Jean Krasno: This is an interview with Mr. Dirk Mudge on Friday, March 9, 2001, in Windhoek, Namibia, and I’m Jean Krasno.

First of all, I wanted to just ask you about your personal background: where you were born and educated, and something about your professional career.

Dirk Mudge: I was born in Otjiwarongo, a small town up north, in 1928, a long time ago. My grandfather came from South Africa just after the First World War. He was in a way involved in the war at the time, against the Germans, not as a soldier, but he did transport for the army from the south, and [during that time] he made contact with Namibia. So after the war, South Africa took over, they defeated the Germans, and they took control of the country and in the mandate system—you know all about that, don’t you, so I need not bother you and waste your time. Actually people from South Africa were at that time encouraged to come here, because there was nothing here, there was almost no development. They came all the way from South Africa with a donkey wagon. You know donkeys, and you know wagons (laughter) with wooden wheels. They trekked for about six months to get to Otjiwarongo. That is where I was born.
At that time, there were no schools or hostels. There was a small school in Otjiwarongo with no hostel, so I had to go to a farm school where the owner’s garage was the classroom and they had a private teacher. I was already about eleven years old when I went to the town school for the first time. Nowadays things are different; everybody wants to have laboratories and new classrooms, and what have you, but we had to start with almost nothing. At that time, there were no farms—there were few farms. My grandfather was given a piece of land; not a farm, there was nothing there. No windmill, no water, no fences, nothing absolutely. It was the beginning of development in the country. I went to school in Otjiwarongo later, then I went to Windhoek high school there, I went to the University of Stellenbosch where I got my Bachelor of Commerce degree. I came back to Windhoek, because I always said I wanted to come back to my country. I worked for a short while as an accountant, and then I went into farming. In 1961, I became a member of the Legislative Assembly, the all-white Legislative Assembly. I think I was 33 years old at the time. In '65, four years later, they elected me as a member of the Executive Committee. That is the small cabinet. We were only responsible for local administration. Certain things we were not allowed even to discuss, and that was foreign affairs, “native affairs” as they called it at the time, military, police, those were still under South African control. We had to look after the roads and the schools and water, et cetera, local authorities.

At that time, when I became a member of the Executive Committee, local politicians had no contact with international issues. We read about it, we talked about it, but we could not make any contribution. It was only a few years later, in 1972, when Dr. Waldheim paid a visit to Namibia. And for the first time, I as a politician, as a local
politician, had the opportunity also to express my views and ask questions and make proposals. That’s more or less my background.

JK: So Kurt Waldheim came to Windhoek.

DM: He came to Windhoek, and the Executive Committee had a very short, I think half an hour or it could have been an hour, I can’t remember, interview with Waldheim. That is now the story, and I don’t know whether you want to react to what I’ve said just now. I’ve got a profile, which is not written by me, on me personally. I don’t think it’s very important, but maybe you could have a look at it.

JK: That would be nice.

DM: It is the fact that even in the early ‘70s that I made statements and expressed opinions, which at that time were nothing white people had ever said. They never dared say [those things]. Then I spoke against apartheid and discrimination and things like that. So nowadays, to switch from one party to another is no problem. People join SWAPO and everybody just thinks it’s fine—it’s democracy! When I left the National Party in 1977, I was considered to be a traitor. People shouted at me, they had demonstrations and things like that. So it wasn’t so easy at that time. We’re talking about 33 years ago, when I broke with the ruling party because of the Apartheid policy.
JK: Explain that to me a little bit more. You had been a member of the National Party, and when did you break with that party?

DM: That is now a long story, but let me just say I was in the National Party—I have to tell you this because otherwise it will be completely out of context. I just explained to you that as a local politician, I had no opportunity to participate in the international process. I knew about it, it was on the agenda of the United Nations, but because of our lack of contact and understanding, we said “Ach, the United Nations, what a toothless dog, what can they do?” That’s what we were told by South Africa.

When I became a member of the Executive Committee in 1965, the first important event was the 1966 court case before the International Court of Justice.

JK: And Mr. Pik Botha was on the team then.

DM: Yes. You will remember the outcome. Actually South Africa pretended that they won the case, but that was not the case. The case was just thrown out because the judges, by the casting vote of the president, found that Ethiopia and Liberia had no interest in the affair. On a very technical point, it was stopped.

JK: So it was just because of the president of the court that that decision came down that way.
DM: Yes, but it was actually not won by anybody. It was just a matter of the case...you know, Ethiopia and Liberia is actually in a case before the world court, the co-plaintiffs, the people who start [the case], must prove that they have a personal interest. As such, they didn’t have any interest, the countries, so it was just thrown out.

But of course still I was looking at this thing from a distance in 1966. After that, the first thing that came was the ’70 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, when they declared South Africa’s presence in Namibia as illegal. That was just an advisory opinion, but still very important. That was followed by very far-reaching and drastic steps by the United Nations. I mean the terming of the presence as illegal, asking member states to cooperate to apply sanctions against South Africa, et cetera. Now of course, as somebody who has an interest, I was getting worried about this situation, and I was getting frustrated because there was not anything I could do. I was just an observer. So I think it was in ’72, when Dr. Waldheim came here that we insisted we wanted to talk to him. I mean, at least we are leaders, we are related leaders of at least a white population, so we wanted to talk to Waldheim. We met him: it was a very short meeting, and nothing important [happened]. But because of the Uniting for Peace resolution by the United Nations, Waldheim actually came here to start to resolve the problem.

Now may I just interrupt myself: you know, this Namibian issue was on the agenda of the United Nations since the formation of the United Nations, from 1945 and especially after the League of Nations was dissolved in ’46. So now we’re talking about 1972. What was the role of the United Nations as such during that period from ’46 to ’72? Actually, they couldn’t find a solution. It was a very long time: we’re talking about twenty-five to thirty years. And apart from discussing, deliberating, accusations
[between] South Africa and the United Nations—you know they went on for years and years without anything really happening. Okay, maybe at that time the United Nations was not given to undertaking special programs, but I just want to point out that for a very long time they didn’t really achieve anything.

JK: Right, exactly.

