

Southern African
LIBERATION STRUGGLES



New local, regional and global perspectives

Edited by Hilary Sapire & Chris Saunders

SOUTHERN AFRICAN
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Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders
London and Cape Town

FOREWORD

Shula Marks

This lively and most welcome collection brings together some of the burgeoning literature, much of it by younger scholars, on 'the entangled histories of southern African liberation movements, armed struggle, the politics of exile and international solidarity'. The passage of time since the first non-racial elections in South Africa in 1994 and the centenary year of the founding of the ANC provide an appropriate moment to reconsider the recent history of southern Africa's oldest liberation movement, and the history of liberation movements in southern Africa more generally. The availability of a rich variety of new sources, and some distance from the immediacy and passions of the late twentieth century, make it possible to reflect in greater detail and more critically on the history of the liberation movements in southern Africa between 1959 and 1994 than was possible in the years of struggle. If the early literature on 'independence' in the subcontinent was greeted in a blaze of optimism and euphoria, what emerges here is a far more contested and complex picture of a region in turmoil than the more triumphalist, or indeed the more polemical, literature would suggest.

Although much of the emphasis in the volume is on the long struggle against apartheid, it is perhaps the first to bring together this detailed recent research on the trans-regional and transnational aspects of the wider struggles for independence in the region. While Colin Bundy gives us an overview of the relationship between the African National Congress (ANC) and the British Anti-apartheid Movement (AAM) from its founding in 1959 to its dissolution in 1994, Gurney writes of the tensions within the organisation in the 1970s, the AAM's 'difficult decade'. Despite the inevitable 'dissensions and disagreement' between the two organisations, both Bundy and Gurney suggest that the relationship proved remarkably successful, not least because of the identification of the AAM with the goals of the ANC. This was

both a strength and a weakness. Bundy and Gurney concur in their critique of the organisation's failure to recognise the importance of Black Consciousness or of the new trade unions in South Africa, and they attribute these failures to its 'special relationship' with the ANC. The AAM's single focus on apartheid, attachment to the ANC and connections to the South African Communist Party (SACP) also lay behind the decision to establish the Friends of Namibia, and its successor, the Namibia Support Committee—the subject of Chris Saunders's pioneering essay in this volume.

The chapters by Bundy and Gurney provide a background for Elizabeth Williams's analysis of the participation of black Britons in the struggle against apartheid. Williams provides an illuminating account of the divided political impulses between the first generation of West Indian immigrants and their children in London, divisions reflected in their responses to the liberation struggle in South Africa, to the AAM and to the manifestos of the ANC and Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). The short history and dramatic implosion of the PAC in Basutoland is dealt with in a well-crafted essay by Arianna Lissoni. Despite this implosion, as a number of the contributors point out, the PAC remained a powerful magnet both for the newly independent African states and for black and white Americans, more so than the ANC with its white and Indian supporters, and its alliance with the SACP.

A cluster of fascinating essays deal with the difficult politics of exile for both the Frontline states and the ANC. Hugh Macmillan writes a vivid account, as both eye-witness and historian, of the complex relationship between the ANC in Lusaka in the 1960s and 1970s, and the difficulties leading up to and resulting from the famous 1969 meeting at Morogoro in Tanzania, when non-Africans were admitted to full membership of the ANC—a subject touched on also by Bundy. Thula Simpson writes of the ANC's even more fraught sojourn in Swaziland, despite the support of the Swazi king, Sobhuza. The presence of the ANC manifestly brought a very serious danger of South African retaliation to its neighbours, and this of necessity affected the fortunes of ANC exiles in all the Frontline states, but especially in Swaziland, with its proximity to South Africa and Mozambique.

South African espionage was also profoundly destabilising for the liberation movements themselves. The fear of spies in their own ranks led to two much publicised episodes of incarceration, 'draconian punishment' and horrifying torture. Macmillan examines the implications for Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in Zambia, and Christian Williams devotes his chapter to the much more serious outbreak of violence and torture in the camps of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in Angola in the 1980s, where hundreds were killed as spies at a time of a heightened—and not unjustifiable—fear that the military camps were being

infiltrated by South African spies. Using the analogy of witchcraft accusations, Williams provides one of the most powerful and disturbing chapters in the volume. The upsurge of witchcraft accusations in South Africa itself since the 1980s makes this an urgent area for further comparative research.

The remaining essays in this eclectic volume deal with the role of Muslims in the independence struggle in northern Mozambique; the development of broadcasting in the ANC's attempts to reach its potential supporters in South Africa; the intersection of violent and non-violent strategies in the liberation struggle; and the 'Freedom Park fracas and the divisive legacy of the "Border War"/liberation struggle'. Liazzat Bonate uncovers the historical, kinship and cultural ties between the Muslims of northern Mozambique and those in Tanganyika and Zanzibar. She suggests that the former were inspired and encouraged by the latter's participation in Tanganyika's struggle for independence to play a similar role in Mozambique. Stephen Davis deals with the development of Freedom Radio by the ANC as a way of reaching its supporters in South Africa, and shows how trans-regional boundaries could be transcended by new technology. Janet Cherry examines the ways in which violent and non-violent strategies were adopted at the local level in the 1980s in response to immediate contingencies. Setting her essay in the theoretical literature on the costs and benefits of violence and 'strategic non-violence' in popular struggles, she develops a critique of existing analyses of the liberation struggle. By looking at the ways in which these two strategies were adopted by 'ordinary activists' in the Eastern Cape in response to different contingencies, she argues that while they may have lacked 'strategic coherence' they were a response to specific circumstances, and that both played a role in the outcome of the struggle. Gary Baines reminds us of some of the ironies of the present in his account of the struggle of white soldiers who fought in South Africa's 'Border War' to be represented in Freedom Park, dedicated as it was to those who lost their lives in the struggle for freedom. As he observes wryly at the beginning of his chapter, 'If one person's "terrorist" is another's "freedom fighter", then South Africa's white minority's "Border War" was the black majority's "liberation struggle".'

If this account suggests the variety of the essays in this volume, they are brought together by the editors in a deft Introduction that weaves the diverse contributions together, places them in context and suggests further avenues for research. Cumulatively these chapters open up new ways of looking at the diverse but connected histories of the region and their broader transnational context in the last four decades of the twentieth century. As the editors conclude: 'A lively process of reappraisal of and engagement with orthodoxies ... is clearly in process, as changing political contexts and a new generation of scholars begin to generate fresh questions.' Long may this process continue!

ACRONYMS

AAM	Anti-apartheid Movement
A-ARP	All-African People's Revolutionary Party
ACTSA	Action for Southern Africa
AGIS	Africa Groups in Sweden
ANC	African National Congress
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army
ARM	African Resistance Movement
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BALSA	Black Action for the Liberation of South Africa
BCC	British Council of Churches
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BCP	Basutoland Congress Party
BNFL	British Nuclear Fuels Limited
CAO	Committee of African Organisations
CAN	Church Action on Namibia
CANUC	Campaign Against Namibian Uranium Contracts
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCSA	Christian Concern for Southern Africa
CFMAG	Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
ECC	End Conscription Campaign
FAPLA	The People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FoN	Friends of Namibia
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
FRELIMO	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GHAPSO	Ghana People's Solidarity Organisation
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IUEF	International University Exchange Fund
KANU	Kenyan African National Union
LCP	League of Coloured People
LCB	Luta Contra Bandido

SOUTHERN AFRICAN LIBERATION STRUGGLES

MANU	Mozambique African National Union (formerly TMMU)
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation)
MPLA	The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NEC	National Executive Committee (of the ANC)
NIS	Namibia Information Service
NSC	Namibia Support Committee
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
PEBCO	Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation
PIDE	Portuguese Secret Police
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
PMC	Politico-Military Council
RAPP	Release All Political Prisoners
RTZ	Rio-Tinto Zinc
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAFA	South African Freedom Association
SATIS	South Africa: The Imprisoned Society
SCCIM	Portuguese Secret Services for Centralisation and Co-ordination of Information for Mozambique
SIDA	Swedish Development Agency
STST	Stop the Seventy Tour
SWATF	South West African Territorial Forces
SWEDTEL	Swedish Telecommunications Consulting AB
SWANU	South West Africa National Union
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
SYL	SWAPO Youth League
TAA	Tanganyika African Association
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
TGNU	Transitional Government of National Unity (Namibia)
TMMU	Mozambique Makonde Union
TUCSA	Trade Union Council of South Africa
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UKSATA	United Kingdom South Africa Trade Association
UNAMI	Independent Mozambique National African Union
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission of Refugees
UNIN	United Nations Institute for Namibia
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
USSR	Soviet Union
WASU	West African Students Union
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WISC	West Indian Standing Conference
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZNP	Zanzibar Nationalist Party

LIBERATION STRUGGLES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IN CONTEXT

Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders

Between 2009 and 2012 three significant anniversaries in the history of the liberation of Southern Africa and the global solidarity movements that mobilised in its support were celebrated. The largest and most sustained international solidarity movement in the United Kingdom (UK), the Anti-apartheid Movement (AAM), marked its fiftieth anniversary in 2009, while in December 2011, the fiftieth anniversary of the launching of South Africa's armed struggle by Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) was commemorated. Then in January 2012 the continent's oldest liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC), celebrated the hundredth year since its founding. The publication of this book on the entangled histories of southern African liberation movements, armed struggle, the politics of exile and international solidarity is timely in the light of these anniversaries, for it is precisely at moments of commemoration that justificatory histories and celebratory 'traditions' are likely to be invented, particularly in a region in which those who led liberation struggles still preside over governments, and constant reference to those struggles is used to legitimise both past actions and contemporary policies. It is now over 50 years since the launching, in 1960, of the '30-years war (1960–1990) for southern African liberation', over 35 years since Angola and Mozambique gained their independence, more than 30 years after the independence of Zimbabwe, and over 20 years after Namibia's independence and the release from prison of Nelson Mandela, which can be said to mark the beginning of the end of apartheid. It is surely time for sober reflection on the nature and significance of the liberation struggles of the region.

The 'transnational' approach of this collection of essays emphasises the linkages and connections between the region's various liberation movements and their international allies, dimensions previously under-explored in the

literature. This volume also tries to take a critical, non-partisan stance in analysing the campaigns, internal dynamics and effectiveness of the various organisations. The chapters in this volume illustrate what may be seen as early examples (certainly in the South African case) of, what Jacob Dlamini has described as, a 'second wave of revisionist scholarship' prompted, to some extent, by the unrealised utopian hopes of an imagined future that animated the liberation movements in the long years of exile and struggle.¹ The chapters may not represent the dystopic 'tragedies' proposed by Dlamini, but they are critical and reflective assessments of the histories of liberation, mostly by younger historians, and they stand at odds with dominant nationalist narratives and an often romanticised and triumphalist earlier literature.² They also offer broader and more impartial perspectives than those provided in the rich profusion of autobiographies, memoirs and biographies of key figures and notables in the nationalist and liberation pantheons.³

These studies have been made possible by the recent proliferation of archives, memoirs and revelations about the necessarily secretive histories of liberation movements. There were difficulties in accessing material relating to the liberation struggles in the immediate years following the political transitions, and only now, nearly 20 years after South Africa's transition to democracy and three decades since the liberation of Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique, is some of this story being revealed. The lingering secrecy and controversy surrounding the topics of exile, armed struggle and the internal politics of liberation movements all continue to have resonances in contemporary political debate. Where the history of the liberation movements has been taken up outside of the academy by politicians, the media or those connected to the 'heritage' industry, there has often been a highly selective and misleading reading of evidence, at the expense of complexity and historical accuracy. As Scott Couper has argued with respect to the much debated origins of the ANC's policy of armed struggle, for example, the lionisation of Albert Luthuli in the South African media and in official pronouncements as a stalwart of the liberation and armed struggle has obscured the extent and depth of the ANC President-General's misgivings about the 'turn to violence' in the early 1960s.⁴ Luthuli's misgivings, Couper argues, were suppressed at the time as an 'embarrassment to the Congresses' and were conveniently forgotten in subsequent commemorative histories. The research of Couper and others demonstrates that controlling archives and constructing amenable and 'usable' pasts has been a prime consideration of ruling parties and has enjoyed a particular priority during 'nation-building' phases of newly independent or liberated states. In recent years the ANC has

weeded its archive for ‘sensitive material’.⁵ In other countries in the region, historical distortion has been noted in the celebratory narratives of liberation struggles that buttressed the claims to power of those who emerged victorious from such struggles. Just to take one example: the elite of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) has been privileged at Heroes Acre, the burial grounds for Zimbabwe’s nationalists and guerrillas.⁶

The liberation struggles of the subcontinent in the last half of the twentieth century cannot be seen in isolation from one another. The authors of this volume reveal aspects of the relationships between different liberation movements and newly established independent governments which often set themselves up as champions and patrons of the liberation of the region. The very nature of liberation movements, often operating in exile and using neighbouring territories as bases, requires a departure from individual, nation-based studies in order to capture both the regional and global spread of the southern African liberation movements and the nature of the networks in which they operated, across borders and oceans. This analytical shift towards providing a regional, as well as a global framework, is prompted both by the reality of the exchanges and interdependencies of liberation movements and solidarity movements ‘on the ground’, and new intellectual currents that emphasise transnational and global connectivity over single-nation, state-based studies. Liberation movements and their armed wings based in neighbouring states, the mobility of ‘transnational’ solidarity activists and political exiles, and solidarity movements that traversed national boundaries, must all be analysed within the widest possible setting. Such a transnational and implicitly comparative focus distinguishes this volume from previous discussions of southern African liberation movements.

These larger contexts and questions provoke fresh questions—even of the most seemingly local of case studies—as exemplified in Janet Cherry’s chapter, which focuses mainly on grassroots liberation struggles in the townships of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. Her examination of the community and resistance struggles in the 1980s, which contributed to the ‘ungovernability’ of the townships (until the State of Emergency began to bite in 1987), provides a lens through which she addresses the much-posed question about the relationship between the ANC’s strategies of violence and non-violence, a question usually asked with reference to only the upper echelons of the organisation’s external wing. By bringing local activism into close alignment with that of the ANC and its military arm, MK, Cherry is able to provide a case for strategic ‘incoherence’ in the tumultuous 1980s. She argues that the struggle was characterised by a messy co-existence of different strategies, rather than a coherent strategy developed by an omniscient leadership capable

of dictating and co-ordinating its multifaceted elements 'at home', in exile and in the field of battle.

A number of the chapters in this book address the politics of international opposition to white settler rule in southern Africa and international solidarity with its freedom movements. As befits its size, influence, longevity and status, the British Anti-apartheid Movement (AAM) receives detailed attention in the chapters by Colin Bundy, Christabel Gurney and Elizabeth Williams. A key constituent of a world-wide mobilisation of solidarity with southern African liberation struggles that traversed national boundaries, bridged domestic divides and gathered mass support from ordinary people on political and moral grounds, the AAM has left a large paper trail for historians and, indeed, has generated a modest historiography. In an age in which vast claims have been made for the power and influence of transnational solidarity movements, it is apposite to examine one of the most significant of twentieth-century solidarity movements, one that has been compared with the international mobilisation against Franco during the Spanish Civil War and opposition to the Vietnam War. The chapters by Bundy, Gurney and Williams explicitly and cumulatively highlight the intimate interconnectedness between this global movement and the local struggles to bring about liberation in southern Africa.

Contexts

Most of the chapters deal with the period between 1959 and 1994, which largely coincided with that of the Cold War. For a time southern Africa was one of the flashpoints in that war, as a result of the installation of Marxist governments in the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola, and the involvement of Cuba in Angola from the mid-1970s. This provided a fillip to the morale of liberation movements, but also meant that southern Africa became a focus of concern for the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), which wished to forestall further revolutions by setting up pro-Western, black majority governments in Namibia and in Zimbabwe, where a guerrilla war was escalating. The Cold War was thus also a critical factor that made it possible for the South African apartheid government to sustain its position internationally and to characterise the principal liberation movement — the ANC — as a threat to world peace and security, as defined by the West. The Cold War also determined Pretoria's view of *which* African regional liberation movements were acceptable with respect to Namibia and Zimbabwe, and shaped policy-makers' vision of a neutral anti-communist bloc of southern African states.⁷ Recent studies of Eastern bloc patrons of

liberation movements, such as the Soviet Union (USSR) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), have likewise highlighted the significance of the Cold War for the motivations and nature of the engagement of these countries with southern Africa; although, in comparison to studies on Western Europe and the US, the English-language literature on the USSR and GDR remains slim.⁸

The Cold War context was crucial, too, in defining and limiting the terrain of action of the liberation movements and the international solidarity movements. The pervasive anti-communism in the West in the late 1960s and early 1970s meant that the ANC's alliance with the South African Communist Party (SACP) was seen, in many quarters, as a 'pro-Soviet force' in thrall to Moscow, a perception that would prove to be a stumbling block for organisations otherwise sympathetically disposed to the liberation movement, including churches, trade unions and solidarity groups in the 'difficult decade' of the 1970s.⁹ A number of such organisations, captive to the rhetoric of 'constructive engagement', argued against the ANC and AAM's call for economic withdrawal and sanctions. Instead they appealed for further commitment by companies through paying better wages and engaging with the government to push it further towards 'reform'. This stance began to shift in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a consequence of the intransigence of the South African government and the intensification of internal resistance in the form of opposition by the United Democratic Front (UDF) to the tricameral parliament and township resistance.¹⁰ By the end of the 1980s, and the period covered by this collection, the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe marked the end of the Cold War. The simultaneity of these events is powerfully demonstrated in the timing of the birth of an independent Namibia, occurring as it did less than five months after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, an event which had profound consequences for both the German states, as well as for the German relationship with post-independence Namibia.

The Cold War provides the global and regional setting for our detailed case studies of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the ANC. While chapters by Hugh Macmillan, Thula Simpson and Stephen Davis focus on the ANC after the decimation of black political organisation in the 1960s and the creation of a mission in exile, Liazzat Bonate and Christian Williams address aspects of FRELIMO and SWAPO's past. Although not explicitly addressed, the ideological and geopolitical battles of the Cold War overshadowed and exerted a profound influence upon these organisations and their international patrons.

Another crucial context is the internationalisation of southern African politics after the Second World War. Even prior to the establishment of the apartheid state in 1948, South Africa was subjected to international judgement at the United Nations (UN), where it was criticised for its policies towards South African Indians and for its attempts to incorporate South West Africa, which became an early UN *cause célèbre*.¹¹ The roles played by the government of India, African-Americans and the maverick Anglican priest, the Reverend Michael Scott heralded future active engagement in global anti-apartheid politics by such people. A complex network of solidarity would emerge. By the 1950s, South Africa had become a byword for regressive racism, which, in the aftermath of the revelations of wartime Nazi atrocities and in an era of decolonisation, attracted the opprobrium of the international community. As Rob Skinner has demonstrated, it was to a significant degree a consequence of the activism of ‘maverick’, ‘turbulent’ and ‘slum’ priests from within Britain’s Anglican establishment that anti-apartheid became a moral cause *par excellence* within the British and wider international community.¹² While this ‘pre-history’ of the international Anti-apartheid Movement draws attention to the moral wellsprings of that movement, new research on the AAM and other organisations has revealed how the activism of many leaders and adherents was conditioned by such contemporary political currents as post-war decolonisation and the rise of Asian and African nationalism, the Civil Rights Movement in the US, the student movements of 1968 and the anti-Vietnam War protests. The emergence of what Hakan Thorn identifies as a distinctively ‘new’ form of social movement—global in perspective and transnational in practice—was exemplified by the Anti-apartheid Movement, which had an influence well beyond the southern African continent.¹³ This was aided significantly by major post-war social and economic shifts and the processes of cultural globalisation. Among the latter, as Tom Lodge has noted, were the expansion of higher education and the increased accessibility to international air travel, which enlarged western middle classes’ exposure to and knowledge of the ‘Third World’ from the 1960s. The growth of photo-journalism and the development in the 1970s of cheap and rapid photocopying, moreover, played a signal role in framing apartheid in particular as an issue of global political importance.¹⁴ By the 1980s, the South African struggle featured in a wide range of global cultural forms, from documentaries, novels, plays, popular songs, rock concerts, music videos and t-shirts with political slogans or portraits to satirical television programmes and feature films.¹⁵ Global, consumer and popular culture were harnessed deftly through the adroit use of the media by both the ANC and anti-apartheid movements, such as the AAM, to garner mass audiences.

