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Tor Sellström: In your personal view and that of the structures for which you worked in South Africa, why did Sweden and the other Nordic countries become so involved in Southern Africa?

Craig Williamson: That is a question which we tried to answer for a long time. I think that the best answer that I can give you—and the best analysis that we came to over the years—is that it related to the Nordic, particularly the Swedish, brand of Social Democracy. It was different to the Marxist-Leninist brand and also to the socialism of the British Labour Party and parties like that.

Throughout my involvement with different organizations, I noticed and reported on political tensions which existed within various structures, especially aid agencies, governments and organizations such as SIDA, but in particular within the non-governmental organizations that they were supporting. I worked with people who identified political forces in various areas of the world and who tried to take them under their wing. In other words, a non-governmental organization would try to become involved with a political group, say in Latin America or Africa, the leaders of which they believed to be salvageable. It was almost a religious thing. You must develop and nurture the political leaders and organizations who were following a political course which you, the aid donor, felt was correct. Rather than have these people becoming hard-line Marxist-Leninists, it was better to raise some support in the international arena and give them assistance.

At that time, a lot of the liberation organizations were complaining that the only people who gave them assistance were the East bloc countries and that the West was, in fact, guilty of being in complicity with apartheid and with the regimes in Latin America. I think that there were political forces in the West who agreed that the conservative political organizations in the West were in complicity with apartheid and with the Latin American dictators and so on, but felt that they should not be. At the same time, they also did not think that they should be supporting Moscow's foreign policy objectives in whichever region.

TS: It appears contradictory that the Nordic countries—who were clearly anti-Communist—supported the same movements in Southern Africa that were backed by the Soviet Union.

CW: I think that one of the key elements of the South African security forces' war against ANC and the other liberation movements at that time was to paint them as part of the international Soviet view of things and to discourage anti-Soviet countries and organizations to support them. One of the biggest problems, or hindrances, to that policy was, in fact, the Swedes and the Nordic countries. Later on even the Canadians and the Dutch. Those were the most stubborn Western countries who continued to support ANC. What South Africa would have liked was that everybody should take a black and white, or a white and red, colour view of things, which Sweden never did.

TS: Would it in this context be correct to say that Olof Palme played an important role?

CW: Yes, that is where Olof Palme came in as, I suppose, one of the ideologues of that view. Palme and the people around him were a third force in this type of political situation and they saw it as a very important role. Therefore, they supported, or they were open to support, people who phrased their requests in a way that they found attractive. But that is not unusual. I think that it happens in any funding activity. When people come with a funding request they will obviously design it to get the best possible response from the person who makes the decision.

TS: Olof Palme and his colleagues had old personal relations with many liberation leaders from Southern Africa. Do you think that personal relationship made it easier for the Social Democratic forces in the Nordic countries to see beyond the East-West divide?

CW: Yes, I think so, because I had a similar experience. Getting to know various leaders personally, you get to know more about their personal political world view than if you just read their writings or the official magazine of the movement. Those who had a chance to meet these people personally, to go to university with them or become close political friends with them, understood that none of them, or very few of them, actually were Communists. That the type of socialism that they were thinking about, and probably wished to promote, was a type of socialism which fitted with the ideological view of the Nordic leaders, or people who became leaders in the Nordic countries.

TS: Was that contradictory to you? You were working for forces that wanted you to paint the world white-red?

CW: Oh, no! I always used to say that 'I have spent ten years looking for a black Communist and I have not found one yet'. Everybody would laugh. People might call me a racist, but there were actually very few blacks in the Communist Party who were ideologues. The ideological driving force in the Communist Party was mainly eurocentric. But that did not mean that it was not useful for us—for political purposes—to paint the whole organization red. And a lot of politicians, of course, believed that. I still think that some National Party politicians believe that if we could just split the Communists away from the other black guys, then we would not have any problems. Even in 1990-91, when I finally got out of

the National Party, that was the belief. Even during CODESA it was still the belief. But I think that there were more accurate views in the security forces and the intelligence community.