DM: Then Waldheim interfered, and he said, “Fine, I will come to Namibia, talk to South Africa, and try and find a solution.” He didn’t get far, I don’t think he really had much success, but then he appointed Dr. Escher as his Special Representative. Dr. Escher came here in ’73. At that time, I objected. I said, “Come on, we must also be consulted.” With all the court cases—there was the 1966 court case, the 1970 court case—the lawyers, Pik Botha, and those people came here and they didn’t even talk to me.

JK: They didn’t?

DM: They did not even consult us locally. They spoke to their cronies, you know, the people who were on their side. So then I started insisting. To make a long story short, in ’73, when Escher came here, Dr. Hilgard Muller was then the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Muller asked me whether I would be able to accompany Dr. Escher on a trip to the country. He was Waldheim’s Special Representative. But the Commissioner for Indigenous Peoples—that was Mr. De Wet—he accompanied him in the north, and I
accompanied him in the southern commercial farms and towns. That was my first involvement.

After that, I spoke to Dr. Muller, and I said to him, “I want to go to the United Nations. I want to see for myself what’s going on there.” He said okay, he had no objections. [I would go] as an observer of course; I couldn’t go as a member of the South African delegation. Mr. Billy Marais was at that time a friend of mine, and we decided. He said we could go.

I’m leaving out many details about Escher’s visit, or Mr. Vorster, who was the Prime Minister appointing the Advisory Council. When I objected, I said the Council is not composed properly because they have all the traditional leaders in there, they didn’t bring in the real leaders, that was after Dr. Escher’s visit in ’73. I suggested that Clemens Kapuuo, the real leader, must be invited to participate, and the South African government objected. They said he was not a leader. Because he was very much opposed to the South African governments’ administration of the country. So I started speaking to Kapuuo, and we sort of agreed that we must find a peaceful solution. Now Kapuuo at that time…

JK: About what years are we talking about?

DM: Let me just finish up. I will come back to the story.

One of the reasons why Kapuuo was prepared to speak to me was that he was Hosea Kutako’s successor. Hosea Kutako was the first petitioner at the United Nations. So the Hereros actually started the process; they started petitioning United Nations. They
were the first group to oppose the South African government’s policy. And now, at the latest stage, the United Nations recognized SWAPO as the true and authentic representatives of the people of Namibia, without an election. So they actually turned their backs on the Hereros and supported SWAPO. For reasons: I mean, maybe they thought SWAPO had a bigger chance of winning the war, or whatever. But this frustrated Kapuuo very much, and also because he was opposed to violence. Then Kapuuo and I started talking. “Let’s work for a peaceful solution. Let’s see if we can get away from armed struggle, from killing people.”

So then I went to the United Nations. And let me be honest. We’re not going by when I sat here and I watched the situation where the United Nations first tried to cancel South Africa’s membership in the United Nations. They did not allow the South African foreign minister to address the meeting, and [again did not allow it] for the second year. The year after that, South Africa withdrew from the United Nations. But in any case, when at last he was allowed to speak, all the members walked out with the exception of the Western countries—Malawi, I think, a few countries.

Then I realized that South Africa is just a no-win situation. Forget about it. It will get nowhere. I phoned Mr. Vorster, who was the Prime Minister of South Africa, and [said] I wanted to talk to him. On the day of my arrival at Johannesburg airport, I went directly to his office and said, “Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, you can never win. You’ve got the whole world against you, and whatever you do will not succeed. There is only one alternative. Let the people of Namibia themselves decide. That was your declared policy all these years, why don’t you implement it? The people of Namibia
themselves must decide.” Then he said, “Fine, come back to me in January.” I went back in January.

JK: Do you remember what year that was?

DM: The beginning of ’74. I came back in December ’73. I went to South Africa in ’74, and I proposed that a Committee be formed. Because the problem was so complicated at that stage that we had the South African army. We had the South African police. We had the various South African departments. We had politicians. And everybody was trying to determine the future of the country. I said that, “This is now chaos; it can’t go on like this. There must now be a coordinated plan. How do we go from here?” And then a Committee was formed. We called it the Koördinerende Komitee. Again, to cut a long story short, out of this, a decision was taken that all the parties in the country be invited to a conference. That was the Turnhalle conference.

JK: And it was called that because…

DM: Because of the building where it took place.

JK: And that was in Windhoek.

DM: Yes, in Windhoek. Obviously, SWAPO did not participate, for good reasons I do understand. They were involved in an armed struggle. They did not accept our
credibility; they thought it was just another trick. So I do understand. This is just a fact, that SWAPO did not participate in the Turnhalle conference.

JK: How many parties did participate?

DM: At the time, we had forty parties in the countries—splinter parties. That’s why DTA came later. But at that time, you didn’t know where to go. You invited whoever you thought was representing somebody—different groups and so on. Anyway, it was representative of the various groups, maybe it was not representative of the whole country, as SWAPO was not involved, but at least it was a beginning.

JK: Was SWANU involved?

DM: SWANU wasn’t; SWANU came in later. SWANU was not involved. Moses Katjuuongua was not there.

JK: He was out of the country.

DM: They were outside the country. So we met and we started discussing constitutions. We set down dates—December 7, April…. But what is important is we started with the process of convincing the people of Namibia that firstly, the country will have to become independent. This was never accepted at that point by the white population. They still insisted that South Africa had the League mandate, and it was
never the intention that Namibia should become independent, but that it should be made part of South Africa. That’s what they thought, so we had to start with that first.

Convincing them that the country must become independent.

Secondly, we had to convince them that Apartheid would have to go. You can’t have an independent country [with it]. There will have to be a one man-one vote election. There will have to be a constitution, a democratic constitution.

In this process, I found that there was a rift between me and my white colleagues representing the white group in the Turnhalle, because it became clear they had a hidden agenda. They wanted to use the Turnhalle to sort of establish a system that will protect only one group. I found out, and then I found out they had a lot of sympathy from South Africa. And then within the Turnhalle, apart from discussions going on there, in our separate meetings as a caucus we started fighting between me and my white colleagues. Again, to cut a long story short, I challenged the leader, I even challenged him at a congress of the party. I lost with a few votes. I walked out, and then I formed a new party called the Republican Party, which was in fact a party representing the white members of the old party that supported me. When I walked out of the congress, about seventy people left the congress with me. Then this new party formed an alliance with all the other groups that participated in the Turnhalle conference, and we formed the DTA.