The sprawling transnational character of the liberation movements from the 1960s, and the border-crossing, peripatetic lifestyles of liberation and solidarity activists, make it appropriate to consider the histories of liberation movements and international solidarity in a single frame, since it was in the situation of exile that they interacted with, and influenced, one another. This is richly illustrated in Colin Bundy's chapter on the 'special relationship' between the ANC and the AAM. The symbiotic relationship between the liberation and solidarity movements is reflected in the fact that a number of political exiles became activists in solidarity organisations and exerted a profound influence upon their direction and orientation. It makes little sense to separate 'internal' (underground and above-ground liberation movements in South and southern Africa) and 'external' struggles (exiled liberation organisations supported by international solidarity campaigns), as has been the tendency in the literature to date.

Janet Cherry's chapter challenges an emergent scholarship on non-violent struggles and the ANC's strategic thinking. Her case study of activism in Port Elizabeth townships demonstrates that while some groupings were explicitly linked into the ANC underground (the *amabutho*), other forms of local politics were an unmediated expression of resistance to daily life under apartheid. By looking at both 'internal' and 'external' impulses and posing questions about the relationships between individual cases of resistance and a national political strategy, Cherry presents a more complex view of politics, one that stands at odds with what has been described as the ANC's vanguardist self-perception. Her local focus offers an alternative to an overly centralised, teleological narrative of the South African struggle.

Histories of liberation: Themes and historiographies

There is a distinct imbalance, historiographically, with respect to the histories of liberation movements within the region as a whole. In part because of the length of time since Zimbabwe's liberation from white settler rule, there is a rich literature on the war of liberation in Zimbabwe, its regional impact, and the cultures and experiences of the armed struggle.¹⁶ The differences in the size and richness of historiographies across the region arise from distinctive national historiographical and intellectual traditions, as well as from the different trajectories and patterns taken by the individual liberation struggles. The politics of the post-independence and post-apartheid periods have also played a significant role in authenticating or effacing different versions of the histories of liberation.¹⁷

This book inevitably reflects this historiographical unevenness. Indeed, most of the chapters focus on the region's oldest nationalist and liberation movement, the ANC, the last to achieve liberation. An underground liberation movement in the 1960s, the ANC could by the end of the 1970s boast international credibility, and it had the capacity to capitalise on the domestic mass resistance that welled up in the early to mid-1980s under the leadership of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the independent trade union movement. By the 1990s it bestrode a huge mass movement inside and outside South Africa. It had won international legitimacy while isolating the apartheid regime politically from sources of support in the international community. Sanctions had been imposed on South Africa, and international finance institutions refused to extend further credit to the country. Within South Africa itself, an insurrectionary climate had taken hold, spearheaded by the UDF and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), both of which accepted the ANC's Freedom Charter, while MK, the movement's armed wing, had raised morale among the masses in spite of its lack of military success. Financial infusions from international solidarity organisations and governments, particularly Sweden and the Soviet Union, enabled the ANC to construct an extensive bureaucracy and arm its soldiers. It commanded diplomatic missions, had fleets of vehicles, owned buildings and occupied offices and ran an army, schools, educational training centres, farms and workshops; it distributed military hardware, food and clothing made available by international allies; and it exercised judicial authority over its members.¹⁸

Because the ANC, and not the PAC, emerged as the premier liberation movement—measured in terms of institutional capacity, alliances, international credibility and legitimacy in South Africa itself—historians have tended to concentrate their attentions on the ANC rather than the PAC, much as scholars of Zimbabwe initially focused on the ultimately successful ZANU PF rather than its rival, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU).¹⁹ Notwithstanding this tendency of the historians of liberation movements to write from the perspective of victors, that there is a more extensive and coherent archival record of the ANC's history has no doubt contributed to this bias. In turn, the very existence of such a rich archive reflects its greater bureaucratic effectiveness. However, the ascendancy that the ANC would enjoy was neither obvious at the start of this period nor achieved without considerable controversy. Colin Bundy's chapter reminds us of the way in which the ANC had to adapt to the conditions of exile in the 1960s, the ideological and other tensions within the exile communities, the simmering discontent among the *mgwenyas* (veterans of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns of 1967) and the controversies about internal democracy

that led to the historic Morogoro Conference in 1969, at which it was decided to open up ordinary membership of the ANC to all races.²⁰

Arianna Lissoni's chapter provides sharp insights, not only into the early strengths enjoyed by the PAC—the appeal of its Pan-Africanist ideology to African states such as Ghana and Basutoland—but also into the divisive impact of the exile experience, which, combined with internal weaknesses, brought about the organisation's implosion. She also draws attention to an additional theme of this book: the relationship of liberation movements with neighbouring states and their publics, especially of 'liberated' or 'independent' states, which at different stages provided bases, succour and 'protection', albeit, at times, with ambivalence and reluctance. Indeed a 'perennial' problem of the South African liberation movements through the 1960s and 1970s was the absence of well-disposed border countries from which military operations could be launched into South Africa. Lissoni demonstrates how Lesotho's Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) initially provided a strategic base for the PAC and how the PAC plotted a violent uprising from Basutoland in co-ordination with underground units in South Africa in 1963 and 1964. Plagued by organisational frailties and personality conflicts, these initiatives were fatally undermined by the stance of the British authorities and the Basutoland police. Much later, the ANC's relatively secure presence in Swaziland would also be weakened by the hostility of its police. Thula Simpson's contribution demonstrates how, notwithstanding the loyalty of King Sobhuza II to the ANC, the relationship between the Swazi government and the ANC between the early 1960s and early 1980s was an ambivalent and shifting one, influenced profoundly by the regional power of South Africa and the capacity of its security forces to destabilise neighbouring states that refused to comply with its programme of eliminating ANC 'terrorism'. His chapter also provides tantalising glimpses both into the development of the underground within South Africa and into the divisions within the Swazi state, which made it a less reliable sponsor of the ANC than either Sobhuza or sympathetic ministers would have wished.

Liazzat Bonate's chapter, which is about Muslim engagement with the liberation movements in northern Mozambique in the 1960s, also considers relationships between liberation movements and neighbouring states. She shows how, during spells of working and living in Tanzania and Zanzibar, Muslim migrants linked up with both local nationalist organisations and branches of the Mozambique African National Union (MANU), one of the predecessors of FRELIMO. She emphasises the significance of religious affiliation and networks in conscientising such migrants, and, like Simpson's Swaziland case study, her chapter points to the sometimes inhospitable responses of neighbouring 'independent' governments towards 'foreign'

liberation movements. In her case, Mozambican immigrants in Tanzania were forbidden, after the revolution in Zanzibar in 1964, from holding political meetings and FRELIMO activities were consequently stalled.

A number of these chapters help to revise the image of the 1960s as a period of 'quietude' or 'quiescence' in South Africa's liberation history. Rather, this period emerges here as one of innovation, creativity and change as the ANC and PAC were compelled to adjust to the new conditions of illegality and exile and to begin the laborious work of international diplomacy and the building of armies. Most histories of South Africa's liberation struggle either conclude with the banning of the liberation movements in 1960 and the turn to armed struggle, or leap from the early 1960s to the Durban strikes of 1973 and the mid- to late 1970s, when the exiled ANC and PAC began to connect up with a resurgent resistance movement in South Africa.²¹ Lissoni and Raymond Suttner, who has re-examined the history of the underground in South Africa after the apparent evisceration of all political movements, both question the consensus that the years between the Rivonia arrests and the Soweto uprising represented a 'lull' in the struggle,²² while a recent study on the impact of international ecumenism, radical theology and the new left on Black Consciousness portrays the decade from the late 1960s as fertile intellectually and significant for the development of mutually constitutive networks and exchanges between white liberals and radicals and Black Consciousness activists in defiance of some of the separatist rhetoric of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM).²³

Violence and armed struggle

One of the criteria for recognition as a liberation movement stipulated by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was commitment to armed struggle. Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa all saw the militarisation of their nationalist movements in the first half of the 1960s.²⁴ In the South African case, participants have recorded various phases of armed struggle, from its inception in 1961, through the first period of exile to the post-1976 years, in which the ANC began to reap benefits of the independence of the former Portuguese colonies and the infusion of a new generation of young exiles and recruits.²⁵ Howard Barrell has asserted that, by prioritising armed struggle, the ANC neglected to devote sufficient attention to the task of mobilising the masses politically, and that non-violent, mass political action, particularly as waged by the trade union movement, was a more effective method of challenging the authority of the state.²⁶ More recently, Thula Simpson has argued against the notion of military failure and has claimed that the

ANC–SACP alliance *always* viewed armed struggle as an adjunct to mass political struggle, and a means of pressurising the South African government to enter negotiations, thereby avoiding the bloodletting of a full-scale civil war. In Simpson’s account, the much-cited unsuitability of the country’s terrain for guerrilla struggles and the superior capacity of the South African military machine are less significant in explaining MK’s ‘failure’ than the alliance leadership’s own strategic choices.²⁷

The origins of the ANC’s strategy of armed struggle and the establishment of MK have recently been subjected to much historical revision as new evidence has come to light. This allows for analyses that go beyond Nelson Mandela’s famous ‘I am prepared to die’ speech from the dock during his trial by the Supreme Court in April 1964, in which the creation of MK is explained as a consequence of discussions in the second quarter of 1961. The important role of the SACP, the impact on the ANC of the Pondoland Rebellion, and the widespread turn to violence and sabotage in 1960 by organisations such as the African Resistance Movement (ARM), the PAC and its armed wing, Poqo, have been identified in recent accounts as critical factors behind the decision to launch MK.²⁸ Most recently, Stephen Ellis has highlighted the role of the SACP, noting Mandela’s membership of the party, a fact not known to the authors of earlier studies. While accounts by ANC insiders and academics have been dominated by debates about strategy and their efficacy, there has also been a distinct tradition of memoirs and personal accounts. As a genre, these have not been subjected to the same scrutiny as their Zimbabwean counterparts. We know little about how ordinary South African men and women became soldiers, and the profound impact on individuals of the geographical and personal passages traversed across both real and imagined borders and boundaries of southern Africa. Stephen Davis’s chapter on the role envisaged for Radio Freedom in the ‘armed propaganda’ phase of South Africa’s armed struggle provides insights into the vagaries of the armed struggle and life in army and detention camps across the region, as does, in a different context, Christian Williams’s study of ‘spies’ in SWAPO’s claustrophobic camps in Lubango, Angola, in the 1980s. These essays remind us that the armed struggles were more variegated, contested and, indeed, troubling than heroic popular images suggest. Divisions and discord within liberation movements and their armies are also highlighted in other chapters. Bonate demonstrates that while Muslims from northern Mozambique had actively supported MANU and FRELIMO, from the mid-1960s FRELIMO’s adoption of a more doctrinaire Marxism and its wariness of both ‘traditional’ and Muslim religious leaders cost it Muslim support. Williams looks in detail at the culture of fear and suspicion that developed in SWAPO camps and led

to torture and deaths of detainees. He is able to point to the myriad ways in which minorities within exile communities could be targeted as spies, and how ethnic, gender, skin colour and language differences were susceptible to manipulation by officials in a 'spy discourse' that also served the purpose of eliminating rivals to political influence. All this took place in a very tense environment in which people in exile were living, in fear of South African violence and dependent on their superiors' monopoly of information and resources.

In the Nkomati Accord of 1984 the Mozambican government agreed to deny the ANC use of its territory as a transit route to South Africa. In 1988, the Angolan government agreed to close MK's camps in that country. The high rates of casualties suffered by MK operatives who tried to enter South Africa through Zimbabwe from Zambia caused demoralisation, desertions and defections, and this precipitated a diplomatic crisis with Zambia in 1989. It was in these unpropitious circumstances, Simpson reminds us, that the prospects for a negotiated settlement for South Africa began to take root. Although in the 1980s MK enjoyed a unique status as the potent symbol of a people's army assailing the apparently impregnable defences of apartheid, the reality was that the ANC did not enter talks from a position of strength.²⁹

The exile experience

It was in exile that the ANC was transformed into a widely recognised custodian of South African freedom through its diplomacy, propaganda and the material and moral support of international solidarity movements. As Mark Gevisser has said, the ANC's moral power was divided between Lusaka, Robben Island and popular power in the townships, but it was in exile that annual budgets of \$50 million were raised and where 'the anti-apartheid movement's moral capital was traded for sub-machine guns, the solidarity and the sanctions.'³⁰ Gevisser goes on to point out that it was in Lusaka—a byword, by the 1980s, for the movement in exile, and the subject of Hugh Macmillan's chapter in this volume—that the political hopes of black South Africans were formalised into a virtual government in exile. This made it clearer to many that a negotiated settlement was the only course of action for both sides.

While exile has received extensive literary treatment, and is featured in many biographies and autobiographies, the political, social and cultural histories of the southern African liberation movements in exile have only recently been taken up by historians.³¹ The restless longings, the peripatetic existence of exiles, the disorienting loss, intense frustrations and pressures,

known through literary evocations of exile, all surface in chapters here, as do vignettes of life in London, Swaziland, Maseru in Lesotho, the guerrilla and detention camps of Zambia and Angola, as well as the towns of Zanzibar and Tanzania that played host to northern Mozambican migrants. The experience of exile is most fully addressed in Macmillan's study of the compounds and suburbs of Lusaka, which hosted the headquarters of the ANC longer than anywhere else. While he vividly evokes the streetscapes and suburbs of that city, he also uses it as a prism to consider the criticism levelled at the current ANC with respect to the enduring effects of the allegedly non-democratic and authoritarian cultures of exile. He argues that the evidence of the Lusaka case suggests a somewhat different conclusion, namely that the tolerant political climate and the relative openness of Zambia's own political culture imparted important lessons to the ANC about the virtues of a mixed, albeit partially planned, economy, and that Zambia's experience alerted the ANC to the dangers of a one-party state.

If Lusaka was one key home in exile, so was London, which in Bundy's chapter is seen as providing a base, network and support structure in the everyday lives of exiles, expatriates, refugees and *émigrés*. It was to this 'junction of empire' that African nationalist deputations made their way from the late nineteenth century to entreat the imperial authorities to intercede on their behalf and redress the violations of African political, social and economic freedoms. There, they first made contact with a wide range of British and British-based sympathisers, from Quakers, non-conformists, Brotherhood movements to Pan-African groups who identified with the plight and struggles of black South Africans. The presence of such sources of support, as well as deep historical linkages and personal contacts, meant that London became a significant base for many South African exiles—initially mainly Indians and whites—in the 1960s, and the centre of activity for exiled SACP members. It was also in London that a series of influential debates occurred about the incorporation of exiles within the ANC, debates that contributed to a shift from the multi-racialism that characterised the Congress Alliance in the 1950s with its separate, white, coloured, Indian and African constituent organisations, to a non-racial movement, in which ANC membership was opened to all exiles regardless of race. Until this was agreed, the white and coloured exiles concentrated in London had been consigned to the fringes of ANC activity, working as solidarity campaigners with organisations such as the AAM and the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF). Indeed, Christabel Gurney writes that the AAM began 'almost as an offshoot of the South African Congress movement'. The growing dominance of white and Indian South African exiles in the AAM resulted in a dwindling of the

participation of black Britons and that of other non-South African African groups who had been present at the Boycott Movement's inception in 1959.

While London provided a home for many exiled South Africans, black and white, the Conservative government's castigation of ANC and SACP activists as 'terrorists' in the 1980s, Mrs Thatcher's intransigent stand on sanctions, as well as Britain's own domestic racial tensions, which flared up periodically throughout that decade, meant that the city was experienced as unwelcoming by Africans. Referring to the difficulties of working as both a black man and a member of the ANC in London, Sobixana Mqikana compared the city unfavourably with Sweden, where 'there was an understanding, a revulsion against racism and apartheid'.³² However, whereas the city's institutions were reviled for investing in the apartheid economy, ANC members and leaders, such as Oliver Tambo, distinguished the London of Whitehall and the city from '[the] *People's London* ... the London of Fenner Brockway, who met and welcomed Solomon Plaatje ... the London we have known as the birthplace of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement'.³³ As Bundy points out, there was a very specific topography involved: it was the offices in Bloomsbury (Gower Street, Rathbone Place, Charlotte Street) that provided purpose to displaced activists and exiles. The offices in Gower Street, in a building used by David Pitt, one of the AAM's black British founders, for his surgery, served as a nodal point for exiles and politicians from throughout colonial Africa. In his unpublished memoir, Pitt recalled how his surgery served as a magnet for African activists seeking shelter and solidarity in the city.³⁴

International solidarity: Alliances, precedents and sub-traditions

In the 1980s opposition to apartheid evoked the most sustained and widespread global solidarity activism. Solidarity with the anti-apartheid struggle, which peaked in the 1980s, was a truly global phenomenon with participants in this movement living in over 100 countries on every continent. Thousands of groups and organisations were involved in the movement, operating in international, regional, national and local organisations. Some of these were set up with the specific purpose of supporting the 'freedom struggle' in southern and South Africa, while bodies such as trade unions, churches and student or women's organisations with a wider mandate also actively championed the struggle against the apartheid state. In many cases, it was precisely because many governments in the West, especially those of the United States, France and Britain, played such a fundamental role in frustrating efforts to implement international action against South Africa, while shoring

up the apartheid regime through trade and other links, that this multitude of transnational, national and local solidarity movements arose in western capitals and cities.

Although national anti-apartheid solidarity organisations were located within a dense web of networks and institutions that crossed national borders and boundaries, and while their adherents were actively participating in the construction of a more enduring ‘transnational political culture’,³⁵ the chapters here indicate that individual participating organisations were shaped profoundly by their national cultures and historical relationships with southern Africa. Indeed, the high feelings evoked within the UK from across the political spectrum reflect the deep historical connections with southern Africa and the intensity with which South Africa, in particular, resonated in British metropolitan culture. Moreover, the coincidence of the arrival in the United Kingdom from the 1960s of articulate, well-placed and professional South African *émigrés* and the emergence of a ‘new idealist politics of conscience’ helps account for the popular appeal and influence of the British AAM.³⁶ The factors that lay behind the buoyancy of anti-apartheid activism in the other three significant bases of anti-apartheid solidarity—the United States, Scandinavia and Holland—have attracted scholarly attention, and overviews of the lesser-known solidarity movements in Canada, Australia, the Caribbean and elsewhere are featured in a recent SADET volume.³⁷

There is, however, still an imbalance in the coverage of anti-apartheid solidarity, with an overwhelming concentration of studies on the United Kingdom, the Nordic countries and the United States. As Chris Saunders points out too, there is relatively little research on the solidarity movements that championed southern African liberation movements other than South Africa’s. Indeed, it has been argued that it was precisely because the AAM was so single-issue focused, and reluctant to dilute its anti-apartheid commitments, that entirely separate organisations were set up to campaign for Namibia’s liberation.³⁸ Although the AAM was concerned with Rhodesia as well as with South Africa, especially in the 1970s, and had until 1968 taken up the Namibian issue, Saunders shows how a separate solidarity organisation, ‘Friends of Namibia’ (FoN), later the Namibia Support Committee (NSC), developed among individuals who were opposed to what they perceived to be the influence of the SACP on the AAM and ANC in exile. For their part, many within the AAM saw Namibia as inseparable from the anti-apartheid struggle, as it was under South African occupation.³⁹

Indeed, while celebrated for its unquestioned achievements, the AAM generated criticisms and controversies within its own ranks and among other organisations. Thus, for example, despite the OAU’s injunction to support

the two main South African liberation movements, a particularly close understanding developed between the AAM and the ANC. This spawned tensions between the AAM and otherwise sympathetically disposed groups wishing to express their solidarity with South Africans in their opposition to apartheid, such as British and Swedish trade unions and the Africa Groups in Sweden (AGIS). While the ANC's alliance with the SACP convinced many that it was dominated by Moscow, the AAM's alliance with the ANC was among the many factors that, by the 1980s, resulted in criticisms of it by younger black British activists, who perceived the ANC's multi-racialism as a cover for white hegemony.