TS: You worked with the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF) for a long time. IUEF was accused of supporting a so-called third force in South Africa. How true would this be? Was it something that the Nordic Social Democratic parties promoted?

CW: I think that the way Lars-Gunnar Eriksson and his friends in the Swedish Social Democratic Party saw it—putting it very simplistically—was that there is a liberation struggle in South Africa which is a just struggle, but the black political groupings have a problem, because they are dominated by ANC, which in turn is dominated by the Communist Party, which is controlled by the Soviets. They did not only get that view from their own personal experience of the situation. They also heard that view expressed very loudly by certain black South African politicians, particularly by PAC people and, of course, after 1976 very vocally by Black Consciousness Movement people, who refused to join ANC. They did so for two reasons. One, because they said it was ineffective. It had not done anything. Two, because basically it was an organization ideologically dominated by whites and the Soviets. The Swedes were seeking a way to assist this new, younger generation of thinkers in the South African liberation struggle, and they tried to avoid being dictated to by ANC and others in determining who should be assisted. Obviously, ANC would only assist people who were in their camp.

The Swedes took an independent view and started to say 'We must give support to Harry Nengwekhulu, Barney Pityana—who, of course, later went very strongly into ANC—and these types of people'. A Christian, non-Marxist group of people. But socialist. There was definitely substance to this, because I saw the personal memoranda written between Lars-Gunnar Eriksson and Pierre Schori and these people, where he would give them some views on what was going on. They would sometimes write back to him and he would even draft questions to be asked in parliament, or replies. That was definitely their belief.

I think that NGO's were used to do and say things and promote policies which the Swed-

ish government and the other Nordic governments could not officially do. They had to officially tell Oliver Tambo: 'Oliver, we are a hundred per cent behind you and we like you very much. You know, we do not like Joe Slovo too much, but we understand.' But, in reality, they did not want ANC to be allowed to push the emerging black leaders into obscurity. If you do not give a flower water, it dies. I think that it was the view. Give these flowers some water and do it through IUEF. And IUEF had a clever way of saying that the aid was humanitarian. 'We have to give aid to all refugees, to all people' and so forth. So, it was a defensible policy.

TS: Is it your impression that Denmark and Norway—being members of NATO—were less in favour of ANC than Sweden?

CW: I always got the impression that Denmark was the least interested. I think that they went along because it was an emotional thing. It was right. I did not ever get the idea in Denmark that there was a strong ideological involvement. The youth movements and others that we worked with in Denmark were very much less political than in Norway. In Norway, there was a conflict between different political forces in the youth movements. We used to go there with the South African programme, or other programmes, to give credibility as part of a political battle within those organizations. It was more political. For example, when I in 1978 manipulated IUEF into accepting ANC as the sole liberation movement in South Africa, the Swedes accepted it, but in Norway people were very angry. In Denmark, Poul Brandrup and them said: 'What you guys do, you do.' They did not have a very strong political approach. They were doing something that they believed was correct. Anybody who was against apartheid—as long as they were not throwing bombs—should really be given some assistance.

TS: There was never any direct support by IUEF to Inkatha?

CW: No. There was only some very small support to Inkatha. Buthelezi came to Geneva and met with Eriksson several times. There was a guy there, an old trade-unionist, who was meant to be Buthelezi's sort of representative, but when Musa Myeni came to Geneva they gave him some support, in terms of a scholarship and this type of thing. But they would

never assist the organization as such. Buthelezi tried to get support from IUEF, but he never succeeded. Lars-Gunnar blocked it because of the 'puppet-of-apartheid' thing. He could not justify such support. I think that he was given the advice that Inkatha should not be supported. In fact, I know that he discussed it with ANC in Maputo. With Joe Nhanhla, who told him not to. At times he was confused. He came to me and said: 'Buthelezi is a good friend of Tambo. They have met in London. Would it not be useful to support him?' But Joe Nhanhla and ANC said no. And, of course, the instructions I got were also no. I mean from the ANC-Communist Party side, not from our government.