JK: That’s how it started.

DM: That’s how it started. The DTA of course was composed ethnically, because that was at that time the only possibility. There were too many parties and you couldn’t
clearly identify leaders. So many of the black groups represented were actually representing the different [ethnic groups]: the Kavangos, the Hereros, the Namas. That is a different story. Unfortunately, this is a fact that you can’t deny; it’s a problem here. All over the world it’s a problem. Ethnic people are killing each other because of that. The question is do you ignore it, or do you try and find solutions for it. After all these years, you still have a black caucus in the United States.

JK: That’s right.

DM: You have conflicting interests. If you want to deny it or not, even now the ruling party has classified the country into the haves and the have-nots. So I’m a “have” now, whether I like it or not, I’m classified.

JK: As an opposition party.

DM: Well, no, not necessarily, because we have many have-nots in the opposition party as well. But that’s how the DTA was actually formed in 1977. Since 1977, many things happened. I think that it is important that we should talk about the United Nations during this period, because that is what you are focusing on.

JK: [That is what] I’m more or less focusing on, but I’m also interested in the formation of the party. I wanted to ask you about the effects of economic and political sanctions on South Africa. Did that actually affect Namibia?
DM: I don’t think so. We were talking last night again about sanctions in the case of Iraq and Khadafi. Sanctions make things maybe difficult, but I don’t think, personally, sanctions played such an important role. I don’t think so. I didn’t feel it myself; I didn’t notice it myself. I think what was more important was the internal situation. Although South Africa at that time, they were more concerned about the Cuban presence in Angola, the expansion of the communist influence. Those were the things that really worried them. I think South Africa was economically strong enough to survive as far as sanctions are concerned. I personally think so. For how long? Maybe they didn’t realize what the long-term effects would be, I don’t know. But I personally don’t think sanctions, as such, were the sort of straw that broke the camel’s back. I don’t think so.

JK: What year was DTA, as such, formed? In what year?

DM: It was formed in 1977.

JK: So before resolution 435 was passed.

DM: Yes, before resolution 435. And now let me tell you what happened. And this is important, and I hope it will be understood. Whatever people might say about the Turnhalle conference, it was a beginning. Up to that time, it was SWAPO and South Africa and the United Nations. The internal people, the peace-loving people in the country, divided in a way—those who want to remain under South African control and
those people like me who realized that we must go it alone—we were ignored completely. We didn’t play a role. But then when we started with the Turnhalle, people all over the world said, “Something’s going to happen in Namibia, we’d better move.” And especially after I broke away from the National Party, and it became clear that although we are not prepared to fight and start an armed struggle, there is a political movement in Namibia, which cannot be ignored.

You may call it a bluff, it wasn’t really a bluff, but then we decided to write the constitution and at least to ask South Africa to allow us in Namibia to change laws, do away with discriminatory measures, and so on and so forth. That’s where we started this. Then for the first time, the international community woke up, and the five contact group countries came to South Africa. What we did here actually triggered that. We provoked it, and said now it’s not just a matter of two parties—South Africa and SWAPO—fighting and we want to make peace between them. There’s something new happening in Namibia. There’s a third force, more or less, going on in Namibia. And that is when they came to South Africa, and they even arranged a meeting with me in Cape Town. The five ambassadors. They said, “What are you guys up to?” I said, “Well, we have to move. What are you doing?”

JK: That’s fantastic. I didn’t know they met with you in Cape Town.

DM: They started talking with South Africa. Now of course what transpired between South Africa and the five, I wouldn’t know. I can only judge from my own experience. And then they started talking to me and to the DTA as well, because we thought we were
of the association, the contact between the internal leaders and SWAPO. They thought the DTA’s just another South African puppet, and they are just trying to support South Africa’s policy. Which wasn’t true. But that’s what they thought, so they were very suspicious. I tried to convince them that we are associated with South Africa for one reason only: from 1966, SWAPO started the guerrilla warfare. At that time, there was no army in Namibia, there were no police forces except the local police in Namibia, and there was no way Namibia could defend itself against the guerrillas, which we called them at that stage. We couldn’t do it, so leaders’ and populations’ lives were in danger, and South Africa got involved. First, the police came here, at a later stage the army came here. We were strange bedfellows. We had no option. South Africa had to provide the money for the administration of the country. South Africa had to provide protection; they had to defend the country. And in the process, we were associated with South Africa. Although we disagreed—I personally disagreed with the South African policy—breaking away from the National Party, which was a variant of the South African party, of course I came into confrontation with South African rulers. Whether I liked it or not, I was dependent. Okay, fine.

So to get back to the story, the five contact group countries came, and then they started talking about a settlement plan, which was then called the Western Proposals, or the Western Settlement Plan, which made provision for an election, a free and fair election. The DTA… I had problems, I want tell you, even as far as the black people are concerned. I had problems in convincing them, to persuade them to accept the Western Proposals. Not because they were opposed to independence, but because they didn’t trust
the United Nations. Kapuuo repeatedly said, “Why did the United Nations reject my people, who were the first petitioners at the United Nations? Why did they declare SWAPO sole and authentic representatives, in spite of the fact that there had never been an election in the country? How can a world body say SWAPO is the true and authentic representative? On what grounds can they say that? They can say, okay, we want to have an election, and then we will elect the true and authentic representatives. But you cannot declare them true and authentic just because you are anti-South Africa.” The feeling was that the United Nations were in fact supporting an armed struggle, supporting a military solution, while we were now talking about a democratic solution.

In any case, ultimately the DTA said, “Fine, we accept. We accept resolution 435, but then we must just sort out this impartiality issue.” How can the United Nations play a role in such a manner that they will not be biased in favor of one or the other party. This took a long time. I know that there was a conference in ’81 in Geneva, and SWAPO was there, people from the United Nations were there, we were invited, trying to get the parties together. And I had a meeting on my own. Mr. Genscher of Germany was foreign minister of Germany, and invited me to the Intercontinental Hotel, present with five ambassadors: McHenry from the United States, Genscher, and I can’t remember all the rest.

