

## Bertil Högberg

### Consultant. Churches, Bread and Fishes, Africa Groups, ISAK

Bertil Högberg is an adult educator who has devoted his life to the struggle for justice, independence and democracy in Southern Africa. In this interview he talks about how his commitment expresses itself through his work for the Church; the Bread and Fishes, an organisation that collects clothes and other material; and the solidarity movements, the Africa Groups and the Isolate South Africa Committee. In various capacities he has also lived and worked in Southern Africa.



Bertil Högberg

Madi Gray: This is an interview with Bertil Högberg, who has played an integral part in the struggle against apartheid for decades. The interview was done in two parts, on 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> September 2005. Bertil, how did you become involved in support for the struggle for Southern Africa's independence?

Bertil Högberg: My first very small role was in the beginning of the 1960s. I was active indirectly, within the church movement of the Mission Covenant Youth, SMU, and they had South Africa on the agenda and I remember discussions around it. I wasn't involved in classical action then, South Africa was there in the background in the 1960s, with the whole boycott movement and I had only an interest in it. Stronger involvement came in the 1970s when the churches were starting ecumenical international campaigns and the theme for the first one was "Freedom for the oppressed". South Africa was one of the examples used in the campaign material, in the booklets that were produced.

At that time I was working as coordinator of a church based study organization in Västerås. The campaign, called "U-veckan" (Development Week), was supposed to be an annual event.

Together with someone from the Lutheran Church I was organising and trying to get local groups started around this campaign in the Västerås Diocese. In the local campaign in Västerås I was also on the organising committee of the ecumenical council. We wanted to focus on South Africa so I managed to get a group together to study South Africa and got some study material from the Africa Groups. That was the start.

In this preparation for the campaign I came in contact with a local group in Västerås called the Bread and Fishes, an ecumenical group doing social work with people who had drug and alcohol problems. They were a working collective, living and working together, running a flea-market to get some of the funding for the operation, and getting only pocket money. It also had an international profile. The money they raised that was above what they needed for their own living expenses was sent to a project in Bangladesh. They had this international agenda and they became involved in planning the campaign. I became more involved in this committee. From Stockholm they asked in the second year, could we try to make this U-veckan campaign much broader. Which we did and we had a very broad campaign reaching far beyond the churches.

I resigned from my job at the study organisation and joined the Bread and Fishes and started work for these campaigns from the Bread and Fishes point of view. We managed to get all schools in the whole town, not only community centres, but youth centres and other organizations were also involved. There were about 45 radio programmes and the whole religious department was involved in these programmes.

We organized one of the first and the biggest debates on Swedish investments in South Africa. We had ASEA and LO-TCO and many organisations involved in discussing what to do about investments because that was the thing that was discussed in churches in those years. A call by the World Council of Churches General Assembly in Uppsala to disinvest from South Africa had not been fully accepted by the churches in Sweden, and

there was an ongoing debate about whether the churches should disinvest. They had given the companies a couple of years to prove that they could make a big contribution by staying. That made the whole issue about South Africa a living debate within the churches but it was not easily resolved and there was a push for more sanctions against South Africa. That was the debate when I joined Bread and Fishes and they had just taken the decision to send support to SWAPO.

Madi Gray: When did you join them?

Bertil Högberg: I joined in September 1974. I was working voluntarily before that and remember doing the physical work of loading bales onto the lorry to ship the five tons of clothing that a work camp had produced over that summer. The decision to support SWAPO at that stage was not a political decision as such, because it was taken from a humanitarian point of view. They'd decided that because SWAPO has refugees they needed the clothes we collected. The involvement with this campaign started a political process when the whole group began asking, "Why are we doing this? What is going on in Southern Africa?" I started organizing study groups within the organization and we also ran a campaign on Fair Trade and study groups on Southern Africa for the general public.

Madi Gray: Were there campaigns on Fair Trade in 1974?

Bertil Högberg: A Fair Trade shop, then called "U-landsbod", was started just before I came to Bread and Fishes, and running it became one of my duties. We supplied products to churches all over the country that wanted to deal with the issues of unjust trade in their campaign work.

We drew up support for a development project in Bangladesh. We saw that the Bangladesh project run through the Swallows was completely dependent on Swedish volunteers being there and was something imposed from the outside. Instead we decided to support activities where the people themselves were trying to change their situation, trying to liberate themselves or change

the suffering in their society. That's why we decided to direct both our financial and material aid towards the liberation movements and to support solidarity movements. Already then, apart from SWAPO where support continued, we'd been supporting ZANU and the ANC.

Madi Gray: You were working with the ANC chief representative?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, Sobizana Mngqikana, Bizo, at the time. Ben Amathila at SWAPO and Claude Chokwenda from ZANU, until a lot of troubles when a fraction split, so we dumped him and started dealing directly with ZANU's secretary, Herbert Chitepo. He was working very closely with Emmaus Björkå. They had more direct contact. They were very much involved in contacts with the liberation movements, from the early 1970s.

Madi Gray: Will you please tell me about the background to your trips to Southern Africa.

Bertil Högberg: One of the reasons I wanted to go to Namibia in 1976 was because I was looking for a theme for a thesis in sociology. I managed to get money from various sources to go via South Africa to Namibia, and also to visit Botswana and Zambia.

I was not really sent by the Bread and Fishes. I had to take unpaid leave. The year before this trip we once again had a study group on South Africa to prepare for the third "U-veckan" campaign. I had an idea that after that this group should become an Africa Group but it never happened. It never got the assistance from the Stockholm Africa Group that I asked for. They did, however, produce exhibitions and information material on the Swedish companies in SA.

After the campaign in November 1975 one of the members of the study group came to me and said, "There are people coming from Uppsala for their two year internship as doctors, who plan to start an Africa Group." So nine of us from Bread and Fishes joined up with about nine doctors as well as some members of the study group and we studied Southern Africa and started the

Västerås Africa group a few months later.

I took part in the congress of the Africa Groups in 1976 when the first programme of the Africa Groups was adopted. There I realised that the Africa Groups had no knowledge of what was happening in Namibia. Support to SWAPO was not in the draft proposal. We really had to fight at that congress to get Namibia included in the AGIS programme.

So my trip to South Africa and Namibia a few days later became quite important both for the Bread and Fishes and for the Africa Groups. I was the only one that had face-to-face contact with SWAPO.

Madi Gray: What happened in South Africa?

Bertil Högberg: I wanted to meet various organisations in Johannesburg and was scheduled to go out to Soweto on June 16. I however got an appointment at the Christian Institute to meet Beyers Naudé at the same time, so the permit to go to Soweto had to be changed. When I was walking towards Khotso House in Johannesburg I saw the headlines about the uprising in Soweto in the daily newspaper *The Star*. Obviously my meeting with Beyers Naudé lasted just one minute. When I came back a few weeks later he was banned and put out of action. It took 19 years before I could get to Soweto! In June 1976 I went to Namibia for two weeks and then came back to Johannesburg. After that I went to Zambia and Botswana, and for a day to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and then had a few days more in Johannesburg. I went to a big meeting in mid-July at the Christian Institute and Beyers was there, supposed to be silent, but he spoke anyway. The meeting was about what was happening now, with the children leading the struggle. "We must go back to the struggle," was one of the messages. The other message that hit me very strongly was that this was not a question of black against white, it was a question of black rights.

I was staying with a Swedish doctor, Ingrid le Roux, who's in Cape Town now, and her husband Pieter, who is professor of sociology at the University of the Western Cape. His doctorate is from his studies at the university in Lund. In 1976 Ingrid was working at the Baragwanath hospital in Soweto.

When I was walking the streets of Johannesburg and seeing what apartheid had done to people, a strong impression was meeting black people on the sidewalk who moved out of my way and left me the whole sidewalk. They gave a young walking white man all the space. That was so frustrating! There was a contrast when I came to Namibia and noticed that Namibian blacks had not lost their self-respect. You could see when you met people that they were more proud of themselves. They did not need to excuse themselves because they were black.

Madi Gray: Tell me more about your experiences in Namibia.

Bertil Högberg: The main goal for my 1976 trip was Namibia. I was staying at the Anglican Bishop's House because I had been recommended by the exiled Bishop, Colin Winter. He had come to our "U-Vecka" campaigns in Västerås and made a very strong impression. The church had stopped ordaining more bishops in Namibia because the South African authorities were throwing out one after the other.

Madi Gray: Why?

Bertil Högberg: The Anglican Church, like some other Namibian churches during the South African occupation, objected to the war that was taking place in the north. The churches had been writing letters and were very active and vocal. Though a South African by birth, Bishop Colin Winter had been one of these very strong voices and he was thrown out. After him the church ordained a number of other bishops who were South African citizens and they were also told to leave.

Madi Gray: The South African government deported them from Namibia?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. Ed Morrow was freshly ordained as a Minister, he was a builder, he had been building and working with liberation theology. When he was about to be ordained, the third Bishop was thrown out so he was sent in as Vicar General. Ed Morrow was very helpful in assisting me. Foreign

journalists who came to Namibia and wanted to know what was going on, what they were doing, what the Government was doing, everyone came to the Anglican Bishop's House for all kinds of information.

I met a number of different organizations, including internal SWAPO. I had a lot of contacts before the trip with the SWAPO office in Stockholm where Ben Amathila was the chief representative. He was very concerned and very interested in the wellbeing of internal SWAPO, as the leadership of SWAPO in exile had difficulties in staying in contact with what was going on inside the country. Internal SWAPO also wanted more contact with the external wing. I was asked to look for ways for how we could get in more money to support internal SWAPO. I also met the Lutheran pastor Max Gerson and was asked to assist people who were trying to start a trade union.

Madi Gray: What kind of trade union, general or specific?

Bertil Högberg: There were no trade unions at all and it became general, NUNW.

Madi Gray: National Union of Namibian Workers?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. Pastor Max also asked me to review the proposed Constitution.

Madi Gray: When you think of Namibian history there was a series of strikes in late 1971.

Bertil Högberg: Bishop Colin Winter was deported because of his involvement around those strikes. The Christian Centre was the unofficial SWAPO office in those years, some SWAPO people were working there, like Taun Hataqulipi. I also met a Taapopi that was chairperson of the local branch. His twin sister was in exile in Västerås.

Madi Gray: Niilo Taapopi?

Bertil Högberg: No, not Niilo, I think his name was Nashilongo he was just released Robben Island and was only 20 years of age. He was running between the churches saying, "I want to put out this SWAPO newspaper. So you print these pages, and you print those two." Each church office had to contribute by printing one or two pages. I was there, helping at the Anglican Church office and printing the paper. I saw him later selling it on the street and I saw also the police pick him up.

Madi Gray: How was the paper actually printed, was it cyclostyled?

Bertil Högberg: Mimeographed. He was killed in the operation that took place around Kassinga when the South African forces abducted quite a number of people, not from Kassinga but from another camp.

Madi Gray: That was in May 1978? Over 600 were killed?

Bertil Högberg: The young people were kept in Mariental in a camp for many years there he was killed.

Then during the same trip in 1976 came my visit to Lusaka, Zambia, where I met Billy Modise at a new UN Institute for Namibia. The Institute was not officially opened yet, but was meant for SWAPO and though he was ANC, he was one of its directors. Billy was director of social sciences and they were supposed to do some research. I'd been in contact with him around my work. I was coming to discuss with them what research I could do to benefit the struggle in Namibia. On their instructions when I came there I wrote a lengthy report about my visit to Namibia. I presented them with about 15 kilos of books that I had acquired in South Africa and Namibia from a long list. I gave these books to the librarian and they became the first books on the library shelves of the institute. My photos became a photo exhibition. I never saw it but prepared it and wrote captions to the photos and left them. They made enlargements and had them at the inauguration of the Institute.

Billy gave me a topic, *The Social Consequences of the Contract Labour*

*System.* My ticket back to Europe was from Johannesburg, so I had to go back to South Africa and did some library studies there. I was largely discouraged by my supervisor at the University of Uppsala from pursuing this topic when I told him that I would probably not be able to go back to Namibia to do fieldwork. I lost a bit of steam there and began more and more to do solidarity work.

Madi Gray: Did you ever finish your thesis?