TS: Reading between the lines, it seems that the interest of the South African security establishment was that you should get to ANC through IUEF. Was that the objective?

CW: Yes, but not as simplistic as that. It was to understand the whole dynamic behind the anti-apartheid support internationally. We had to sabotage it. We were much more worried in the mid-1970s about the Black Consciousness Movement than about ANC. That is why we started to sabotage IUEF's support for BCM. It was like a double-edged sword. It was also to get me more popular with ANC, obviously. I was doing something that they believed in. 'Even if this man has a dubious background, he is doing something which we want him to do. He is effective.' So, if somebody went and said this or that about me, ANC would say: 'Hey, just leave him alone. He is working under discipline and he is doing his job'. That was good for me.

We wanted to cut the funding support to the Black Consciousness Movement. For two reasons. Number one, they were a problem internally. Politically, that was where the problem was, not with ANC. Number two, it was part of the whole process of trying to have a very clear black and red situation. But here we had a difficult situation. It was not so easy for 'PiK' Botha or his people to go to a foreign minister overseas and explain that the BCM guys were also red. We could not give them the proper ammunition. And you start to sound less credible if you say that anybody who opposes you is a Communist. Then people would say: 'We have heard that type of story before'.

Sweden and the Nordic countries were also supporting the World University Service and

there were a lot of ideological problems with that, because WUS started to support—in fact, more and more—the Black Consciousness Movement. They had a much more religious approach, more of the centre, maybe. This became a political problem, because one had not only to try and stop the support from IUEF, but also to make sure that funding did not go into WUS, because that could defeat our goal.

TS: That must have been uncomfortable for you? At the same time as IUEF was trying to broaden the support, you wanted it to be narrowed down to ANC?

CW: Yes, it was very difficult because of that. I had to narrow it down to ANC, but without being illogical. If I suddenly would have said to Lars-Gunnar that we must support this or that ANC initiative, he would immediately have thought that I was a Communist. He would have thought that this is a SACP guy. Which is what people like Buthelezi and people from ZANU told him. They were not so worried about me being a spy for South Africa. They were worried that I was a white South African Communist. So, on the one hand he had to tell people: 'He is not a Communist'. And on the other: 'He is not working for the South Africans either'. It was a bit tricky. If I had just said: 'Look, ANC is *the* liberation movement', he would not have gone for it.

It took a bit of time. Of course, the only reason it worked was that the Black Consciousness Movement started to have some problems of its own from 1976-78. They broke up into fractions. The Gaborone office was asking one thing, the London people another and then Lusaka was saying something else. Some people were talking to ANC and some were not. For IUEF, a non-governmental organization having to justify money and expenses to donors, it became a bit tricky. But, using that confusion, I was able to move the political decision to recognize ANC. And, of course, during that same period ANC got its act together. After 1976, they got a wake-up call and realized that they had better get the organization to do what it was supposed to be doing. They started to look better and at the IUEF conference in 1978 I was able to get the policy through.

TS: Who was then Lars-Gunnar Eriksson? You have described him as an anti-Communist.

Many have asked if he was working for Swedish, or Nordic, interests or for South Africa?

CW: He was a fanatical Social Democrat. Fanatical. Lars-Gunnar Eriksson liked to play. He loved intrigue and he created intrigue, but he really disliked Communists. That is why we found him useful.

TS: Even before you joined IUEF, the financial management of the organization had been strongly criticized. You have stated that you managed to divert funds through Lichtenstein to your structures in South Africa. Daisy Farm has been mentioned. Could you comment on this?