JK: And this was in Geneva in ’81. It was right in the last weeks of the Carter Administration, and they were trying, before Reagan would come in, to pull some of this together.
Exactly. I said to them, “No problem, but one thing you have to do is to disassociate yourself with SWAPO. You have to do something to convince my people that you are really impartial, that you are objective. So you have to make a statement. The United Nations will have to make some sort of declaration that they are impartial. Withdraw their recognition of one political party.” I remember McHenry saying, “But there’s no time; we are going to implement 435 in a week’s time.” That was ’81. I said, “Forget it, it will not happen.” It took another eight years. But they thought it would go that fast. In any case, whatever we did, you know they came with the sort of explanation. They said, “This decision to recognize SWAPO was taken by the General Assembly, not by the Security Council.” I said, “People in Namibia don’t know the difference between the Security Council and the General Assembly. They talk about the United Nations. So you have to do something.” This was when they started talking about the mechanics, the nuts and the bolts about how many troops, when must they go, how many of this, how many of that, all that.

In the meantime, as a political party with no record—we didn’t participate in an armed struggle—we had to do something. We couldn’t live any longer with the system of Apartheid. We couldn’t go on allowing South Africa to administer their tyranny. That is why we insisted on all the interim governments. Give us some power; let us do things in the country. Let’s prepare for independence. We can’t just postpone everything until the day of independence. We knew that no interim government could declare unilateral independence (UDI). I knew that all the time. People were afraid that we might just become independent without SWAPO, but we were not that stupid; we knew. But we used the opportunity in the interim period to pick up experience. Many of our people
never ruled before; they were never abroad where they could be exposed to a broader international community. We had to change the white population’s thinking. That’s what I had to do. I started when I broke away. I had to decide to convince them that Apartheid can’t work, [that we must work for] better human relations, we must all become Namibians. We did that during the interim period.

JK: I wanted to ask you about the preliminary constitution that was put together in Geneva at that time. You had said earlier that here in Namibia you had begun to think about a Namibian constitution. I was wondering if some of the ideas that you had been working on were brought to Geneva.

DM: No, Geneva was a failure altogether. What happened there didn’t work.

JK: I know it never went forward…

DM: I don’t think, and I can’t remember that we actually even discussed constitutions at that time. We discussed elections, how an election should be conducted, and that was the issue. Not constitutions.

JK: But that there would be a bill of rights.

DM: Yes, that was accepted right from the beginning, that there should be a bill of rights. Let me come back to the United Nations as far as our confusions are concerned.
That is important. I come to Chester Crocker and the Western Contact Group...the role that the respective two groups had played. In any case, then what happened is that Waldheim came with an amendment to the Settlement Plan, and that sort of almost ruined the whole thing. I’m talking about ’78, ’79, I can’t remember the date. After 435 was accepted by South Africa, by us, by everybody, he came with an amendment, which provided for SWAPO troops to be brought back into the country before the election, and to be stationed and confined at designated locations.

JK: Inside Namibia.

DM: In Namibia, inside Namibia, where the understanding was, right from the beginning, the South Africans would be confined to base, they would go back to South Africa, and SWAPO would be confined to base where they were in Angola. SWAPO of course maintained that they had bases in Namibia, which wasn’t true. I mean, we all know that. They came in and they left, but they never controlled any part of the country. Whatever, that amendment finally delayed the process. Then the South Africans, and we as an internal party...can you imagine, with hundreds of thousands of SWAPO guerillas coming into the country, that would leave the impression that they had, in fact, taken over the country? So let’s stick with the original Settlement Plan, and this didn’t happen, so it was sort of a deadlock. From that [point], for two or three years, not much happened. Then Chester Crocker came.

JK: Yes.
DM: When we met in Freiburg, at the time after the election at this sort of post-mortem, we had both Chester Crocker there and the Contact Group, from Germany, and Donald McHenry from the United States. It was very interesting to see how both claimed to have been the saviors of Namibia. The contact group said, “We started the whole process,” which is true. Chester Crocker said, “But you couldn’t pull it through. I had to take over. I settled the promise.” So in fact, in the process, again it was not the high rate of involvement by the United Nations, it was, in fact, firstly, the five, the Contact Group. When they couldn’t get any further... every time agreement was reached, it was supported by a United Nations resolution, because neither the Contact Group nor Crocker could finalize anything. But they were in fact the negotiators; they were the people. We didn’t negotiate with the United Nations. We had talks with them. I met the Secretary-General. But Crocker picked up from where the Contact Group actually stuck when they couldn’t get any further.

Then they could never really solve the impartiality issue. They were at no stage prepared to withdraw their recognition of SWAPO. So we had to look for other assurances, so things can’t go wrong. In 1982, Crocker came, which was later known as the 1982 principles. That is very important, the 1982 principles. Those are available; I can make you copies of the ‘82 principles and a few things, and if you give me your address I will mail it to you. I will make you a set of the documents that I refer to now. What is important about the 1982 principles is that that put our minds at ease a little bit. I just want to see if I can [find the passage]. It is very short, but I think that was actually
the breakthrough, the 1982 principles. This is actually a very objective report on the whole…

JK: Let’s read this into the record what this book is. It is Namibia 1990: An Africa Institute Country Survey. And where would you get this?

DM: From the Africa Institute in South Africa in Johannesburg. I will also give you the address.

JK: Okay, good, we can get a copy of this book.

DM: It’s a little history, it’s very objective; it’s not pro-South Africa. But in any case, I don’t want to waste too much time now. The important thing about the 1982 principles was that it prescribed certain fundamental principles, which must be taken up in a new constitution.

JK: Okay, that’s good, because this is what I wanted to get at.

DM: Here they are: “Principles concerning the Constituent Assembly. In accordance with the United Nations, elections will be held to select a constituent assembly, which will adopt a constitution,” and then they say, “Every adult member will be eligible to vote. Voting will be secret ballot. The date for, et cetera, et cetera, the constitution…. “Principles,” this must be in the constitution: “Namibia will be a united, sovereign and
democratic state. The constitution will be the supreme law. The constitution will determine the organization, powers and legalities of government,” et cetera, et cetera.

“The electoral system will be consistent with the principles. There will be a declaration of...