Bertil Högberg: No, I never wrote anything. I was asked by SWAPO to go back to Namibia already six months later, as my visa was still valid. It was a one-year multiple entry visa. I was surprised that I got a visa for South Africa because I'd already been involved in support to the liberation movements. I was sent back with new money, but the trip was also because Ben Amathila wanted documents smuggled in. I had to stay there for three weeks because that was the cheapest ticket. I found that a Canadian scholar had already been there doing some interviews on the contract labour issue. That also discouraged me. I hadn't completely given up writing something, but a few months after coming back from that trip I left Bread and Fishes, in April 1977. The work on Namibia was well-established within the Bread and Fishes and it mainly went through Zambia. Most of what was collected was clothes but there were also some equipment. I had hoped to go to the refugee settlement when I was in Zambia on my first trip, but SWAPO couldn't get a permit from the Zambian authorities to have me going. So I only had discussions with the SWAPO leadership there. I met the ANC as well when I was in Lusaka. When I left Bread and Fishes I was asked by Ben Amathila to assist at the SWAPO office. He didn't want to employ me at the office but he wanted me to work with his successor. While waiting for his arrival, I was finishing a slide show that I'd started to work on, on Namibia. I also worked a little at the Africa Groups with recruitment. We were just about to send the first volunteers to Mozambique.

Madi Gray: What happened when the new SWAPO rep came?

Bertil Högberg: When Timothy Hadino Hishongwa came to Stockholm in August 1976, I was working half-time in the SWAPO office and quite a lot at the Africa Groups, at first as a volunteer.

Madi Gray: Tell me about the Africa Groups.

Bertil Högberg: I was elected to the board in May 1977. There was an office on Grev Turegatan near the *Kommentar* office where Magnus Bergmar was placed that year as the editor of *Afrikabulletinen*. We didn't have an Africa Group office and facilities there. But the Stockholm Africa Group had a room nearby in the basement in Humlegårdsgatan where all their meetings took place, so that was where I was based. Half a year later the sale of our study book *The Liberation Struggle in Africa (Befrielsekampen i Afrika)* gained us enough money so that the board decided that we could solve our staff problems and create a 50% post. I had to split my time between the SWAPO office and the Africa Groups from January 1, 1978. About three months later the board decided to add another 50% post and employed Lena Johansson and we built up the Africa Groups office.

If you look at what the Africa Groups was doing in those years, it was one of the most active organizations, selling bulletins on the streets, standing with tins collecting money for the liberation struggle. That brought in cash that we sent to all the liberation movements, with no strings. They could do whatever they wanted to with this money. We did realise there was resistance by some people to giving cash like that. There are people who are prepared to support a liberation movement if they can be sure the funds will go to civilian activities. We decided we should have a project for which people could earmark money. We talked to SWAPO for quite a long time to ask them to identify a project. Eventually we started to talk around health, medical needs. The advantage was that together with the Bread and Fishes we had already sent second-hand medical material to the SWAPO camps in Angola.

Madi Gray: Was it moved from Zambia?

Bertil Högberg: It was not moved. You could say that new refugees that came after Angola's independence in 1975 were settled there, first in Kassinga and afterwards in Kwanza Sul. While we discussed the possibilities of a medical project, requests came from SWAPO to send medical personnel. We decided to do it. George Dreifaldt and I went to go and look at all the liberation movements in Southern Africa. I don't remember if we got any financial support from our organizations. I was representing the Bread and Fishes and he was representing the Africa Groups. I was back at Bread and Fishes then but still on the AGIS board. We spent most of our 7 weeks in Angola negotiating with SWAPO on how to do this medical project for the SWAPO settlement in Kwanza Sul.

I'd wanted the Africa Groups to be in charge of it together with the Bread and Fishes, but the AGIS board was hesitant to take the full responsibility for a SIDA supported project. I'd planned to go back to AGIS and continue working there, but then I decided to stay on with the Bread and Fishes to work with this project.

Madi Gray: How did you set it up? Did you phone around?

Bertil Högberg: There was a lot of procurement of second-hand material. We got long lists of hospital material and medicines from SWAPO and had to phone around to get it and organise logistics. What we could not collect second-hand we had to buy. Then we were asked to build more clinics in the refugee centres. We had the project approved but when the drawings came they were not for small clinics but for two hospitals.

Madi Gray: Where were the drawings drawn up?

Bertil Högberg: By SWAPO. They did some very sketchy designs and it was decided that Sida should take responsibility for at least one of the hospitals and we should take the smaller one. After a year of working with this project

Sida took charge of building both hospitals and we took charge of equipping them both instead. So I started doing the procurement for both hospitals.

Madi Gray: How did you make a living?

Bertil Högberg: I had my low-paid employment from The Bread and Fishes. By now we'd got money from Sida, as co-financiers of this project. We raised 20% and asked for 80% from Sida. That became the first ever Africa Groups project, though it was administered by the Bread and Fishes. The Africa Groups took responsibility for collecting the 20%, I think the whole project involved about a million Swedish kronor at the time.

Madi Gray: That was a lot of money in those days.

Bertil Högberg: Yes. They took responsibility through the local groups. The local Africa Groups had been doing the collecting of the hospital material and sent it to Bread and Fishes and came over the weekends to pack it there. The Bread and Fishes didn't do collecting, but enormous shipments came from the whole of Sweden. At the time a lot of doctors and nurses were involved in local Africa Groups. It was the most important professional group and many people became involved.

Madi Gray: Can you tell me about the background of Bread and Fishes.

Bertil Högberg: The background was an ecumenical movement working more with social issues locally, but it very quickly broadened to an international perspective and then about 1975 we decided to concentrate support to liberation movements in Southern Africa. By mid-1978 the Bread and Fishes had such organisational problems that the whole organisation was about to collapse and had to be restructured. When we reconstructed the organisation, its connection to the church as a Christian organization became less clear. There was not agreement in the group about that though the name was

retained. The focus was on support to the liberation movements in Southern Africa and that remained.

Madi Gray: Do I understand you right? Bread and Fishes became less religious and focused more on struggles for independence and democracy?

Bertil Högberg: The focus had changed in the mid-1970s already, but we retained the idea that we were a Christian movement. This changed now. However, we still worked very closely with the churches and still do work closely for example with the Lutheran Church, and run campaigns around Mozambique together with the Africa Groups, but the identity of Bread and Fishes has changed.

Eventually the scope widened at the end of the 1980s to include Angola and also Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Eritrea. The focus was on Southern Africa for most of the 1970s and 1980s, mainly the liberation movements.

When it comes to Zimbabwe it was mainly ZANU that Bread and Fishes supported. That created a problem because of the stand taken by the Africa Groups whom we worked very closely with. A lot of the clothes were collected by local Africa Groups around the country and sent to Västerås. The Africa Groups had decided to support both ZAPU and ZANU, or not exactly the movements themselves, but their “unification in the Patriotic Front”. I had a great deal of pressure from the Africa Groups’ board that I should try to influence the Bread and Fishes to change. It wasn’t possible to change it, but we allowed local Africa Groups to come and sort the clothes and pack the clothes themselves on weekends for ZAPU and we used the Sida allocation for transport. In my spare time I arranged all the freight and the logistics to get it down to the refugee camps. That I had to do outside my work for the Bread and Fishes because for some time I was dealing with the transport issues there. In that way we also did a few shipments for ZAPU, but the organization itself supported only ZANU, SWAPO and the ANC.

Madi Gray: Can you tell me more about what you did in Bread and Fishes?

Bertil Högberg: Clothes were the main thing we collected. I have some figures here. I've been trying to compile what we sent from 1974 to 1991 and it was 1 000 tons of clothes to SWAPO. In this tonnage you also include shoes, but that is still a lot. If one says two kilos of clothes is a complete set of clothes for one person, then there were clothes for 500 000 people.

Madi Gray: Half a million people?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. Of course you need to replace the clothes and it was over a period of many years, yet obviously this was more than SWAPO needed and we were not the only ones sending clothes. ZANU got clothes for a shorter period. From 1976 to 1981 they got 275 tons and ZAPU 35 tons in 1979, that was the only year that this arrangement worked. We had started to support the ANC financially earlier but we sent the first clothes shipment in 1980 and until 1991, 1992, they got 450 tons. That was also quite a lot. Considering that the ANC didn't have as many refugees in Africa compared to SWAPO, that was even more clothes in relation to their needs.

I remember discussing at one stage with the ANC in Lusaka around 1983, whether it was possible for them to sell some of the clothes on the local market, because they got more than they needed.

When you collect clothes there're some types of clothes that you never get, like underwear and other things. In discussions with the liberation movements we realised that we are not fulfilling these needs. A few things were sent that were very good but maybe needed some mending, but basically most of the things that were broken we never sent. We managed to get some funding from Sida, apart from the transport, to supplement what we collected so we bought needles, zippers, and all kinds of things that you need when you repair clothes. Even if they were not broken when they arrived, clothes do wear out. We also managed to buy some underwear, things that were never part of what was collected, but that we could add to the shipment.

Madi Gray: What about things like sanitary towels?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, some I think we also included. We had lists from the movements on what they needed. I was not really involved in that, but we had a sum of money during the 1980s for that.

We collected quite a lot of other types of equipment that people gave us, there were blankets, sometimes tents, pots and pans and radios and tools, sewing machines, and all kinds of equipment that had been on the list from the liberation movements were also shipped. I have been going through the old annual reports trying to compile how much this was worth and unfortunately, it's only during some years that the insurance value that we put on the things had been noted in the annual reports.

There is no record from most of the mid-eighties and afterwards, but before that I had notes about SWAPO getting material for about 600 000 Swedish kronor, only one third of the year that was recorded, and towards the end it was a lot. I know that some years we sent medical equipment worth millions of kronor in just one year. That was outside the medical aid projects, and we could buy things for the medical aid projects, but these were things that we collected. We could equip some of the hospitals I talked about that we were building with second-hand materials. The rest we had to buy, but what we could collect in Sweden was also worth millions. The ANC never got so much of this material support, but they got some of the second-hand medical material. In the years we recorded it, for SWAPO it was worth one and a half million kronor and one million for ZANU, so that was quite a lot.

Madi Gray: For medical equipment alone?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, in only four years ZANU got medical equipment worth one million, and that was in the 1970s. One million Swedish kronor in the seventies was a lot of money. Over those years ZAPU got medical equipment worth 400 000, but this was collected by the Africa Groups so they packed it and did all the work, and that's why it was distributed. These are only very scattered figures unfortunately, but it was worth a lot. There was also cash, because the flea market where we sold a lot of the collected things gave us a surplus as we only took out a very low salary.

Madi Gray: What were you earning?

Bertil Högberg: In the 1970s when I started work we started with 250 Swedish kronor as pocket money a month, which was little. Then when we reconstructed the organization around 1979 we said you should earn as much after tax as if you are a student living on a student loan. Gradually it increased a bit, and for example you got extra if you had children, but it was very low pay over the whole period. Still we managed over a quite considerable time in the 1970s to raise funds of between a hundred and two hundred thousand Swedish kronor a year, which was a lot of money.

Madi Gray: Was this mainly through sales?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, and that went to SWAPO and ZANU and a very little to ANC in those years, apart from the printing of the Freedom Charter in Swedish in 1976. In the mid-1980s, we could make no cash contributions because our premises were torched twice.

Madi Gray: You mean they were burnt down?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, the first time the fire brigade was so close that they were able to rescue most of the building, so there was only damage to part of it and we were able to resume operations, but the year after it was completely destroyed. It was not found out who did it.

Madi Gray: The arsonists have never been found out?

Bertil Högberg: We never found out, but I did try to get the Swedish Security Police to investigate the South African connection because it was around the same time as there was a bombing of the ANC office in Stockholm and the ANC was attacked in London. In Västerås it occurred the night after a local paper wrote about ANC students being in Västerås for work camps and being

active in street theatre. Both occasions were the night after articles were in the papers about support to the struggle in South Africa.

Madi Gray: In the eighties?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, the first one was 1981 and the second, when they managed to burn it down, was in August 1982. That was a severe setback, we managed to find substitute premises just outside town but it slowed down the operation and the question was what should we do now. When the first fire happened I was only working part-time in the organization, but when the second came and the premises were destroyed I'd left the organization and was working as a teacher, but I was still on the board. I was the Treasurer of the board and worked actively within Bread and Fishes.

It took a while to both discuss with the liberation movements and with the members that we should actually build our own premises, so that we could get something that was fit for the operations we needed, for a big flea market, for a good operation for sorting and packing the clothes and areas for containers. The liberation movement said, "It's better you get an efficient operation going rather than that we get your cash grants," so we saved up money for a few years and said, "Now we are going to build our own premises and that means that for a number of years we will not be able to make a surplus". I can see from the records that in 1986 we resumed giving financial support to SWAPO and the ANC, just those two, so it took four years from 1982. Then we could continue giving donations of a hundred to two hundred thousand Swedish kronor a year.

Madi Gray: It's twenty years later, what has happened to Bread and Fishes?