The AAM drew on deep traditions and precedents within the United Kingdom. These included the anti-slavery sugar boycotts, domestic radicalism as well as the anti-racism, anti-militarism and anti-imperialism of Quaker, nonconformist and Christian Brotherhood movements. Pan-Africanist and black British engagement with southern Africans can be traced back as far as 1787, when a former slave, Quobua Ottobah Cugoano, wrote of 'numerous and inhuman barbarities' perpetrated by the Dutch at the Cape.⁴⁰ By the late nineteenth century, South Africa had a particular place in the imagination of black Britons and expatriate Africans living in the United Kingdom as it encapsulated in heightened form the exploitation and oppressions that characterised the black experience in both the British Empire and the Americas more generally. A discourse on southern Africa emerged among black writers, churchmen, Pan-Africanists and African nationalists from the nineteenth century to the 1940s. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the impact and significance of these early forms of solidarity, such research as exists offers a fascinating comparative foil to the better-known African-American engagement with South Africa, and the role of visitors and exiles in the US, from leaders such as A.B. Xuma and Z.K. Matthews to later activists such as Miriam Makeba, Dennis Brutus and Dumisani Khumalo.⁴¹ It is arguable that in addition to the anti-slavery and humanitarian precedents, which most commentators refer to as a forerunner, however remote, of the Anti-apartheid Movement, the early anti-racist, anti-imperial, Christian and Pan-African networks laid the foundations for late twentieth-century, popular, anti-apartheid solidarity.⁴² The later incarnations of such organisations—the Movement for Colonial Freedom, the Africa Bureau, Christian Action and the Committee of African Organisations (CAO)—were key constituents of the Boycott Committee, that would become the Anti-apartheid Movement in 1960.

This research on early black British moral and political engagement with southern Africa indicates that the initiatives taken in the 1940s by Pan-African and other British-based African groups, such as the West African

Students Union (WASU, established 1921), League of Coloured People (LCP, established 1931), the International African Service Bureau (established 1937) and the Pan-African Federation (established 1944), grew out of a deep history of engagement with Africa and the moral conundrums of colonialism. Bound together by a common anti-colonial and anti-imperialist spirit, and the conviction that the right to self-determination should be extended to colonial territories after the war,⁴³ the solidarity of these groups with South Africa was part of their broader aim to promote the liberation of Africans from colonial domination and racism. They sought to articulate concerns and demands of colonial peoples with a view to influencing discussions at the UN, enlisting support of the international trade union movement, exerting pressure on the British government and influencing British public opinion. The black South African journalist and writer Peter Abrahams represented South Africa in this growing Pan-African and anti-colonial movement in the United Kingdom and anticipated the role of exiled South African solidarity activists in the 1960s by keeping the issue of South Africa in the public eye through his journalism and involvement in Pan-African circles.⁴⁴ The Pan-African Conference in Manchester in 1945, which looms so large in the history of African decolonisation and black British politics, and at which representatives of 'millions of Africans and peoples of African descent' condemned the Union of South Africa's policy as little different to fascism, was less portentous for southern Africa in terms of direct results. But it is significant that the idea that strikes and boycotts were the 'invincible' weapons for winning freedom was aired there.⁴⁵ Fourteen years later, the ANC called for an international boycott of 'Nationalist' goods, which led to the establishment in the United Kingdom of the Boycott Committee, followed a year later by the creation of the AAM. Thus the idea of a boycott in protest against apartheid had diverse origins. In addition to its roots in the anti-slavery sugar boycotts, precedents in South Africa itself, India's freedom struggle and the Civil Rights Movement of the US, there was also this Pan-African strand, represented in British by the CAO, which, together with its South African affiliate, the South African Freedom Association (SAFA), played a critical co-ordinating role in initiating the British Boycott Movement in 1959.⁴⁶ Continuity between the AAM from the 1960s and these antecedents were embodied in the participation and support of individuals such as C.L.R. James and David Pitt, who had been active in anti-colonial and anti-racist politics since the 1930s.

The prominence of Pan-Africanist groups in the early AAM receded in the 1960s. Stuart Hall recalled that although black British intellectuals and political activists continued to engage with the issue of anti-apartheid in the 1960s and 1970s, the mass of black Britons were preoccupied with domestic

racism (which the AAM chose not to address), and were ‘bedded down in those daily struggles ... rather than the building of anti-apartheid politics’.⁴⁷ Although historians of the AAM have acknowledged the ‘failure’ on the part of the AAM to draw in what was a natural constituency,⁴⁸ recent research by Elizabeth Williams shows that popular engagement by a range of black British organisations and groups with the anti-apartheid issue by the 1980s was more widespread than is generally known. Newspapers such as the *West Indian World* and *Caribbean Times*, the popular ‘Black Londoners’ daily radio programme, which encouraged participation in boycotts and support for the ‘Free Mandela’ campaign, organisations such as the Black Parent Movement, established in the mid-1970s, and events such as the annual African Liberation Day, all reflected popular concern with the anti-apartheid struggle and support for the liberation movements. Williams has uncovered a repertoire of popular black music—home-grown reggae music, calypso, soc and other black British genres that purveyed anti-apartheid messages. These, her informants told her, had a greater impact on black Britons than any touring ANC cultural groups. *Biko’s Kindred Lament*, sung by the British reggae band, Steel Pulse, commemorated Steve Biko’s death at the hands of the South African security establishment. It is one of the popular songs through which awareness of South Africa was disseminated:

*The night Steve Biko died I cried and cried
Biko, O, Steve Biko died still in chains.
Biko died in chains, moaned for you.*⁴⁹

While some black British anti-apartheid activism took place in co-operation with the AAM, more radical and separatist groups, such as the All-African People’s Revolutionary Party (A-ARP) and Black Action for the Liberation of South Africa (BALSA), arose from disaffected black activists in the Labour Party and expressed their solidarity with southern Africans through a more exclusive Pan-Africanist idiom.⁵⁰ Williams’s chapter draws attention to the sometimes fraught relationship between various black British groups and the AAM during the 1980s, a decade of unprecedented upheaval and violence in both Britain and South Africa. While they identified with the struggle against apartheid, many young black British activists were drawn to the starker terms in which the PAC framed their struggle. For these reasons, as well as their experience of exclusion and indeed perception of racism within the AAM, many felt alienated from this organisation. The establishment in the late 1980s of a Black and Ethnic Minority Committee represented a late attempt on the part of the AAM to widen representation in the organisation

and to develop meaningful links with black Britons and other ethnic minority groups. However significant identification with the southern African liberation movements was to generations of black British activists, on their own they were unable to influence government policy. This stands in striking contrast to the experience of African-American anti-apartheid activists, who by the 1960s exerted influence through the Congressional Black Caucus and the American Committee on Africa.

While African-American and 'black diaspora' solidarity with the southern African liberation struggles has received increasing attention, the attitudes and responses on the African continent itself remain largely unexplored, or are considered with respect to the stance of individual governments — mainly in southern Africa — towards harbouring South African exiles and refugees and allowing the establishment of MK bases in their territories. Mozambique, and later Angola, as a consequence of agreements with the South African governments in the mid- and late 1980s, would eventually expel MK operatives despite the rhetorical and moral support those countries gave to the liberation struggles. Some insights into the attitudes of both governments and ordinary people emerge in some of the chapters in this volume: the moral and material support offered by politicians like Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, as well as the tensions with, and resentments of, Lusaka's residents towards ANC personnel. Macmillan writes about MK soldiers, while Lissoni tells us something about the relationship between the PAC and the Lesotho political establishment. But there remains very little understanding at the popular level of African attitudes towards the South African liberation struggle and of human interactions between exiles and soldiers and the societies of host countries.⁵¹ Nothing comparable to the popular support achieved for the ANC in Nigeria developed closer to South Africa. In Nigeria, Gevisser suggests that there developed 'what was really the only popular international solidarity movement on the continent'.⁵² That Nigeria was under military rule, he surmises, lent an edge to popular anti-apartheid activism there.

Faith and morality in liberation and solidarity movements

The strong religious ethos that existed in early solidarity and black British groups was embodied in the LPC's most prominent leader, Dr Harold Moody, a Congregationalist who became chairman of the London Missionary Society in 1943.⁵³ We know, from Skinner's work, of another related 'prehistory' of anti-apartheid sentiment in the UK: the activities of a group of Anglican priests whose outspoken criticisms

of the apartheid government and call for action in the late 1940s and early 1950s had a powerful moral resonance in an era in which a new discourse of human rights took root. Debates around decolonisation, which represented a more radical and rebellious moment, were expressed in a critique of colonial and imperial politics. The campaigning, lobbying and publishing activities of individuals such as Michael Scott, who features in Chris Saunders's account of the development of British solidarity with Namibia, John Collins, Ambrose Reeves and Trevor Huddleston—identified by Skinner as heirs to the nineteenth-century humanitarian tradition—played an important part in creating an anti-apartheid network that legitimised the claims and strategies of the liberation movements. Critically, Skinner argues, all four offered a moral reading of apartheid as a fundamental wrong. This, along with Huddleston's wholehearted identification with the 'African struggle', helped to give the ANC a wider international public.

The exceptional nature of Scott, Collins, Reeves and Huddleston, who were all, to some extent, 'outsiders' in their own churches, is underlined in Christabel Gurney's account of church timidity in the UK in the 1970s on the issue of economic disengagement and sanctions, a point of tension with the AAM until 1977, when the South African government banned the Christian Institute. The period of reflection that followed culminated in the decision in 1979 of the general assembly of the British Council of Churches (BCC) to adopt a policy of 'progressive disengagement'. Gurney notes that the churches in the 1970s had found the AAM too strident, and were captive to a spirit of 'constructive engagement' that counselled suasion and diplomatic pressure as a means to nudge the South African government into reform, rather than economic disengagement, as urged by the AAM. At the same time, there were always dissident voices within the churches, particularly the Quakers, Methodists, the Church of Scotland and groups such as Christian Concern for Southern Africa (CCSA). A number of clergymen, such as the Anglican New Zealander Michael Lapsley, were closely associated with or actually joined the ANC and were acknowledged as ANC priests. Moreover, the international church network often served as a vehicle for communication between the worlds of exiled revolutionaries and solidarity activists. Saunders's work on British solidarity with the Namibian struggle demonstrates how significant church support was in that country, and highlights the role of individuals such as Scott and Colin Winter, another activist Anglican priest. Church Action on Namibia (CAN) formed branches in London, Manchester and Edinburgh, and after 1989, as independence loomed, organised speaking tours of churches and ran

fundraising campaigns for church projects. It also became a social base for the Namibian student community based in the UK.

The Christian moral conscience of some of the constituents in the AAM and other solidarity movements had its parallel within the liberation movements. Although the ANC in exile was ostensibly a secular organisation, it had always been deeply imbued with a religious ethos and many exiled leaders were practising Christians. Oliver Tambo's rich spiritual life has been much noted by commentators, and, as his biographer writes, his confirmation into the Anglican Church 'throws some light on the importance to him of inclusiveness, a practice that was to be a mark of ANC policy during his, and his predecessor's, presidency'. As Anthony Sampson recalled, despite being surrounded by 'militants and Marxists', Tambo retained his Christian commitment. 'He took eucharist whenever he could, and saw his troops not as guerrillas but as Christian soldiers.'⁵⁴ Scott Couper similarly highlights the significance of Chief Albert Luthuli's religious faith; the Congregationalist tradition in which he had been raised profoundly informed his views on internal democracy, and, very likely, his preference for non-violent methods of opposition well after the ANC had made its historic 'turn' to violence. The importance of this Christian dimension of many activists' identities was recognised by the ANC in 1987 with its establishment of a separate religious department.

Although religious faith and Christian groups served as one of the bridges between the international solidarity and liberation movements, these relationships were not entirely free of the tensions of race. Indeed, consternation was caused within the circles of Christian Action in 1953, when Nontando Jabavu, daughter of the African intellectual D.D.T. Jabavu, condemned mission Christianity as a pillar of white domination and as an 'outlet for troubled consciences'. Nor did the moral case for anti-apartheid issue forth exclusively from the churches, of course. Indeed, from the late 1950s, especially after crises such as the Nyasaland Emergency and the revelations of the Hola Camp atrocities in 1959, as well as the Sharpeville killings of 1960, a broad consensus developed in the United Kingdom and at the United Nations on the unacceptability of treating anti-colonial dissent through repressive measures.⁵⁵ Recent research into campaigns by the AAM, IDAF and South Africa The Imprisoned Society (SATIS) in support of political prisoners in South Africa shows how they keyed into international concerns about human rights, inverting the idea that the liberation movements were primarily responsible for violence by focusing on the brutality of the apartheid state.⁵⁶ In his discussion of western donors' financial support of the ANC's Radio Freedom, Davis points to the way in which the very idea

of an exile radio service broadcasting from afar to an oppressed population held ‘a particular resonance with a certain European imaginary’, one that recalled the Nazi occupation or the Soviet invasions of Hungary or Czechoslovakia and the valiant resistance of guerrilla fighters. Indeed, the association between the liberation struggles and resistance against Nazism had particular resonance among East Germans. For Erich Honecker, the East German head of state, solidarity with the liberation movements was ‘absolutely sacrosanct’.⁵⁷ Indeed, as Weis has shown, solidarity in East Germany reflected a distinctively socialist morality, in contradistinction to what was portrayed as ‘neo-colonialist’ engagement in southern Africa by western states. The GDR’s version of solidarity sought to emphasise equality between the two sides (SWAPO and the GDR in Weis’s case study), a shared moral and political community and a complete rupture with the legacy of European colonialism.⁵⁸

While the chapters in this volume on international solidarity cover different dimensions of the solidarity movements, a key aspect of the work of these movements was propaganda and public education. Recent scholarship refers to the welter of books and articles produced by liberation and solidarity intellectuals and activists in pursuit of informing a wider public on the wrongs of apartheid.⁵⁹ From Huddleston’s influential *Naught for Your Comfort* and Peter Abrahams’s *Path to Power*—a set reading in the USSR—to the writings of individuals such as Ronald Segal, Ruth First, Michael Scott, Albert Luthuli, Ambrose Reeves, Wally Serote, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Jordan Ngubane and Bloke Modisane, intellectual production by activists is an important sub-theme of the history of international solidarity. The nature and impact of this knowledge produced about southern African society and apartheid, and how it shaped the imagination of sympathisers and critics in the wider world, merits closer study by scholars.⁶⁰ Along with journalism and books, much new research also points to the wide range of cultural activities and events in disseminating the liberation movements’ message, particularly in the 1980s, leading to a broad international consensus in the West on the need to take action against apartheid.

The authors featured in this book have sought to contribute to an ongoing process of interpreting the significance of the long history of the southern African liberation movements and the momentous consequences of their struggles. At the same time, new technologies ensure that voluminous archival and other primary sources are continually becoming available to a potentially global community of scholars.⁶¹ Gary Baines’s chapter engages directly with the question of the production of history and historical memory of liberation struggles, questions raised earlier in scholarship on memorialisation of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. Baines recalls a ‘commemorative crisis’ that

attended the establishment of memorials to honour the heroes and heroines of the South African liberation movement. South Africa's 'Freedom Park' became a cause of controversy when its trustees failed to include names of deceased SADF soldiers from the Wall of Names. His chapter examines the intense contestation that took place over the meaning of South Africa's 'liberation struggle' for its different protagonists. Bonate's chapter also touches upon silences and absences in officially sanctioned histories; she retrieves the story of the robust engagement of Muslims of northern Mozambique from the obscurity to which it had been condemned by FRELIMO, and from whose 'triumphant historical portrait' they were excluded. A lively process of reappraisal of and engagement with orthodoxies—however recently created—is clearly in process, as changing political contexts and a new generation of scholars begins to generate fresh questions.

Notes

- 1 J. Dlamini, 'After the romance, tragedy? Rethinking South Africa's national liberation', keynote address to the South African Historical Society Conference, Durban, June 2011. Sections of this Introduction are drawn from H. Sapire, 'Liberation movements exile and international solidarity: An introduction', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2, 2009.
- 2 See J. Seekings, 'Politics and methodology in political organisation and protest in the final phase of the "struggle" in South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, 62, 1, 2010, 7–28; C. Saunders, 'Liberation struggles in southern Africa: New perspectives', *South African Historical Journal*, 16; and H. Sapire, 'Liberation movements', for recent historiographical overviews.
- 3 The most ambitious attempt to provide a comprehensive history of the South African struggle is the multi-authored and multi-volume South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) *Road to Democracy* series.
- 4 S.E. Couper, "'An embarrassment to the Congresses": The silencing of Chief Albert Luthuli and the production of history', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2, 2009, 311–348. See also R. Suttner, 'The road to freedom is via the cross': 'Just means' in Chief Albert Luthuli's life, *South African Historical Journal*, 62, 4, 2010, 693–715.
- 5 C. Saunders, 'Liberation struggles', fn. 9, p. 3. On 'patriotic history', see T. Ranger, 'Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle over the past in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 2, 2004, 13–28.
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- 7 S. Onslow, "Noises off": South Africa and the Lancaster House Settlement, 1979–1980', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2, June 2009, 489–506.
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- 9 The Swedish Social Democrat leader, Olaf Palme, was influential in shifting attitudes in Britain's Labour establishment in 1977. His report on southern Africa urged his counterparts in the West to refrain from viewing the southern African struggle through the prism of the Cold War.
- 10 The victory of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher entrenched 'constructive engagement', making Mangosutho Buthelezi the darling of western powers. Reagan was forced to agree to sanctions by Congress in 1986 but Thatcher held out longer and, by her own account, only agreed to inconsequential sanctions.
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- 12 R. Skinner, *The Foundations of Anti-apartheid. Liberal Humanitarians and Transnational Activism in Britain and the United States c. 1919–64* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- 13 H. Thorn, 'The meaning(s) of solidarity: Narratives of anti-apartheid activism', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2, 2009, 417–436.
- 14 T. Lodge, *Sharpeville. An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 239.
- 15 V. Bickford-Smith, 'Playing apartheid: With a particular focus on "Hollywood" histories of the 1970s', in V. Bickford-Smith & R. Mendelsohn (eds). *Black +White In Colour: African History of Screen* (Cape Town: Double Storey and Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), 262; P. Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood Exploring the Jungles of Cinema's South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1996); R. Nixon, 'Cry white season: Anti-apartheid heroism and the American screen', in R. Nixon (ed.), *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 16 For example, see N. Bhebe & T. Ranger (eds). *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War and Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (1996); J. Alexander, J. McGregor & T. Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000); D. Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985);