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…fundamental rights, which will include the rights to life, person and liberty, freedom of movement, freedom of consciousness, to freedom of expression, including freedom of speech, free press, assembly, association, including political parties, for due process and equality before the law. To the protection from arbitrary deprivation of private property.”

That was very important.

JK: I wanted to get at that, because I wasn’t sure when that first came in.

DM: “Without just compensation,” et cetera, et cetera. So then came this.

JK: So the issue of the protection of private property was really written into these Principles.

DM: Yes.

JK: And how was this agreed upon? How was this organized?
DM: Then they came here, and they talked to the different political parties.

JK: But who actually wrote that?

DM: I was under the impression that the 1982 Principles was a proposal by Crocker, which was condoned also by the United Nations. It was accepted.

This was a new initiative. All of a sudden, we all were a little more relaxed about the whole thing. I think it could have gone very fast from there, but then came in the Cuban issue. And the Cuban issue actually delayed the process for quite a long time. I don’t know whether there was a...you see, this is the first time that South Africa could find common ground with some of the Western countries. The first time. And they were very clever, don’t make a mistake, they were very clever. But we all know...and of course they knew Reagan, who took over as the new President in the United States. And all of a sudden, all of a sudden the focus was not any more on constitutional matters, but the withdrawal of the Cuban troops. And again, this was out of our hands. Again, the Namibian politicians couldn’t play much of a role. They started negotiations about the phased withdrawal of the Cuban troops, and meetings, and meetings and meetings.

JK: Right. Well I want to talk a little bit about that, because we were talking about the issue of private property. Was there a general fear that SWAPO really was a Marxist organization, and that if they were to come and take over power, that they would nationalize all the property? Was that the main fear? Was there a fear of communism and a fear of this pattern of communism of taking over property?
DM: Among other issues. You must appreciate that SWAPO’s declared policy was nationalization. I mean that was their declared policy. They said it, and they said they believed in the moral superiority of the Socialist system. They made statements like that. The whole thing’s changed with the fall of communism in Russia. That also is very important today. It was part of it, when you look back. I asked Martti Ahtisaari in Freiburg, after the election, “Tell me, frankly, do you think independence for Namibia ten years earlier would have been a success?” Frankly, I mean, apart from all the price in human lives and the price in terms of money. “Do you really think it could have worked when SWAPO was still very much under the influence of Russia [and] East Germany, with a lack of experience, and all the things that happened afterward, the 1982 Principles, et cetera?” And Martti Ahtisaari agreed with me. Would he be prepared to say it today, I don’t know, but he said, “No, it couldn’t work ten years ago.” So in spite of everything, it might have been a good thing that the process was delayed for some time. The Cubans withdrew, South Africa’s fear of a Cuban and Russian presence in Angola…. You know, when I went to the United States after Reagan was elected, I had a meeting with Jeanne Kirkpatrick. I was so frustrated, because she didn’t want to talk about Namibia. She was only talking about Angola and Savimbi. She said, “How is Savimbi doing?” I said, “Ma’am, I’m not representing Savimbi, I’m talking for Namibia.” The Americans were more interested in what was happening in Angola at that stage.
JK: That’s right.

DM: You know that. What was that?

JK: The total focus was on the containment of communism. That was the prime foreign policy.

DM: Exactly. And for the first time they had common ground with the South Africans, so this was now the one thing. They said, “Now let’s forget about the rest. Let’s first get the bloody Cubans out.” This delayed the process. In any case, in this process, I think we had a wonderful opportunity of working on constitutional models in the country. We had a long time, and we wrote several of them, and SWAPO had the opportunity to have another look at their constitution in the meantime. And especially after events in Russia, SWAPO was advised to amend their constitution, their proposed constitution, by an Indian lawyer in South Africa.

Now again, I’m skipping a few years. When we met in the Constituent Assembly, after the election, I was one of the members of the Standing Committee, which is the small committee that wrote the constitution. And when we had our first meeting, all the parties came with their draft constitutions, and we put them on the table. So the chairman, who was Mr. Hage Geingob, the prime minister—and I have a hearing problem—so I had to several times say, “Please sir, will you sit next to me?” So I was sitting next to the chairman. We had a very good working relationship. Then he said, “What do we do now with all these constitutions? Do we take them paragraph by paragraph...
paragraph and compare? What do we do from here?” So I made a proposal that shocked them, surprised them, even my colleagues. And this is official; it’s on record. I said, “Let us take the SWAPO paper, constitution, as the working paper. Take that constitution. Forget about the others, but let’s discuss this one. With our background, our knowledge, we can then discuss it article by article, and make proposals to amend it according to other proposals that we have there.”

So Hage later said he didn’t know how to react to that. He said, “Mudge, now he’s coming with entreaties, is he trying to fool us, what the hell has he got in mind?” But they thanked me for that afterwards. And we had a wonderful cooperation. Why did I make that proposal? Because the SWAPO constitution at that stage was so different from the one that we knew years ago; it moved away completely from all those terrible things that we were afraid of. You see? So we all learned in the process. And that’s why I even found paragraphs in that which were taken from the Indian constitution. It was Ishmail Mohammed who helped them with their new constitution; who was of Indian origin. I even found parts from the DTA constitution in there, which they took over. So we already came closer together. And coming back to the ’82 Principles…and I worked very hard, I know that Hage Geingob made mention of the fact that one night we got into a deadlock situation, and I was the one who said, “What do we do now, go back to the plenary and tell them that we have failed? No way, we will work through the night until we find common ground.” And he admitted that, and I was very often praised for my role in this small Standing Committee.

In any case, after the election, at the first session, after we had proposals of the Standing Committee, Theo-Ben Gurirab stood up in the Assembly and he said that he
wanted to propose that the 1982 Principles would form the basis of our new constitution. That was accepted by everybody in that meeting. So the importance of the 1982 Principles can never be overemphasized. That is for sure. That made all the difference. It could have happened earlier—the implementation, the elections in Namibia—were it not for the Angolan mission.

JK: Right. Now we’ve actually covered a lot of things in the discussion. One of the things that I wanted to ask you about is during the interim government period, there was a movement, I think it was actually Moses Katjiuongua…

DM: Multi-party conference.

JK: But what they wanted to do was to abolish the AG-8. In hindsight, what do you think about that movement?