Bertil Högberg: It still exists and is working a bit on Southern Africa. The problem is that Sida is not there to fund the transport and some of the costs of the packing as they did before, because they say it's not an emergency situation, it's not that kind of humanitarian need any longer for clothes. There is also more discussion on whether second-hand clothes are damaging the

local market and the local possibility to produce, so Sida has been more and more hesitant in supporting them. They have been sending shipments for a while to Angola, and give some to Western Sahara, but it means that Bread and Fishes have problems in financing the operation. They have had to start to sell some of the clothes because they get much more clothes than they can use. They are selling some clothes in Eastern Europe. There are more problems around, so the future is a bit different, more uncertain. The same goes for the Emmaus groups because Bread and Fishes work together with Emmaus-Stockholm and Emmaus-Björkå in the organisation called Practical Solidarity. It's based on the informal cooperation that started in the seventies and developed between these organizations and it was formalized at the end of the eighties to form an organization that does basically the same work. The last shipment that we sent to the ANC, for example, was around 1992.

Madi Gray: Was this sent to South Africa, or to Tanzania or Zambia?

Bertil Högberg: It was a trial shipment to South Africa. I was involved in trying to solve that problem on the local side in South Africa.

Madi Gray: Was it held up in customs?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, but we managed to solve that. Basically the textile workers in South Africa didn't want us to continue the operation and the ANC left it at that, otherwise it was supposed to be handled by the ANC local branches and social committees.

Madi Gray: Was it the trade unions that objected?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, we had high-level discussions with the ANC and textile workers' trade unions around this, so it means that nothing was sent after that to the ANC. There were a few shipments after independence to Namibia. It was sent, but there were difficulties about who was going to distribute the clothing and some went to the churches for the repatriation programme and

as aid to something the State set up to take care of ex-combatants. That was an operation that didn't really work properly. Then I was the Africa Groups co-ordinator in Namibia, so I was a bit involved in it.

The collection and sending of material to the liberation movements was quite an important operation in Sweden. It was done together with, not only the Africa Groups, but also schools and a lot of other institutions that wanted to make a contribution to the struggle in the 1970s and 1980s. They saw this as a possibility to contribute and also involve many people. Apart from collecting things schools also manufactured things. They were making toys or baking biscuits or whatever, all kinds of collections were undertaken and these things we shipped.

Madi Gray: Biscuits?

Bertil Högberg: Biscuits, yes. That was started in Elverum in Norway, a big Namibia campaign where they started to bake special protein biscuits, which were shipped. It was at schools, they did it in their home economics classes and so on.

Madi Gray: They were high protein biscuits in order to supplement the food?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. The Centre Party Youth and Women were also quite active, particularly on Namibia. At the end of the seventies when I worked at the SWAPO office I had a lot of contact with the Centre Youth Movement around Namibia. They collected quite a lot of school material. They not only collected material but also collected funds to buy school material that I remember we shipped from the Bread and Fishes to SWAPO.

Another example is that in the Västerås diocese, just to involve people, they used to have a soap collection, mainly for Mozambique. When they had activities they said, "The entrance fee is a piece of soap," and at the place where they had these activities the Bread and Fishes would put a big container that would be filled with bars of soap.

Madi Gray: What you're saying is that organizations like Emmaus and Bread and Fishes would pack and send stuff that other people had collected?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, quite often. At some stage we shipped for organizations in Norway, like this Namibia Association in Elverum that became very strong. They didn't have funds for shipping so we financed it, with agreement with Sida that it was okay to use the funds we had for shipment for this purpose. On a few occasions we had arrangements with Denmark in the same way. So we helped with the shipment of their stuff, but after a couple of years they managed to get a similar type of support from their own governments. We did a lot of work with Finland on the medical aid projects, the recruitment, but that was not organized from the Bread and Fishes, but from the Africa Groups.

Madi Gray: It sounds as though a lot of imagination and thought went into the work of collecting. Have you got other examples?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, there were different ways that you could organize collections. Sometimes we went out with leaflets in post boxes, saying we are coming on such and such a date, just put it outside and we'll come and pick it up, or people phoned in and we could drive there and pick it up. But it was a more rational way of doing it when we selected a certain area and day. Then we developed a method of dealing out plastic bags with some information about why we needed the clothes, where it was going and the name of the organization. People then had a bag in which they could put the clothes. Different methods were used by the local Africa Groups and other organizations. Maybe not using the plastic bags, but handing out leaflets or saying, "On such and such a date come to this place and we will receive your old clothes". For example, here in Uppsala where I was living from 1983, we had a third world shop, a fair trade shop, and that became the place in Uppsala where you could always leave your clothes. They had a backroom and the Bread and Fishes paid the rent for that storage area, and as I was going to Västerås anyway every second week to work on the finances there, I

sometimes rented a trailer and picked up the things. That was typical of the activities spread in many parts of Sweden.

The sorting operation is quite important also, sorting into different categories. A few percent of the clothes were sold also on the flea markets. Nowadays they sell more.

Madi Gray: What was regarded as unsuitable? What would be taken out?

Bertil Högberg: Some of the warm clothes would be taken out but surprisingly enough we sent quite a lot of winter clothes anyway, because at some point in time some of these movements had refugee settlements in areas where they sometimes got cold, for example the SWAPO settlement in Kwanza Sul was on very high ground, so they had some periods where it could be cold. But the ANC in Tanzania had not so much use for these boots and so on. That was a problem, we got a surplus of winter clothes that we didn't really know what to do with.

Madi Gray: Did you sell some of them?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, we were more prepared to sell some of them because they were not so useful for the liberation movements, some had to be thrown away. But I think basically they got much more warm clothes than they had use for, so that was a problem.

Madi Gray: Today Bread and Fishes' focus is much broader. You mentioned other countries, not only in Southern Africa.

Bertil Högberg: Nicaragua, Eritrea, Western Sahara, Angola, and Mozambique, these have been the countries that Bread and Fishes have been working with. Later they developed, not only sending clothes but also financing projects, building schools and things like that, so they became involved more in that type of work, but that is something that happened in the 1990s. I left the organization in 1990 when I was going to work in Namibia as

the Africa Groups' coordinator and after that I've had very limited contact with the Bread and Fishes.

Madi Gray: I would like to know how many people worked there over the years?

Bertil Högberg: It varied. I think when we were at the peak, around 1975, 1976, we were 25 people who were more or less all working full time, but this changed and people worked there for short times, for three months, a year, or half a year. Very many young people just moved through the organization, worked there for a while and later the average number in the group remained between 10 and 16. More people are staying longer, and some are working now who started there already in the 1980s. Most people worked there for a period of six months up to a couple of years.

Now there are also a number of people placed there by the government because they have social or other disabilities, which make it a problem to place them in a normal working situation. So they basically work there in a kind of sheltered employment.

There're always some volunteers working with the organization, but there are problems to combine volunteers and people working full-time, but volunteers are not completely out though there were more in the seventies and beginning of the eighties.

Madi Gray: Volunteers and other people, who only got pocket money?

Bertil Högberg: Or not anything at all, just coming there to help.

Madi Gray: Once or twice a week or something?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, like that. We also had international workers. I mentioned this in connection with the arson, when the premises were burnt down. For a number of years we had people coming from not only Europe but from all over the world to work with us, for about three weeks or so.

Madi Gray: Did you also have people from the recipient organizations?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, some of them joined these work camps because that was part of getting a political content into the work camps, for these people coming from all over the world to be able to meet the people from South Africa and Namibia. That was one of the aims of the work camps to make them aware of what was going on in Southern Africa. But some of them also came outside these work camps situations, some were students in Sweden or students in the Soviet Union. They came to Sweden for a period and in co-operation with the offices of the liberation movements they were placed for a while to work with us.

Madi Gray: Was this so for all the organizations in Practical Solidarity, the work camps and the fact that you had co-operation with outside people?

Bertil Högberg: Not all of them organized international work camps. I think that this idea was only sustained during the seventies and the first half of the eighties. Like Emmaus Björkå, they always had people coming there in the summers, so they had some kind of work camps because there were a lot of volunteers coming in the summer, on their vacations, and some came from other parts of Europe.

Bread and Fishes organized their camps together with two different international work camp organizations. First we had three with an ecumenical work camp movement EYS, connected to the World Council of Churches. Then we started to work with IAL, the Swedish branch of the Service Civil International, a broad international work camp organization that organizes work camps around the globe, and during most of the eighties we worked together with them on these work camps.

Madi Gray: So little Västerås had an impact in many different parts of the world?

Bertil Högberg: Sure.

Madi Gray: If we leave Bread and Fishes and return to your other solidarity work, you were working with both the Isolate South Africa Committee, ISAK, and with the Africa Group?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, In 1981, at some stage I was chairperson of the Africa Groups, the Isolate South Africa Committee and Bread and Fishes, even if my role as chairperson of the Africa Groups was initially a secret one. At that time an organization like the Africa Groups, coming from the left-wing of the 1968 tradition, should not have a chairperson as its structure should not be so hierarchical, so it was kept secret that AGIS board had elected a chairperson.

Madi Gray: Oh I see, the fact that AGIS had a chairperson wasn't supposed to be known because one was still into rotation and equality, where the group was regarded as equal people working together, and a rotating chairman and secretary were elected at each meeting?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, no one was supposed to be above anyone else. For example, no names were put on articles written in our bulletin, they were anonymous, it was the movement that published it. I wrote most of a book in 1978 about Namibia, with help from some others, and my name is not mentioned. So that was the tradition we had in the organization, which was a problem when it came to establish ourselves on the media scene, because no one got established as a spokesperson for the organization.

For most of the 1970s we had an informal chairperson, Dick Urban Vestbro, who was very influential and strong and I regarded him, when I came onto the board, as the chairperson, even though we never elected him. He acted perfectly, he was a very good chairperson of the board, and always had everything planned for the board and the organization. He chaired all the board meetings, planned the meetings, and was perfect in that role. It took me a while to realize that he was not actually elected, but he was doing good work.

When he left the board there was a difficult situation because we had no one to lead the work of the board and it took quite a while before they made the decision that I should take up that role formally, but still secretly. When I left the board they didn't elect another chairperson. Only one and a half years later, when I was asked to come back on the board, I was elected chairperson. This time it became public, which made it easier to issue statements in the name of the organization, to approach media and to write statements.

Madi Gray: So the first official chairperson of the Africa Groups was elected in 1983?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, and I remained there until 1985. Then I got more involved in another programme that I was working with, the Southern Africa project of the Lutheran Church. I was working as a teacher at a college in Sigtuna run by the Church of Sweden Youth Movement. I went there in the early eighties. We had some students on youth leadership training from South Africa, who I worked with. One of them I also interviewed in this series, Sekopi Malebo. They also had a programme with Zimbabwe, and the Youth Movement had been asked to come by the Church of Zimbabwe to help them with reconstruction.

I came to the college in Sigtuna when these two parallel programmes were going on and became very much involved with the Zimbabwean exchange. We then decided to have a second programme with Swaziland, within a programme of solidarity work with South Africa and Namibia, because this was a way for the Lutheran Church Youth to express their participation within ISAK. It was a way to involve more people within the church in doing solidarity work for South Africa. So the group went to Swaziland. The whole campaign in Sweden, which we tied in this project, was to make people more aware of the situation in South Africa.

Madi Gray: This would have been the mid-1980s?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, it was 1986. It was a three-year programme starting in 1985 and running up to 1987 and that was the second programme. We had another one with Zimbabwe at the end of the 1990s, still with the aim of raising awareness about South Africa in the Swedish work.

The Swedish group was in Swaziland for almost six months. At one stage Sekopi Malebo came to visit us wearing the borrowed collar of a Swedish priest, Per Svensson; that was the way he sneaked out of South Africa. He was an important figure in the underground movement of the ANC so he also used that opportunity to reconnect with the ANC structures in Swaziland and have a lot of meetings. This was in secret, as the ANC were not supposed to be in Swaziland.

These meetings with Sekopi and others became very important for our group and we did quite a lot of information activities when we returned to Sweden. After the formal course started some of them went on a five months tour in two groups doing a lot of campaign work and information work focusing on both Swaziland and South Africa, on the struggle against apartheid. This was the major campaign work done within the Church youth movement.

Madi Gray: If we think about Swaziland and its history, some time during that time, the previous King must have died and the new one took over.

Bertil Högberg: We came to Swaziland just a couple of weeks before his coronation, so we were at the stadium when he met the people. Swaziland at that time had started to be very hard against ANC and I felt it to be politically too sensitive to be chairperson of the Africa Groups and at the same time be in Swaziland, that's why I resigned from the board during that year. It was difficult and it was problematic to talk too much politics, both in Zimbabwe and in Swaziland. In the Swedish context it was very political, while in the Swazi and Zimbabwean context it was difficult to talk about these issues.

Madi Gray: In Zimbabwe and Swaziland did the work become more like charity?