CW: First of all, I would say that Lars-Gunnar's problem was that he was not a good manager in terms of technical things. He was a politician. He was very good at getting to know people, to understand what they wanted, the political structures and so on, but he did not care about the actual figures and the financial management, making sure that this account and that account were balanced. Money was money. If he had something that he needed money for, he would spend it and worry about trying to justify which account it came from afterwards. I suppose that you can get away with that if at least—after you spend the money—you find a way to account for it. If not, it becomes administratively impossible to start unravelling the mess. And it became a complete mess.

TS: Which was handy for you?

CW: Yes. He then created a slush-fund. At first, he had a less structured slush-fund, but at a certain stage he realized that he had to have a proper one. So he created this thing in Vaduz, Liechtenstein, called Southern Futures. He then used to report to the donors: 'Look, on certain confidential projects all I can tell you is that when the money leaves IUEF's account, you have to accept that for auditing purposes it has been spent'. He would take the money out of IUEF and put it into Southern Futures Vaduz and, of course, he could then do what he liked with Southern Futures Vaduz. This does not mean that he stole the money or spent it on his chalet in France. He was well paid. He had a good salary. He could afford a good life. But if he had gone to SIDA and said: 'The ILO conference is on in Geneva. All the liberation guys are there and I am going to take them to a night-club and this and that', they would have had a heart-attack if the

money was coming out of IUEF. So it would come out of Southern Futures Vaduz.

Some of these guys, for example Sam Nujoma, would come to town and say: 'Lars-Gunnar, I need money'. Lars-Gunnar would say: 'How much?' 'Well, 20,000 Francs'. Lars-Gunnar would then give him 20,000 Francs, which would come out of the slush-fund. Every time Joshua Nkomo came to town he got money. He stayed at the Inter-continental Hotel, which was an expensive business.

Lars-Gunnar was playing a political game. So, what we did was just the same. IUEF was supposed to have a leadership training programme for white students in South Africa. The money had to be spent, because if it was not spent there would not be any more grants given. Sometimes there was pressure. Lars-Gunnar would say: 'We have got money for this white student programme. Are we not going to spend it? What am I going to tell the donors if it does not exist?' That is how it was done. It was a leadership training programme, but, unfortunately, it was a leadership training programme for the security forces, not for the anti-apartheid forces. At one stage we ran an internal structure here which was financed by IUEF. People even came from Denmark and other countries and were shown the programme. They went to the farm and were very happy.

TS: To Daisy Farm?

CW: Yes. Poul Brandrup from Denmark lived on the farm for a while. He was told that this was the secret place we had for training of anti-apartheid activists. They all said: 'Oh, wonderful! This is in the heart of apartheid, just twenty kilometres from Pretoria. They have got a farm where they are training the opposition'. They believed the romance of the thing.

TS: One wonders how the Nordic governments could continue increasing the allocations to IUEF?

CW: I think that they were doing it deliberately. I mean, we believed that. For example, I gave cash to ANC. We were supposed to be supporting this or that programme, but I would go to the bank in Geneva with Swiss Francs and buy Rands at a discounted rate. I would get about twenty or thirty per cent more Rands and then go to Lusaka and

give ANC Rands. Thomas Nkobi would give us a written account of the money, with a big ANC stamp on it. 'Thank you very much!' I mean, what did I write in my reports to the South African government? Sweden and the other donors could not give money to ANC for political and military purposes, but they gave it to IUEF, who then played some games and it went there anyway.

I know that people in Sweden knew that he was giving out cash. Sitting late at night, having some schnapps and coffee, he would say: 'This is politics. This is the real world. We do not all live on refugee scholarships and little farms that make handicrafts. These people are fighting a liberation struggle. They have to pay hotel bills and so on'. He often used to have that argument. The donors would say: 'Yes, but you know that we do not have funds for that'. But he found a way to create the funds. Air-tickets were one of the biggest slush-fund activities. The guys would phone from Lusaka and say: 'We have to send so and so many delegates somewhere. We need air-tickets'. He would then buy the tickets, although there was no project that could buy them.

TS: Who were the most critical among the donors?

