

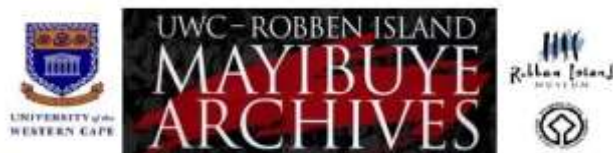
Ruth First Papers project

## Interview with Rica Hodgson part 2

An interview conducted by **Don Pinnock** c. 1992. Part of a series carried out at Grahamstown University and held at the UWC/Robben Island Mayibuye Archive.

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**RH:** ... to do something I would have loved to have had. She wore these dark glasses

**DP:** Even at meetings?

**RH:** Well, she never took her – they were her spectacles, but they were always dark, you see. And she would – she would get terribly flat by eight o'clock. Right down. It may have been part of this thyroid thing. She always had this quite badly, you see. And she would go to sleep. You couldn't see that she was sleeping and she was a very quiet sleeper. She would just sit and sleep very quietly. But as soon as there was anything that was contentious, she woke up like a bullet! [laughs] She never missed it! Now I thought that was a fantastic capacity to have. And the other thing I admired and liked about Ruth – and I think that's why Ruth liked me – it didn't matter how unpopular her point of view was, if that's what she believed, that's what she stuck to. And for a long time she was very critical of the Soviet Union, and as you well know, it's not a secret that the Party didn't agree – you know, or couldn't agree. That was another reason why Ruth was unpopular amongst many people.

**DP:** For her not taking a pro-Soviet

**RH:** That's right. Very critical of Stalin when others were not prepared to be.

**DP:** Now was that later, or was that early?

**RH:** I don't know how early. It certainly went back to the 'sixties.

**DP:** That would have put her at a bit of – in opposition to Joe?

**RH:** It did. It sure did.

**DP:** Because Joe's a Moscow man.

**RH:** It sure did. It sure did. With my husband too. He was a very hardliner. But despite that, you see, he had a huge regard and respect for Ruth. So did Joe. For her intellect, you know.

**DP:** I always find it interesting that of the great tours that happened in the 'forties and 'fifties, many people went – like Brian Bunting went to the Soviet Union, Ruth went to China. And in her writing, much of her journalism is about the rural affairs – about [indistinct], about Bethel, whereas Brian's was about international politics. And even then the differences were obvious. I mean the relationship between China and the interest in rural affairs was very obvious.

**RH:** She didn't fancy Brian very much. Or Michael Harmel [laughs].

**DP:** Well, they were the hardliners.

**RH:** Well, so was my husband a hardliner. She got on extremely well with him. So was Joe. She had to find another way around to like somebody. I mean, at least they were honest and she could argue with them, and agree to disagree finally, you know. But I think with some people she didn't have much rapport. I went with her once to Rome for a conference. 1970. When Cabral was the main speaker.

**DP:** Oh marvellous! I've got a lot of regard for Cabral.

**RH:** So did I. But I want to tell you he was one hell of a womaniser, hey! I met him at a conference earlier when I was a lot younger, and I had one hard time with him! But he was a beautiful, wonderful man. No doubt about it. Anyway, I'd never been to Rome before. There were several of us who went to this conference, and the first day we didn't have anything on. So we went off, and Ruth said Rica, the first place I'm taking you to is this wonderful shoe shop [laughs] near the Trivoli

Steps, Trivoli Fountains, where I really must go. And she was so right, I needed a pair of sandals desperately, it was as hot as hell. And we went in and we bought our sandals, and we then took off for a wonderful walk round Rome, and she had a – she had a man friend there whose name I don't know. And that man was mad about her, and I know she was having an affair with him, but I don't know who he was. So I can't tell you any dirt. And he met us that night and took us to St Peter's Square. He took us to the most wonderful restaurant. And then I was with Ruth in the conference and we went back together. It was the only conference I ever was at with her.

**DP:** Rica, in the – just to drop back into the 1950's, which is my passion – what were you involved in then, apart from the Springbok Legion and COD? The party?