- N. Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- 17 R. Kossler, 'Images of history and the nation: Namibia and Zimbabwe compared', *South African Historical Journal*, 62, 1 (2010), 29–53.
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- 19 See, for example, G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley, CA: UCLA Press, 1979); T. Lodge, *Sharpeville*; B.B. Maaba, 'The PAC's war against the State, 1960–1963', and S. Mathabatha, 'The PAC and POQO in Pretoria, 1958–1964', in SADET (eds). *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 1, 1960–1970 (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 257–297 and 299–318; T. ka Plaatje, 'The PAC's Internal Underground Activities, 1960–1980', in SADET, (eds). *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 2, 1970–1980 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2006), 669–701; A. Lissoni, 'The South African liberation movements in exile, c. 1945–1970', PhD thesis, University of London, 2008; T. ka Plaatje, 'The PAC's exile politics, 1980–1990', and T. ka Plaatje, 'The PAC's attempt at internal revival in the 1980s', in SADET (eds). *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 4, 1227–1264 and 1265–1299.
- 20 A. Lissoni, 'Transformations in the ANC external mission and Umkhonto we Sizwe, c. 1960–1969', *Journal of Southern African Studies. Special Issue: Liberation Struggles, Exile and International Solidarity*, 35, 2, 2009, 287–302 and 'The South African liberation movements in exile'.
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- 23 I. McQueen, 'Re-imagining South Africa; Black Consciousness, radical Christianity and the New Left, 1967–1977'. PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2011.
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- 25 N. Babenia, *Memoirs of a Saboteur* (Cape Town: Mayibuye, 1995); L. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting: Memoirs From a Life in South African Politics, 1938–1964* (London: Viking, c. 1999); M. Dingake, *My Fight Against Apartheid* (London: Kiptown, 1987); P. O'Malley, *Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj and the Struggle for South Africa* (London: Penguin Books, 2007); James Ngculu, *The Honour to Serve: Recollections of an Umkhonto Soldier* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2009).
- 26 Similar points have been made by Robert Fine and Dennis Davis in *Beyond Apartheid: Labour and Liberation in South Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 1991); and D. McKinley, *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography* (London: Pluto Press, 1997). See T. Simpson, 'The people's war of Umkhonto we Sizwe, 1961–1990', PhD dissertation, University of London, 2007. Janet Cherry, by contrast, argues in this volume that the ANC was characterised by 'strategic incoherence'.
- 27 Simpson, 'The people's war'.
- 28 B. Magubane et al., 'The turn to armed struggle', in SADET (eds). *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 1 (1960–1970) (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 53–145; T. Simpson 'The people's war', Chapter 1; M. Gunther, 'The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM); B.B. Maaba, 'The PAC's war against the State, 1960–1963' and Mathabatha, 'The PAC and POQO in Pretoria, 1958–1964', all in SADET, *The Road to Democracy*, Vol. 1. See also S. Ellis, 'The genesis of the ANC's armed struggle in South Africa, 1945–1961', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, December 2011.
- 29 T. Simpson, 'Toy-toying to freedom: The endgame in the ANC's armed struggle, 1989–1990', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2 (June 2009), 507–522.
- 30 M. Gevisser, *The Dream Deferred: Thabo Mbeki* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007), 405.
- 31 See P. Gready, *Writing as Resistance: Life Stories of Imprisonment, Exile and Homecoming from Apartheid South Africa* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003); L. Nkosi, *Home and Exile* (London: Longmans 1965); E. Mphahlele, 'Africa in exile', *Daedalus*, 3, 2 (1982), 29–48.
- 32 Cited in Thorn, 'The meaning(s) of solidarity: Narratives of anti-apartheid activism.'
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- 35 For an exposition of Thorn's sociological analysis of the organised global mobilisation against apartheid, see his *Anti-apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
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- 37 SADET (eds). *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 3 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008).
- 38 Although in the late 1970s the Zimbabwean crisis was the predominant British concern in southern Africa, reflected in the 'Months of Action' on Zimbabwe in the last two years of the 1970s. See R. Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid*, 287–289. Peter Katjavivi of SWAPO spoke at the 40th anniversary of the AAM.
- 39 Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid*, 287–289.
- 40 Quobna Ottobah Cugoana, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (London:1978) (Penguin Classics edition. Vincent Caretta (ed.), London, 1999), 100.
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- 42 Skinner, *Foundations of Anti-apartheid*.
- 43 A. Lissoni, 'The South African liberation movements in exile', 38.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 39–41.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 41; P. Abrahams, *Tell Freedom* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981); H. Adi & M. Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (London: New Beacon, 1995); P. Abrahams, *The Black Experience in the Twentieth Century: Autobiography and Meditation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

- 46 Implemented by oppositional groups in South Africa since the early twentieth century, and coming into its own in the 1940s and 1950s, the boycott strategy was deployed again in the 1980s. See Tracey M. Carson, 'Black trade unions and political boycotts in the Cape Province, South Africa, 1978–82'. D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 2008.
- 47 E. Williams interview with Stuart Hall, 13 June 2002, cited in Williams, 'Until South Africa is free', 70.
- 48 Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid*, 345–351; 466–467.
- 49 Cited in Williams, 'Until South Africa is free', 180.
- 50 *Ibid.*, Chapter 6.
- 51 A forthcoming SADET, Vol. 5, will examine the responses on the African continent.
- 52 M. Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007), 375–376.
- 53 D. Killingray, 'Rights, land and labour: Black British critics of South African policies before 1948', *Journal of Southern African Studies. Special Issue. Liberation Struggles Exile and International Solidarity*, 35, 2 (2009), 375–399; D. Killingray, "'To do something for the race": Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples', in B. Schwarz (ed.). *West African Intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1–70.
- 54 Callinicos, *Beyond the Engeli Mountains*, 57; A. Sampson, *The Anatomist: The Autobiography of Anthony Sampson* (London: Politics Publishing, 2008), 223.
- 55 N. Owen, 'Critics of Empire in Britain', in J.M. Brown & W.R. Louis (eds). *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 206; S. Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
- 56 G. Klein, 'The British Anti-apartheid Movement and Political Prisoner Campaigns 1973–1980', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2, 2009, 455–470.
- 57 Weis, 'The politics machine', 356.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 357.
- 59 On the efforts to counteract the propaganda efforts of the South African government, see S.M. Ndlovu, 'The ANC's diplomacy and international relations', 634–639 and Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki*, 396–399 and 421–427.
- 60 See Mai Palmberg, 'The struggle for Africa revisited. Reflections on the history writing by the Solidarity Movement', presented at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, 10 August 2004.
- 61 Considerable progress has been made towards the preservation, digitisation and dissemination of sources on the liberation struggles and international solidarity through the Internet. See A. Isaacman, P. Lalu & T. Nygren, *Digitization, History, and the Making of a Postcolonial Archive of Southern African Liberation Struggles: The Aluka Project*. See <http://www.aluka.org/page/content/struggles/>

AfricaTodayArticle. Material from the SWAPO archive is available online at www.sparc.na. See also *The Heart of Hope: South Africa's Transition from Apartheid to Democracy* at www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley and William Minter's guide to digital material on the liberation struggles at [http://www.noeasyvictories.org.search/smartsearch1.php](http://www.noeasyvictories.org/search/smartsearch1.php).

SECTION 1

LOCAL AND REGIONAL STRUGGLES

CHAPTER 1
THE IMPLOSION OF THE PAN-AFRICANIST CONGRESS:
BASUTOLAND, c. 1962–1965

Arianna Lissoni

Recent years have seen the opening up of scholarly debate around the history of the South African liberation struggle after the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1960. New studies and a string of biographies and autobiographies of political activists have begun to analyse the difficult processes of adjustment and transformation involved in the liberation movements' reorganisation underground and in exile after 1960.¹ Moreover, instead of treating the experience of exile as a universal phenomenon, they have started to problematise the concept of exile by drawing attention to the multi-faceted and often conflicting characters of a diversity of experiences. Despite this growing interest, most of the focus has tended to be on the ANC, while the PAC has received comparatively little attention—almost as if its political eclipse has become somewhat mirrored in the literature. During the long years of exile, the PAC was afflicted by a number of internal problems, which partly overshadowed the political tendency the organisation represented when it was founded in 1959. It is important to remember, however, that at the time of its banning in 1960 the PAC's Africanist message generated significant popular support both in South Africa and at a Pan-African level. The achievement of hegemonic status by the ANC from the late 1970s onwards was by no means apparent in the early 1960s, and an explanation of this phenomenon needs to be based, in part, on an investigation of the PAC's own self-implosion. The years 1962–1965 saw the organisation rapidly plunge into a state of crisis from which it never fully recovered.

This chapter aims to bridge some of the gaps in the literature on the PAC by focusing on its activities in what was then the British High Commission

Territory of Basutoland, where the organisation's first external headquarters were set up in 1962. It draws mainly on British intelligence reports from the first half of the 1960s,² which provide fresh insights into the PAC's early years of exile and can help one to reach a better understanding of its political decline over the next decades. This new documentary evidence will be linked to the established literature on the PAC and the sparse organisational documents that have survived from that period.

Basutoland provided an ideal base for the PAC leadership to regroup and co-ordinate operations inside South Africa. The country's strategic potential for the PAC to mount a violent challenge against the apartheid state, however, was never realised. In the absence of its charismatic President, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, the PAC was unable to maintain and capitalise on the momentum it had gained in 1960, and its plans to launch a general uprising in South Africa, firstly in 1963 and secondly in 1964, failed to materialise. Underlying the crisis in the PAC was the difficulty of having to grapple with the politically and geographically fragmented nature of exile politics, something which the leaders of the PAC in exile were ultimately unable to overcome. At this early stage in the PAC exile history, a number of internal problems can be thus discerned, most notably endemic internal strife and the factionalist tendencies for which the organisation became notorious. Basutoland's political context—and in particular the PAC's close alliance with the local Basutoland Congress Party (BCP)—provided the conditions for the PAC both to flourish in the Protectorate and for its ultimate collapse. The British intelligence records reveal the responsibility of colonial authorities and their collusion with the South African police in uprooting the PAC from both Basutoland and South Africa.

If the ANC had been caught unprepared for the government's crackdown after Sharpeville, the PAC has generally been viewed as being even more ill-equipped for illegality.³ The imprisonment of Sobukwe alongside the bulk of the PAC's leadership in March 1960 left the Africanist movement 'in a virtual state of suspense'⁴ and without much direction for its reconstruction, either underground or externally. Despite this lack of preparation, the PAC was able to inspire 'the largest active clandestine organisation of the 1960s',⁵ Poqo.⁶ While Poqo had 'no public statement of aims or ideology other than a reputation of a generalised support for Sobukwe and the PAC and an "all-out" determination to smash white rule',⁷ Poqo's message had millenarian undertones and its rhetoric was often crudely anti-white. As Lodge has observed, the PAC's Africanist ideology, as it had been articulated in the 1959 Manifesto (for example, its Pan-African outlook, its views on communism, and its stance on racial minorities), did not feature in Poqo's message.

With most of the party's intellectuals locked up in jail, the ideology of the PAC was stripped of its theoretical refinements.⁸ Africanism was reduced 'to a set of catchphrases, those which resonated most strongly with the experience and preoccupations of men who had been forced off the land, whose families were subjected to all sorts of official harassment, whose children lived on the margins of starvation, and who experienced every relationship with authority in terms of conflict, whether at the workplace, in the compound, or in the reserve.'⁹ That many PAC supporters 'hardly understood what the PAC stood for' became clear to PAC leaders such as Zephania Mothopeng during their time in prison.¹⁰ For the majority of Poqo militants, 'a generation ... to whom action preceded political theory and operation superseded strategy', the movement's appeal lay in the immediacy of its aims and results, rather than in long-term planning based on a clearly understood political philosophy and strategy.¹¹

Though Z.B. Molete, Joe Molefi and a few other PAC leaders provided some initial guidance for the PAC's reorganisation underground after March 1960, a high degree of uncertainty and confusion reigned among the ranks of the organisation. The release of national executive member Matthew Nkoana in early 1961 helped bring about greater co-ordination between the underground movement and the PAC national leadership.¹² Although Nana Mahomo and Peter Molotsi—who had slipped out of South Africa on the eve of the anti-pass demonstrations with the task of raising funds for the PAC and mobilising the international community—set up some rudimentary contact points for the PAC in Accra, London and Cairo thanks to the relations established through the South African United Front (a joint ANC–PAC external machinery established in June 1960),¹³ no co-ordination was in place between these various centres, which operated discretely and not under the direction of a central authority.

The PAC, the BCP and the ANC

In April 1962, the PAC's General Secretary, Potlako Kitchener Leballo, emerged from prison with several other leaders. A more serious effort to bring together the various parts of the organisation into a unitary structure was now initiated under his leadership. Immediately upon his release, Leballo was served with a banning order which confined him to a remote area of Natal. Born in Basutoland, he successfully appealed to the South African government and was granted permission to leave the country on an exit permit.¹⁴ He arrived in Maseru in August 1962, where he joined the growing number of PAC refugees who had been arriving in Basutoland since the PAC's banning in

April 1960. The PAC refugee community in Basutoland had, until this point, been loosely organised and politically inactive, with limited connections with PAC/Poqo militants in South Africa.

During the State of Emergency imposed after Sharpeville, thousands of ANC and PAC activists had gone into hiding or sought refuge in the neighbouring High Commission Territories in order to escape political prosecution in South Africa. There were long-standing ties between Africans in these three countries and South Africa. In the case of Basutoland, 43 per cent of its adult male population worked in South Africa at any one time.¹⁵ Moreover, it was quite common for the sons of chiefs and of mission-educated Basotho to study at South African institutions, most notably at Fort Hare, the only university college open to Africans in the whole of southern Africa.¹⁶ Therefore, during the 1940s and 1950s, many Basotho had become involved in South African politics through the activities of the ANC and its Youth League, either through their work or education. In the 1940s the President of the BCP, Ntsu Mokhehle, was at Fort Hare, where he established personal friendships with upcoming ANC leaders, including Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela, and joined the ANC Youth League. The ANC gave Mokhehle the political experience and inspiration to rally the Basotho for Basutoland's independence and against the country's incorporation into South Africa. As ANC and PAC refugees flocked to Basutoland in the aftermath of Sharpeville, they were initially welcomed by the BCP, which had won a majority of seats in the Basutoland National Council at the general election of January 1960.

By 1961, however, the BCP's attitude towards ANC refugees had changed into one of active hostility. Political interference, communism and Pan-Africanism were the main issues of contention between the ANC and the BCP. Mokhehle, who had attended the 1958 All-African People's Conference in Accra, had come under the powerful influence of Pan-African thinking. The Ghanaian government had also provided financial assistance to help the BCP prepare for the 1960 election.¹⁷ In a speech to the BCP Youth Conference early in August 1961, Mokhehle accused ANC refugees of infiltration and of trying to dictate policy to the BCP, and blamed them for the formation of the Communist Party of Lesotho (CPL), 'whose aim was the destruction of African national organisations in the territory'. He attacked 'these so-called freedom fighters who are mostly communist inspired and are interested in crippling the nationalist movements by their tricks and infiltration', and made clear his support for the PAC.¹⁸ Although the PAC lacked the political experience that the ANC had built up in the course of almost five decades of existence, the PAC enjoyed one major advantage over the ANC, as the two organisations set out to establish an international presence: its Pan-African ideology was attuned

to the mood of newly independent African states in the early 1960s. The ANC was viewed with suspicion by many African countries, Basutoland included, on account of its policy of collaboration with non-Africans (especially whites and Indians) in the multi-racial Congress Alliance and the Communist Party's influence on it. The direct outcome of this was that after 1960 the ANC was unable to set up a formal presence in Basutoland.¹⁹

By contrast it was in Basutoland that the PAC established its first official external headquarters, thanks to its Africanist credentials and the fraternal support it received from the BCP. Leballo's birth in Basutoland and his personal links with the BCP helped to ensure this.²⁰ He was a founding member and secretary of the Transvaal branch of the BCP—'the strongest and wealthiest BCP branch'²¹—for until December 1960, when dual membership was forbidden by the BCP, many BCP members in South Africa had also been members of the ANC or the PAC. The Transvaal BCP membership, under Leballo's influence, had taken an active part in the Africanists' breakaway from the ANC and the events of March 1960, and in the Transvaal the PAC had a predominantly Basotho membership. Moreover, the BCP had helped the PAC to establish a link with Nkrumah, who then sent funds to help launch the PAC. In fact, so strong were the links between the PAC and the BCP that Mokhehle later stated that 'the decision to break away from the ANC was taken in Maseru' before him, and that 'Leballo was the link between the Pan-Africanist group in the ANC and the PAC.'²² At the same time, the Transvaal branch of the BCP had aided the BCP's electoral victory of January 1960 through their postal votes, as well as by making funds available to the BCP in Basutoland. The BCP thus felt obliged to assist the PAC in Basutoland because of the important support it had received from the Transvaal branch. Moreover, it had to contend with the possibility that future elections in Basutoland would continue to include the expatriate Basotho (among them the pro-PAC Transvaal BCP members).²³

The PAC Presidential Council and the failed 1963 general uprising

Shortly after Leballo's arrival in Basutoland, a PAC office was opened in Bonhomme House, where the BCP also had its premises. Leballo allegedly carried with him a letter, dated 25 August 1962, from President Sobukwe, ordering him to form a Presidential Council from among those executive members, Chairmen, and Vice-Presidents who had survived arrest. The letter also designated Leballo as the PAC's new Acting President.²⁴ The Presidential Council was invested with 'absolute powers to rule, govern, direct and administer the Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa during all the time the

movement is banned and in revolution'.²⁵ As Thami ka Plaatjie has pointed out, these powers in effect allowed Leballo to run the PAC 'on a permanent State of Emergency'.²⁶ Though this was regarded by some in the PAC as unilateral and unconstitutional, given the circumstances in which the PAC was now forced to operate and the scattering of its membership, the most that could be done by Leballo's critics at this stage was to protest in 'hushed tones'.²⁷ Leballo's entrenchment at the top of the PAC had far-reaching repercussions. From now on, it would be impossible to discuss the history of the PAC without making reference to Leballo, for as Matthew Nkoana remarked in a letter to Leballo, 'you [Leballo] seem to think Leballo is the Party and the Party is Leballo'.²⁸

By late 1962, the Presidential Council had firmly established itself in Maseru, from where it set out on a vigorous campaign to regroup and build up the PAC in South Africa. Around this time, PAC/Poqo branches in South Africa began receiving written orders from Maseru. Communication with PAC/Poqo cells in South Africa was maintained through the use of secret couriers. Branch leaders were also summoned to Maseru in December 1962 and again in February and March 1963. They were told to step up recruitment, with each branch having to enlist a target number of 1 000 new members. Furthermore, instructions were given out to stockpile weapons, collect materials for the making of rudimentary bombs and wait for further commands when the starting date of a nation-wide uprising would be revealed.²⁹ Finally, it was promised that military support from outside, especially from African states, would arrive on the day of the uprising. According to the plan, on the given day PAC cells and branches throughout the country would start their own revolt by simultaneously attacking strategic points, such as police stations and power plants, thus making it impossible for the police and army to assert their control over a wide area. The insurgents were then to turn their attention to the white population and kill indiscriminately for the next four hours. Those whites who survived would be allowed to stay if they were willing to pledge their loyalty to the new government that was going to be created. The date for the uprising was set for the weekend of 7–8 April 1963, 'thereby fulfilling the earlier PAC prophecy of "independence" by 1963'.³⁰

None of this, however, was to happen, and by the time the insurrection was to take place, the South African police had arrested over 3 000 PAC/Poqo suspects. Several factors were responsible for the mass arrests. The first was the Paarl uprising of 22 November 1962, which 'represents the occasion which came closest to the apocalyptic ideal of Poqo and many other movements before them: a black insurrection in the heart of the white cities of South Africa'.³¹ The Paarl uprising prompted the government to set up a Commission of Inquiry under Judge Snyman. The Commission's interim findings, published

on the third anniversary of Sharpeville on 21 March 1963, concluded that the PAC and Poqo were one and the same and urged the government to take severe measures against what was believed to be a Poqo country-wide conspiracy.³² The Paarl insurrection had not, however, been sanctioned by the PAC leadership in Maseru, and Leballo claimed afterwards that both the Paarl uprising and the killing of five white civilians near the Bashee River in the Transkei in February 1963, had been the actions of local PAC units who had acted in an 'unco-ordinated fashion' as a result of 'extreme provocation', such as 'beatings and exploitation'.³³

By March 1963, the South African police was closing down on the Poqo network, many of whose branches and cells had been infiltrated.³⁴ Several men travelling from Cape Town to the Transkei on a mission to assassinate Kaiser Matanzima, Chief Minister of the Transkei Bantustan,³⁵ had been arrested in the previous months. Some of the branch leaders returning from the Maseru meeting were also seized by the police in March. In late March, secret couriers had been sent out from Maseru carrying letters to be taken across the border and then posted to PAC/Poqo branches from Bloemfontein. The letters contained coded instructions announcing the start date of the insurrection. Thanks to a tip-off from the Basutoland police to the South African security police, two women messengers were arrested in South Africa on 29 March.³⁶ They were carrying about 70 letters which supplied the police with the addresses of many local activists who were subsequently arrested. Leballo delivered a further blow to the organisation when, at a press conference in Maseru on 24 March 1963, he claimed that the PAC had over 150 000 active members in South Africa, who were ready for action and were waiting for his signal to stage the final revolt. Leballo also confirmed the official belief that the PAC and Poqo were the same organisation.³⁷