Bertil Högberg: Not really charity, we worked in development. We worked with communities, re-building schools and fixing up water wells and repairing community structures. That was when we were involved in practical development work. Some was with the Lutheran World Federation's local office, Church of Sweden Aid, for example. It had the backing of the Church of Sweden Mission, Church of Sweden Aid, the Christian study organisation and the Church youth movement, so it was quite a broad umbrella organization that was behind the project. It was also an exchange, so youth that we worked with also came to Sweden. It was called the Comrade Project.

Madi Gray: Comrade?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. It was also a problem to use that name. We couldn't use a name like "Be a Comrade with Zimbabwe" when we came to Swaziland because in a way 'comrade' was a prohibited word in Swaziland, it was too political. So we called it "Meeting Swaziland" and "Meeting Sweden", that was the official name, but in Sweden the whole project was "Be a Comrade with Southern Africa".

Madi Gray: In Swedish 'comrade' is 'kamrat'?

Bertil Högberg: Yes.

Madi Gray: Which also has a sense of friendship, of being a colleague.

Bertil Högberg: Yes, more or less. In Swedish it's not so political as the English word.

This was the reason why I resigned from the Africa Groups board in 1985. I'd been elected to the AGIS board in 1977 and started to work at AGIS and started up the AGIS office before I went back to Bread and Fishes, but I remained on the AGIS board. I also rejoined the board after the period in Swaziland.

Madi Gray: For many years the Africa groups could not decide whether or not to support the ANC in South Africa?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. When the Africa Groups decided to start to work on South Africa in March 1976, we decided there should be a campaign on South Africa, this was the first really active campaign work. We agreed on a platform for that campaign, and that platform also became the platform of ISAK. AGIS was very much concerned because we had chosen this campaign to try to restart the boycott, because our platform was support to the ANC, SWAPO, the total boycott of South African products, no cultural, sports or academic exchange with South Africa, and total disinvestment.

Indeed when AGIS started its South Africa work we were basically only latching on to what the churches were doing, since the churches had run a big campaign around disinvestment for some time. I've mentioned the campaigns I was involved in, in Västerås in the seventies. The churches had pushed the Government in 1976 to have a commission to look into the possibility of having a law against Swedish investments in South Africa.

When AGIS started to involve itself in South Africa that commission was working and only the year after they began, did we start our campaign. In 1976 we took the decision, but the actual campaign work started in 1977.

Madi Gray: Was this the year the commission's report was produced?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. AGIS first more public action was to print a comment on that report. When we started this boycott campaign in 1977, we realized we were a small organization with about 200 members throughout the country, in about ten, eleven, local committees that were very active. We alone could not run a nationwide boycott campaign, but we had a campaign week in October 1977 on South Africa, where we mobilized a lot of different organizations locally, raising the issue of boycott.

We said that it's not because of the economic effect the boycott will have on South Africa that we are trying to restart the boycott of the 1960s that had faded away, but because we can use the boycott as a political tool to make people take a stand. They must decide on which side are they, we were using the boycott as a means of pushing people into a situation where they had to take a decision.

I think we were basically a bit wrong in our understanding of the campaign in

the 1960s. It wasn't as biased as we were told; nor did it fail because the only impact wanted was the economic impact on South Africa. The political aspect was there also in the sixties.

AGIS realized that even though we'd managed to mobilize a number of organizations locally, and had a few at national level supporting the platform, if we were going to restart a really good South Africa campaign, we must restart it as a boycott and we needed a national campaign committee at least. How could we do it?

We wanted the social democrats to be part of it, and knew the social democrats had a very painful experience when taking part in inter-political activities around Vietnam. We knew they'd decided not to go into any inter-political campaigns any longer involving both the left and the centre of the political sector, so this was a tricky thing. We said if we take the initiative they will classify us as part of the left and will not be part of it, because they will be scared of involving themselves, since they lost so many members and so much of the initiative around the Vietnam movement and they don't want to repeat that.

So we tried to see if wasn't it possible to restart some of the committees that were active in the sixties. There was a solidarity committee for Southern Africa, where Hans Göran Franck, a radical social democratic MP and advocate, very much involved in international human rights issues, and Per Sandén who'd been doing quite a lot of filming and had done a lot lately for Namibia and worked very closely with SWAPO, were some of the people involved in this committee in the 1960s. We tried to have some meetings with them to see if we could restart that committee and they should take the initiative but that never worked.

By the end of the 1970s, even though the Africa Groups grew quite rapidly in those years, adding three, four new local committees every year, we were still not very many. There was a lot of bickering within the Africa Groups about whether we should go about it ourselves or not and eventually we decided we had to take the initiative, and I think it was around the World Youth Festival on Cuba in mid-1978 where the foundation was built.

Madi Gray: I was there as part of the ANC delegation and had no idea this was going on behind the scenes. Tell me more.

Bertil Högberg: During the preparations for the trip to Cuba quite a lot of political youth movements and other organizations met, that became the platform where discussions were held around restarting ISAK. When AGIS said that we will go with this initiative, Lennart Renöfält who was involved in the preparations took the discussion, so by the end of 1978 we were able to have the first official meeting and ISAK officially started in January 1979. AGIS said in 1978, "We have planned a second campaign week with the same platform involving more people" and the 1979 campaign became the first under the name of ISAK.

Madi Gray: When ISAK started, it was quite small?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, only 16 organisations initially, but it grew over the years.

Madi Gray: Can you tell me more about ISAK's work, because in its short history it grew to nearly 80 organizations.

Bertil Högberg: Maybe we can start with what type of organizations were members. Apart from the political and Christian youth movements, a few trade unions joined. Not very many, we tried to get involved with big trade unions from the beginning but they said, "No, we can do this by ourselves, we are big enough". The year that we approached them, 1978, they had a fairly large Southern Africa campaign of their own. A few of the white-collar unions joined, like the small Folk High School Teachers union, the union that organizes nurses, the one for government employees and also the blue-collar union for municipal workers. I think four or five unions joined. There were peace movements, the political women's movements, and a number of other organizations. When Bread and Fishes and Emmaus created its national organization, Practical Solidarity, they could also join ISAK. They were involved in the local work. ISAK became very broad in that sense.

Madi Gray: But only national organizations could join?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, but the platform that ISAK started with was the same platform as the one with which the Africa Groups started its South Africa campaign.

During its early years I was also chairperson of ISAK for two periods. AGIS felt it wasn't a very good idea to have someone who was so active in the Africa Groups being the chairperson of ISAK, with ISAK trying to be a broad umbrella organization. We thought that as a solidarity movement we had enough influence in ISAK; we were the initiators of the Isolate South Africa Committee and we shouldn't also have the role of chairperson, but they couldn't find anyone else to take it. We didn't want anyone from the political youth movements at the beginning.

Madi Gray: Otherwise it might become a party political thing?

Bertil Högberg: Basically we were trying to get a chairperson from a more Christian organization. Lennart Renöfält had, like myself, the same background, coming from the Mission Covenant Church Youth Movement, but he was still very much involved. He was the one who initiated ISAK and did it on request from the Africa Groups. We financed his initial work. Lennart was partly employed by the Africa Groups to start ISAK and he became the first chairperson.

I was the second one and it was only for one year. Later I did one more stint as ISAK chairperson. I left them at the beginning of 1981. At the beginning of 1982 I was recalled again, because the new chairperson, who was International Secretary of the Christian Youth Council, was going on parental leave, so I had to step in for one year again. But he came back, so I was just a replacement for that year. Yet those were tough years in ISAK, these were the years when we were still trying to establish the sanctions campaigns. We didn't get the finance for a campaign secretary to be employed for a whole year. We could say "Okay, we have employment now for eight months and then we don't know," so we employed someone for eight months and then we had to stop for a couple of months and then we hired someone else for the next period.

A number of member organizations, like the political youth movements, and

particularly the Social Democratic Youth, never wanted ISAK to become an organization, it should remain as a campaign that was very temporary. ISAK was centred around mobilizing for a campaign week, but at the same time we were mobilizing people to start the consumer boycott, and that was something that had to go on all year round, and we were doing lobby work, and that was also something not concentrated to a campaign week.

This was a struggle in the first year. Were we an organization or were we just co-coordinating a campaign? There was lots of discussion around that issue. When I came back for the second period as chairperson, ISAK was more established and we were able to retain a year-round person to work there. Magnus Walan was the fourth campaign secretary. He was able to stay for a couple of years. Lars Hult, an Africa Group activist from Karlstad, was then employed and stayed on for the rest of the time.

ISAK grew, from having one desk at the beginning in the Africa Groups office, very much supported by the Africa Groups, to later become a bigger operation than AGIS nationally. However, the Africa Groups Recruitment Organisation, ARO, employed more people than ISAK.

Madi Gray: ISAK grew to seventy or eighty organizations?

Bertil Högberg: I think at its peak it had 77 or 78 national organizations, but it never allowed local or regional organizations to become members.

Madi Gray: And ISAK never allowed private people to join either?

Bertil Högberg: No, there were some private people who were supporters of ISAK.

Madi Gray: Which meant that they gave money?

Bertil Högberg: Some of them gave money or just received information or some of the individuals who were active in the sixties in the boycott movement worked as supporters later. There were lots of national organizations, like all the Churches and Church Youth Movements that were very active. All the political youth movements belonged, except the moderates, the right-wing

political party never joined. The liberal youth movement withdrew over the Shell campaign at the end of the eighties.

In the beginning very few organizations were working actively. We tried to create local ISAK committees to conduct the campaigns and some of these committees existed for just running the campaign for a short period in September/October and the campaign was in October. Some committees remained, but quite a lot of the local work was done by the local Africa Group, which sometimes managed to broaden the organizers to include other organizations.

Madi Gray: Which organizations did these committees consist of?

Bertil Högberg: They had representatives from a number of different organizations.

Madi Gray: Who were members of ISAK at a national level?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, and a few others that maybe were not members on a national level but wanted to take part on the local level and vice versa. Quite a lot of the ones that were members in the national level never managed to get local people involved in doing the local work, they never really managed to get any work done on the ground. So a lot was left for the local Africa Groups and the most active organization during the time that I was chairperson, was SMU, the Covenant Youth and the Church of Sweden youth. I could see that because I was helping to send out the campaign material and we saw which organizations it was addressed to, which one was ordering the materials and it was the local committees of these organisations that were the most frequent in ordering the material, apart from the local Africa Groups.

In some places a problem arose because the local ISAK committee detached from the local organizations and became a group of committed individuals, who did not really report back to the organization to which they maybe belonged or came from. Some were recruited from outside to become active. At some places you had local ISAK committees and local Africa Groups working very closely together, but the local ISAK committee never really

represented so many organizations. Sometimes there were no Africa Groups and the local ISAK committee was more like an Africa Group because they were not connected to any national organization, they were just individual members that kept on doing good work, but they saw themselves as an ISAK committee rather than an Africa Group committee.

That became a structural problem, because in the Africa Groups we had local committees, local mandates, and ISAK was supposed to be more a representative structure. One problem for these organizations was that they had no say and had no way of influencing the work nationally.

Madi Gray: The local committees?

Bertil Högberg: The local ISAK committee, because there was no formal link between the national ISAK committee and the local committee because the national committee was elected by the national organizations.

The local Africa Groups did have an influence on the national Africa Groups. Up to 1983, the structure of the Africa Groups was that the local committees elected people to be accepted as members, and in relation to how many active members each local group had, they elected delegates to our annual congress where they elected the board. In 1983 we changed the structure and allowed national membership and part of the national membership fee was redistributed back to the local committees.

Madi Gray: Which is still the system today?

Bertil Högberg: Not really, there's no automatic transfer of money from the national level to the local level. A local Africa Group can apply for money if it's going to do some activities, you can get some money for local activities.

If we say that local ISAK committees were probably 30, 40 at the peak, we also had round the same number of local Africa Groups. Quite a number of them were almost identical, some were actually a local Africa Group that called themselves an ISAK committee, though in other areas they were quite separate.

Madi Gray: Which is why it makes it so very difficult for people who come from outside to know the difference between whether they're being invited by the Africa Groups or ISAK.

Bertil Högberg: It was confusing, and it was a problem for people outside to see who is what. By allowing ISAK to grow and become the main campaign vehicle we had, as the Africa Groups, to take a backstage position. We did it deliberately because we saw that ISAK as the broad organization with its broad backing was the most important vehicle when it came to lobbying government, approaching media, going out. It was expected that one would do it in the name of ISAK. In the beginning we in the Africa Groups had quite a lot of the knowledge, the capacity to do background studies and things for campaigns and lobby work. This was done in the Africa Groups, but the vehicle to put it out was ISAK. It was a problem for us when we wanted to recruit members who would see that it was ISAK that did the work publicly. It was an identity problem for us and we discussed it a few times, but we saw this as the most effective strategy. It affected our organization badly, but for the struggle, for mobilization it was better to use this way. It didn't take many years before ISAK developed its own capability, the organizations that were involved developed their own knowledge about these things and later the Africa Groups was not so central and ISAK moved on its own. But we kept a high profile, and later a lot of the campaigns and material that was printed was done in the name of both the Africa Groups and ISAK.