**RH:** Not terribly involved with the Party. I mean, I never got up there. I'm essentially a backroom girl! [laughs].

**DP:** So was Ruth the only person within the inner circle of the Party who was a woman?

**RH:** No, I'm sure Hilda Bernstein was. Ray Alexander, I'm sure was, from Cape Town.

**DP:** Sorry, I was asking you about what you were involved in.

**RH:** Well, I was involved with King Kong very much. If you ever want to write a book and you want some stories about King Kong that have never been written, I have some

**DP:** I'm fascinated by King Kong!

**RH:** Ja, so was I. I was besotted with it.

**DP:** I'm sure you knew Todd?

**RH:** Oh yes, sure. So that was – but in the 'fifties, hey? COD, the Springbok Legion, and then the Treason Trial Defence Fund in 1956, and for a short time – I can't remember the reason and I can't remember the dates, it might have been between my banning orders when I didn't have a job, because I was from that organisation out ... I needed to work. I mean, we were always desperately short of money. Terribly poor. Jack was a professional revolutionary. I mean, Jack was the epitome of what you would call a communist. A lot of people called him Jesus Christ, who were not political people, who said that's what Jack was. I'll try to describe it to you. I mean, we were always desperately short of money and I had to work. A job came along in the Katy Keegan [name correct?] Memorial Fund to raise money for a nursery school for working women in the distributors' trade, and I remember doing that job for not very long, but it might have been six months to a year, when I raised money for the Katy Keegan Memorial Fund.

**DP:** That would have been in the late 'fifties?

**RH:** I can't remember ... I can't remember, honestly, when exactly it was.

**DP:** 1960 came along and all hell broke loose. People had to go into hiding under the State of Emergency – what did you do?

**RH:** Well, our story's quite funny, actually. Jack was banned – we were both banned. Had been banned for a long time, since '53, '54. Jack was at a meeting where he obviously had no business to be. The 'phone rang, and it was Nelson Mandela on the 'phone. He didn't give his name but I knew his voice. He said Rica, I want to speak to Jack. I said, he's not in. When do you expect him? I said, eleven o'clock. He said, will you give him a message? It's very important. Now don't forget what I'm telling you. And he gave me a message which was gobbledygook, and he said don't forget and goodbye. And he put the 'phone down. So I immediately wrote it out because I didn't trust myself to remember it, it was meaningless to me. Jack came back and I gave him the message and

he said oh my God – that means arrests. Now up till then we'd had raids, you know, these two o'clock in the morning blah blah, and they'd gone round and taken books and looked for ... so Jack said this message means there're going to be arrests. I must go out and warn people. When will you be back? He didn't know. So off he went. Meantime I decided to go round the house and see if there was anything we shouldn't have there – like a pamphlet about the potato farms or something! Jack got back at about halfpast one and said look, I'm instructed to go into hiding. So while I'm packing a bag you think where to go. Well, it wasn't easy, you know. You can't go to relatives, you can't go to people who are in the same position as you are, you can't go to a bloody hotel. Not easy. Anyway, I decided those were the people we'd go to. We'd try. If not, we'd try something else. So in very short time we took off, and they were more than responsive, absolutely. They said come in, and Jack kissed me goodbye and he said now don't contact me. I will get in touch with you somehow tomorrow. I didn't have very far to drive home and I went straight to bed. And at two o'clock that button was on the door. My son was where are we now? 1960. Spencer's now 41. What age was he then?

**DP:** He would have been about fourteen, thirteen.

**RH:** Thirteen. Not quite, I think. He wasn't quite thirteen. So I didn't make it easy for them, as one never did, you know, slipped their things under the door, and you're quite right Mrs Hodgson if you're alone, they said. Anyway, I opened the door and they said Mrs Hodgson? I said yes. We've come to arrest you. You could have knocked me over with a feather! They didn't have a warrant for Jack's arrest that night. You know how that emergency went – they arrested so many people and ten days later the rest. Well! The first thing I did was go and pour myself a huge big brandy. And then of course, we didn't know anything about the Emergency, we didn't know anything about detention. We only knew that if you were arrested the next day you were in court. So I put all my smartest clothes and my makeup and my cigarette holder, the lot, and they went round and searched the flat for about two hours. By four o'clock they were ready to move. I said I'd like to make a call to my sister. No, not allowed. Then I went to wake up my son and I whispered in his ear that if anybody asks where Daddy is, he's in the country, and I'm being arrested. And as soon as I go, Spencer, ring Auntie Lil immediately. Big blue eyes look at me – and then of course I broke down. Anyway, off to jail, and I met Eli Weinberg taking pictures outside – his wife's inside. And there were the four of us, Helen Joseph, Violet, Phillippa Levy – who only stayed the one day, she got out on a technicality the next day, which we all should have worked on, but she was the only one who did. Anyway, so that's where I landed in 1960, and Jack then went into hiding to Swaziland.

