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Name of Interviewer: De Wet Potgieter

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Name of translator (if any): De Wet Potgieter

Name of transcriber:

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De Wet	It is Monday 11 October (12 October) 2009. I sit here with general Tienie Groenewald, retired head of military intelligence. Is that correct?
Tienie	Chief director of military intelligence.
De Wet	Chief director of military intelligence. General Groenewald was also one of the first parliamentarians for the Freedom Front until his retirement a few years ago. Tienie, I would like to talk to you about the establishment of the Volksfront (Peoples' Front) which was in those days labled by the Mail&Guardian as the "Night of the Generals". Please tell us how it came about that the Volksfront was established and why it had a military flavour to it.
Tienie	Let me start by saying, De Wet, that the inititiave for the establishment of the Volksfront came from the Boer Freedom Organisation and it consisted of people like prof. Alkmaar Swart, dr. Wally Grant, the world renowned nuclear phycisist and a reverend that is still the chairman of Radio Pretoria. I will remember his name just now. They decided, in the light of the threat against us, we have to unite the Afrikaner nation and we appointed a committee. The Committee of Four. A very strong driving force behind this was my broher, Jan

Groenewald. The committee of four under chairmanship of dr. Willie Lubbe, the current head of the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, prof. Adriaan Pont en prof. Resirius of Potchefstroom. Now, they got together and asked themselves, how do we do this? They then decided to extend the committee and bring in experts from all spheres of life.

I was pulled in as an expert in military matters. But, also the economy and information that had gone with it, and also because I was so closely involved with governmental matters. We then established the committee and expanded it gradually to a committee of 23 members and we finally decided to hold a meeting inviting all the right wing organisations.

We organised the meeting in the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in Prtettorius Street in Pretoria. The conservative Party, the HNP, I think there were about 54 right wing organisations involved.

We said at the meeting the future was in that we have to strive for ourselves, do it together, for self determination, that we could establish some kind of self determination for the Afrikaner to decide its own future.

We then received instructions to enlarge that committee, but to come back with a proposal about how it should be done. This resulted in the committee of 23 becoming the People's Unity Committee.

Again under the chairmanship of dr. Wally Grant. We came forward with the proposal for the formation of a national Afrikaner organisation and we held a meeting with the People's Unity Committee where a proposal was put on the table that the Afrikaner Volksfront should be established there and then and it was done.

There was a huge debate about who the leader should have been and it was agreed upon that Ferdie Hartzenberg should be appointed as the chairman.

At the follow-up meeting Dries Bruwer suggested that we should call on the generals to establish a strategic committee to advise the Volksfront at the ways and means to reach its goals. At that meeting the leader of the HNP, Jaap Marais, was a very disgruntled man because he felt the whole idea was an initiative of the HNP and he should have been the elected leader. He then withdrew himself from the Volksfront.

We then put a motion on the table, as proposed by Dries Bruwer, for the election of gen. Constand Viljoen, who attended the meeting, and three other generals, police general Visser, gen. Bischoff from the army and who served in the defence force, until his retirement, as head of planning, and I was also elected.

Now, because I was retired and fairly available, I was appointed as executive director of the committee and very soon

afterwards we met at gen. Viljoen's farm to plan our strategy. The strategy made provision to start with mass mobilisation of the Afrikaner, and to reach this goal we needed organisations to drive it, but because we were running out of time we had to make use of existing organisations to start this mobilisation. We decided to use the Conservative Party's structures, but which would not act as part of the CP, but on behalf of the Volksfront.

As soon as we managed to establish the mass meetings, we planned to carry on with the next phase of negotiations, because we realised we couldn't negotiate without an effective power base. This power base did not only consist of people, but also a military structure where the Boer Crisis Action, would've formed the backbone of the mobilisation.

It was decided that I would be mainly involved in the mass mobilisation, gen. Viljoen the security aspects and I would also handle the communication aspect and the propaganda.

If we felt that we didn't get the expected reaction from negotiations, we would have resorted to violence. Here I do not mean that we would go around killing people, or anything of that nature, but first demonstrate power through mass action and what goes with it and I believed that the message would be realised by both the government and the ANC that we were not prepared to take things lying down.

As part of this mobilisation was the first huge gathering of farmers in Potchefstroom which made a huge impression on people, and from there we took the mass meetings throughout the country.

The meetings were mainly organised with the generals as the key speakers, but we also put a politician with them on the stage to stress the unity that existed. Now, De Wet, this was an enormous experience.

The first was a meeting in Pretoria North where I was the main speaker and Dr. Wally Grant also made a speech. So many people turned up that we first had to put chairs outside the hall in the passages and later on had to put loud speakers outside the building for the crowd outside. There were thousands of supporters.