Madi Gray: It's almost as though you read my mind. I was just about to ask you about the publications. I remember material published about sanctions, the war machinery that was developing in the military industrial complex in South Africa, books, pamphlets and leaflets about all kinds of issues, which probably had to do with the educational work of the Isolate South Africa Committee and the Africa Groups. Then it was often Africa Group activists temporarily employed by ISAK who produced them.

Bertil Högberg: Yes. We changed strategy somewhere in the mid-eighties and on the pamphlets and campaigns it was said that it was a combined Africa

Groups and ISAK project, but in the beginning of the eighties material was mostly produced by Africa Group people, but the label only said ISAK. When we saw that the Africa Groups was coming too much in the background, one of the results was that we wanted to be seen to be more involved, so we started to try to use both names on some of the publications.

The Africa Groups had a longer tradition of doing pamphlets and books and had a production infrastructure. From the end of the seventies basically quite a number of the books that we produced were quite important to build up the Africa Group office. No one was paid for doing anything of that work in the beginning. We could make a small profit from the sale of the books and this money was important to help build up the office from the beginning. Later I think we lost a bit of money on the publications.

Madi Gray: Did you start paying for them?

Bertil Högberg: We started paying for the work and had a high rate of publication. When we regularly printed new things there was an interest in up-to-date information. When there were two years between each publication it became difficult to sell. When we put out a new publication we were able to sell some of the old stuff as well, and if we didn't have any new material of interest to produce, there was not anything regularly coming out from us. I think that was one of the problems in the mid-eighties.

Madi Gray: Already in the eighties?

Bertil Högberg: Yes it started then. Very few new things were produced after the mid-eighties. There was a deliberate decision by the board that we should first sell what we had printed already, we had too much stock of old material, we should sell it, and that was a decision I resented very much.

Madi Gray: Were there other problems?

Bertil Högberg: If we look back on those years, I said that there were tough times in the beginning. Not only did people want ISAK to remain a campaign and not become an organization, but also we had foreseen problems like

getting some of the organizations we had targeted as possible members of the committee to accept support to the ANC and SWAPO without qualification. We thought that we could get them on board on the boycott strategy but to get them on board on unqualified support to the ANC and SWAPO, there we were a bit worried. We were surprised that we could get them on board on the full platform, and that they agreed to come in, because the ANC in those years was not fully accepted by the Swedish public. Many people could accept the idea of a boycott, but many questioned whether the ANC had any role in South Africa, what were they doing, was their strategy right, there were a lot of questions around that.

Madi Gray: Was the armed struggle a problem?

Bertil Högberg: The armed struggle in particular was a problem, but surprisingly enough the organizations didn't object much to that and said, "Okay, we will support the ANC anyway".

The battle was with the media in the beginning of the eighties, because they didn't see that ANC had a role. Very few of the media accepted that or wrote about it. It was very difficult for the ANC to get any statement published and the media seldom asked the office for a comment, so it was a major uphill battle for us in the Africa Groups and ISAK in the beginning of the eighties to establish ANC as the important player in South Africa.

Madi Gray: In the early eighties the ANC had a very charismatic Chief Representative, Lindiwe Mabuza. Are you saying that it was even difficult to get her statements into the media?

Bertil Högberg: Yes.

Madi Gray: Initially, but later it improved?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, but she did marvellous work. She was very good and slowly it changed, partly because of what she was doing, what the ANC office was doing, what we were doing from ISAK and the Africa Groups, but also

because of what happened in South Africa. I think a turning point came with the State of Emergency in 1985.

Madi Gray: Preceded by the building of the UDF in 1983?

Bertil Högberg: The UDF was not really helpful when we were arguing that it is important for us to support the ANC, because you had to explain why should we support ANC now there's the UDF in South Africa. That became a problem, which we could explain, but in the media that remained a problem. It took a while, and the first breakthrough for our view was the State of Emergency. What it did was show that you couldn't trust the South African Government.

I remember discussions with the editors of the foreign pages of some Nordic newspapers around 1979. It was a conference organized by the Nordic Africa Institute and we were trying to find how to improve the possibilities for the liberation movements and solidarity movement to come out in the active media. Should we do anything on the Nordic level? I was involved in planning activities for a media outfit that should really work towards the media on this. When I was criticizing that they never accepted any ANC version of things and only printed the South African police or military version of what's happening in Namibia and South Africa, I remember the political editor of *Aftonbladet*, the evening daily that was then linked to the labour movement and the Social Democratic party in Sweden, saying, "No, we cannot print any ANC statement, because they're too biased, they have their own version, we must be objective. But the statements that come from the South African government have been edited by responsible journalists," was what he said, defending their printing of SAPA news items.

Madi Gray: The argument being that South African propaganda was objective?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, I became furious in that debate because that was so blatant, but that was the situation in quite a number of papers. We had papers like *Expressen*, which had a columnist called Ernst Klein who was against the

sanctions campaign. All the way to the end of the eighties he was campaigning against the ANC and against sanctions in his paper, so we didn't have an easy time with the media.

Madi Gray: Later in the eighties both *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* got South African journalists to report for them?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, Mono Badela and Sylvia Vollenhoven. We were not all that happy with her reporting, but it was an improvement. But Klein had a column and could write anything. There was this mix. They had South African journalists writing on a kind of youth position in the paper, while he had his column where he could push his view independently, so that was two completely different things.

Luckily we had other papers like *Dagens Nyheter* that had columnists and influential people like the editor Per Wästberg, who was very supportive of the struggle in South Africa. He had strong links to South Africa and so it was a different picture. On the news pages the turn came in 1985, 1986. Much also depended on TV footage of events like soldiers hiding in a Casspir and coming out shooting at children who threw stones at them.

Madi Gray: In Athlone, the Trojan Horse?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, that event and similar footage shown on TV did quite a lot to change the remaining media resistance to the realisation that something had to be done about South Africa. Public support for the ANC had grown considerably over these years and by the end of the eighties there were really very few who questioned that the ANC was important.

Madi Gray: I'm sure ISAK's work helped.

Bertil Högberg: Yes. Let me tell you about what were we doing in ISAK. The first thing was to continue the work on the consumer boycott that the Africa Groups had already started. The information that we'd already produced was then republished with the name ISAK. We made small red stickers that said, "Don't buy South African products," which was effective. People were given

these to stick on South African products in the shops. There were organized pickets outside shops and people handed out leaflets to customers, those were things that we did particularly for the campaigns.

Madi Gray: And this was nationwide?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. Even in areas where there was no formal ISAK committee, an organization could do things on their own.

Madi Gray: Like a youth organization?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, they could do their own thing outside a shop and so on. It became quite high-profile and many people remembered the boycott from the sixties, but we were trying to push the shops to stop selling. Some local shop owners took the decision to exclude South African goods, but we didn't really have any success with the national distributors.

Madi Gray: Not even the cooperative movement?

Bertil Högberg: Not in the beginning.

Madi Gray: What happened after the official trade boycott began?

Bertil Högberg: The trade boycott ended those protests. We made it a two-pronged strategy, so we put pressure on the Government tighten the investment law that was in place already. A lot of campaigns were run around all the exemptions given to companies when they needed to replace equipment.

Madi Gray: There was never a total withdrawal of Swedish investments, only a ban on new investments, as a compromise?

Bertil Högberg: And exemptions were allowed when the old machinery broke down and they had to replace it. It was always a new one that had much better capacity than the old one. The cases of these exemptions became a public issue until they changed the law, when they were able to deal with

these things in secret. For a number of years there was always a campaign around each case when a company asked for an exemption. We never managed to get a total ban on investments, so a few companies withdrew while other companies just restructured, like ASEA now ABB, selling the shares to the local management, saying that they could buy them back when they needed, which they did, so it was just a façade that was created. Only a few pulled out, one could say that it was more American companies that really pulled out of South Africa because of the American boycott campaign. In a sense they were more successful because they targeted individual companies, via ownership and shareholding. Of course, we had a similar campaign and the churches did work on their own, but I think we put too much emphasis on working the government route, on lobbying.

Madi Gray: We, being the Isolate South Africa Committee?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, and not really using the avenue of influencing the shareholders or making it an issue at the AGMs of those companies.

Madi Gray: I see, that was done in the US and to some extent in England?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, because the governments were not doing very much around this.

Madi Gray: One company which did withdraw was after the School Students Organisation, Elevorganisationen, organized a national schools boycott of the big stationery company, Esselte. They found a reason to close down their South African operation a few weeks later though the official reason had nothing to do with the boycott, but it was remarkably close, within a few weeks of this boycott. It was the schools that did that.

Bertil Högberg: Yes, because many schools bought stationery from them. That is one of the successes, I forgot about it. There was a joint Nordic campaign to stop flights to South Africa by SAS, the Scandinavian Airline System, which is owned by Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

Madi Gray: Do you remember when that started?

Bertil Högberg: It was very early, that campaign was at the end of the seventies, we managed that quite quickly, in 1979 or 1980, they stopped those flights.

Madi Gray: When did they start flying again?

Bertil Högberg: They have never started flying there again.

Madi Gray: So from the point of view of SAS that was the end of South Africa?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, they never picked that route up. Now they solve it because of our alliance with Lufthansa that flies to South Africa for the Star Alliance.

Madi Gray: Doesn't the Star Alliance include South African Airways?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, from 2006. When it comes to other parts of the boycott, the academic boycott was quite effective, because we had people all over the universities who were very sympathetic. When they realized that some South African representative was invited for a conference and so on they always alerted us and we took action, and we also managed to stop people going from Sweden down to South Africa.

The sports issue became very important. The only time I was interviewed in my period as chairperson of ISAK on Swedish national television was around the sports boycott. I think he was called Maree, a runner who was coming to Sweden and had to pack his bags again. I remember we had a discussion up at the office in the old Olympic Stadium and we were talking to him on the phone. Stopping Zola Budd was another sports campaign.

Madi Gray: The barefoot runner?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, she was also a runner. We had a long tradition of campaigns on sport. Already in 1968 there was a big campaign that stopped

Rhodesia playing tennis in the Davis Cup in Båstad, so the sports boycott had a strong tradition in Sweden.

Madi Gray: Were sports organizations members of ISAK?

Bertil Högberg: No, we had Athletes Against Apartheid, which was more individual members that joined and did a lot of activities. We worked a lot with SANROC, the Olympic Committee that was, Sam Ramsamy and others based in England.

Madi Gray: And Dennis Brutus in Canada.

Bertil Högberg: Yes. We worked with them around sports issues and had a network internationally on who is coming where. I think the sports boycott became more effective than the academic boycott. Artists Against Apartheid and similar organizations were connected and became members of ISAK.

Madi Gray: Artists Against Apartheid included musicians and graphic artists?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. Culture was more problematic because we wanted to use culture when we were mobilizing.

Madi Gray: As a weapon in the struggle?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, because we know how much the liberation songs meant. We had virtually thousands of choirs in Sweden singing South African liberation songs, some of them brought to Sweden by Anders Nyberg, the leader of a small song group called *Fjedur* that worked professionally for a number of years singing Swedish folk music and South African liberation songs. He and others managed to spread this around Sweden in churches, and a lot of other choirs sang the liberation songs. We saw the power of using culture. We had *Amandla*, the ANC cultural group, on tour twice in Sweden organized by the Africa Groups. It was of tremendous importance.

Madi Gray: In the 1970s the Africa Group in Stockholm had its own choir.

Bertil Högberg: Yes, and in Uppsala the Africa Groups had a choir for more than 25 years. We produced at least one record and a songbook with it. It was important within the solidarity work. A lot happened after Nelson Mandela was released and came to Sweden in March 1990. It was his first visit outside South Africa after his release and he came to Sweden because ANC president Oliver Tambo was here being treated after a stroke. That was one reason for Mandela coming here, but another was because Sweden was so important for the ANC.

We had a long debate with our foreign office and the ANC in Lusaka to try to convince them to extend his programme in Sweden by one day so that he could make an appearance for the people in Sweden. Before we had confirmation, there were a lot of faxes and telexes going back and forth around this issue, we took the decision to rent the Globe Arena which takes about 13 000, 14 000 people. We had to take a chance that we would make it and had to book the venue as it was only three weeks ahead, and eventually, three or four days after making the booking we got the confirmation that we were able to do it. As soon as word spread that we were going to have a manifestation where Nelson Mandela would appear we had the phone lines jammed in our office, the choirs from around Sweden wanting to be there on the stage singing for Mandela. We asked Anders Nyberg, who'd been running so many seminars, to conduct and lead the whole event. We had to say no when the limit of 350 was passed, because we couldn't take more on the stage.