**DP:** Do you know anything of how he went and how come Ruth ended up with him?

**RH:** Well, I don't know how he went. I suspect he was taken. And then he learned all the routes in and out – he took a lot of people in and out. He saw people like Adelaide Tambo out of the country and he and Adelaide stayed together for a while, with her kids. He took a hell of a lot of risks. He never got over this. He never got over it. He said I'm never leaving you again as long as I live! Because we had a great love affair, as you may not have – but for thirty years we had the greatest love affair in the history of our ... Nelson and whatnot had nothing on us. And he never got over – that, that he had buggered off and left me to be arrested! Couldn't believe it! [laughs]

**DP:** And how long were you inside for?

**RH:** Only five months. No, I beg your pardon – five months was the length everybody was inside for. I was in for a hundred days. Just over three months.

**DP:** Did Ruth take her children out?

**RH:** No, no I don't think so. No, she wouldn't have wanted to disrupt the children from their schooling.

**DP:** And Tilly would have taken over.

**RH:** Mmm. Mmm, absolutely.

**DP:** And how long were she and Jack

**RH:** Oh, she wasn't there for that long. Jack brought her back. I remember going to visit her in this incredible place ... you know, life is funny, isn't it? Full of all sorts of things. When I married my husband, very shortly after, about a year later, we took a holiday with his three kids who were at boarding school and not actually living with us. We went to a very remote place on the South – Coast. Very cheap hotel, quite wild and lovely. And there were very few people there. There was a very attractive man, bearded, beautifully spoken, with a gorgeous blond woman. They kept their distance but we got quite friendly – there was nothing else to do there at night. We had a lot of those sorts of games you never otherwise play, guessing games, all that crap. Nothing else to do. Mostly they kept to themselves and took long walks, didn't mix much. We were quite happy to be on our own as well. But we got to know them quite well. I never ever got to know their names, I was never introduced. But when I went to visit Ruth, that's where she was! She was at that guy's house, with a completely different wife whom he'd had for years. A very interesting couple, very interesting. They had about five kids, lived way out in the country ...

**DP:** Whereabouts on the South Coast was that?

**RH:** Oh, God knows. About 50 miles from Margate.

**DP:** Is that where she went, or did she go to his house in Jo'burg.

**RH:** No, no, no, no, he was on holiday with this blonde who was not his wife. When I met him, I never acknowledged that I'd ever met him before. He might not have remembered me, I don't know. I think he was grateful, perhaps, that I didn't acknowledge that I'd never met him before. He was an architect and a wonderful potter. Fantastic potter. He had this incredible home and this very earthy wife who made wonderful vegetarian foods and salads, and all that. And I think Ruth and he had something going, "up there". I don't think – it was possible in the same house, but I think he was very taken with Ruth.

**DP:** What was his name?

**RH:** No, I don't remember. I know his wife, though. She was an Indian woman.

**DP:** So how long did she stay there?

**RH:** Quite a few months, I think. But it was a lovely place to stay. You see, Ruth needed – you've read 117 Days. You saw what happened with her and Victor, did you?

**DP:** Yes.

**RH:** She needed that rapport with somebody, you know? She needed to be loved. Everybody needs to be loved, but Ruth in a special way needed it.

**DP:** Because of her insecurity and her shyness?

**RH:** I think so. I think so. And I think, you know, you're more vulnerable when you're in – I think, for example, I don't know ... this is just crap what I'm saying now, but this is what I think. I think when you're under pressure, I think a man when he's under pressure – I don't know so much about a woman, but a man – if he's having a tough time, he's more prone to having an affair than he would otherwise be. So I think when you're most vulnerable is when you can most need that sort of somebody to come close to you. I don't think anything ever came of this, but I think it was very

good for her in that house that there was that kind of a guy, you know? I think it saw her sane through that period when she was so close to her kids, and she couldn't do anything about it, she just had to stay like a prisoner in that house. It was a lovely home. He'd built it himself, it was very superior. Different, you know; quite wild. But very interesting.