According to Sobukwe's biographer, Benjamin Pogrand, Leballo called the Maseru press conference 'for no apparent reason except conceit'.³⁸ Pogrand's view is supported by Lodge, who has written that 'Leballo could not resist informing a startled press conference of his plans',³⁹ and by Karis and Gerhart, who have accounted for the event in terms of Leballo's inability to 'control an urge to boast about his grandiose plans'.⁴⁰ These interpretations are also in line with Joel Bolnick's characterisation of Leballo as 'a mesmerising orator who loved to dramatise' and as 'an intelligent fabricator of information'.⁴¹ While no official protests were lodged by the South African government to the British government, the National Party press 'urged that South Africa should prevent such a situation on its borders even at a very high price', and that South Africa could not be expected to tolerate the apparent impotence of the Basutoland authorities to 'obstruct Leballo in his devilish work'.⁴² Bernard

Leeman, on the other hand, has downplayed the importance of Leballo's Maseru statements in spurring the South African government into action to crush the PAC and Poqo. In his partisan account of the PAC, Leeman reported that the event was, in actual fact, a meeting between Leballo, Molete and one single journalist at the PAC Maseru office.⁴³

In PAC circles (as well as outside them), many saw Leballo's erratic political conduct as an open provocation to the government, so that it would take tough measures against Sobukwe and Leballo could remain in charge of the organisation.⁴⁴ In fact, Leballo's Maseru claims came shortly before Sobukwe's three-year sentence was about to expire and they may well have influenced the South African government to rush through Parliament the draconian General Law Amendment Act (better known as '90-Day Act'),⁴⁵ which included the so-called 'Sobukwe Clause'. On 1 May 1963, just two days before his sentence should have expired, the new law came into effect, thus making it possible for the then Minister of Justice, John Vorster, to announce that Sobukwe would remain in jail. The Maseru conference thus marked the beginning of a process of estrangement for many in the PAC, for whom 'Mr Leballo ceased in March 1963 to be an accredited Leader ... of the PAC'.⁴⁶

Whatever Leballo's motivations, the immediate repercussions of his statements were disastrous. On 1 April 1963, a raid was carried out by the Basutoland Mounted Police on the office of the PAC and two private houses in Maseru (one of which was Leballo's). A number of important documents were confiscated, which pointed to the existence of 119 branches or cells with 11 399 members inside the Republic. They also disclosed the existence of two PAC branches active in Basutoland, the first in Maseru (with 20 members) and the second one at Pius XII College, better known as Roma College (with 40 members), where experiments and training in the use of explosives were being undertaken. The documents confirmed that the PAC had been directing activities from Maseru since late 1962 and that it was from this centre that large-scale operations were being planned to take place inside the Republic in April. Reports of visits by PAC members from South Africa to Maseru in order to attend secret nocturnal meetings to receive instructions in sabotage and other organisational matters were also revealed. Although no arms or ammunitions, or proof of their presence in Basutoland, were found during the search, sketch maps showing the location of arms caches in South Africa were captured.⁴⁷ Finally, Presidential Council members Molete, Elias Ntloedibe and Elliot Mfafa were arrested, while a warrant for Leballo's arrest was issued by the Basutoland police on a charge of incitement to public violence.⁴⁸ However, Leballo managed to disappear and go into hiding. His escape may not have been known to his colleagues, as several sources indicate that he was

believed by them to be in the hands of the police.⁴⁹ A second police search at the PAC Maseru office in May 1964, however, led to the discovery of Leballo's diary. This revealed that Leballo had spent 'a great deal of his time in hiding in various places in the Republic, including the PAC regional headquarters in the Orange Free State, Johannesburg and Cape Town'.⁵⁰

There were widespread suspicions at the time that the information obtained from the documents seized by the British colonial police in Basutoland, among them PAC membership lists, was passed onto the South African authorities. John Nyathi Pokela, on behalf of the Presidential Council, wrote to the Colonial Secretary in London to express concern over this issue.⁵¹ Proof of collaboration and of exchange of information between the British and the South Africans can, in fact, be found in intelligence reports⁵²—despite the official denial by both the British authorities in Basutoland and the British government in London. Plain-clothes South African policemen were also believed to have taken part in the raid.⁵³

Despite claims by a group of unidentified PAC members in an interview with *Die Burger* in May that the movement was far from crushed,⁵⁴ the mass arrests which followed in South Africa delivered the PAC a serious blow and the organisation's influence inside South Africa started to wane rapidly thereafter. In King Williams Town and East London, attempts were made to enact the uprising plan, but overall this had been averted by the arrests. Scattered Poqo groups continued to operate on a local initiative for the next few years, with the last instance of Poqo activity reported in Welkom in December 1968.⁵⁵ As Lodge argued, 'despite the activities of these residual clusters of PAC followers the back of the movement had been broken with the mass arrests of April–June 1963'.⁵⁶

Directly linked to the police raid on the PAC Maseru offices in April 1963 was the promulgation of the Prevention of Violence Abroad Proclamation Act by the British High Commissioner, Sir Hugh Stephenson, 'in order to give an anticipated measure of control over such activities in Basutoland' with immediate effect from 26 July 1963.⁵⁷ The Act made it illegal for a person or an organisation to plot or incite violence against South Africa from any of the High Commission Territories, thus making it increasingly difficult for the PAC to continue to co-ordinate underground operations in South Africa from Maseru.

Plans for a second uprising in 1964

One of the most formidable obstacles faced by the liberation movements after 1960 was the absence of friendly border countries where they could establish a rear base from which military operations could be launched in

South Africa itself. This was to become a ‘perennial’ problem, one that lasted throughout all of the 1960s and much of the 1970s, if not beyond.⁵⁸ In this respect Basutoland offered a ‘unique strategic position’ as a forward base for military and underground political activity. The leaders of the PAC clearly understood that it was from this base that ‘real and effective opposition to apartheid’ could be waged, as the events of 1963 had demonstrated.⁵⁹ They therefore deemed it ‘essential that the office in Basutoland be maintained’.⁶⁰ Thus, the Prevention of Violence Abroad Proclamation Act did not immediately deter the PAC from its resolve to maintain its Maseru headquarters. In spite of the severe impact of the arrests of April–June 1963 and of the tough measures taken against the PAC in Basutoland, the PAC leadership managed to regroup in Maseru, where they began to plan the launch of a second uprising.

On 12 September 1963, Leballo made a ‘dramatic appearance’ in the spectators’ gallery of the Basutoland National Assembly in Maseru. Although it was not widely known at the time, the warrant for his arrest had been withdrawn the previous month.⁶¹ The withdrawal may have been prompted by a ‘stinging motion of no confidence in the Basutoland Government which had been moved a little earlier’ by the BCP—which had alerted the British government to the BCP’s dissatisfaction with the way in which the British authorities had handled relations with South Africa to curtail the activities of the PAC in Basutoland.⁶² On his return, Leballo ignored the threat of the Prevention of Violence Abroad Proclamation Act and began reviving the activities of the PAC in Basutoland. Moreover, the Leballo administration now actively encouraged the participation by PAC members in the activities of the BCP. According to a PAC dissident, Charles L. Lakaye,⁶³ this led to the involvement of PAC members in Basutoland politics, culminating in the murder of a PAC member, Sobhuza, in an ambush while in the company of the BCP in Rothe, where the latter were to hold a rally in October 1964.⁶⁴ Leballo himself addressed a series of BCP meetings, where he delivered ‘virulent anti-white’ speeches.⁶⁵

Despite severe financial difficulties, the PAC was able to reoccupy its Maseru offices in Bonhomme House on 1 October 1963. This was made possible by limited funding received through Anthony Steel, a British solicitor based in London who acted on behalf of the PAC, and Patrick Duncan, a former Liberal Party spokesman turned PAC supporter.⁶⁶ Financial aid was also received from the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL–CIO), which donated US\$5 000 after receiving a memorandum from Nana Mahomo, who had begun a two-month tour of the United States with Duncan in June 1963. The PAC used its anti-communism to encourage the

AFL–CIO to give money and thus help ‘make the PAC in Basutoland a bastion of democracy against Communism and apartheid’.⁶⁷

The Presidential Council of the PAC now concentrated its efforts on organising a second uprising in the Transkei, which would begin with the assassination of Chief Matanzima at the opening of the Transkeian Parliament on 4 May 1964. The blueprint for this operation was moulded on the 1963 insurrectionist plan. The new plot was outlined in a letter by Elias Ntloedibe, the PAC representative in Ghana:

*When you launch and attack Matanzima and Parliament, our forces must do it. Thereafter we must carefully plan mass slaughter of whites all over the country and whites in factories and mines must be mercilessly killed. After the attack ... our forces must distribute leaflets to say POQO heats [sic] out again. ... Forces must also purchase Police Uniforms so that when they attack certain areas like jails, they must be dressed as Police. Stations are armed and they should be the last to attack.*⁶⁸

On 5 April and the weekend of the 25–26 April 1964, two meetings of the Presidential Council took place in Maseru. The first meeting discussed the organisation’s finances, whereas the focus of the second one, which was attended by 10 PAC representatives from South Africa, was the planned uprising in the Transkei.⁶⁹ The PAC’s violent infighting and its active participation in the local politics of Basutoland, however, were responsible for drawing much unwanted attention by the police.

In November 1963, Joe Molefi had been expelled from the PAC by Leballo,⁷⁰ probably as a result of Molefi’s criticism of the latter. The dispute culminated in Molete being attacked at his home in Maseru by three other PAC men with a home-made panga and nearly losing his hand in April 1964. Molefi, one of the attackers, was found guilty of causing Molete grievous bodily harm and was sentenced to six months in prison. The bickering did not confine itself to the PAC in Maseru but soon spread out to other countries where PAC members were based. In an attempt to re-assert his control over the organisation, Leballo also expelled Ellen Molapo⁷¹ and started issuing ‘by telegram a continuous stream of orders and directives’ to PAC representatives abroad ‘couched in peremptory terms’. He warned against the ‘communistic tendencies’ of some PAC representatives, including Mahomo, Molotsi,⁷² Ntloedibe, Tsehlana, Nkoana, Leabile, A.B. Ngcobo and Ndziba. The labelling of PAC members who were critical of Leballo’s administration became common practice. Instead of having their grievances and complaints heard and attended to, Leballo’s critics were given the tags that they were ‘communists’ or ‘collaborators’ of the South African regime and were

liquidated from the ranks of the organisation.⁷³ Fearing possible attacks on his person, it was also around this time that Leballo started to employ bodyguards.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, both the South African and Basutoland police had been keeping a close watch on the PAC in Maseru, as they expected further violence to erupt between warring PAC factions. They also had become aware of the plot to kill Matanzima. The South African government now explicitly asked Britain to take action against the PAC in Basutoland and threatened to close the border between Basutoland and the Republic to all African traffic.⁷⁵ Moreover, the British embassy in Pretoria was warned by its American counterpart of preparations for a South African joint police–army operation in Basutoland, which would be put into effect if Britain failed to act against the PAC in Maseru.⁷⁶ South Africa’s blackmailing strategy succeeded in pushing the British colonial administration into action. On 4 May 1964 the Basutoland police enforced a 48-hour roadblock on strategic roads to the north and to the south of Maseru ‘with instructions to search for arms and hold anyone on slightest pretext’.⁷⁷ A car with Bloemfontein number plates was stopped by a Basutoland police cordon near the Tsupane border. Inside the car were four white passengers believed by the police to have been waiting for Leballo.⁷⁸ Whatever the case, the Basutoland police action succeeded in forestalling any sort of movement by PAC members.

On the morning of 6 May 1963 at 2h20, Leballo’s Land Rover blew up outside his Maseru home. Although Leballo himself escaped uninjured, two of his bodyguards, Salu Soyizwaphi and Siphso Tshabalala, were wounded, suffering serious burns on their heads and hands. Despite police investigations, the exact cause of the explosion remained unknown. The general opinion at the time was that the car was blown up by a PAC faction opposed to Leballo.⁷⁹ Several houses, as well as the PAC office, were searched by the police two days later. Another one of Leballo’s bodyguards, Kwenzile Hlabisa, was arrested alongside a BCP man, Mobau Mokitimi, on charges of unlawful possession of firearms, threatening language and obstructing the police. However, no evidence of the alleged plan in the Transkei was discovered, suggesting that the mainspring of the action forecast by the South African and Basutoland police was, perhaps, not the PAC in Maseru but PAC/Poqo cells still active inside the Republic. No registers, account books or other documents — which the police expected to come across in the office of a politically active organisation — were found either, and nor was any evidence of caches of arms uncovered.⁸⁰ Mokitimi was released the next day, whereas Hlabisa was sentenced to four months in prison or R60. The fine was paid.⁸¹

The car explosion prompted Sir A.F. Giles, the new Resident High Commissioner, to send a telegram to the Colonial Office in London requesting that a Public Order Proclamation Act be promulgated by the Secretary of State to the Colonies 'as a matter of urgency'.⁸² The Act would allow the Resident Commissioner to proscribe the PAC in the country. Although no action was ultimately taken to ban the PAC in Basutoland, that such request was made suggests that the organisation's presence in the country was perceived as a threat to security by the colonial authorities.

On 11 May 1964, a cyclostyled pamphlet entitled 'Special Release by the Presidential Council of the PAC' was distributed in Maseru. It blamed the events of the preceding days on the British and South African governments. Fingers were also pointed at 'the Communists'.⁸³ Relations between the PAC and the ANC/communist elements in Basutoland, which had already been tense, now deteriorated rapidly. The CPL had been founded in October 1961. Although its membership was secret, Joe Matthews, an ANC/SACP member who had escaped to Basutoland after being detained during the Sharpeville Emergency, had become closely associated with it. Mokhehle and the BCP were deeply wary of both the CPL and Matthews because of their association with the SACP and the ANC.⁸⁴ Moreover, Matthews's involvement in the local politics of Basutoland did not go down well with Mokhehle, who had become convinced that Matthews wanted to undermine his leadership.⁸⁵ As well as being associated with the CPL, Matthews was also believed to have been involved in channelling funds from Moscow to the Marematlou Freedom Party, which had been created in January 1963 in opposition to the BCP with an eye on the 1965 electoral contest.⁸⁶ In February 1963, a bomb was found underneath Matthews's car in Maseru, but police investigations were unable to shed any light on the matter.⁸⁷ Leballo's bodyguard, Hlabisa, was charged with the attempted murder of Joe Matthews later that year, although it is unclear from the records whether this was in relation to the bomb found under Matthews's car or to a separate incident. The charge was withdrawn in April 1964 as Matthews failed to attend the court hearing after being subpoenaed.⁸⁸

The CPL retaliated to the PAC statement which blamed them for the explosion of Leballo's car by issuing a pamphlet attacking the PAC in return.⁸⁹ Relations between the PAC/BCP and the ANC/CPL reached open conflict in June 1964, with the PAC/BCP engaging in a sort of 'political gangsterism' to push the ANC/CPL out of the Basutoland political scene. The General Secretary of the CPL, John Motloheloa, was the victim of a murder attempt on 2 June, which was followed by the stabbing of another leading CPL member, Nako Mefane. Physical assaults were carried out against several

other communist and trade union leaders. Other violent methods used by the PAC/BCP included forced evictions by landlords, and discrimination from shop assistants who sympathised with the BCP.⁹⁰

In June 1964 an attempt was made to restore unity within the ranks of the PAC in exile, which had been suffering from fragmentation and leadership conflicts since Sharpeville: this took the shape of a statement on the background to official appointments and policy.⁹¹ The Presidential Council was proclaimed the supreme organ of the party, responsible for 'directing the struggle and administering the PAC'. '*Orders and commands should emanate only*' from this body, from its Maseru headquarters. All PAC representatives abroad were subordinate to the Presidential Council, to whom they owed absolute loyalty and to whom they should report on a regular basis, although they enjoyed equal status among themselves. Their duties were 'to build the true image of our Party to the world, fearlessly putting across our message and justifying our cause; to procure money and any other help and assistance required ... to arrange scholarships for our party members, training for our technicians and revolutionaries or to execute any other matter in the interest of the Party or when delegated to do so by the P.C. [Presidential Council]'.⁹² Members of the Presidential Council would lose their executive powers when away from the Maseru headquarters. This, it was declared, was to avoid the creation of multiple bureaucracies 'as it was in the days of Molotsi and Mahomo'.⁹³ Since Basutoland had no direct air links with anywhere but South Africa, this meant that PAC representatives were effectively denied their executive rights once they left Maseru.

On 21 August 1964, Leballo left Basutoland by chartered aircraft for Salisbury, where he boarded a second plane to Accra. He travelled through South Africa on a single-journey transit permit issued by the South African government.⁹⁴ Gasson Ndlovu (head of the section dealing with military training) and Pokela were left in charge of the PAC in Basutoland in Leballo's absence. Leballo was never to return to Basutoland, where the position of the PAC became more and more untenable.

The final curtailment of the PAC in Basutoland

The British colonial authorities in Basutoland were alarmed about the number of PAC refugees arriving in the territory, who they suspected of plotting acts of violence against South Africa. Moreover, the Basutoland police were aware that PAC supporters were being channelled into Basutoland, where they registered as political refugees, so that they could be educated in the manufacture and use of explosives, arms and ammunition, and then

return secretly to South Africa.⁹⁵ Between July and September 1964 alone, a total of 136 refugees from South Africa (of whom 109 were thought to be PAC supporters) applied for residence permits to remain in Basutoland.⁹⁶ In October 1964, approximately 20 South African refugees were rounded up by the Basutoland police under the pretext that they had not complied with entry and residence regulations. Their arrest was followed by a police search of three boarding houses, which 'provided evidence of build up of local PAC strength under a form of discipline and indications that military training may be contemplated or taking place in the mountains'. As no arms or explosives were discovered, the group of refugees was subsequently released.⁹⁷

One night in November 1964 a PAC official was stopped and searched by the police. The man carried with him a suitcase containing PAC documents, which implicated leading members of the organisations in conspiracies to commit acts of violence in South Africa and the High Commission Territories. The premises of the PAC in Maseru were searched again, and so were two trading stores in the Quthing district.⁹⁸ Patrick Duncan⁹⁹ had purchased these trading stores in mid-1962, which he ran with the help of two PAC men, Joe Nkatlo and Ebrahim Abrahams, to accommodate South African refugees in Basutoland. The stores had soon come to serve as military training grounds for PAC recruits.¹⁰⁰ During the search the Basutoland police came into possession of a shotgun, a loaded pistol and a number of home-made pangas, which had been hidden at a boarding house in Maseru in which PAC refugees lived. In the Quthing area, ingredients for the manufacture of explosives and some metal containers were uncovered.¹⁰¹ This latest strike on the PAC in Basutoland took place roughly at the same time as an operation carried out by the South African security police in the township of Mbekweni, outside Paarl, in November 1964. The latter led to the arrest of 20 or more Africans belonging to a resurrected PAC/Poqo cell in the Paarl area, and to the discovery of documents linking this group to the PAC group operating from Basutoland. Chief of the security police Van der Bergh remarked to the press that the men arrested were PAC and not Poqo members.¹⁰² This suggests that some form of contact between the PAC in Basutoland and its supporters in South Africa had continued to take place despite the sequence of knock-backs the organisation had received since March 1963 as a result of police action in both countries.