DM: I know exactly; even when you speak to Moses, he feels very strongly about it. Let me say, the first interim government--we elected them--I think the sequence is very important. In ’78, we had an internal election to elect a Constituent Assembly, local, and again SWAPO did not participate. Immediately after the election, and simultaneously P.W. Botha took over from Vorster. Vorster was stubborn, Vorster said, “We’re not going to wait for the United Nations, we’re going to have an election in Namibia, so that we have leaders we can talk with and decide.” We had an election and DTA won that election. Then immediately after the election, P.W. Botha had contact with the United
Nations, with Waldheim, and I don’t know with whom in the Western countries. They said, “Now what the hell is happening now in Namibia? Please don’t go ahead with a Constituent Assembly.” So then we asked, “But what do we do with this body? We’ve had an election; we’ve elected seventy-two people. Now you don’t want us to write a constitution. What do we do?” And then we came to an agreement that they would allow this elected body to be transformed into a national assembly so that they can make laws for the country. We said, “Thank God.” Okay, fine.

The first thing I did was to propose a bill that did away with all social Apartheid. And I can tell you, the whites had demonstrations in the streets against my proposal. It was a hell of a demonstration, and I can tell you I had to be protected. People wanted to do me harm. That was the first one. But immediately, I had problems with South Africa. They said, “How can you do that? How can you discriminate now against the white people?” Immediately there was a fight between me and South Africa. And when we started making laws, the white party in the country, the old Conservative Party, complained and they talked to South Africa: “This government, which is now an assembly selected on a one-man, one-vote basis, all the groups are not properly and equally represented.” And that is where the fight against me in South Africa actually started. So then I made a law to change the public organization, to do away with the South African public organization. The Administrator General refused to sign, and then I resigned as Chairman of the government as a protest because South Africa wouldn’t sign my law.

JK: Explain to me: you were Chairman of this National Assembly?
DM: I was a Minister, but we didn’t call it Minister at that stage. I was the Chairman of this small Cabinet. Regter Steyn was the Administrator General; later he handed it over to Viljoen. But then P.W. Botha abolished the government. He just abolished it because, he said, we were doing things that were having an effect on South African politics. We were moving away from Apartheid too fast.

JK: So he abolished this interim government?

DM: In 1982 he abolished that government. Then all the powers went back to the South African government. Then in the meantime, this so-called AG-8 was implemented by the Administrator General.

JK: So it was created then.

DM: It was made for representative authorities.

JK: Just explain that, because I don’t think that many people would understand. These representative authorities were ethnic authorities. So it was each ethnic group that would have a separate authority.

DM: Yes. And let me just explain my position as far as the ethnic authorities are concerned. Actually, the break in the National Party was because of the powers given to
the ethnic authorities. That’s where I differed from my colleagues. I said that only matters which directly affect a group, like a language, for instance, if they want to campaign for language rights, they want to start private schools, things like that, but I could never agree that functions which affect the whole country could be given to the representative authorities. But during that period, the Administrator General issued this proclamation. As far as I’m concerned, although I was not opposed to some sort of representative body for an ethnic group, I could never accept that a representative authority could control roads and railways and ethnic culture and things like that. So I was also not happy with AG-8, of course not. But it was a compromise. It was also discriminatory, because the white group had all the money and the others had nothing.

JK: Exactly. Who was the Administrator General at that time?

DM: Gerrit Viljoen. But of course he did it on instructions from South Africa. He was not responsible personally. I think he had a lot of sympathy for my point of view. I tried to persuade him not to give too much power to the ethnic authorities, but he had to make a compromise, because South Africa was very much concerned about white unity in the country, because if we fight here, the fight will affect South African politics.

In any case, the interim government was abolished. I walked out, and this is a story that is also taken up in my biography. I had a meeting with Prime Minister P.W. Botha, we fought and I walked out and I slammed the door. And that was the end of the government; he just abolished the government, the second one. The first one he abolished because I resigned. I resigned because in terms of proclamation, if I resigned
there had to be a meeting of the Assembly, and I thought we could pick up a fight in the Assembly. But he abolished the government [instead]. So the second government, in 1982, again he abolished because of the fight that I had with him. Then there was nothing in the country. That is when we started talking with Moses Katjiuongua, Andreas Shipanga, and other leaders. Because a new Administrator General was appointed, Willie Van Niekerk, and he wanted to take an initiative, a new initiative to put together a new government more on the South African model. And I was immediately opposed to that.

This is where people like Moses Katjiuongua were actually without a power base in the country. And I’m not saying it because I have anything personally against Moses. I’m just stating facts now. Moses and Shipanga were not on SWAPOs side, but they were also not in the DTA, and they had no power base, as it was proven later. They had no support. Moses always wanted to have Herero support, but because he couldn’t get a foothold in the Herero constituency, he opposed everything that smells of ethnicity. He had to find a new power base. I spoke to him on many occasions. I said, “Moses, whether you like it or not, every party in this country has got an ethnic group as its power base. Whether you like it or not, if you want to get anywhere in politics, you must get the Herero people behind you because the Owambos will not support you, and no other group will support you. You have to get a power base.”

In any case, we opposed the South African effort to start what they called a “State Council” here. We took the initiative to start a multi-party conference: Moses Katjiuongua, the DTA, the other councils. This led to a new government of national unity. Moses Katjiuongua was also a member of this government. But still, while Moses
and Shipanga were in this government of national unity, they had their own private quarrels with their respective groups: Moses with the Hereros and Shipanga with the Owambos. The only way they could have themselves known as fighting against everything that’s ethnic. This is where they started to say we must abolish AG-8. I said, “AG-8 is law, AG-8 is discriminatory, AG-8 can never work as it is. It must be changed. But you are not elected.” Moses and Shipanga never took part in any election at that time. They were just put there by the South African government. The DTA at least had an election before. And we had to negotiate representation, or they had to negotiate representation, but Moses and these other parties never took part in the election.

I said to Moses, “On principle grounds, you, not having been elected, now want to abolish authorities that have been elected. Right or wrong, they have been elected. My view is, let us talk about amendment and find a way out, get away from all the problems that we have with AG-8. But I’m not going to accept that you, now having a problem to find a political base,” which he could never find, unfortunately. Poor old Moses, even in the last election he didn’t even get one seat. But at the time, Shipanga and Moses wanted to take over the government. You see, they wanted to play a role that they really did not deserve. Nice people, articulate people, friends of mine, but I think they never had the possibility of playing a very important role.