**DP:** But when she came out – when those people came out of hiding it must have been a very tense time. They must have expected arrests.

**RH:** No, I don't think so. Maybe they did, but I don't think so. I have a feeling, but I'm not sure – I mean, you're into the media, I haven't really looked back on the newspapers, but maybe there was a promise from the regime that if they came out now, they'd be OK. The Emergency was lifted. There was always the fear, only after the Emergency, of course. My husband, too, didn't return from Swaziland. He came to visit, once, but under cover.

**DP:** Rica, that period between the Emergency and Rivonia: was it a very neutered period, politically, or a very heightened political period? Because the ANC and PAC are banned, the Communist Party's banned – what is going on?

**RH:** [laughs] Are you asking me about my flat in Hillbrow? You know, Jack was the first person to make bombs for MK, did you know that?

**DP:** No, I didn't know that. It doesn't surprise me!

**RH:** You see, he had two very good qualifications. He'd been a miner, he was a mine captain. So he knew about explosives. And he'd been with the Desert Rats in the army, so he was quite an authority. And Jack had an ability to do anything with his hands. You know, if you broke a zip, Jack would fix it. He could fix the tiniest earring, anything that went, you know ... he had an ability and he had patience. He was wonderful with kids, and he had patience. And so Jack started to make the first bombs for MK. He tested the first ones. So people like Nelson were regular visitors to our home; Walter, Nelson, all those people. Jack was very involved then with the Congress Alliance, and of course so was I – I was very much an active person in the Congress of Democrats, and

**DP:** Were you working in that period?

**RH:** Mmm! I always worked! I never ever stopped working. I went back to work when my kid was six weeks old. I never stopped working.

**DP:** So when was MK formed?

**RH:** In 1961.

**DP:** So was much of the planning for MK in those kinds of meetings?

**RH:** Oh yes, I'm sure. And actually, the first bombs were made in my flat. I mean, Spencer was fourteen and he was at St Martin's School then. And Jack used to mix them with a mortar and pestle on my diningroom table. I had beautiful FOSA – do you remember FOSA? Does FOSA mean anything to you?

**DP:** No.

**RH:** There was an organisation in Durban called the Friends of the Sick Association. It was a TB settlement for Indian people, and they used to do this wonderful weaving – curtains, tablecloths, bedspreads – but beautiful stuff. Handwoven. And my sister was always giving – I've got a very rich sister, that's Jeremy's grandmother. Always giving me presents of these beautiful things. And I don't know many of my FOSA tablecloths were ruined by the acids from – and my carpets and my tables and so on. And Jack and Spencer one day were mixing this stuff, because Spencer was in

the know. And one of Spencer's friends from school came in who was a very brilliant science student, and he said what are you chaps doing? So Spencer said, oh, my father's just experimenting. He's a great experimenter. I think Jack – was he under house arrest by then? Oh no, not yet perhaps. Well, what's in this? So this chap looks and he says but this is Condi's Crystals and this is gunpowder – Jesus Christ, you can bloody well make bombs out of this! [laughs uproariously]. But he didn't think anything of it, then. Ja, and those first trials of those bombs were terribly dangerous, Jack risked his life every time he went out to set off a bomb.

**DP:** Did they have trials on nothing – just out in the veld, to find out if they worked?

**RH:** That's right. That's right. And I mean, Jack came home one day with the car on fire! He didn't come home, he went straight to my sister's garage. He had a very good rapport with the man who worked for her, and he just put the hosepipe on it! [much laughter].

**DP:** Now how did he escape Rivonia?

**RH:** Well, we were already out of the country by then. We were in Botswana. Jack was told to leave. He had a special mission in Botswana.

**DP:** Was that before the Rivonia arrests?

**RH:** Ja.

**DP:** Was that just fortunate, or did you have an inkling that it might have been coming?

**RH:** No, I don't know. I didn't have an inkling. I suppose Jack did, but I didn't. But I mean, by then Jack was under twentyfour hours house arrest, and we lived on the fourth floor in a flat in Hillbrow. We were actually in a very unique position, because Jack was the only person under house arrest who couldn't actually take a walk outside. We had no garden. And Kentridge decided this was good for a test case, and went to court with it, and we won. A house is not a home, or a home is not a house or something, I don't know what. And for five weeks everyone in the Transvaal was released from house arrest.