Following the capture of the suitcase filled with incriminating evidence in November 1964, Letlaka and Mfafa of the Presidential Council and six other PAC members (Hlabisa, Rufus Fumanekile, Sipo Sobuza, Nikelo Faku, John Tway Ingana and M. Kambula) were arrested and put on trial for conspiracy to commit violence in contravention of the Prevention of Violence Abroad Proclamation Act. A second warrant for Leballo's arrest was issued under

the same Act. Leballo, who was at this time in Britain, had in the meantime made another application for a transit permit to the South African authorities as he planned to return to Basutoland in January 1965. It was also reported that the PAC was now looking for an alternative base outside Basutoland.¹⁰³ The trial of the eight PAC men, which started in December 1964, was a lengthy one. Two of the men were discharged while the remaining six were convicted on 12 July 1965, with sentences ranging from one to three years. They appealed against their conviction and succeeded, the appeal being upheld by the Chief Justice on 2 September 1965.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, a separate trial against Pokela and Qhobose was initiated on similar charges.¹⁰⁵

The PAC was now struggling to retain Bonhomme House as its operational headquarters. The organisation was desperately short of funds, and depended entirely on the remittances it received from the BCP.¹⁰⁶ Reuben Rigala, F. Ntozini and R. Xokolelo were put in charge of the day-to-day running of PAC affairs locally. The Basutoland police suspected that, despite the enormous difficulties the PAC faced as a result of the arrest and trial of many of its leaders, the organisation was still involved in clandestine activity in the Protectorate. These suspicions were confirmed when another group of 10 PAC members was detained in January 1965. When the police stopped them in the Mapoteng area—dressed in blue boiler suits, velskoens, matching greatcoats and blankets—they had been undergoing some sort of physical training under the leadership of Gasson Ndlovu. The latter was remanded in custody to join the other eight PAC men (Letlaka and others) already on trial and was later released on appeal.¹⁰⁷

In February 1965, the Basutoland police uncovered yet more incriminating evidence. Seventy pounds of dynamite, 40 pounds of gelnite and a quantity of detonators were recovered in the Quthing area. Moreover, PAC military training activities appeared to have now extended to the Youth League of the BCP, with a view to combining forces to intimidate non-BCP voters on election day in April or to take unconstitutional action after the election should they not agree with the electoral results.¹⁰⁸ Relations between the PAC and the BCP, however, were beginning to show signs of strain. There had been allegations by Mfafa of the Presidential Council that the BCP had been misappropriating Organisation of African Unity (OAU) funds destined for the PAC. Moreover, the split in the PAC into pro- and anti-Leballo factions was reported to continue.¹⁰⁹

Several letters of appeal were sent to the British Colonial Office by the PAC, African governments and the British Anti-apartheid Movement (AAM) regarding the treatment of PAC refugees in Basutoland by the British colonial authorities. In November 1964, the PAC in Maseru complained of the constant

victimisation of its members in Basutoland. A letter was sent to the Colonial Office to appeal against the arrest of a group of PAC men who had been released from Robben Island on 1 August 1964 and who had entered Basutoland seeking asylum. The men had been arrested and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. Their appeal to the High Court had been dismissed on the grounds that they had entered the country unlawfully.¹¹⁰ In February 1965, Matthew Nkoana in London wrote to the Colonial Office asking for a meeting with Mrs Eirene White, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, who was about to visit the High Commission Territories, to discuss the status and treatment of South African refugees, but his request was turned down.¹¹¹ In July 1965, James Ndawo, another PAC representative in Maseru, again appealed to the Colonial Office asking the British government to define the status of refugees in the High Commission Territories, with specific reference to the practice by the Basutoland Mounted Police of arresting political refugees without travelling documents under the Entry and Residence Proclamation Act.¹¹² Representations and appeals were also lodged by the governments of Sierra Leone, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania for the release of Letlaka and the other PAC men at the start of their trial under the Prevention of Violence Abroad Proclamation Act in December 1965.¹¹³ After the conviction of six of the PAC men in July 1965 the AAM warned the Secretary of State to the Colonies, Anthony Greenwood, that the conviction of the PAC men under such an Act 'seriously undermines the whole principle of political asylum and renders the future of South African political refugees in the British High Commission Territories uncertain'.¹¹⁴ Although an AAM delegation (consisting of David Ennals, Vella Pillay, Joe Matthews and Abdul Minty) was granted a meeting to discuss the matter of South African refugees with the Colonial Office on 18 October, this does not seem to have had any impact on British policy towards the issue.

Far from this being the case, the Resident High Commissioner, Sir A.F. Giles, speaking on behalf of the Basutoland Commissioner of Police and Head of Special Branch, advised the Colonial Office that Britain 'must continue by one means or another my earlier policy of leaning heavily on these gentlemen and making them feel that they cannot operate safely in Basutoland'.¹¹⁵ In September 1965, the Basutoland Mounted Police again suggested to the Colonial Office that the PAC in Basutoland should be banned while more permanent legal measures against the threat posed by the subversive activities of the PAC could be laid down.¹¹⁶ The Colonial Office, however, decided not to ban the PAC 'for the time being', as not a strong enough case could be made for the identification between the PAC and a threat to law and order in Basutoland. Moreover, the Colonial Office was aware that the banning of the PAC would be viewed in the UK as evidence of collusion between the

British authorities, the Basutoland National Party (BNP, which had won a majority of seats in the April 1965 elections) and South Africa. Moreover, it was thought that any such banning was likely to be ineffective because of the wide distribution of PAC members throughout the country, and because the PAC was likely to continue to operate underground.¹¹⁷

That the British authorities should think that the PAC no longer represented too serious a security threat to Basutoland was largely due to the continuous harassment by the police of PAC refugees, as well as to the April 1965 electoral results, which saw the BCP lose to the conservative BNP with the approval of the British colonial and South African authorities. The BCP's electoral defeat came as a shock to both the BCP and the PAC, who had been confident that the BCP would achieve an overwhelming victory. The PAC did not hesitate to show its opposition to the newly elected BNP government. A statement was issued by the PAC from Dar es Salaam which denounced the recent elections in all three Protectorates as being:

*[F]raught with fraud and manoeuvres cooked up to prop puppet regimes of reactionary chieftainships to support Verwoerd apartheid regime against the African liberatory movements, thus turning the protectorates into allies against the liberation of Southern Africa and a realisation of a Union Government of all Africa.*¹¹⁸

The new BNP Prime Minister, Chief Leabua Jonathan, had made it clear that he would not allow Basutoland to be used as a base for subversive actions against South Africa by PAC refugees who had been given asylum. With the BNP, which 'had made no secret of its hostility to the aspirations of the PAC in Basutoland',¹¹⁹ now in power, an important chapter was closed in the history of the PAC in exile.

Conclusion

The imprisonment of the PAC leadership in March 1960 had led to a period of confusion within the PAC. From 1962, however, PAC leaders started to regroup in Maseru. From this base they succeeded in synchronising operations with the internal Poqo movement, which had started off largely as the result of spontaneous initiatives by PAC supporters in various localities. Despite the great strategic potential offered by the Basutoland headquarters, the underground PAC/Poqo network was infiltrated and smashed by the South African police in 1963, before its plan for a country-wide general uprising could be staged. Leballo's careless statements at a press conference in Maseru in March 1963 are partly to blame for the police crackdown on Poqo. They also irretrievably undermined his legitimacy as

the top leader of the PAC. Despite Leballo's attempts to centralise control of the organisation in his own hands, internecine strife soon became an endemic feature of the PAC exile politics. Fighting did not confine itself to the internal affairs of the PAC, but also spilled over to the Basutoland political context, often violently, with the effect of pushing the British colonial authorities to do everything in their powers to make the PAC's continued existence as difficult as possible (just short of banning it). Continuous harassment of PAC members by the Basutoland police, coupled with the 1965 BNP electoral victory, eventually had the desired effect of forcing the PAC out of the country.

Notes

- 1 See, for instance, South African Democracy Education Trust (hereafter SADET) (eds). *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 1, 1960–1970 (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004); Vol. 2, 1970–1980 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2006); Vol. 3, International Solidarity (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008); and R. Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2008).
- 2 Despite the overtly biased nature of British colonial sources, the picture they portray both complements and supports the conclusions reached by other surveys of the PAC and Poqo in this period and which are based on a different set of sources. See, for example, B.B. Maaba, 'The PAC's war against the state, 1960–1963', and S. Mathabatha, 'The PAC and POQO in Pretoria, 1958–1964', both in SADET (eds). *The Road to Democracy*, Vol. 1, which are largely based on oral testimonies.
- 3 See T. Karis & G.M. Gerhart, 'Challenge and Violence, 1953–1964', in T. Karis & G.M. Carter (eds). *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882–1964*, Vol. 3 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 341.
- 4 B. Pogrud, *How Can Man Die Better: Sobukwe and Apartheid* (London: Halban, 1990), 183.
- 5 T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London: Longman, 1983), 241.
- 6 Ibid. Cf. also T. Lodge, 'The Poqo insurrection', in T. Lodge (ed.). *Resistance and Ideology in Settler Societies* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986). According to the PAC leaders in exile in Maseru there was no difference between the PAC and Poqo, which developed out of the PAC's Task Force structures (a system of self-sufficient cells which became operative after Sharpeville). Poqo was a PAC slogan used by these underground cells: 'Um Afrika—Poqo', meaning 'True Africans'. See University of the Witwatersrand (hereafter Wits), William Cullen Library, Historical Papers (hereafter CULLEN HSTPAP), A2675, I, Dan Johns, Notes on a meeting with the PAC Presidential Council, Maseru, 9 March 1964,

- and supplementary notes by T. Karis. For the origins and usage of the word Poqo see also Lodge, 'The Poqo insurrection', 179–180, and T. ka Plaatjie, 'The PAC's internal underground activities, 1960–1980', in SADET (eds). *The Road to Democracy*, Vol. 2, 678.
- 7 Karis & Gerhart, *Challenge and Violence*, 669.
 - 8 For an analysis of the PAC's ideological development see Gerhart, *Black Power*.
 - 9 T. Lodge, 'The Pan-Africanist Congress, 1959–1990', in I. Liebenberg, F. Lortan, B. Nel & G. van der Westhuizen (eds). *The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa* (Pretoria: HAUM, 1994), 112.
 - 10 A.K. Hlongwane, 'To independence now! Tomorrow the United States of Africa: The story of Zephania Lekoame Mothopeng (1913–1990)', MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2002.
 - 11 K.M. Kondlo, 'In the twilight of the Azanian Revolution: The exile history of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa): 1960–1990', D Litt et Phil thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, October 2003, 289. <http://etd.rau.ac.za/theses/available/etd-08182004-115716/restricted/FinalChapter6.pdf>, Accessed 12 January 2008.
 - 12 See Lodge, 'The Poqo insurrection', 184, and C.J. Driver, *Patrick Duncan: South African and Pan-African* (London: Heinemann, 1980), 184–185, 194. Nkoana's release prompted the withdrawal of the PAC representatives from the Continuation Committee tasked with organising the March 1961 All-In Conference. Nkoana was also responsible for orchestrating opposition to the May 1961 anti-republican stay-away. This had severe repercussions on endeavours to create a degree of African unity in South Africa and, correspondingly, on the tentative union established abroad between the ANC and the PAC through the South African United Front, eventually leading to the latter's dissolution in early 1962.
 - 13 For an account of the South African United front see A. Lissoni, 'The South African liberation movements in exile, c. 1945–1970,' PhD thesis, SOAS, 2008.
 - 14 G.M. Gerhart & T. Karis, *Political Profiles, 1882–1964*, Vol. 4 of Karis & Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, 55. For Leballo's biographical details see also Lodge, 'The Pan-Africanist Congress', 106. For an account of his early life see J. Bolnick, 'Potlako Leballo—The man who hurried to meet his destiny', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29 (1991), 413–442.
 - 15 J. Motloheloa, 'Lesotho's road to independence, The founding of the Communist Party of Lesotho (Basutoland)', *African Communist*, 10, 1962, 24.
 - 16 J. Halpern, *South Africa's Hostages: Basutoland Bechuanaland and Swaziland* (Hardmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), 141.
 - 17 R.F. Weisfelder, *Political Contention in Lesotho, 1952–1964* (Morija, Lesotho: Institute of Southern African Studies, 1999), 13.
 - 18 *Contact*, 7 September 1961. See also Halpern, *South Africa's Hostages*, 163, and Leeman, *Struggle for Azania*, 107. According to Mokhehle, the reason behind the

- turnabout in BCP–ANC relations was a meeting between the BCP executive and four ANC leaders (Arthur Letele, Walter Sisulu, Moses Kotane and Joe Matthews) in January 1961. The ANC allegedly put forward a number of requests, including press support of the planned stay-away of May 1961, the setting up of a printing press in Basutoland, which would exclude PAC propaganda, the staging of parallel demonstrations in Basutoland, and the demand for immediate independence by the BCP. All were refused.
- 19 The ANC also notably failed to establish an official presence in Ghana, regarded at the time as ‘the Mecca of Pan-Africanism’. Only in 1965 was the ANC invited to send a representative to Accra.
- 20 Other PAC leaders had close relations with BCP leaders. Zeph Mothopeng and Ntsu Mokhehle, for instance, taught together at Basutoland High School until they were dismissed in 1955 for their criticism of the British colonial administration in *Mohlalani*, a political journal they founded together with B.M. Khaketla in 1954. See Hlongwane, ‘To independence now!’
- 21 B. Leeman, ‘The Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania’, in P.F. Alexander, R. Hutchinson & D. Schreuder (eds). *Africa Today: A Multi-Disciplinary Snapshot of the Continent in 1995* (Canberra: Australian National University Humanities Research Centre, 1996), 173–174.
- 22 Ibid., 176.
- 23 Leeman, *Struggle for Azania*, 94, 97. See also Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 16.
- 24 Leballo took over from Molete as Acting President, and the latter was appointed Secretary for Publicity and Information. The other office holders of the Presidential Council were: John Nyathi Pokela (Acting Secretary), Elliot A. Mfana (National Organiser) and Zeph Mothopeng (who replaced Molefi as Acting National Treasurer). Other members included P.L. Gqobose and Templeton M. Ntantala. Although Sobukwe’s letter is mentioned in a statement issued by Leballo and Pokela in 1964, there is no other proof of the existence of such a letter.
- 25 University of Fort Hare (hereafter UFH), National Heritage Cultural Studies Centre, PAC Tanzania Office, Box 24, ‘Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa: Background to official appointments and policy statement’, signed by P.K. Leballo and J.N. Pokela, Maseru, 20 June 1964.
- 26 T. ka Plaatjie, ‘The PAC in exile’, in SADET (eds). *The Road to Democracy*, Vol. 2, 710.
- 27 University of Cape Town (hereafter UCT), Department of Manuscripts and Archives, BC 1081, Q (1), C.L. Lakaye, ‘A statement concerning the dispute within the Pan-Africanist Congress (S.A.) to the African Liberation Committee’, Dar es Salaam, 17 November 1967. See also Wits, CULLEN HSTPAP, A2675, I, ‘Unpublished autobiographical notes by Charles Lakaye’, Nairobi, Kenya, February 1970.

- 28 M. Nkoana, letter to P.K. Leballo, 2 December 1966, in M. Nkoana, *Crisis in the Revolution: A Special Report on the Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa* (London: Mafube, 1969), 40.
- 29 See Lodge, 'The Pan-Africanist Congress', 114.
- 30 Lodge, *Black Politics*, 247.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 254.
- 32 Lodge, 'The Paarl insurrection: A South African uprising', *African Studies Review*, 25 (1982), 97–98.
- 33 Wits, CULLEN HSTPAP, A2675, I, Dan Johns, Notes on a meeting with the PAC Presidential Council. Maseru, 9 March 1964, and supplementary notes by T. Karis.
- 34 According to Charles Lakaye, the level of infiltration was so high that the South African police 'even knew the pseudonyms used by the PAC leaders in Basutoland and Dar es Salaam', and so too did they know of the PAC's 'childish code'. Wits, CULLEN HSTPAP, A2675, I, 'Unpublished autobiographical notes by Charles Lakaye', Nairobi, Kenya, February 1970.
- 35 Those headmen and chiefs who were assisting the state in the implementation of Bantu Authorities had been among the first targets of Poqo militants. In late 1962 Matanzima had applied to become Paramount Chief of Thembuland.
- 36 Pogrund, *Sobukwe*, 182.
- 37 South African journalists reported Leballo as having made those statements, although he denied this. See Wits, CULLEN HSTPAP, A2675, I, Dan Johns, Notes on a meeting with the PAC Presidential Council. Maseru, 9 March 1964, and supplementary notes by T. Karis.
- 38 Pogrund, *Sobukwe*, 181.
- 39 Lodge, *Black Politics*, 247.
- 40 Karis & Gerhart, *Challenge and Violence*, 671.
- 41 Bolnick, 'Potlako Leballo', 413.
- 42 Halpern, *South Africa's Hostages*, 27.
- 43 Leeman, *Struggle for Azania*, 111. That Leeman would take a stand defensive of Leballo comes as no surprise, as he was a staunch PAC and BCP supporter. He became one of Leballo's close aides after the latter was finally ousted by an internal coup in 1979 and the PAC split into two opposing factions.
- 44 UCT, Manuscripts and Archives, BC 1081, Q, C.L. Lakaye, 'A statement concerning the dispute within the Pan-Africanist Congress (SA) to the African Liberation Committee'. See also Pogrund, *Sobukwe*, 184.
- 45 The Act introduced 90-day detention without trial and further extended the powers granted to the Minister of Justice by the notorious 'Sabotage Act' of 1962.
- 46 J.D. Nyaoase, quoted in African National Congress of South Africa, *The Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa: Whom does it serve?* (New Delhi: Asian Mission of the African National Congress of South Africa, 1968), 11.

- 47 Public Records Office (hereafter PRO): CO 1048/521, Basutoland Intelligence Report, April 1963.
- 48 Leeman, *Struggle for Azania*, 111.
- 49 See PRO: CO 1048/521, J.N. Pokela (for the Presidential Council), PAC National Headquarters, Maseru, to the Colonial Secretary, HMG, London, letter dated 5 June 1963; and Memorandum from the Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa [c. July/August 1963], in A. Drew (ed.). *South Africa's Radical Tradition: A Documentary History*, Vol. 2, 1943–1964 (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1997), 387.
- 50 PRO: CO 1048/521, Basutoland Intelligence Report [hereafter BIR], 11 May 1964.
- 51 Ibid., J.N. Pokela (for the Presidential Council), PAC National Headquarters, Maseru, letter to the Colonial Secretary, HMG, London, 5 June 1963.
- 52 See PRO: CO 1048/521.
- 53 See Halpern, *South Africa's Hostages*, 28–29, and Wits, CULLEN HSTPAP, A2675, I, Dan Johns, Notes on a meeting with the PAC Presidential Council, Maseru, 9 March 1964, and supplementary notes by T. Karis.
- 54 *Die Burger*, 22 May 1963.
- 55 Lodge, 'The Poqo insurrection', 195.
- 56 Lodge, *Black Politics*, 255.
- 57 PRO: CO 1048/521, Pan-Africanist Congress—brief early history [marked 'secret'].
- 58 V.G. Shubin, *The ANC, A View from Moscow* (Cape Town: Mayibuyeye Books, 1999), 101.
- 59 Memorandum from the Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa [c. July/August 1963] in Drew (ed.). *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 2, 378.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 PRO: CO 1048/521, Pan-Africanist Congress—brief early history [marked 'secret']. See also Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania*, 112.
- 62 Halpern, *South Africa's Hostages*, 31.
- 63 Lakaye was dismissed in May 1966 over an alleged misappropriation of funds.
- 64 UCT, Department of Manuscripts and Archives, BC 1081, Q (1), C.L. Lakaye, 'A statement concerning the dispute within the Pan-Africanist Congress (S.A.) to the African Liberation Committee', Dar es Salaam, 17 November 1967, and Wits, CULLEN HSTPAP, A2675, I, 'Unpublished autobiographical notes by Charles Lakaye', Nairobi, Kenya, February 1970. For more on the Rothe incident see Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 69–70.
- 65 PRO: CO 1048/521, BIR, October–November 1963.
- 66 Ibid., For the story of how Duncan came to be a PAC member see Driver, *Patrick Duncan*. For an account of the relations between the PAC and Liberal Party see R. Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid: A History of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953–68* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), J. Ngubane, *An African Explains Apartheid* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1963) and Pogrud, *Sobukwe*.