Madi Gray: You had 350 people in a mass choir from all over Sweden?

Bertil Högberg: Many were disappointed because they could not be accommodated.

Madi Gray: Several thousand people in Sweden sang South African liberation songs?

Bertil Högberg: Not several thousand people, thousands of choirs. We talk here about maybe thirty, forty, fifty thousand people who were singing South

African freedom songs, organized, and these songs spread.

Anders Nyberg went around the world, you'll find them in his arrangements in the US, Latin America, Europe, you'll find some of his songs were sung in the resistance in East Germany. "Freedom is Coming" was one version sung in the resistance in Germany before the wall came down, in the churches. It was sung in the Baltic States when they were calling for revolution when they were trying to break loose from the Soviet Union. It was the version they got through Anders and others.

I remember when we started some of this singing in the 1970s we brought people from the ANC in London here to help us, but when Anders and others brought songs directly from South Africa it spread like wildfire all over. That was very important in mobilization. We saw then how theatre and music were important, but the ANC was from the beginning very hesitant in allowing us to get any groups from South Africa. We had major arguments around this issue, how they interpreted the cultural boycott and it only eased in the end of the 1980s.

The tourism boycott was another aspect. There was one in the ISAK platform, which was problematic because at the same time we saw how important it was that people went there. We accepted that people went to South Africa if the reason was not tourism but to get information and feedback into the campaign. We supported that in many ways and quite a lot of people within the Africa Groups and connected to ISAK went and then wrote articles and books as freelance journalists.

Madi Gray: And some of them under assumed names.

Bertil Högberg: Yes, like Herman Andersson, who was one of the most frequent travellers, aka Magnus Walan. I mentioned him before because he worked for ISAK and ran one of the campaigns. He was a board member of the Africa Groups for a number of years and for many years he was the Africa Groups representative on the ISAK Board. He was also chairperson of the Africa Groups for one year, when I resigned as chairperson. He was one of those writing under pseudonyms, but there were a number of others, and some established themselves as journalists.

Magnus is now of the most effective lobbyists in Sweden on international relations. He learnt the trade when he was doing lobby work for ISAK. That was another aspect of ISAK work, lobbying of Parliament, which was very effective. Numerous motions placed before Parliament were written in the ISAK office and just signed by this or that Parliamentarian. Often we managed to get a broad spectrum of parties to sign these motions and we managed to get quite a lot adopted.

Madi Gray: I think in English they call a motion a Bill, a proposal for a new law.

Bertil Högberg: Not in this way. When a member of Parliament proposes and put it as a motion it's not a readymade bill, it's maybe a suggestion for a commission or for an action to be taken but it's not in the format of a bill. That's the routine here, a motion asks the Government to come back with a bill. Basically we argue for certain action to be taken in the motion and accept it if the Government takes the action we requested.

Madi Gray: Did travellers also take in money? Did they act in liaison with the underground, the trade unions, and other organizations?

Bertil Högberg: I don't think Africa Group members smuggled in much money. I know there was some money going, for example to Sekopi, who I interviewed, who got money in various ways, and I carried some to Namibia in the seventies. They found other ways to get money in. As officials of ISAK and the Africa Groups we never smuggled money in that way. We did, however, begin to channel funds to some organizations in South Africa. The Swedish Government, apart from supporting ANC and a number of other organizations, started quite early to provide money to organizational structures inside South Africa. We were very hesitant to involve ourselves in that, but they couldn't do it directly and had to use Swedish NGOs as vehicles for that support. For example, from the start the UDF received money via what's now called the Olof Palme Centre of the labour movement's international committee, and the trade unions got a lot of money for the

formation of activities within COSATU. The churches were also channelling money, and could do it because they could openly say, "We are supporting this organization" as they were raising funds from their own constituency for these organizations. They could easily accept additional money from the Government.

There were conditions for this Government money, we were not to tell, it was supposed to be a secret, one could not reveal that one was accepting Swedish Government money that was going into South Africa. It was in a Government bill where it was said that Sida is supporting organizations in South Africa, but it was never said who was actually getting Sida's support. The whole bureaucracy around this support and the rules around it, all matters had to be stamped secret. There were very strict regulations how we could handle the money and handle the activities, so we were a bit hesitant to go into that.

Madi Gray: We as in Africa Groups?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. ISAK never involved themselves in these things, but the Africa Groups were asked by Sida. It was Lena Johansson who was handling this at Sida and she had been working with me in the Africa Groups office a number of years before. She was asking, "Why are you not involving yourselves in this? We have to look for organizations that are not so knowledgeable about South Africa as you are, and you are better placed in judging which organization should be supported or not." But the reason on our side was that we were fundraising for ANC, everything we collected went straight to the ANC, without any strings, and that meant that we could not talk about anything that we are doing, who we are supporting. We were also so closely linked with the ANC that it could be a problem for those organizations we would be supporting in South Africa and Namibia. That's why we hesitated, but we started on a small scale in 1984, and then it grew. The area where we first were asked to work was the alternative media, since we were dealing so much in trying to collect information and we started with organizations that were based in exile, so we didn't really have to go outside.

Madi Gray: Like Radio Freedom?

Bertil Högberg: No, we supported it but through the ANC. We collected cassettes and money, but that was part of the ANC campaign work. But SNS, and SANA that was based in Botswana.

Madi Gray: South News Services and South African News Agency?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, it was basically a cover for ANC activities in Botswana I realised later. They got bombed. We supported Agenda Press Services started by Howard Barrell, he had to go into exile and started it and later became editor of the *Mail and Guardian*. APS was in operation both in Zimbabwe and in South Africa, and had some problems with the Zimbabwean authorities. Then we started inside South Africa with *Work in Progress*, *Critical Health*, and some of the alternative publications of radical organizations.

Madi Gray: Like *Agenda*, the Women's academic journal?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. Then we went into community media like *Saamstaan* in Oudtshoorn, *Namaqua News* in Springbok, the Western Cape Media Training Forum, a forum for media training organizations supporting community media structures in Cape Town.

Madi Gray: *Grassroots* I guess?

Bertil Högberg: No, I think *Grassroots* got money from Diakonia as did *South*. We supported *Vrye Weekblad* edited by Max du Preez, and from 1987 *Weekly Mail*, which was a very influential radical weekly at that time and was prohibited from publishing for three months. They came with request to the Swedish Legation in Pretoria for support to a training programme and the Legation sent the request to us. Basically this was how it operated.

Madi Gray: Tell me about the *Weekly Mail* and the training programme.

Bertil Högberg: As I was saying, we got this request via the legation in Pretoria, who sent it to Sida, who sent it to us. Most organizations that wanted

support approached the Swedish legation. There was an enormous network of radical organizations all over South Africa and Sida would send the request to the appropriate Swedish vehicle. We were allotted the media and alternative media structures, except for a few media organizations that had already been within the Diakonia fold, before we became involved. We gave the *Weekly Mail* a very quick decision and allocated some money to their training programme. Later it became an ongoing journalism internship training programme for black journalists, that the *Weekly Mail* started. It was the first real black journalism training in South Africa, and we supported it for ten years, until *Weekly Mail* closed it down in 1997. Later we supported a journalism training programme in Cape Town with the Media Training and Development Trust and also in Grahamstown with the Eastern Cape News Agency that was then transferred to the Democratic Media Agency. We supported *Bush Radio* that was trying to get started as a community radio but never got allotted a frequency, so they were doing training for years and did some illegal transmitting as well. We supported them for a number of years before they got their license and also after they got their license. We were able to maintain this 100% Sida funding for the whole media programme until 2000, when we had the last programme. We had quite a lot of exchanges between the Community Media from this programme in South Africa and Swedish Folk High Schools with journalism programmes. It was in 1994 that we started with these exchanges.

Madi Gray: Did the Africa Groups ever work formally with the Swedish Union of Journalists? For some years I was in a social group set up by the Swedish Union of Journalists to entertain visiting journalists from South Africa.

Bertil Högberg: No, we didn't work formally with them, but had informal contacts, and sometimes we met the same people when they came here. ISAK had more contact with journalists than the Africa Groups. Some of them were the same people, like the writer Don Mattera who was one of these visitors and others who were involved with the journalism training at *Weekly Mail*. So we met some people, Howard Barrell was here a few times.

Madi Gray: What you're saying is if the Africa Groups invited journalists, they made them available to the Union of Journalists.

Bertil Högberg: And vice versa.

Madi Gray: I've interviewed Don Mattera in this series. It was a fascinating story he had to tell. Bertil, an organization that received Swedish money is CAP, the Community Arts Project in Woodstock that trained many artists. I subsequently met Graham, the man running it during that period, and he told me that the money from Sweden made all the difference between life and death for them.

Bertil Högberg: A lot of organizations were surviving on Swedish and other donor funds, like Market Theatre in Johannesburg, and a lot of theatre and cultural activities were supported from Sweden.

After being involved in the media sector we came into the health, at about the same time. Health issues were also early, from 1985, 1986, and the organizations were both looking at alternative health projects for a newly independent South Africa but also running clinics, the Alexandra Clinic for example. There was a programme run by the Medical School of Witwatersrand University where they wanted to expose medical students to the situation in the countryside and did extension work with teachers and students who every Saturday went out to Krugersdorp.

Madi Gray: One of the townships?

Bertil Högberg: No, it's a small rural set-up in Muldersdrift where they had a clinic for farm workers. They just went temporarily and used some space, they wanted to make it more permanent and employ a nurse who could be there in the week and later they wanted to get some ground so they could build a clinic, and we supported them very early, from 1986 up to 2000. Then eventually the Provincial Government took over responsibility for the clinic. We had also local activities in Acornhoek, which is close to the Kruger National Park. We supported some health and social programmes in Durban. Quite a number of projects were university based, it was committed students

and teachers who had started activities and some of them were still running within the university but some had become independent NGOs and then developed. We supported some organizations for progressive health workers, and had a number of exchanges with people coming to Sweden to study and to meet Swedish colleagues.

It is quite interesting that some of the people doing policy studies at Wits University who we supported towards the end of the eighties became involved with ANC policy formulation in Government structures, so we could see that we had an input directly in those issues. (See interview with Laetitia Rispel - MG.)

Madi Gray: There were also land committees?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, that was the third sector we came into and it was quite late. Only in 1990 did we get the first contacts and from 1991 we gave the first support to a land organisation. Then they were still working against forced removals, and it later grew into work in land reform, which laid the foundation for the biggest programme that we are now running for the Africa Groups, with some land reform organizations. One organization is the Border Rural Committee; we started supporting them already in 1991.

Madi Gray: And that's based in East London?

Bertil Högberg: Now it's in East London, then it was in Grahamstown.

It was quite early when we began to support the National Land Committee and TRAC, the Transvaal Rural Action Committee, which was based in Johannesburg. They have now separate offices, separate organizations, one in Mpumalanga and we supported them until 2000. Sida remained and gave us 100% funding for these activities up till 2000. Now we have to concentrate all our activities since we have to fund them on our own. We had to prioritise more and are concentrating our activities to the Eastern Cape and we have a few new ones instead in that area.

Madi Gray: I feel it's relevant to start talking about the recruitment organization of the Africa Groups, ARO, so we need to backtrack in time.

Bertil Högberg: Yes, we need to backtrack to the mid-1970s. The background is that things started to change in Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique in the mid-seventies and the Africa Groups worked with the liberation struggle in those countries in the late sixties and early seventies.

Madi Gray: They became independent in 1974 and 1975 respectively.

Bertil Högberg: Yes. Then the question was, "What are we going to do now?" Since there'd been little work around Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, the organization was very much in limbo when I came into the picture. But some committed members had gone to Angola on their own, in co-operation with the MPLA, so people were working in Angola already from the end of 1974 when the first one came there. At some stage we had about four or five Africa Group members working in different positions in Angola. The most prominent of these being Hillevi and her husband Lars Nilsson, who stayed for ten years before they came back to Sweden. They worked basically on their own as Africa Group members in different positions in that country. The volunteers in Angola were spontaneous and were organized together with the MPLA representative and privately.

It became a discussion on how do we structure this? Can we send anyone to these countries? There were requests from Frelimo, MPLA and PAIGC for committed people. "We need people because we lost most of our trained people, since a lot of Government functions had been carried out by Portuguese and they have left." There was an enormous skills shortage in these countries. We were asked to send solidarity workers.

The question was how do we organize it. We decided to have a seminar on solidarity work in 1976 to talk about the possibility to recruit people. A few people were sent on short-term contracts to Mozambique. At least two of them were doctors, sent for three- or four-month contracts. I don't remember now how that was financed, I think they got a salary from the Mozambican Government and somehow raised funds for their transport. Later Sida was

approached to assist the system of volunteers by a grant. You get a lump sum for each volunteer who signs a contract for two years, you get a certain amount of money per year, covering travel, the basic low salary and cost of training. The first four were sent on a two-year contract when I was temporarily working in the offices in 1977 a mathematics teacher, two nurses and a woodwork teacher.