**DP:** Oh, I remember that, yes.

**RH:** And then they closed off the loopholes in the law and they went back into house arrest. Well, I was under thirteen hours but Jack was under twentyfour hours house arrest. I mean, we were so tired, and Jack was obviously a very useful person, he was very good on security matters and so on. So we were asked by the movement to leave and go to Botswana, where we had a specific role to play, but it wasn't – I mean, we had British passports and after five months we were deported by the British.

**DP:** To England.

**RH:** Mmm.

**DP:** So it was your job to receive people coming through to

**RH:** Ja. We did that, and we had other things to do. But I took an option on a farm there and I'd already started growing things. We never moved to the farm, but I'd started to grow gardens.

**DP:** Where was that? In Lebotsi? [name correct?]

**RH:** Mmm. Which Barbara Castle always addressed us to "Lebotski"! She thought we were in Russia. But she did a wonderful job in fighting for us. You see, what buggered us finally was the Profumo Affair.

**DP:** How did that work?

**RH:** Well, because the British Government – the Labour Party was winning at the time. The British Government wanted to deport us. The Labour Party, led by Barbara Castle, was winning our case for us to remain. We were very much in the news then. I mean, all sorts of – even Gordon Winter came over to interview us at that time in Botswana. So we were winning, but then the Profumo Affair broke, and in that period everything else was knocked out of parliament, knocked out of the news, and very quietly we were then deported. I mean, before we were deported we were asked to leave. And we said we couldn't

**DP:** So the British didn't want you in Botswana. They'd rather have you in Britain?

**RH:** Verwoerd was breathing very heavily down their necks. Everybody who escaped – Joe Slovo, Goldreich and Wolpe and Mercer and Jasset and everybody came through us and came to our flat and stayed with us and went on from there, you see. And we were an embarrassment to them. They hated our being there. They wanted us out. And actually, we were not safe. I mean, finally there was a big bid to kidnap us.

**DP:** I mean, if Winter could get to you, anybody could have!

**RH:** Well, I thought Winter was in that team that tried to kidnap us at the time, actually. I can't be sure of that, but I think so

**DP:** How did you avoid it?

**RH:** Well, we sat up all night with our African friends. They stayed with us the whole night, about ten of them, and these seven guys were outside, and they were waiting for everybody to go, but nobody went. We kept them there the whole night. We were tipped off by a friend downstairs, who was not a South African, who was not a Botswanan citizen either – he was a Ghanaian, I think, or some odd thing. He was a photographer and a very good friend of ours. He came to tell us that this car was downstairs from Pretoria and there were these men. They came up and knocked on the door. They wanted to come in on some pretext, you know; we didn't let them in. Anyway, all sorts of things were happening around then; I mean that 'plane was blown up of Goldreich and Wolpe, and Fish Kitson's [name correct] landrover was blown up, and the British were getting very windy. They didn't want an incident. They didn't want us to go back to South Africa, because that would have been very bad for their security if we'd been taken back. And they tried very hard to get us out. First, they asked us to leave. We said we couldn't, we didn't have the money, which was absolutely true. I mean, when we arrived in Botswana we had three hundred pounds and that was it. So then they threatened us, then they declared us PI's, then the chief rep who was then in Dar es Salaam, a man who has since left the ANC, 'phoned through and said to Jack, we're getting very worried about you. I'm sending you a ticket. And Jack said, I can't hear you, the 'phone is very bad. And he repeated it, and Jack said, no, it's impossible, the 'phone is very bad, and put the 'phone down. Then we were – after having been declared PI's, we were arrested and taken to court

**DP:** What's a PI?

**RH:** Prohibited Immigrant. And we said, we can't leave, we haven't got the money. So they then took us to court. And there was a terrible man there, a British official. What would he have been called then, the administrator?