- 67 Memorandum from the Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa [c. July/August 1963] in Drew (ed.), *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, Vol. 2, 378.
- 68 Wits, CULLEN HSTPAP, A2675, III, 594, Elias Ntloedibe, Accra, letter to [?], 10 April 1964.
- 69 PRO: CO 1048/521, BIR, April 1964.
- 70 Ibid., November 1963.
- 71 Ellen Molapo was a prominent PAC and Garment Workers' Union member. See Karis & Gerhart, *Challenge and Violence*, note 139, 372.
- 72 Until 1962, Mahomo and Molotsi had been the only PAC leading representatives abroad. Given the lack of contact with the rest of the PAC leadership (the majority of whom were at the time in prison), the two men had been able to conduct the external affairs of the PAC with a virtually free hand. The establishment of formal headquarters under Leballo in Maseru in 1962 soon led to the development of frictions with Mahomo and Molotsi over the handling of funds. In 1964 Mahomo and Molotsi, who had proved unwilling to relinquish their freedom of action, were both suspended on allegations of misappropriating PAC funds. Cf. Lodge, *Black Politics*, 308–309; and 'The Pan-Africanist Congress', 117.
- 73 UCT, Department of Manuscripts and Archives, BC 1081, Q (1), C.L. Lakaye, 'A statement concerning the dispute within the Pan-Africanist Congress (SA) to the African Liberation Committee', Dar es Salaam, 17 November 1967.
- 74 PRO: CO 1048/521, Extracts from Head of Special Branch meeting, 20 April 1964.
- 75 Ibid., BIR, May 1964.
- 76 Ibid., British Embassy, Pretoria, to Secretary of State to the Colonies, telegram, 7 May 1964.
- 77 Ibid., Basutoland Resident Commissioner to Secretary of State to the Colonies, telegram, 4 May 1964.
- 78 Ibid., 8 May 1964.
- 79 This is what emerges both from British intelligence records and from Halpern's account.
- 80 PRO: CO 1048/521, Telegram from the Basutoland Resident Commissioner to the Secretary of State to the Colonies, 11 May 1964.
- 81 Wits, CULLEN HSTPAP, A2675, III, 594, News release, issued by Z.B. Molete and P.K. Leballo, 25 May 1964.
- 82 PRO: CO 1048/521, Basutoland Resident Commissioner to Secretary of State to the Colonies, telegram, 8 May 1964.
- 83 Ibid., BIR, May–June–July 1964. See also Wits, CULLEN HSTPAP, A2675, III, 594, News release, issued by Z.B. Molete and P.K. Leballo, 25 May 1964.
- 84 At its founding Conference of May 1962 the CPL set out as its central task the formation of a 'united front of all patriotic political parties for the achievement of complete independence and national liberation'. It also advocated the

- establishment of a 'National Democracy' to advance 'on a non-capitalist path to Socialism and then Communism'. This closely resembles the SACP 'two-stage' theory and its resolve to build a strong national democratic movement in South Africa which would be headed by the ANC. Finally, the CPL called for 'close friendly relations with the progressive movements in the Republic of South Africa, such as the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress'. Motloheola, 'Lesotho's road to independence', 21–22, 27.
- 85 Halpern, *South Africa's Hostages*, 163–169. See also Leeman, *Struggle for Azania*, 104–105, 113–114.
- 86 Leeman, *Struggle for Azania*, 113–114, and Weisfelder, *Political Contention*, 69.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 164.
- 88 PRO: CO 1048/521, Extracts from Head of Special Branch meeting, 20 April 1964. Leeman also refers to this incident, although he inverts the chronology of events claiming that Leballo's car explosion occurred before the attempted murder on Matthews by the same means. See Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania*, 113.
- 89 Wits, CULLEN HSTPAP, A2675, III, 692, Concerning the Statement of the Pan-Africanist Congress of the 11th May, 1964, Issued by the Young Communist League Box 330 Maseru.
- 90 PRO: CO 1048/521, BIR, June 1964.
- 91 UFH, Centre for Cultural Studies, PAC Tanzania Office, Box 24, Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa, Background to official appointments and policy statement, signed by P.K. Leballo and J.N. Pokela, Maseru, 20 June 1964.
- 92 *Ibid.*
- 93 *Ibid.*
- 94 See PRO: CO 1048/521, BIR, October 1963 and July 1964.
- 95 *Ibid.*, Pan-Africanist Congress—brief early history [marked 'secret'].
- 96 *Ibid.*, BIR, September 1964.
- 97 *Ibid.*, Basutoland Resident Commissioner to Secretary of State to the Colonies, telegram, 10 October 1964.
- 98 *Ibid.*, BIR, November 1964.
- 99 Patrick Duncan, the son of a former British governor-general of South Africa, had served as a colonial officer in Basutoland from 1942 to 1952. He was thus well acquainted with Basutoland politics and had friendly relations with political leaders like Mokhehle and Chief Leabua Jonathan. According to Driver, Duncan's biographer, it was a letter of congratulations Duncan wrote to Chief Leabua on occasion of his electoral victory in 1965 which led to Duncan's expulsion from the PAC. See Driver, *Patrick Duncan*.
- 100 *Ibid.*, 213.
- 101 PRO: CO 1048/521, BIR, November 1964.

- 102 *Cape Argus*, 11 January 1965. That such a distinction was made by Van der Bergh is interesting as both the press and the authorities in South Africa had thus far tended to conflate the two.
- 103 PRO: CO 1048/521, BIR, December 1964.
- 104 *Ibid.*, BIR, January 1965 and July 1965.
- 105 *Ibid.*, Pan-Africanist Congress—brief early history [marked 'secret'].
- 106 *Ibid.*, BIR, December 1964.
- 107 *Ibid.*, January 1964.
- 108 *Ibid.*, February 1964.
- 109 *Ibid.*
- 110 PRO: CO 1048/521, Letter of Appeal sent by the PAC to the Colonial Office, signed by Reuben Rigalia, Justice Tshwili, Benjamin Matebe, Hitler Sonkwenye and Solly Koloj, Maseru, 18 November 1964.
- 111 *Ibid.*, Matthew Nkoana, 73 Roseberry Gardens, London N4, letter to Mrs Eirene White, Colonial Office, 21 February 1965, and reply from the Colonial Office to Nkoana, 24 February 1965.
- 112 *Ibid.*, James Ndawo, PAC Maseru Office to the Colonial Office, 9 July 1965.
- 113 See PRO: CO 1048/552.
- 114 PRO: CO 1048/521, Anti-apartheid Movement (signed by S. Abdul [Abdul Minty]) to Secretary of State to the Colonies, 22 July 1965.
- 115 *Ibid.*, Extract of a Letter from Sir A.F. Giles to the Colonial Office, 23 September 1965.
- 116 *Ibid.*, BIR, 17 September 1965.
- 117 *Ibid.*, A. Campbell to Mr Marnham, 25 October 1965.
- 118 *Ibid.*, PAC Statement, quoted in BIR, July 1965.
- 119 *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 2

MUSLIMS AND THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE

Liazzat J.K. Bonate

Northern Mozambique was the principal region of the liberation struggle against Portuguese colonialism by the people of Mozambique. Although a significant percentage of the population of this region was Muslim, their participation in the Mozambican liberation struggle has hardly been addressed in scholarship, although much has been written on the role of Protestants and Catholics.¹ Some authors have considered Muslims to have remained entirely aloof from the independence struggle. This chapter focuses on the response and involvement of northern Mozambican Muslims in the two principal nationalist liberation movements, namely the Mozambican African National Union (MANU, also known as the Makonde African National Union) and the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO). It draws on archival data, primarily the records of the Portuguese Secret Police (PIDE) and the documentation of the Portuguese Secret Services for Centralisation and Co-ordination of Information for Mozambique (SCCIM), as well as fieldwork conducted in Maputo and Pemba in 2007–2008.

Like most Africans in Mozambique, Muslims wished to end colonialism and recover their land. For them, Islam and chiefship were linked. Chiefs were believed to be the ‘owners’ and ‘stewards’ of the land, and the majority of Muslim leaders, whether traditional chiefs or Sufi leaders, were from the chiefly clans. Most importantly, Muslims of northern Mozambique had close historical and cultural ties to Tanganyika and Zanzibar, especially through Islamic and kinship networks. The involvement of Muslims in these regions in the liberation movements, in particular in the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), inspired and encouraged the Muslims of northern Mozambique to support MANU and FRELIMO. These movements

were launched in Tanganyika and Zanzibar with TANU backing and the participation of Muslim immigrants from northern Mozambique.

Shaykh Yussuf Arabi (1925–2005), a prominent religious leader who rose to a position of political leadership in both MANU and FRELIMO, provides unique insight into the relationships between Muslims and the main liberation movements during this period of Mozambican history. Although the key source for his life-story is his 74-page PIDE interrogation deposition (archived in Lisbon), some of his former associates were interviewed as well, confirming and adding details.²

Shaykh Yussuf and MANU

Historically, northern Mozambican Muslims interacted with Tanganyika, Zanzibar and Nyasaland through kinship and religious ties. Many lived, worked, studied or had relatives in these regions. As a result, many northern Mozambicans were drawn into the debates over Uhuru (the independence of Africa from European colonialism) during the 1950s. This was spearheaded by the Tanganyika African Association (TAA) and, in particular, TANU, which was formed in 1954 by Julius Nyerere. As John Iliffe has pointed out, in Tanganyika and Zanzibar, Muslim reaction to TANU was probably more positive than that of Christians. He holds that almost every kind of Muslim supported nationalism.³ Muslim townsmen had been prominent in the TAA, and Muslim activists helped to create TANU. Muslim trader-politicians were among its most influential leaders at first, while TANU's coastal origins and the KiSwahili language attracted some Muslims. The use of KiSwahili also gave TANU's ideology many Islamic overtones to balance elements that its Western-educated leaders derived from Christianity. Sufi orders also contributed to the independence movement in Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Their predominantly African membership, regional influence and hierarchical structures enabled a determined *khalifa* (head of a Sufi order) to throw his following behind TANU.

In the 1950s, significant numbers of northern Mozambicans moved to Tanganyika. The Mozambique Makonde Union (TMMU), founded in Dar es Salaam in 1958, had close ties to TANU. Almost all of its founders held TANU membership cards, and the TMMU envisioned becoming an all-Mozambican political movement similar to TANU. In 1960 it changed its name to MANU (Mozambique African National Union). Before it was officially registered, TANU recognised Matheus Mmole, a 25-year-old Makonde from Tanganyika, as President of MANU. In the same year, the Zanzibar Makonde and Makua Union became affiliated with MANU as

Z-MANU. Besides having close ties to TANU and holding its membership cards, MANU affiliates used TANU's methods of popular mobilisation. TANU branch leaders spent 10 days to two weeks each month in the rural areas, organising mass meetings to recruit people and persuade them that self-determination was both desirable and possible. MANU also imitated TANU's structural organisation, consisting of District Secretary, Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer. After the proclamation of Tanganyika's independence on 9 December 1961, MANU's role as a political movement seeking the independence of Mozambique intensified.

Shaykh Yussuf Arabi, Makua speaker, was born in the Chai region of Macomia in Cabo Delgado. Between 1942 and 1946 he studied under Shaykh Omari Macama, former student of a prominent Zanzibari Sufi leader, Shaykh Husayn bin Ramadhani (1880–1978).⁴ In order to continue his education under Shaykh Ramadhani, Shaykh Yussuf left for Zanzibar in 1947. On his return to Chai in 1957, he found the Portuguese administrators had become particularly hostile to Islam, persecuting Islamic leaders, forbidding mosque prayers, closing down the Qur'anic schools and burning 'Muslim flags' (most likely the Qadiri banners).⁵ After they destroyed his madrassa, Shaykh Yussuf decided to return to Zanzibar in February 1962 for his and his family's safety. During the following two years, he became affiliated with MANU and FRELIMO, and interacted closely with members of Mozambican liberation movements in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar.

Due to the persecution Shaykh Yussuf suffered at the hands of the local Portuguese administrators, he left Mozambique angry and motivated to act against Portuguese repression. On his way to Zanzibar, he contacted the MANU branch in Lindi.⁶ After he told the Secretary of MANU, Matheus Shauli (a Makonde from Mueda), about his ordeals, Shauli gave him a letter to the MANU headquarters in Dar es Salaam, where he met MANU leaders Matheus Mmole and Lawrence Malinga Millinga.⁷ Millinga explained that MANU was working towards a general Uhuru of Mozambique, but its efforts were being undermined by popular perceptions that MANU was basically a Christian Makonde organisation. Because Shaykh Yussuf was a prominent shaykh and a Muslim Makua speaker who had suffered Portuguese persecution, Millinga suggested that he tell his story in order to attract other Muslims to MANU. Shaykh Yussuf's story was read to two African journalists in March 1962, and then broadcast on radio by the Tanganyika Broadcasting Corporation.

After Shaykh Yussuf was unsuccessful in acquiring legal standing in Tanganyika, he wrote to Shaykh Ramadhani expressing his desire to move to Zanzibar. With the support of local Muslims, he arrived in Zanzibar in April 1962, where he met various Mozambican immigrants who were politically active

and affiliated with MANU and the Afro-Shirazi Party, with a few affiliated to the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP). Shaykh Yussuf affiliated with the Afro-Shirazi Party (he claimed this was 'obligatory' for African Muslim immigrants) to secure his position within Zanzibar Muslim society.⁸

Next, Shaykh Yussuf met the Regional Secretary of the Zanzibar MANU branch, Lucas Nchucha, a Makonde from northern Mozambique, who introduced him to other MANU leaders and its Youth League. Mwewa Mfaume, the Zanzibar and Pemba Regional Chairman, convinced Shaykh Yussuf to join MANU, while Lucas Nchucha gave details of political parties in Zanzibar. He described MANU in particular as a party of northern Mozambicans and denounced UDENAMO (*União Democrática de Moçambique*, Mozambique Democratic Union) as comprising 'arrogant *landins*' (Portuguese for Africans from southern Mozambique).⁹ Nchucha also told Shaykh Yussuf that many Makua speakers were moving from MANU to UDENAMO, having been misled into believing that MANU was a Makonde Christian party. In words similar to those used by Millinga, Nchucha described how Shaykh Yussuf's story of an important Muslim shaykh harassed by the Portuguese could be useful for MANU's objective of unifying people of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds (not only the Makonde) for the Uhuru of Mozambique. On 6 May 1962, Shaykh Yussuf recounted his story at a meeting at the MANU Club, attended by more than a hundred Mozambicans.

From the late 1950s to 1961, popular mobilisation for Mozambique's independence was carried out mostly by MANU (former TMMU), linked to TANU. As Shaykh Yussuf's story demonstrates, MANU wished to become a political party for all Mozambicans, inclusive of a broad ethnic and social basis, not of the Makonde alone. MANU sought to use the influence of the relevant representatives of different ethnic and social groups in a mass mobilisation campaign for a nationalist cause. Shaykh Yussuf a *khalifa* of the Qadiriyya *tariqa* (Sufi religious order), is an example.

Between 1959 and 1963, MANU's mobilisation activities in northern Mozambique began drawing the attention of the Portuguese colonial rulers. In coastal Memba and Pebane regions, they detected rumours among Muslims concerning a 'war against the whites' and that 'Nyerere was planning to come to Mozambique'. They realised that a number of Muslim religious leaders from Tanganyika were discussing the possible end of Portuguese colonialism in local mosques, while some Muslim *régulo* (Portuguese for chief) were involved in debates about independence with other Muslim *régulos* and shaykhs close to Cabo Delgado.¹⁰

In 1960, PIDE arrested the chief Qadiri *khalifa* of Memba region, Shaykh Mussagy Bwana, accusing him of reading 'subversive news' from Tanganyika

in a mosque under an oath of secrecy sworn on the Qur'an.¹¹ This 'news' included a letter stating that 'God was angry with Whites for ruling in the land of Blacks, and for collecting taxes and forcing Blacks to work in cotton fields'.¹² Shaykh Mussagy was subsequently exiled to São Tomé. In 1961, the important Yao Muslim *régulo*, Selemane Mataka, and several others were put under PIDE surveillance because they listened to Tanganyika and Nyasaland radio stations and maintained regular correspondence with Muslims in those regions in which Mataka had strong ties.¹³

Meanwhile, the selling and seeking of *hiriz*, protective amulets with Qur'anic inscriptions, was on the increase among northern Mozambicans. These *hiriz*, prepared by shaykhs and the *walimu* (Swahili, pl: Qur'anic teachers, also Muslim healers), were intended to inculcate bravery and protect the owners from Portuguese bullets and other weaponry, as well as against general malevolent spirits and wild animals. As during the 'effective occupation' during 1895 to the 1930s, the circulation of 'anti-bullet' *hiriz* was read as an indication that Muslims were preparing for warfare. The Portuguese thus viewed *hiriz* as a powerful tool for political subversion. During 1961–1963 in Cabo Delgado, Angoche and Niassa, PIDE arrested various *walimu* and Muslim *régulos* with anti-bullet *hiriz*, who often travelled to and received visitors from Tanganyika and Nyasaland, and were in possession of anti-Portuguese pamphlets and other propaganda literature.¹⁴ The money from *hiriz* sales reportedly went to Tanganyika for buying weapons.¹⁵

FRELIMO

In 1962, when Shaykh Yussuf met MANU leaders, there were already two other Mozambican liberation movements present in Tanganyika. One was UDENAMO, which was attracting not only Makua but many Makonde to its ranks—largely because, as Nchucha had explained to Shaykh Yussuf, this party favoured all-out war against the Portuguese in Mozambique.¹⁶

Some Makonde became discontented with their leaders because of the change of TMMU's name to MANU, which sounded like a nationalist party similar to TANU and KANU (Kenyan African National Union). They wished to maintain an ethnic 'club' designation rather than belonging to a political party interested in negotiating peacefully with the Portuguese for their return to Mozambique. Despite being a Makonde himself, Nchucha opposed those who did not want the Uhuru of Mozambique as a whole, but only of their 'own particular homeland'. However, many Makonde wanted to go to war, while the MANU leaders were still considering a peaceful transition to independence through negotiations with Portugal. Michel Cahen believes that these factors,

along with the perception that UDENAMO's Adelino Gwambe (who spoke Portuguese) was more 'Mozambican' than the Anglophone Mmole, played a decisive role in the Makonde transferring their allegiance from MANU to UDENAMO.¹⁷

Another organisation in Tanganyika pursuing the independence of Mozambique was UNAMI (*União Nacional Africana Independente de Moçambique*, Independent Mozambique National African Union), a small Zambezi-, Tete- and Niassa-based group created by José Baltazar da Costa Chagonga and Evaristo Gadaga in 1960.¹⁸ Exiled to Nyasaland after being arrested by the Portuguese, Chagonga arrived in Dar es Salaam in 1961.

On 25 June 1962, these three Mozambican movements were united into a common front, FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, Mozambican Liberation Front). Some, like UDENAMO's Gwambe, opposed the unification because he did not support Eduardo Mondlane, whom he suspected of being close to American interests. Gwambe also rejected the idea of peaceful transition to independence through negotiations with Portugal. He was subsequently expelled from FRELIMO. Mmole followed TANU instructions and joined FRELIMO, although he did not consult anybody within MANU. He was expelled from FRELIMO in 1963 because of his associations with Gwambe; Chagonga left FRELIMO of his own volition in the same year.

Shaykh Yussuf Arabi recalled that in 1962 Mmole proclaimed the news about the foundation of FRELIMO at the MANU Club in Zanzibar, saying that 'Africa was for Africans and not for the whites'.¹⁹ The meeting, attended by about 800 MANU members of Zanzibar and Pemba, almost all Makonde, decided that the local MANU branch should be transformed into a Regional Committee of FRELIMO. Mwewa Mfaume became Regional Chairman, with Sadiki Ntanga as Vice-Chairman, Lucas Nchucha as Regional Secretary and Rafael Ntuma as Treasurer. All were Makonde. According to Shaykh Yussuf, Mozambican immigrants from other ethnic groups were invited to join afterwards, but almost no one stepped forward. Besides Makonde dominance of the committee, lack of consultation on the dissolution of the MANU branch and the foundation of a FRELIMO committee in its place had alienated these immigrants.

The Zanzibari Committee informed the Central Committee of FRELIMO in Dar es Salaam of the situation, and in 1963 the Central Committee sent Uria Simango to solve the problem. Simango first went to talk to the Afro-Shirazi Party, which had many Makua, Yao and other Mozambican Muslim immigrants in its ranks, asking why FRELIMO did not appeal to non-Makondes. He was told that the Makonde were seen to be people of 'a lower race, who did not want to accept Islam, know nothing about hygiene,

tattooed their faces and used only a cloth to cover their privates'.²⁰ This kind of ethnic prejudice circulated even though there were many non-tattooed, Muslim Makonde in Tanganyika and Zanzibar. It is understandable that Muslims who viewed the local FRELIMO committee as a kind of 'Makonde Club' did not want to join it. This situation reflected the pre-revolutionary atmosphere in Zanzibar, which pitted Indian and Arab Muslims against African Muslims and non-Muslims. Coastal and Makua-speaking Muslim immigrants from northern Mozambique, with a long history of Islamic and kinship links with Zanzibar, were better integrated into Zanzibari Muslim society than recent Makonde Muslims or non-Muslims. Simango then invited all Mozambican immigrants to a meeting at which he said that they should leave their religious and 'tribal' differences aside and unite for the common purpose of Uhuru and *jamhuri* (Swahili for liberation) of Mozambique. However, the situation remained unaltered.