CW: I think that he was less scared of the Swedes, because he had more political influence with SIDA. He was more scared of the Danes. They were very picky. The Canadians were another problem, because Paul Ladouceur was actually on the IUEF board and he was a real auditor. But Southern Futures Vaduz was unbreakable. The recipients also played ball. It was not that the money was disappearing into Southern Futures Vaduz. The recipients would tell the donor that they got the money. ANC would give them a piece of paper saying: 'We have received the money'. So the donor left it there. Especially for the internal programmes it was understood, for security reasons. Between the recipient and himself, Lars-Gunnar could make any arrangement.

TS: IUEF also tried to serve as some sort of fund-raiser for the SOMAFSCO settlement in Tanzania and you tried to work with IDAF in London. Do I see you behind these initiatives? If you were pushing the ANC line?

CW: Yes, the Solomon Mahlango Freedom College. ANC, Lars-Gunnar and everybody saw that as a prestige project. IDAF was a different thing. Lars-Gunnar was convinced that it was run by the Communists and he wanted to take over its function. But he also had people who came to the office complaining about IDAF.

People can say what they like about IDAF, but the fact at the end of the day is that IDAF for a long time supported who they felt like supporting. There was a strong South African Communist Party influence there. IUEF paid lawyers for people on trial, because IDAF just could not get the bureaucracy together and Lars-Gunnar never believed that it was purely because of funding or bureaucracy. He said: 'These guys have got problems. They have been arrested. They are on trial and they need lawyers to be paid'. Often we paid. IDAF would then get angry and refund IUEF, which we usually would accept, because we had used money from some other programme. IUEF did not have the money to pay for trials.

Lars-Gunnar and Canon Collins had a reasonable relationship, but his relationship with the rest of them was very antagonistic. He planned to take over IDAF. He thought that he could do it when Collins went. This was not only a personal ambition. It was political. He did not like IDAF.

TS: So this was nothing that you had to push?

CW: No. I helped him, obviously, because the more trouble we could cause for IDAF the better. But I had a difficulty there, because I could not be too openly anti-IDAF since I was supposed to be on the ANC side.

TS: In the Swedish media, both Pierre Schori and Mats Hellström have been asked to comment upon IUEF, Lars-Gunnar Eriksson and yourself, but they have declined to do so. Why do you think that they have never talked about this. Is it because they were very close to Eriksson?

CW: I do not know. I think that they were good friends. Lars-Gunnar was a guy who at the end of the day was doing what a lot of people wanted him to do. He was tripped up.

TS: Coming back to South Africa, you have admitted to planning the actions against Ruth First in Maputo and Jeanette Schoon in

Lubango in Angola. Do you know of any plans directed against SIDA people in the Frontline States that were assisting ANC or other liberation movements?

CW: I revealed the actions against Ruth First and Jeanette Schoon because I realized what was going on, but when we did our cross-border operations we tried to avoid to have any international people hit due to the political problems involved.

TS: The SIDA people were also diplomatic personnel. It would probably have been difficult for you to do anything against them?

CW: They would not have done anything against SIDA people. At one stage—when the Rhodesians bombed Lusaka and we had given information to them of where to strike—there was a German aid worker killed and everybody was very upset. No. They did not even go for the Soviets, so they would not have gone for the Swedes.

TS: I also asked UNITA this question. They once kidnapped—and actually killed—Swedish aid workers. But they said that it had been a political error.

CW: Yes, it can be carried out by a unit who does it because they think it is the right thing, but it is not the organization as such who thinks so.

TS: Do you know who were behind the bombing of the ANC office in Stockholm?

CW: I actually did not even know that it was bombed.

TS: Did you have any agents in Sweden or in the other Nordic countries?

CW: Our involvement there was not very good. I would say that the first time that we really got a lot of information was when I was operating there. They would obviously have had some people there, but I do not think that there was anything particular. I really think that South Africa was not—how should I put it—obsessed with the Nordic countries. It was more of a political problem. I mean, the support was not in the same context as the Soviet support. I think that they wanted to deal with it more on a political level. The Nordic countries were left very much to the foreign affairs people.