**DP:** The commissioner?

**RH:** Commissioner? Whatever, ja. I suppose it was the commissioner. Chap called Billings, a terrible, pompous, stupid man. And then we were arrested and taken to court and charged with being there illegally after being told to leave. We could not find a single lawyer in Botswana who



was prepared to defend us, so we went in to defend ourselves. And Jack knew exactly what was going to happen. This guy said, I know that you've got the means to get out. And Jack said we haven't! What are the means? And Jack was really twisting the lion's tail, it was really nice. He [the official] couldn't say that he tapped telephones – that was not on, then. Not on now, really, is it! But he couldn't say it, he couldn't admit how he knew we could get a ticket to go out. Anyway, we were sentenced. I was sentenced to thirty pounds or thirty days, and I think Jack was sentenced to fifty pounds or two months. And we had a quick discussion – we'll go to jail. I thought, well, a white woman's never been to jail in Botswana, it'll be a real experience. But then our friends in the Bechuanaland Peoples' Party paid our fines. Sometimes your friends are your enemies, in a way! I think it would have been a good experience. And during that period this kidnap attempt was on, and then the British very quietly just – you know, there were no 'planes then, proper 'planes, only these little fourseater planes that were private. What do you call them? Chartered planes. And that's another thing, they were – I mean, we knew the people who ran the company. A very strange man; if you ask me now I couldn't tell you what his politics were or anything about him. And he was the pilot, or there was another pilot, a South African guy who we didn't trust. So we didn't know who would fly us out

**DP:** Or where they'd fly you to!

**RH:** Or where they'd fly us to. Now that's an interesting point – I've gone right off Ruth. This is just by the way, if you're bored, I can

**DP:** I'm very interested in the Rivonia period.

**RH:** Well, just to finish the story. You see, in our five months in Botswana nobody ever spoke to us except African friends. Fish Kitsing was in the treason trial, he was actually a – Botswanan citizen that had worked in South Africa, and Botswanan friends that we'd met there, or people who'd come through from South Africa. But not one British person or one South African bastard ever spoke to us. We were treated like

**DP:** Pariahs.

**RH:** Absolutely. But one day a woman who was very beautiful – she was enormous, but she was very beautiful – stopped us in the street with an afrikaans accent you could cut with a knife. And she said, what's wrong with you people? The papers tell us you're bloody communists – God knows what I expected to see! she said. I don't know what communists are – I don't care! she said. You seem

to me to be very nice people. Why don't you have a drink with me? So she said to me, come and have a drink. So I said, not in the hotel. I mean, there was only this one hotel. It was owned by this South African who was this real agent, and all these – whoever, there was only this one place to congregate. She said, of course in the hotel! I want people to see me drinking with you! That's the whole point of the exercise. I said, you can come up to my flat. No! Now she was the person who ran the telephone exchange, and she tipped us off that the 'phones were being tapped. That's why Jack knew that this chap Billings knew – and she was really very kind to us, she got in touch with my sister and all kinds of things. The second person who was ever kind who spoke to us was just prior to our deportation. I mean, now it was known we were going in ten days, you know. A very ugly man, also enormous, wearing khaki shorts, red face – really such an ugly boer, I can't tell you. From SouthWest Africa. And he came into the bar one evening. By then we couldn't eat at home, because all our stuff was packed ready for going off. I mean, then we knew we were going. So we had to eat at the hotel, there was nowhere else to eat. So he walked up to us and he said, I'd like you to have a drink with me. Of course, we were very suspicious – who the hell are you. And then he told us he's from SouthWest Africa, and he said much the same sort of thing as this woman. He said, I don't know why people are so terrible about you – you look like nice people to me. I'd just like you to have a drink with me. OK, Jack said, we'll have a drink with you. We had a drink with him, he

said, no, have dinner with me! We were a bit reluctant. Oh please have dinner with me. So we had

dinner with him; he bought a bottle of wine and he was very charming. he said, listen, this is really what I wanted to talk to you about. They're going to bloody deport you. You don't know where they're going to take you, you don't know who's going to pilot that 'plane. He said, I've got a very good friend in SouthWest Africa. He's a chemist, he's a Jew, and he's a pilot. He owns his own 'plane. If you should land anywhere other than where you're supposed to, get in touch with me [laughs]. This is my name and blah blah blah, and my friend will take you out. Well, I mean, I don't know if you land in the bundu of somewhere or other whether all this is possible, but it was a very kind thought. Then he wanted to press money on us, and Jack said look, if you want to give me money for the movement I'll take it, but – I don't take money for myself. We don't need it. Oh, you're bloody fools, I'm not interested in your movment, I'm interested in you! Anyway, we finished our dinner and so on and so on. Eight o'clock the next morning this guy knocks on my door. He said Rica (we were now on firstname terms), your husband's a bloody fool. Here, I want to give you this money. I said no, I'm sorry. If you say we can use it, OK, but otherwise no. No, no, he said. Alright. But good luck, and don't forget! Those were the two people ever – both Afrikaners. Interesting.