Madi Gray: And they were sent to Mozambique?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. This was handled by a group within the Stockholm Africa Group calling themselves the Recruitment Group. When I came onto the board in 1977 I became Treasurer and realized that I had to sign a paper for Sida to say I was receiving a lot of money and had to report on funds that were four times bigger than my budget for the whole Africa Groups operations and it was outside my accounting system. I had no control over this money as it was completely separate. The board was not dealing with this, because there was the local committee within the Stockholm Africa Group dealing with recruitment. I said, "We can't operate like that," because it was growing very quickly. We sent four in the beginning of 1977, another group in the middle of 1977 and then more people started to be sent.

Madi Gray: They had first to attend seminars?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, there were two-week seminars, later reduced to ten days. They were held twice a year and almost half of those who went to the seminars, which was also screening, were accepted, so around half would be sent out, about 20 a year. Recruitment grew quickly, because some volunteers stayed for three, four years.

I said we have to create a separate organization so we created the Africa Groups Recruitment Organisation, ARO, in 1978, and they took charge of the finances. They had a separate annual general meeting where the local Africa Groups nominated the majority of the representatives, but those who went out to work and those who came back, became individual members in the organization and eventually they got more power over the organization so it

was run mostly by the volunteers.

We sent people to Mozambique, but it took a long while before we started to send volunteers to Angola. It was Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. We sent people to these three countries in the seventies.

Then came the request we talked about earlier from SWAPO for medical personnel, so we sent a medical team to Kwanza Sul first for a short term, for about four months, then on one-year contract. We got Sida to accept an exemption because the conditions of work in these settlements were so tough that we could only ask people to stay for a one-year contract. Though we had an exemption from Sida there were some who stayed two years, but most of them returned after shorter stays. In the beginning we sent four people, two doctors, one nurse and one lab technician. Then the lab technician said, "I've trained people so they can manage on their own," and we didn't send any more lab technicians. Namibians were well enough trained to carry out what it was possible to do under the circumstances they had in the settlement.

Madi Gray: Magdalena Bjerneld, a public health nurse, is one of the people you've interviewed in this series?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. In the eighties the number was reduced to two doctors. Here we had co-operation with the Finnish Africa Committee, because they also wanted to contribute and didn't have any support from the Finnish Government for sending volunteers. So we had an agreement that they should try to send one of the doctors from Finland.

Madi Gray: Didn't Finland have an interest in Namibia through the missionaries?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. There was a lot of work in Finland around Namibia. So for most of the years up to 1989 there were at least one Finnish and normally one Swedish doctor and sometimes two more Swedes in the medical team. This was parallel to the medical aid programme, so we sent both personnel and a lot of material and medicine and built hospitals. There was quite a big involvement when it comes to the health sector.

Madi Gray: Up to 1989 means up to Namibian independence, which occurred in March 1990?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. A doctor we had in Angola signed a contract to continue, she was the first doctor I had with me to Namibia when I became the Africa Groups co-coordinator in Namibia in 1990. There was a gap for a little more than one year between the two parts of her contract. We continued with the health sector in Namibia because of that need and are still involved, though Sida now says that we are not supposed to work with a government any longer but it's difficult to work in health without involving the government. It's been many years and doctors and nurses still go to work in Namibia.

In 1982 I was supposed to do a follow up of the medical aid programme. I was supposed to go several times but eventually SWAPO told me they can't organize a visa for me, and I had asked for leave from my work, taking leave several times and not been able to go, but then I was on my way.

Madi Gray: Were you then were working at the church college in Sigtuna?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, at the college. But in December 1982 to January 1983 I was on my way again, and I also was going to visit my students in the Zimbabwe programme that we had, so I was going to Zimbabwe first. When I came to Lusaka I was met by Swedish Embassy staff who told me that they just got a telex saying that I was not welcome in Angola, they couldn't organize a visa, so I realized I couldn't get into Angola and ended up working with the ANC. Instead of going to Angola I went to Tanzania. I helped them drive a car up to Morogoro for the director of the Somafco school. There I got a request for an architect because they needed so many buildings planned and got money from Sweden from different organizations, and I also got a request for an agricultural project. Sida turned the first version of the agricultural project down, though they started to fund it later.

The Africa Groups of Sweden sent an architect called Gabriel Marin, who's originally from Chile, to work with the ANC, then SWAPO and then he worked with the government, and in the late 1990s he worked with a Sida project in

Kimberley and in East London and so on, so he is very much part of the solidarity movement.

Madi Gray: Living in South Africa?

Bertil Högberg: No, he's back in Sweden. Teachers Knut and Margareta Bergqvist were already there when I came, as we sent the first teachers in 1982, but the architect and other volunteers came later. From 1982, we sent nurses and at one stage there were three to four teachers and one nurse in the Somafo settlement.

Madi Gray: That's an acronym for the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College?

Bertil Högberg: It was the main school the ANC set up in exile in Tanzania to cater for the young people who fled without having completed their education. There were also children of people who were assigned to many places outside the country or families that were living around Morogoro, so they had small children as well. One of the volunteers worked quite a lot to establish the pre-school there, they were also in the primary school and in the high school.

There was quite big involvement of many organizations around support to Somafo. For example, the Operation A Day's Work of the Swedish Secondary School Students movement, SECO, raised a lot of money for the school buildings there. We had many campaigns, both within the Africa Groups and outside for the school. We collected money separately.

Madi Gray: It was a project supported not only by Sweden but there were also other countries that supported the school?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, all the Nordic governments were involved and a number of NGOs, also from other countries, like Holland and Canada. Some volunteers came from other countries, but I think the Swedish volunteers were important.

I mentioned that it took a long time before we sent anyone to Angola. We had some early solidarity workers who worked there on their own, but I think it was

after we had the SWAPO volunteers for a number of years, only at the end of the eighties, that we started to send a few people to work in Angolan society as volunteers from 1987. It was not very many and we still don't have very many. We have two people, a co-coordinator and one more sent after that, as it's very difficult to work alone. We work more through Angolan NGOs.

The work in Mozambique has been more through our volunteers. It's gradually changed to be more project-orientated and more via Mozambican NGOs. The first ARO project where they actually applied to Sida for money in the matching-grant category, where Sida put up 80% and the Africa Groups 20%, was a spare parts project for the textile industry in Mozambique. We sent an engineer there to help with the textile industry and he wanted to set up a workshop to produce spare parts for the textile industry because they had very big problems to run the machines that they inherited. That became the first project where ARO applied for money to Sida in the year after we'd started the medical aid project. That became the start of a bigger project approach from ARO.

In Namibia we also did a few things I didn't mention when we talked about our support to the internal structures. In Namibia we supported a Students Union, NANSO, and *The Namibian*, the newspaper.

Madi Gray: Tell me more about the projects that the Africa Groups were working with in Namibia.

Bertil Högberg: Yes, the third project we were doing before independence was called the NNP 435. I think it was Namibia National Programme, something like that, it's a dialogue programme around conferences between SWAPO and the authorities. We had been supporting these for a number of years before independence and the guys then had to wind up the projects when I came there as the co-coordinator. It had once been my goal in the mid-seventies to do solidarity work until Namibia got its independence, but I didn't anticipate that it would take so long.

Madi Gray: For a while there was hope that the situation would be resolved fairly soon through the United Nations?

Bertil Högberg: Yes, things were promising towards the end of the seventies.

Madi Gray: Then South Africa changed the rules of the ballgame round Namibia. What about Zimbabwe?

Bertil Högberg: There was a problem with our working with Zimbabwe from the Africa Groups side. ZANU was in Sweden earlier, they had an office for quite a while, but that took the wrong side in a split in ZANU so they needed to re-establish themselves. ZANU was a bit more established because they also had more people around. For quite a while only ZANU had an office in Sweden, before ZAPU established an office in 1978. The Africa Groups did quite a lot in helping them to establish that office.

Madi Gray: Was that when a Patriotic Front Office opened in Stockholm? On one side of the corridor was the ZANU representative and on the other side the ZAPU representative.

Bertil Högberg: Yes, that's right, that's how they ended up.

Madi Gray: This was a couple of years before independence in 1980, and it was in place before the negotiations began. When did ARO start work there?

Bertil Högberg: It took a long time before ARO started working in Zimbabwe, only in 1987. There're many reasons for it, one is the ambiguity within the Africa Groups around ZANU. The problem was different factions were supporting ZAPU and others were supporting ZANU. We were not really able to talk about and discuss it because we were supposed to work for the unity of the Patriotic Front. The whole organization was very unprepared when ZANU decided to go it alone in the elections. That was one problem, we were not able to analyse the difference between the organizations. It seemed like the majority did not really like ZANU. I was in the minority within the board and had contact with ZANU and worked with them, but officially we worked with both.

I was for example in Mozambique right after the Lancaster House Agreement, where the terms of independence were determined, and worked out a

programme for support for the ZANU election campaign. We started collecting money and together with some Dutch organizations sent a plane with a lot of printing equipment. The authorities in Rhodesia embargoed everything, so ZANU never got the shipment that they'd requested.

The solidarity that was automatic when Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and later also Namibia became independent wasn't there, not from the person who was influential within the recruitment organization. There was no real drive. There were decisions taken at the AGM because the issue was raised by local committees and there were some attempts. Some doctors were recruited, and CVs sent down, but they were refused. No one had gone down to Zimbabwe, no one had done any preparation of the ground. They just sent something in the mail, and it was quite obvious that this was more to satisfy some individuals who wanted something to happen than that the organization really wanted something to happen, because then it would have been prepared in a different way. They were refused by a board that decides on who is going to be able to be employed as a doctor. It was left like that, and just a couple of months later the doctors got work in Grenada, so they were no longer available.

When I came in 1985 on my way to Swaziland for the Comrade Project I saw Sally Mugabe, Robert Mugabe's first wife, who I'd met a few times when she was touring Sweden. She was very upset to hear that we had been refused, and was immediately on the phone to the Minister of Health to try to sort it out. I said, "No please, they are not available any longer, this is just information about what we attempted to do".

It was in end of 1986 or beginning of 1987 that someone was sent down to draw up a plan. It is quite interesting that in that plan it said we should work differently in Zimbabwe than in the other countries, because in the other countries we started to work with Government structures, being an extension of the liberation movement that we had been supporting before. But in Zimbabwe we should support what we now talk about as 'civil society', that expression wasn't invented in those years. It mentioned a Trade Union for farm workers, as an example of the organizations we should work with. There was reluctance to work with the government.

In those years you could also explain it because of all those atrocities that happened in Matabeleland in the early 1980s that had started a growing frustration within the solidarity movement towards the way Zimbabwe was going. I think it's also based on AGIS history of which contacts were good between the Africa Groups and the Zimbabwean liberation movements. So the Africa Groups have not been operating very much in Zimbabwe. We have had a maximum of seven volunteers and a number of projects in Zimbabwe.

Madi Gray: Wasn't the coordinator running the projects from the Africa Groups office in East London for a while?

Bertil Högberg: The Zimbabwe office was moved temporarily, but she went back home to Sweden in May 2005, so from then on there has not been anyone there. They are trying to re-establish an office in Harare. (A co-ordinator was re-established in Harare in early 2006 –MG)

Madi Gray: What can you tell me about the relations between ARO and AGIS?

Bertil Högberg: The division of labour, which was quite obvious at the time we created ARO, was that they would deal solely with the former Portuguese colonies and all the campaign information around those countries, and AGIS would deal with South Africa, Zimbabwe as long as it was struggling against minority rule, and Namibia. That was a clear-cut division of labour, but when we started the medical aid project for SWAPO, the project itself was run by AGIS, together with Bread and Fishes, but the recruitment was done by ARO. All the campaign work around support to SWAPO was organized by AGIS, but the recruitment was handled by ARO.

Increasingly South Africa became involved in destabilizing Angola and Mozambique, so the whole issue about what was happening in Angola, and Mozambique was so much nearer to South Africa that you couldn't separate these things any longer. This became a problem because ARO was working with the former Portuguese colonies at the same time. Suddenly the dividing

lines between those two organizations became very problematic.

In the office we worked closely together and ARO rescued AGIS many times because ARO had better and more stable finances with the money from Sida and sometimes they were able to save some money and topped AGIS up by giving us an extra grant or by paying for a higher proportion of the office space than they actually used. All the common space that we used together was paid for by ARO, which was a way we solved the problem that AGIS was always struggling financially to survive. Government support at the end of the seventies, beginning of the eighties was very limited, and to get Sida information grants we had to compete with a lot of other organizations for those monies.