Now ultimately, of course, this government of national unity had to be dissolved before the election. I think you have a point on cooperation with Louis Pienaar, the last Administrator General. I had fights with him; he did not want to change many of the things in the country. One of them was that we wanted to take away certain functions of the white representative authority. They controlled white integration, up to the last day.
Now how the hell can we fight in an election against SWAPO with separation in schools? So we wanted to change that. Again, to prove my point, I wanted to change AG-8, I didn’t want to insult the Herero’s or the Namas by saying, “You have no rights, you are not entitled to any form of representation.” “Fine, you can have it, but you cannot obstruct progress in this country.” So we have to take away powers from them. I could not succeed. Louis Pienaar was insisting the white representative authority would remain in control of the white interests. This did us a lot of harm. You know, I did away with more or less all discrimination, except in schools. And that was the wonderful opportunity that SWAPO had, when they came to the election and they fought the DTA and said, “We still have separation in schools.” And I told the South African government and Louis Pienaar, “You are expecting us to participate in an election with this old awful business of separate schools on our shoulders.

Financing the DTA is another point on your list of questions.

JK: That’s right. I was going to ask you about that. You have a good memory.

DM: I’ve already told you that unfortunately, whether we liked it or not, we were in a way associated with South Africa. We were contaminated by the South African policies. But we had no option, because the war was going on until the first of April. South Africa had to defend us, they had to fight against SWAPO militarily, while we were swamped fighting against SWAPO politically. So we were fighting the same opponent. Terrible situation, but it’s a fact.
One thing that worried me when we spoke about the election, all the years I said, “Where are we going to get the money? Where are we going to get the money to fight SWAPO in a fair and free election?”

JK: To build the political party campaign.

DM: Would we get it from the international community? Forget it. We might get it from a few European parties who might have some sympathy with us. But we’re talking about millions. Where are we going to get that money? SWAPO has it. They have only their properties, their companies, and we knew that they had money. They had been supported by East Germany, by Russia, and by many other countries in the world. So it also was proven later that they had a lot of money. We had no money; we were dependent on our few supporters in the country, mainly white supporters because the black people couldn’t make much of a contribution. So I said to the South African government, “You will have to finance the DTA; you will have to give us money. You don’t, and it will be suicide. We are in fact solving your problem in a way. The minute Namibia is independent, you are rid of one of the problems that you’ve had for fifty years.” Thank God. I think that they can make a contribution to make it possible for the internal parties to participate in an election. And I can tell you, if it wasn’t for that, it would have been political suicide.

But now the important thing is, were there any strings attached? Because we were always accused that by financing us, the South African government would dictate to us. Now only people who are very ignorant believe that, because I had to fight with the
South African government for years. We were almost enemies at one stage. I wouldn’t allow them to dictate to me. I wouldn’t allow them to dictate to me. We criticized them, we fought them, I slammed the door in the face of the president. I mean, one thing about the government of national unity and Moses Katjiuongua, for the three years from ’82 to ’85 we had now interim government, and that’s where the multi-party conference came in, and that is where the multi-party conference started organizing for the new government. Let me tell you that Moses and Andreas were very eager to get into a government of some sort, that’s for sure. I was very much opposed to another interim government, because as I said, all the theories aside, let us now work on constitution models and forget about getting a job and a car and an office. But they really badly wanted to get it. Shipanga said it one day, “I’ve never ruled a fly in my life and I want to get into a government now.

But because of the fight between me and P.W. Botha, he wanted me to apologize, and when Moses and the whole group went to Cape Town to talk about the establishment of a new interim government, I got a message from the Administrator General that P.W. Botha said he will only agree if I apologize for insulting him. Can you believe it? A personal matter.


DM: But I said, “No, I’m not going to apologize.” Then we arrived in Cape Town, all of us, and they were sitting around the table and I could see the faces of all my
colleagues—Moses and Andreas—these guys badly wanted a government. Now Mudge is the problem, he’s now the one who is obstructing a government.

JK: Because you wouldn’t apologize.

DM: I have to apologize. And I wasn’t going to. So when we came in, the Administrator General was standing there and greeting the people. I was right at the back, coming in last, and when it was my turn I said, “Hello Mr. Botha, how are you?” And the Administrator General said, “Mr. Botha, Mr. Mudge has got something to say.”

JK: Okay, he was setting you up!

DM: I said, “Oh yes, Mr. Botha, I’m sorry, I want to apologize that we are late.” All the blood went out of his face; it was white, and you could see he was now sober. And I was looking at my colleagues and they were sitting there thinking, “Yeah, Mudge, you are now ruining the bloody thing. We want the government now, we want to have salaries and we want to rule. Now you ruined it because of your personal fight with P.W. Botha.” And then we sat down and the president said, “I don’t have time, I’ve got other work to do and I’m getting sick and tired of you people,” and he went on and on and on. And again, I looked at the other faces and I thought, “When we go out from here I will be enemy number one. What the hell do I do?” In any case, at one stage I said to the president, “President, I think really we are being childish and I think we are wasting a lot of time. What the hell is the problem?” I said, “In this process, all of us make mistakes,
all of us say things sometimes that hurt other people. I was on the receiving side and you were on the receiving side. But by God, if it is anything I did which makes things complicated, I’m sorry.” But I was not referring to that particular issue, I’m talking in general.

JK: That’s right, in general!

DM: In general, that’s right! But when I said, “Sorry,” he said, [bangs on the table] “Now that Mr. Mudge has apologized, now we can go on.”

JK: He was just waiting for some opportunity, a straw to grasp at. Oh my God.

DM: It was a matter of... I must apologize. “Now you must like that, P.W. Fine, then all the guys relaxed, I could see them smiling.

JK: Finally!