For example, the meetings of gen. Viljoen in the Free State drew unbelievable crowds of people. I addressed a meeting in Newcastle for a crowd of 5 000 supporters. More than half the people that turned up for my meeting in Richards Bay were English speaking.

We travelled throughout the country arranging meetings. It was the biggest mobilisation of Afrikaners in history and at one stage we had very close to a million members. Although this was not our main aim it was important to show membership to proof head counts of supporters.

The next phase of the mobilisation was to show that we did not want a exclusively Afrikaner organisation, but we also wanted to reach out to other organisations wanting self determination. We then held meetings with dr. Buthelezi, Mangope, with the Ciskei- I knew Oupa Qgozo very well- and we then established a second grouping namely the Concerned South African Group (Cosag).

This was a very effective mobilisation group. Our biggest problem was the fact that this all happened in 1994. Time was running out, the election was due in April that year.

But both organisations, the Volksfront under leadership of gen. Constand Viljoen and the generals, immediately started negotiations with the ANC and with the national government, and Cosag did the same. I was member of both negotiating teams and we negotiated and the message came through that they just could not ignore us.

The demonstrations at the World Trade Centre and also the Bophuthatswana operation were all as a result of mass demonstrations. At the World Trade Centre things went a bit array with the AWB acting outside the planned frame work, but it eventually turned out very effective.

It did not give us a good name, but the ANC suddenly realised that they had no ways in going up against the Afrikaner and this led to a secret meeting with Mandela where we agreed to negotiate. To look for ways and means to negotiate.

The negotiation process then kicked off. The problems we had here, I must stress, were that both the Volksfront and Cosag were not in agreement about the exact goals we wanted to reach through negotiations.

Cosag was very much in favour of Buthelezi's idea he called the "bottoms-up" approach. In other words the pwer must be based at regional and ground level and yopu delegate from there upwards to reach your goals.

We also had to look at the constitutional model where the biggest concern was with Bophuthatswana and the Zulus who did not want complete autonomy, but still wanted to be part of the central state coffers of Gauteng. This is where the economic power was and these states still wanted to be part of that economic power.

The Volksfront was not concerned about this. We wanted to create our own economic power. The problem facing the Volksfront was promairly where this volkstaat would be that we wanted to establish. And secondly how the new constitution would be.

There was still a lot of room for negotiations. And this is where a lot of discontent emerhed iwthin the ranks of the Volksfront.

Also for Cosag the AWB had become a sore point. The AWB started to sow dissent withing the ranks of the party, politicians

and the Conservative Party felt the generals were becoming too powerful and had too much power. This is not what we wanted. We were there to solve problems.

But the fact of the matter was that Moolman Mentz, Beyers, adv. Rossier de Ville and adv. Chris de Jager started a breakaway political party. They still worked very closely with us. We never had problems with them.

But to find the borders for the volkstaat, to write a constitution still needed a lot of negotiations. But, as the time for the election started getting closer, we made it clear to the ANC and also the government, that there was no way that we would allow the elections to go ahead unless we had a basis for negotiations for self determination.

We also saw the negotiations for self determination as a process that would stretch over several years. It could not happen overnight.

This is where the ANC eventually in the negotiating committee appointed by Mandela with Zuma and Mbeki on their side and on our side gen. Vlijoen, myself and people like Dries Bruwer were brought in to the negotiating table.

They then came with a proposal and wanted to know if they come to an agreement with the Volksfront, would the National Party accept it? Will the AWB accept it?

In other words they wanted to know what was our power base. Who supported us? Who do we represent?

We then reacted and said there is only one way to fathom this and that was by means of a referendum. The ANC agreed that we should have a referendum based on the old voters role and that we should ascertain what the level of support for the Afrikaner was.

We made our calculations and found that we would gain about 400 000 votes in such a referendum. This would mean that the majority of Afrikaners were in favour of self determination.

We agreed to this referendum for February 1994. We would also by then have tabled a draft constitution and if we did not have a constitution by then, we would have agreed upon the establishment of a third parliament, a national council to carry on with negotiations for self determination.

Now, De Wet, more than this we could not ask for. I think this was an enormous victory for gen. Viljoen and also on the basis that the ANC realised that there would be no elections unless we came to some kind of agreement with us.

We then held an very important mass meeting at the Pretoria show grounds.

I just would like to add that in the end De Klerk refused us this referendum and also refused any other constitutional principles. The problem was never the ANC. The problem was De Klerk and the National Party.

	<p>We had to come to some kind of agreement to avoid a blood – bath. And this was the accord signed on 26 April 1994. That accord still stands today where the ANC gave certain undertakings and you can go an research it. It exists and it is available.</p> <p>The problem was that we had the means to turn to violence if we wanted to.</p>
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