Only in 1986 did money became available from the fund that Sida had for support to the liberation of Southern Africa and that they applied to solidarity organizations in Sweden. Our Dutch and British counterparts had been financed by those monies for years and we were very frustrated that we were not able to access those monies in Sweden. Our counterparts in Europe, when we were at international conferences, thought we were just swimming in money because we had Sida. When we said we don't have the money to send people to international conferences, they couldn't understand it. We simply didn't have money, or maybe could send one person, so that was a very tough time. When Sida finally changed its mind and we could apply for money, it particularly helped ISAK. During the last years of their existence they had much better financing and not so strict reporting routines as we had to do. AGIS benefited as well, but not to the same degree. It became problematic with this division between AGIS and ARO and there were several attempts to try to put these two organizations together again.

Madi Gray: You say there were several attempts to reunite AGIS and ARO. I think it was only official in the early nineties.

Bertil Högberg: Yes. I resigned from the board in 1985 because I went to Swaziland, but rejoined in 1986. I never took up the position of chair again because we had other people, like Anita Jansson who was very good as chairperson, and I became deputy chairperson for the rest of the 1980s. I did

make one attempt in the mid-eighties to try to put the two organizations together but it failed, but we made a new attempt at the end of the eighties. When we combined, AGIS had the projects that we had been running in Namibia and South Africa and ARO was responsible for Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. The process had already started before South Africa released Mandela. In principle we were in agreement, but the restructuring took two years. I think we started in 1988 with this process and the formal decision was taken in October 1990. That was my last congress before I left for Namibia.

We don't use the acronym AGIS anymore, Africa Groups in Sweden, it's called the Africa Groups, sometimes AGS.

Madi Gray: Today the Africa Groups publish a monthly called *Södra Afrika* (*Southern Africa*). It appears to be an amalgamation of two earlier publications. Was this connected with the restructuring?

Bertil Högberg: It wasn't linked. It happened a few years later. The magazine has an interesting history, as the first issue came out 1963, as a mineograph.

Madi Gray: In Lund?

Bertil Högberg: No, the first issue came out in Jönköping. Gabor Tiroler a researcher living here in Uppsala and Anders Johansson who later headed the Africa desk at *Dagens Nyheter* were members of the South Africa Committee in Jönköping, or Södravätterbygden as it was called, and put out the first issue of the *Syd och SydvästAfrika Informationsbulletin*. Shortly after it was published in Lund, in co-operation between the two groups. It changed its name about 1970 to *Södra Afrika informationsbulletin* and became *Afrikabulletinen* (*Africa Bulletin*) in 1975. That's a long tradition, over 40 years! In the mid-1980s the Africa Groups began publishing short news items in a new publication called *Södra Afrika Nyheter/Southern Africa News* that came out about every fortnight. After the 1994 elections in South Africa it was felt that there was no longer a need for two papers, so they were amalgamated

into *Södra Afrika*. The Africa Groups also publish *Samlat* (Collected) about campaigns to collect money for projects in the countries we support.

Madi Gray: We've now been given a lot of information about the organizations you were involved in, let's quickly run through them. They were the Bread and Fishes, the Africa Groups, The Africa Group's Recruitment Organization, and the Isolate South Africa Committee.

Bertil Högberg: And the Church of Sweden Youth in the eighties, these campaigns around "Be a Comrade with Southern Africa". In the beginning of the seventies it was the churches more broadly. When I first started work in Västerås on their campaigns, they were very much South Africa orientated.

Madi Gray: You've spent the major part of your adult life working on Southern African issues. Just off the cuff, what were highlights?

Bertil Högberg: One highlight was to get the experience of South Africa and Namibia, what it meant to meet all these people in 1976. The aim of the trip was to find a theme for my thesis, but that never materialized because of doing solidarity work. The trips I've been doing to Southern Africa are highlights, and the time I spent in Swaziland, as you become much closer to a country if you spend a longer time in one place. Also in December 1979, visiting the SWAPO refugee settlements after working in support. When it comes to experiences here, I think the singing, the songs, were highlights.

Madi Gray: Were you a choir member?

Bertil Högberg: No, I was not really a member, but I sang with my students in school, both with this project but also with other students. I was actually involved in starting a choir that still exists, it's called *Motvals* in Linköping. It was started by me and my students and some colleagues, when I was in internship, doing Teachers Training at Valla Folk High School. There was a seminar on culture and politics in Africa at another college where we learnt some dancing and drumming and singing. I was the one doing the political part. I'd brought some of the students who I was lecturing. They became so

inspired by the singing that we started a choir and it still exists. I heard them a couple of months ago, still singing South African songs, they'd been to Port Elizabeth on an exchange with a group there.

Madi Gray: It must be a real mind blow for South Africans when whites from overseas, thousands of kilometres away, come and sing their songs.

Bertil Högberg: Yes, it's something that both Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu have been talking about several times, about their experience of these things. The first time I saw Mandela was when I joined the Africa Groups Song Group from Uppsala to meet him at the airport, but there were so many TV photographers that though he tried to reach us in the choir standing there singing to greet him, the TV photographers didn't move.

That same afternoon I had to leave because I was supposed to represent the Africa Groups at Namibian Independence, so I wasn't around for that big event in the Globe Arena. Otherwise that would probably have been one the big highlights. I missed that one.

Namibian independence was of course a big highlight. That was an important thing, to see something so big.

Madi Gray: Over the years there must have been problems both in Swedish society and with the liberation movements. You've mentioned some.

Bertil Högberg: Yes. One problem I mentioned is how we dealt with Zimbabwe. A different problem is one I had with the SWAPO office and it became a problem with SWAPO leadership eventually. For at least one and a half years I worked as the SWAPO Information Secretary in Sweden and I was out lecturing a lot, mostly on Namibia but also on South Africa. Within the Africa Groups I have been very much tied to Namibia, but in the church structures, I was more with South Africa. This was the time when I was chairperson of ISAK and had earlier resigned as chairperson of the Africa Groups. It was a Namibia Day Celebration in 1987, and a delegation came with Moses Garoeb, the Secretary General of SWAPO and then Secretary of International Relations, Peter Mueshihange. He approached me and Lena

Johansson, who was then working at the Africa Groups' office, at a breakfast meeting at the Grand Hotel where the Foreign Ministry had placed them, and they wanted to talk about the work of the office in Sweden. It was just pulling the plug out from under a lot of frustrations that we'd had, in the Africa Groups but particularly in ISAK. In ISAK we had problems with the then representative because he didn't like the name ISAK, because he said, "It doesn't say Isolate Namibia, it should be called the Isolate South Africa and Namibia Campaign". I argued that we're not isolating Namibia, it's South Africa occupying Namibia, so it's South Africa we should be isolating, not Namibia. We had endless arguments about that. We felt, from ISAK, that we didn't have full co-operation from the SWAPO office. It was a stumbling block, because I was pushing the Namibian side and in the Africa Groups it was very easy that Namibia came in the background, because the focus was always on South Africa. This was in the beginning of the 1980s, when Namibia was hot in a way.

There were a lot of other organizations like the left youth movement of the left party, that had serious problems to co-operate because it seemed like SWAPO did not want to co-operate with them. There were a number of other organizations that had been treated very rudely by the SWAPO office and had a lot of complaints. And they asked us, "Please, could you write these things down because the President wants to know how you look upon the office, and we want it in a couple of hours".

Madi Gray: You did it?

Bertil Högberg: Yes. We did as we were asked, went back, wrote the memo, two pages with six, seven points where we had specific complaints and also let them know what we thought could be improved in the relationship and how it could be worked out. There was no time to check with other people to have it approved or see if they backed it, so I signed it as chairperson of ISAK and for Bread and Fishes. It was drafted by Lena and myself and Sören Lindh, who was not elected chairperson but a leading figure on the Africa Groups board, basically the three of us were in agreement that we should do as we were requested.

We were trapped, this was a set-up in a way, which I understood years later.

At the time I didn't understand what happened, because it was like the shit hit the fan. It was certainly not the President who had asked for it, because he became furious when he saw this letter.

Of course he gave it to the representative who distributed it amongst all his friends in Sweden, in particular to the social democratic movement, who he worked very closely and well with. I must say he had worked quite well in establishing relations with certain organizations but there were others that he neglected. He wasn't even-handed, that was the problem. Being representative in Stockholm where so much of the money came from and being representative of the whole Nordic area, made him strong and it seemed that he had got too strong for some of the people in the delegation, but he had the ear of the President. The one that was supposed to appoint him, Peter Mueshihange, and the Secretary General, these were the two that came and asked me, and they were numbers 2 and 3 in the Party. But this backfired and the letter was distributed widely by the representative to other organizations. I was very much criticized within ISAK, not from the ones that felt that we dealt with their problems, but from the others, so my situation became quite difficult. That was one of the reasons that I resigned after that year, but I had always seen it as temporary anyway. ISAK's criticism was quickly forgotten because I was asked less than a year later to come back as the chairperson. It was, however, very frustrating and cut me off from SWAPO for the remaining two years the chief rep had in office.

I never came back to work closely with the SWAPO office after this problem, which was a pity, and I realized that was the reason why I was not invited into Angola to follow up on the medical aid project, so that made me leave the work with that project. I'd been in charge of it for a number of years, and as I realized I couldn't work with it, I dropped out of that committee. As soon as we appointed two others to go there the visa came straight away, it was just a matter of weeks, after three attempts by me, so then I realized, SWAPO doesn't want me. It was a frustration, but I still worked quite a lot, but maybe I would have worked even harder if I had better relations with SWAPO. The representatives who replaced him I had no problem with, but I detected when I worked down there that some people in the leadership of SWAPO still felt

some suspicion towards me. But then it didn't mean anything in the world any longer.

Madi Gray: It must have been a very difficult situation while it lasted.

Bertil Högberg: One thing I regret in many ways is that I met a lot of people over the years, but didn't write down the names of all the people. It's hard to find the people now after independence, both in Namibia and South Africa, and sometimes you see a name that sounds familiar. There were a few that you really met so that you got to know them and say you remember them, but I've had a chance to meet quite a lot of people over the years.

Madi Gray: What would have been more important personal relationships?

Bertil Högberg: It was some of the representatives, even if I didn't work very much with them, we met them frequently. It was very good, the relations with Lindiwe Mabuza and with the ANC office. Niilo Taapopi at the end in the SWAPO office, and some of the students I had from South Africa, both in the beginning of the eighties and at the end of the eighties. People I met in Swaziland. One very important person is Bishop Colin Winter, or the impression that he made on me. Without it, I don't think I'd gone to Namibia in 1976 and not been involved so long, he was crucial, and a few others I met in that way, like Ed Morrow in Namibia.

Madi Gray: What do you think that your support of all these organizations meant in Southern Africa?

Bertil Högberg: I think it was quite important. Even if Sweden is not a big country we had been very influential, and managed to do things in solidarity work that were looked upon as a model by many other countries. We had some influence outside Sweden.

What we did was most often in agreement with the anti-apartheid movement in Britain. Sometimes they thought that we were too critical towards our own Government, which we had to be in the Swedish context, but they thought we shouldn't say that internationally, because there we should beat the drums

and tell people what we had achieved instead. True to Swedish traditions, we were very self-critical and they didn't like that and there were a few other conflicts with them over the years.

I think the sum of all the solidarity work done not only by Sweden, but also by the whole of Europe, Canada and the States, is important. The boycott in all its forms eventually had a big economic impact and was important in bringing about change. The material and monetary support that we were able to mobilize in Sweden was very big. Even Swedish government support was tremendous and very important and decisive for the ANC and SWAPO; Sida covered more than 60% of the civilian budget for these organizations, and quite a lot of the rest came from the other Nordic countries. The solidarity organizations in Sweden also contributed substantial amounts of money and resources. It went to both SWAPO and the ANC, towards both the struggle and to help them prepare themselves for the new Namibia and South Africa and it was important.

In Namibia many people recognized the role of Sweden, not distinguishing between the solidarity movement and the Government, but Sweden as such. Very few in South Africa are really aware of the role that solidarity work played in the world nor what the Swedish and the Nordic governments did in support of the ANC. Very few know that, and even those who maybe survived for ten, twenty years on Swedish funding don't know it came from Sweden. Many South Africans who studied in the US, the UK, or anywhere in Europe believe they studied with money from Britain, but a certain part of the money was funds that came from Sweden, though British institutions distributed it. Very few in South Africa actually know of these things, which is why we're doing this interview project. It's important also in Sweden that Swedes know what was done in those years, what solidarity meant. I think we get a lot of credit for what we did from those who know. Those who know that we were involved, appreciate what was done.

Madi Gray: Let's hope that recording this oral history will help inform many more of the contribution of millions of ordinary people in Sweden to the struggle against apartheid. Thank you, Bertil.