**DP:** Ja. But now Ruth stayed behind and got arrested. Why was she arrested, do you think?

**RH:** Well, everybody was being arrested then, I mean, all sorts of people. Look, even in the 1960 Emergency when I went in, there were some very funny people with us. There was a girl whose husband was a liberal with a capital "I". When they came to arrest his wife, he said, you're making a mistake! It's me you want! No, they said it's your wife. I mean, she'd been in the Party like twenty years before. I think she'd joined maybe two days before the Party was banned. She'd not done a thing, ever, and she was one of the people who was arrested. You couldn't explain – you couldn't explain why they had a warrant for me that night in 1960 and not for Jack. In those days they weren't so bloody clued up, let's put it that way, or mistakes were easily made. Maybe language problems, I don't know what, you know.

**DP:** But they must have thought that Ruth was involved in Rivonia, and she was. In those kind of meetings.

**RH:** Are you talking about 1960 now?

**DP:** No, that's '63.

**RH:** No no, I'm talking about '60.

**DP:** Ja, just jumping back

**RH:** Right, right. Well, I don't know. You see, I'm saying to you that for anybody to have arrested me and not my husband was the biggest joke in history. Not that I was not involved, but I was not anything like as involved as my husband was. No ways. And so you can't explain these things. There is no explanation.

**DP:** But you were inside for 100 days, and Ruth was inside for 117

**RH:** No, she was not inside in the 1960 Emergency.

**DP:** No no, but later, I'm just saying

**RH:** She was arrested under the 90day law, which is a different one, later. It was a new law.

**DP:** Why do you think she tried to commit suicide? From your own experiences in detention?

**RH:** No, our experiences were quite different. First of all I went in, and there were four of us. Then there were two of us, because Helen was taken to Pretoria for the treason trial and Violet Weinberg and I were left. Violet was a wonderful woman, then.

**DP:** So you were never in solitary?

**RH:** I was never in solitary, and then the other nineteen women came in, so there were twentyone of us. I mean, I can't say what it's like if you're in solitary or if you're bullied ... it didn't happen.

**DP:** Given what you know of Ruth, it seems such an unusual thing for her to do. Or is it not?

**RH:** Look I don't know. My husband was a hardliner in many ways, and one of the things he was a hardliner on was on the question of people giving statements in jail. He didn't forgive that sort of thing, and he didn't think anybody needed to. He didn't think it was necessary, regardless. And I often argued with him on that, that you can't know – every person is different, to which point a person can be taken, for either psychological or physical torture. I mean, you just don't know. And there are some surprising people, I mean I think Alfred Nzo was a man who had a terrible time under torture and never said a word. But others speak before they've even had a klap on the head. I can't say, I wouldn't like to surmise on that.

**DP:** Do you think she really was giving information, or just thought she was?

**RH:** No, I don't think she thought she was, or was. I think she was afraid she might if she came to a breakingpoint, and I think her vulnerability and her guilt maybe about her children ... you know, you have a lot of time to think when you're sitting in a situation like that. No, I think Ruth – I think that's the whole point. I think she would have rather killed herself than say anything. No, she didn't, certainly, give anything away, and I think she was afraid she might. I think maybe she felt her mind would go. You don't know what they might do to you. Perhaps – a clever girl like Ruth will think they would only have to give you an injection of Pentathil and maybe they can get something out of you.

**DP:** What was her relationship to Victor? A very strange relationship.

**RH:** Well, that's right, you see, because we didn't know enough until Ruth's book came out about the soft and the hard touch. And here was the man – they were all being beastly and terrible and horrible to her – and here was a man who was not. Maybe she thought that guy fancied me, you know.

**DP:** Didn't he perhaps? Because he left the security service [indistinct].

**RH:** He might have, you know. He might well have done. Certainly anybody like Ruth could have persuaded him that he was in the wrong job! Yes, I think if he had a mind at all, and I think he probably did – and that's what got to her, you see. He was the only one that had something that related to ... ja, I'm sure there was something of an affair of the minds there in her case, certainly. And maybe that's what upset her as well, you see. How can you fancy a bloody Special Branch man? But in that vulnerable situation you can.

[end of side two]