TS: It has also been alleged that your intelligence in IUEF led to the assassination of Steve Biko.

CW: Well, the reality of that was that Steve Biko was coming out of the country to meet

with Oliver Tambo. It was set up by the Swedes and by Lars-Gunnar. I reported that it was going to happen, but I do not know if the fact that they then beat him up and killed him was based on that. I actually do not believe that the people who arrested him would have known that intelligence. It would never have been revealed to them. They would never have told them: 'Look, we have got information that Biko is going to see Tambo'.

TS: Was it not the same structure?

CW: It was the same structure, but they would never have told them, because it would have been too sensitive. They may have told them that Biko is up to something. 'Detain him or question him!' I do not even know. But the reality is that Biko's detention and then death was at the time when he was secretly going to leave the country to meet Tambo. It was all funded by Swedish money through IUEF. That was bad news.

TS: There are also some people who have mentioned your name in connection with the Palme assassination.

CW: It is fantasy.

TS: Is it plausible to talk about a South African link to the Palme assassination?

CW: I do not think that anybody here hated Olof Palme. If they were going to kill a head of state, hell, there are a lot of people before Olof Palme that would have been on the list. I really do not understand why Olof Palme. If they were prepared to do such a thing, I think that there would have been quite a few other targets. One day I saw a newspaper article which said that the murder was done by *Koevoet* under my command and that we had camped in the forests outside Stockholm in winter. Some journalist asked me and I said: 'Yes, we actually went overland from Africa with *casspirs*, all the way from Johannesburg. We drove in *casspirs* to Sweden. We did the operation and nobody saw us. Then he said: 'You are joking!' I said: 'Well, please, do me a favour'. They said that it was *Koevoet* people. I said that 'we were trained in desert warfare and now you tell me that we went and camped in the forests outside Stockholm in the middle of winter. That nobody saw us, that we crept into the city and killed the Prime Minister and left. And that nobody found one trace. That is really quite good'. Now there is

some lunatic here in Pretoria who keeps telling the Swedes that I was the commander and that he bought the gun. He is a madman. He wants money.

TS: Is there anything you would like to add?

CW: Well, if you go through the IUEF files of the Latin American programmes, you will find that there is a parallel. For example, Eden Pastora, Comandante Zero in Nicaragua, was getting money from IUEF and that was because he was an anti-Communist. They were playing exactly the same role with the Contras. Chile, Argentina and Nicaragua were IUEF's main programmes. I do not know the names, but all of it was designed to support the Social Democratic elements of these groups. That is why IUEF always had the reputation among the left of being CIA. The old ISC was set up by the intelligence agencies and IUEF came out of ISC. When ISC collapsed, Lars-Gunnar, Schori and them kept it alive as an independent organization. It always did the same thing. It always supported anybody who was Social Democratic, but not Marxist. I do not think that you will find one contradiction there.

TS: In retrospect, would you then say that the role of the Nordic countries was constructive for Southern Africa?

CW: Well, I think that the Nordic influence has been very strong. As I flippantly said—a bit cynically maybe—we looked for black Communism and we failed to find it. I do not know whether *ubuntu*—the traditional element amongst the African people, which some people equate with Communism—has got more in common with Social Democracy than with Marxism-Leninism. But I think that Lars-Gunnar and those people clearly saw that it could be nurtured and developed.

Obviously, I think that the success here has been greater than in other places. The quality of leadership in Namibia since liberation has not been the same as we have here. In Zimbabwe the same. Here, I think that the basic thinking of ANC probably has benefited a lot from the Nordic influence. But, at the end of the day we all know that if it was not for other historical forces—which brought about the time of Gorbachev—we would probably not be sitting talking here.

By this time, we would probably be in quite a nice fighting situation.