DM: Then we came back. You could write a book about all these things. I’m only telling you a few incidents. The fact of the matter is I wasn’t very enthusiastic about this last interim government, I must say that, because in a way the people were not elected. They were arbitrarily reappointed. All the National Party was in again, the old Conservative Party, they were in the cabinet again. It was more what P.W. Botha wanted. He wanted the whites on the executive body, which I refused. I said the DTA
JK: I think we’re almost finished. I just wanted to ask you about the reaction to the final elections, because while SWAPO eventually got about 56% of the seats in the National Assembly, or the Constituent Assembly, DTA actually did pretty well. You managed to keep them from getting two-thirds. So what was the reaction of DTA as the election results were coming in, and then to the final results?

DM: I want to repeat, I’ve said it earlier, you’ve got to know what is important to me is that DTA declared themselves in favor of democracy. We had, I had, hundreds of meetings in the country, and let me say that I spoke more about human relations and about constitutional matters, that is also true. Because I always said that the important thing in this country that must be put right is human relations, because of this black-white conflict. Often I said we might have moved too fast constitutionally, and not fast enough socially and economically. We had people in governments who were not really prepared for that, instead of working harder to bring people together. The difference between our situation and Zimbabwe and even South Africa, the difference is that the South African constitution was written in Kempton Park; the Zimbabwean constitution was written at Lancaster House; the Namibian constitution was written in bushes of the country. We consulted and informed the people about what we do. We didn’t set any walls up where we rushed through the constitution. At that time, when we met in the Constituent
Assembly, we had years and years of explaining, convincing people about what we really had in mind.

JK: The remarkable thing about Namibia is that the whites did not leave.

DM: Some of them left in '77, when I broke away. That was then the feeling, but that was long ago. That was actually when the United Nations involvement was for the first time announced. But in any case, the inhabitants of this country knew that when you take part in an election and you lose, then you wait for the next election.

JK: So that was part of the education process that you were carrying on.

DM: The educational process, yes. And whatever people might say, we were responsible for that process of education. SWAPO couldn’t do it because they were not here. They were outside, and they were also not interested in what happened after the election because they actually knew they would win the election. I knew, I never said it, but we got word, and we knew at best we hoped to get more than one-third.

JK: Did you also educate the white farmers that within the constitution private property would be respected?

DM: Yes, I had to convince them of that.
JK: That was key.

DM: I had to convince them, because they were very much concerned about it. And let me say, I am happy to say that the new government is absolutely determined not to deviate from the constitution. They made many other mistakes, but I must give them credit for their position on human rights and, among others, on private property. I’m not concerned about the acquisition of land for land distribution. What I am concerned about is the way it is now allocated, the way that these farms are now being given to new owners and the way they farm. That’s reason for great concern. But I always tell the farmers up to this day, there is not going to be a repetition of what’s happening in Zimbabwe. Most definitely not. I personally think it ended up… I can’t complain. I’m happy, I live in the country, my children are all here, all five of them. We will never leave Namibia. I think it’s the best place I know. I don’t want to go anywhere else.

JK: It’s a wonderful country.

DM: I think the United Nations played a very important role during the election. Martti Ahtisaari, we became enormous friends, I think he’s a nice guy, a very nice person. They tried their best. I don’t think it was really necessary to do it on that scale, but fine. Afterwards, nobody can complain. There were a few incidents. I think the one incident which almost ruined it was the first April thing, you know about that. Sad, I mean, so many people lost their lives in that incident, which was unnecessary, I would think. But SWAPO had to take up strength, to create the impression that they had taken
over militarily. They always wanted to. That’s why they always wanted bases within the territory. In a way, they were a little afraid of the election. I don’t think it was necessary for them to be, but they thought they would maybe. There are many accusations of rigging the election, the counting of votes. My position on that was to forget about it, don’t think or go back and talk about what could have happened. The lights going out when the papers were counted … I was happy. You know, the outcome of the election, in fact, couldn’t have made any difference. When the DTA and the other parties got one-third, SWAPO couldn’t write a constitution. So whether they got 60% or something percent, as long as they didn’t get two-thirds. Whatever. We could even get fifty-fifty. So the outcome of the election was actually only important in one respect: SWAPO couldn’t write the constitution on their own. There couldn’t be a sort of unilateral decision.

**JK:** It had to be a negotiated decision.

**DM:** Negotiated is the word. That is also why I said the day the constitution is accepted I want to retire. I wanted, I really wanted to retire. They persuaded me to stay on for one term. I did not complete my first term. I stayed on for two or three years. It’s now a new ballgame; it’s a new generation; it’s a new era. As far as my contribution is concerned, I have made that contribution in writing a constitution and getting the country independence. And now I want to retire. And fortunately, I could take that decision myself. Nobody asked me to retire, nobody forced me to retire; it was my decision. And that’s that.
JK: I really appreciate so much your giving your time to this, because I think your explanation of a number of the events is really important, and a [explains a] whole area that is completely misunderstood or not understood. I really appreciate it.

DM: I will say this: it is so sad, the role of the internal parties played—forget about me—the role of the internal parties, the people who did not take part in the armed struggle, the people like Kapuuo, who lost his life, was assassinated. I was on the hit list of SWAPO, it was admitted by the SWAPO head of the armed forces. I saw the correspondence. Kapuuo and myself were on the hit list, and had to report back that they couldn’t find me, that I’m still alive and well. But what is interesting, after the independence, I invited the man who gave the orders to shoot me, to come and hunt on my farm.

JK: That’s trust.

DM: Actually, he asked to come and hunt. He phoned me through his secretary and asked if I would invite him to come and hunt. I said, “You’re welcome, but what do you want to hunt?”

JK: Exactly!
DM: But he didn’t catch that one, he didn’t really understand what I meant. So they came, and we spent a day together on the back of my truck with a rifle—he’s got a rifle, I’ve got a rifle. And then afterwards, when the gentleman who wrote my biography wanted to know whether I wanted him to write about it, I said, “Yes, I will ask the man.” I told him, I said, “When you came to hunt on my farm, I knew that at one stage you ordered that I must be assassinated. I knew it, and I still invited you.” I said, “Do you have any problem if it’s published?” And he said, “No.”

JK: So that’s reconciliation.

DM: That is really reconciliation. But what I wanted to say is that it’s so sad that the poor DTA that played an important role without—maybe I’m claiming too much now—if I could not persuade the white and the black populations to accept 435, independence would not have been as successful as it was.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]