In June 1963, the FRELIMO Central Committee in Dar es Salaam sent Paulo J. Bayeke, a Makua speaker from Massassi, to Zanzibar to develop a propaganda campaign among Mozambicans and to prepare for Eduardo Mondlane's visit in October 1963.²¹ Several Muslims considered important by FRELIMO, including many Makua speakers, were invited to meet him at the local FRELIMO committee office. Among these were Shaykh Yussuf and his wife, Mariamo Omar.²² What happened next sheds light on the ethno-linguistic and religious distinctions that plagued the nascent independence movement, particularly the suspicion with which the Makonde viewed FRELIMO and its leader. Mondlane immediately called for everyone to join FRELIMO, but a Makonde speaker named Ntalama spoke for many when expressing impatience about starting a war of independence as quickly as possible. Mondlane called for patience and calm in order to avert the repetition of events like the 1960 Mueda massacre. He concluded by saying that while the land was Mozambican, there was a place for everyone—blacks, whites, Arabs, Indians and others. When Mondlane subsequently left for a meeting with the Afro-Shirazi Party, Ntalama commented: 'This one is not an African anymore, he is white; married to a white, he is probably a Portuguese government spy.'²³

Following Mondlane's visit, Mwewa Mfaume asked Shaykh Yussuf and his wife to join FRELIMO, telling them that, as important Muslims and Makua speakers, they were very valuable to the movement. Having agreed, Shaykh Yussuf became a district chairman and his wife the President of the Women's League. They worked hard to mobilise Mozambicans and to wage a propaganda war against the Portuguese, targeting northern Mozambican Muslims in particular. News of Portuguese harassment and persecution of

Muslims in northern Mozambique, burning mosques, madrassas and religious literature, were brought to Zanzibar via the existing historical religious and ethnic networks. These stories were broadcast on the radio and included in pamphlets and letters that were sent back to northern Mozambique, calling on Muslims to join FRELIMO. One of Shaykh Yussuf's letters was intercepted by PIDE in April 1964.²⁴ In it, he addressed fellow Muslims as a *khalifa* of the Qadiriyya and a FRELIMO official, describing Muslim grievances under Portuguese rule and inviting them to join the liberation movements because it was 'God's will'.

Nevertheless Shaykh Yussuf and his wife, like many other Mozambican immigrants in Zanzibar, grew frustrated with the Makonde, who, being mostly Christians, mistrusted Muslims in FRELIMO.²⁵ Makonde people were also annoyed at having to pay monthly quotas to FRELIMO while 'nothing was happening', and they continually questioned the party leadership's political capacities. Consequently, some Makonde left FRELIMO and joined the re-launched MANU in Mombasa; others entered a new Makonde Afro-Shirazi Union in Zanzibar.²⁶

Historical animosities between slave-raiding Muslims and victimised non-Muslim Makonde went back several centuries, but it seems that the political atmosphere in Zanzibar contributed to mutual Muslim-Makonde apprehensiveness and fed to Makonde anxieties. The 1961 elections and the 1963 British concession of Zanzibar autonomy perpetuated both the Arabic sultanate and the political superiority of Arabs, Indians and coastal Muslims as opposed to African non-Muslim immigrants from the mainland, such as the Makonde.²⁷

The Makonde were thus deeply involved in the 1964 Zanzibar revolution. Shaykh Yussuf's deposition mentions that John Okello, a Ugandan mercenary and one of the former leaders of the Mau Mau revolt, instigated immigrant workers, including hundreds of Mozambican Makonde, to join the revolution by promising them material assistance for the Uhuru of their homeland in the case of revolutionary victory.²⁸ According to Shaykh Yussuf, Okello had a personal Makonde paramilitary group.

On 12 January 1964, the Sultan was deposed and Abeid Amani Karume was proclaimed President of the newly born Zanzibar Republic. The 'revolutionaries' committed atrocities, such as rape, murder and looting of the island.²⁹ After the arrival of police troops from Tanganyika and a return to relative calm, Okello was declared *persona non grata* and returned to Uganda. The Makonde, who had occupied Arab properties and land during the revolution, were expelled from these properties by the new government.³⁰ Shaykh Yussuf did not know whether the Makonde received anything from

Karume, but they approached Abdurrahman Muhammad Babu for jobs and assistance. Babu said there were no jobs except in the police or the army, and the Makonde remained in precarious straits. In March 1964, they asked for a camp for military training for the Uhuru of their homeland, which, though promised by the new Zanzibar government, was soon forgotten. The majority of the Makonde gradually became disillusioned and began leaving for Mozambique. The PIDE noticed that, as early as 1963, significant numbers of Makonde began returning from Tanganyika to Mozambique.³¹ In August 1964, the Makonde loyal to MANU decided to start the independence war in Mozambique on their own, and raided the Nangololo Catholic mission in Cabo Delgado, where they killed a Dutch missionary.³²

After the Zanzibar revolution, foreign immigrants were forbidden to hold political meetings, and FRELIMO activities were stalled. Finally, Shaykh Yussuf decided to leave the island. On 17 February 1964, he arrived at the FRELIMO headquarters in Dar es Salaam, and contacted Uria Simango, who arranged for him to be sent to Mtwara in Tanganyika, and introduced him to Mtwara District Chairman, Lazaro Nkavandame. During his stay at Mtwara, the shaykh saw many people coming from Mozambique to the FRELIMO office, including at least 12 Makonde students from various Christian missions, some southerners and Makua speakers. He was asked to write a letter targeting those Muslims who collaborated with the Portuguese and denounced FRELIMO mobilisers. This letter was taken to Mozambique and used to convince Muslims to support the independence movement.

The environment in Tanganyika and Zanzibar was becoming increasingly difficult for Mozambican immigrants, and, unable to find a job or support his family, Shaykh Yussuf wanted to return to Mozambique. He asked Nkavandame for funds, and was shocked to be accused of being a PIDE spy in return. Shaykh Yussuf complained that he did not understand why FRELIMO had invited him to Mtwara, only to make accusations. He subsequently left for Mozambique, staying in the homes of various Muslim religious leaders along the way. At Mocimboa da Praia, he went to the Portuguese administration to ask for a travel permit to Chai. That afternoon, PIDE arrested him, confiscating quantities of FRELIMO papers, including a party bulletin in KiSwahili and Portuguese. Shaykh Yussuf was held at Ibo Fort prison for some months and then transferred to Machava prison in Lourenço Marques, from which he was released by the transition government in 1974.³³ After independence, he tried to join the police, a request which was declined by the new government. He subsequently became a *mrwalimu* and an imam of the Qadiriyya mosque in the Mafalala neighbourhood of Maputo, as well as one of the leaders of the national Muslim umbrella organisation, the Islamic

Congress, created in 1983. In the mid-1990s, he moved back to his native Chai in Cabo Delgado, where he died in 2005.

His experiences as a Muslim political activist and FRELIMO member in exile suggest something of the difficulties and contradictions, even betrayals, involved in Muslim revolutionary engagement in and outside northern Mozambique.

Chiefly and Sufi networks in mass mobilisation

During the early stages of the popular mobilisation for independence, FRELIMO agents were recruited from among ethnic, linguistic and religious groups in which they subsequently worked.³⁴ The enlistment of important religious leaders, such as Shaykh Yussuf Arabi, by MANU and later FRELIMO also paved the way for popular acceptance by Muslims of these movements' political messages. Shaykh Yussuf's story also demonstrates that FRELIMO took note of MANU's clandestine networks of mobilisation and tapped into existing social networks in order to broaden the movement's support base. They knew that the most effective means of popular mobilisation in northern Mozambique would be through the involvement of 'traditional authorities', including Sufi orders and the institution of African chieftainship, consisting of the *régulos* and their entourage of *apia-mwene* (Emakhuwa: female branch of a matrilineal chieftainship), *mahumu* (Emakhuwa: lesser subordinate chiefs and advisors to the *régulo*) and healers. Both the 'chiefly' and Sufi networks extended to Tanganyika and Zanzibar.

Most northern Mozambican Muslims involved in the liberation struggle were affiliated with Sufi orders, in particular the Qadiriyya, and to a lesser degree the Shadhuliyya. A Portuguese Secret Service agent, Jose de Mello Branquinho points out that FRELIMO mobilisation occurred along routes previously approved by Islamic leaders of northern Mozambique in co-ordination with those residing in Tanganyika and Zanzibar.³⁵ As mentioned earlier, the involvement of northern Mozambican Muslims in the liberation movements through MANU and the Qadiriyya networks had been detected by the Portuguese in Memba and other regions as early as the late 1950s and early 1960s. Some of these Muslims were imprisoned, tortured, killed or exiled, methods applied even more ruthlessly by PIDE in the mid- and late 1960s.

The most important basis for northern Mozambican Muslim mobilisation came from the Muslim 'chiefly' networks. Modern scholarship tends to view Islam and 'traditional authorities' in northern Mozambique as two separate and autonomous domains, but some 'traditional authorities' sided with FRELIMO, while others collaborated with the Portuguese.³⁶ A Mozambican

scholar, Rafael da Conceição, however, whose research focuses on the Muslims of Cabo Delgado, finds that while attitudes of ‘traditional authorities’ can be traced relatively easily, those of Islamic religious leaders remain ‘ambiguous’. Similarly, in the early 1960s, the Portuguese Secret Services questioned whether northern Mozambican Muslims were becoming involved in the liberation movements through Islam or through kinship connections. But another Secret Service officer, Fernando A. Monteiro and, to some degree, Branquinho recognised that in Muslim regions of northern Mozambique, ‘the Islamic hierarchy coincided with the traditional socio-religious hierarchy’.³⁷ In other words, Islamic religious authority, especially Sufi, and local African ‘traditional authority’ — the chieftainship — were linked.

The Portuguese authorities suspected that the Ekoni-speaking Makua (Muikoni) chiefs were dragging other Muikoni into the liberation movements. But it is clear that the ethnic identity of those involved was diverse. This was because the formation of the chiefdoms in the regions of Muikoni influence at the height of the international slave trade (during the second half of the nineteenth century) involved absorbing different ethnic groups and establishing kinship ties with Muslim chiefs of other ethnic groups of northern and even central Mozambique.³⁸ Most Muslim chiefs of northern Mozambique were perceived to be kin, both by Africans themselves and by the Portuguese, and were part of historical chiefly networks, formed during the nineteenth century via their involvement in the international slave trade.

As Feierman points out, the great appeal of the African nationalists of the liberation period was that they ‘said openly what many common people knew, but what other leaders feared to say, that the European rule needed to end so that Africans could govern themselves’.³⁹ Mozambicans also joined the liberation movements because they wanted the end of colonialism.⁴⁰ Africans in general, and chiefs especially, due to their relationship with land and territory, upheld a grassroots, culturally based nationalism, which provided an additional ideological basis for their support of the liberation movements. They believed, for instance, that ‘the land was theirs and not of the whites’ and that ‘people from Tanganyika would come to wage a war against whites to liberate us and our land.’⁴¹

Muslim responses to FRELIMO in northern Mozambique

During 1963–1966, the positive response to nationalist mobilisation, both by Sufis and especially chiefs and their entourages, became apparent not only to FRELIMO, but also to PIDE, which began to keep close records. Recruitment as a rule occurred in a *banja*, the assembly of the prominent members of the community, when mobilisers from Tanganyika arrived.

The *banja* was accompanied by rituals that provided the recruitment process with 'traditional' legitimacy. One of these rituals was sacrifice to the ancestors, to extend the blessing and protection of the ancestor spirits over the armed insurgence groups. Another was the oath of secrecy sworn on the Qur'an and a reading of the Sura Yassin (a recitation from the Qur'an), followed by the distribution of *hiriz* in exchange for payment of membership fees (ranging from 20 to 100 escudos) and the distribution of FRELIMO cards. When an authoritative shaykh of the region or a visiting one from Tanganyika or the East African coast was involved, the ceremony took place in a mosque following regular prayers, or after Sufi rituals. After the first *banja*, FRELIMO expected mobilisation to continue, and intelligence to be collected.⁴²

The liberation movements gained the most support in those regions in which forced labour and cotton production were ruthlessly imposed. In explaining the quasi-total adherence to FRELIMO by the 'traditional' and Islamic authorities in some regions, Branquinho emphasised that local administrators used brutal corporal violence against the plantation labourers.⁴³ Some administrators forced Africans to buy goods in their shops, and prohibited them from buying elsewhere. People were resettled by force in villages far from ancestral homes, family lands and water resources. It is therefore not surprising that northern Mozambican Muslims, although influenced by the political attitudes of Muslims in Tanganyika and Zanzibar, were far more intensely involved in the liberation struggle in regions of acute colonial abuses.

Between 1964 and 1968, the PIDE, together with local administrators, began arresting Africans who supported liberation movements. A significant number of northern Mozambican Muslim leaders were detained, including the famous chief Abdul Kamal of Megama. Many were tortured and murdered, or exiled to São Tomé and other places. Kamal was imprisoned at Ibo Island, tortured and murdered.⁴⁴ Mosques, madrassas and religious literature were burned and shaykhs were forced to eat pork and renounce their faith; Islamic religious activities were forbidden. In Muíte region in 1965, PIDE tortured and killed 15 representatives of the Islamic religious elite, including Shaykh Bwanamire, the chief *khalifa* of the Qadiriyya in the region.⁴⁵

Simultaneously, attempts were made to co-opt Muslims to the side of colonial rule.⁴⁶ Between 1968 and 1972, the Portuguese regime kept up a 'hearts and minds' campaign aimed at winning the support of Muslims against the onslaught of African nationalism. In particular, colonial authorities displayed public respect for some Muslim leaders, facilitated Islamic practices and rites and took steps to improve the living conditions of Africans. These measures were not as successful in alienating some northern Mozambican Muslims

from the liberation struggle as were FRELIMO's internal skirmishes from 1966 onwards. These reflected ethnic and regional contradictions, in particular between northern Mozambicans (representing mostly the interests of rural peasantry) and the southern urban *assimilados*. FRELIMO started envisioning a Marxist form of post-independence Mozambique, entailing 'collective production' and the construction of a socialist country. It proposed an agenda that involved creating a new society from scratch, a new nation that would discard 'tribalism' and the old colonial structures centred on chiefs, who were denounced as clinging to 'traditions' in order to maintain their power as servants of the colonial rule.⁴⁷

Colin Darch and David Hedges maintain that these changes within FRELIMO stemmed from the worsening military situation and the abuses of power for personal gain by FRELIMO officials with strong 'traditional' credentials. The militarisation of the regions that FRELIMO liberated from the Portuguese (the 'liberated zones') meant that military cadres were given control of food and logistical supplies in these regions to the detriment of the 'traditional' structures, which undertook these activities before 1969.⁴⁸ Though FRELIMO continued to rely on 'traditional' structures to facilitate these processes, distrust had already taken hold. FRELIMO viewed its dealings with the traditional and religious structures as a temporary measure necessitated by the war situation. In post-independence Mozambique, the affiliations of tribes and regions associated with traditional structures would have no place. These ideas were promoted by FRELIMO cadres in the 'liberated zones', and therefore became known among *régulos* and Muslim religious leadership.

The FRELIMO mobilisation groups also abandoned the TANU-inspired structure and methods, integrating instead a socialist, single military command hierarchy, led by Party Secretaries. Local delegates of FRELIMO departments of Health, Education, Culture, Production and Commerce formed various councils and committees, to which members were centrally appointed by the party leadership. To protect members from easy identification by PIDE/DGS, FRELIMO suspended the issuing of party cards in some locations.⁴⁹ These shifts notwithstanding, Muslim mobilisation and involvement in the independence war in northern Mozambique continued, even if it was not as unequivocal as before 1968.

Conclusion

In focusing on the neglected topic of northern Mozambican Muslim support for the liberation movements, this chapter has shown that while compromised

at times by displacement, distrust and ethnic rivalry, there was strong revolutionary support from prominent Muslim leaders, such as Shaykh Yussuf, and grassroots Muslim communities, in northern Mozambique and in other parts of East Africa.

The most active Muslims most active in the struggle were from the regions of intense forced agricultural labour, where the abuses of colonial administrators included physical violence and the persecution of Islam—a powerful motivator for Muslim participation in the liberation movements. The close historical cultural, kinship and religious ties that Muslims of northern Mozambique had with those of Tanganyika and Zanzibar played a decisive role in their support of MANU and FRELIMO. The involvement in TANU of Muslims in Tanganyika and Zanzibar, and the launching of MANU and FRELIMO in these regions, inspired northern Mozambican Muslims to embrace the independence message. In addition, the Qadiriyya Sufi order, active in TANU, was connected historically to branches in northern Mozambique, and used this connection to expand the nationalist ideology. The story of Shaykh Yussuf Arabi provides a first-hand account of these revolutionary efforts.

From the late 1950s until 1968, Muslims were active in the mobilisation and support of the liberation movements in northern Mozambique. However, from 1969 onwards, their support became less visible. In part, this was because of the 1965–1968 PIDE purges of Muslims involved in the liberation movements. However, the most important factor seems to have been FRELIMO's adoption of a doctrinaire and radical Marxism after 1969 and the militarisation of its cadres in the liberated zones. While FRELIMO still relied on traditional and Muslim religious leadership, it also began manifesting distrust towards it.

Those who survived PIDE tortures and were released from prison were not always welcome back in FRELIMO, which suspected them of having been recruited by the Portuguese Secret Services as *comprometidos*. Harry West points out that 'even those former political prisoners who had remained in prison until the end of the independence war were treated with suspicion by the post-independence FRELIMO state'.⁵⁰ They were thus denied a place in the history of the independence war and, in most cases, erased altogether from FRELIMO's version of history, along with groups that did not fit the profile of secular and militant Marxist revolutionaries. One result is that the participation of northern Mozambican Muslims in the liberation movements and FRELIMO has been officially forgotten. This chapter has attempted to recover important aspects of the history of their participation in the struggle against colonialism.

Notes

- 1 See especially Teresa Cruz e Silva, *Protestant Churches and the Formation of Political Consciousness in Southern Mozambique (1930–1974)* (Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 2001); E. Morier-Genoud, 'The Catholic Church, religious orders and the making of politics in colonial Mozambique: The case of the Diocese of Beira, 1940–1974' (PhD dissertation, Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2005). For Islam, see Fernando A. Monteiro, *O Islão, o Poder, e a Guerra: Moçambique 1964–74* (Porto: Ed. Universidade Portucalense, 1993); Edward A. Alpers, 'Islam in the service of colonialism? Portuguese strategy during the armed liberation struggle in Mozambique', *Lusotopie*, 1999, 165–184.
- 2 'Relatório das conversações havidas em Porto Amelia, de 1 de Junho de 1964 à 7 de Junho de 1964, entre um dos adjuntos dos SCII e Yussuf Árabe' (78 pages), in Instituto de Arquivos Nacionais de Torre do Tombo (hereafter IAN-TT), Lisbon, the SCCIM Collection (hereafter SCCIM), Caixa (Box, hereafter Cx.) 60, No. 408; interviews with Shaykh Abu Dale, 13 July 2007, Maputo; and Mr Nasurullahi Intizane Dulá, 31 March 2008, Pemba city.
- 3 John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 529–530, 551.
- 4 IAN-TT, SCCIM, 'Relatório das conversações', 132. Ramadhani was a renowned Qadiri *khalifa* (leader of a Sufi order), born in Zanzibar to Zigua parents from mainland Tanganyika.
- 5 IAN-TT, SCCIM, 'Relatório das conversações', 132.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 134.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*, 138. Barnabé Lucas Ncomo mentions that the relationship between MANU and UDENAMO was shaky, because MANU had a very limited ethnic Makonde orientation: *Uria Simango: Um Homem, Uma Causa* (2nd edition, Maputo: Edições Novafrica, 2004), 86–87.
- 10 José Alberto Gomes de Melo Branquinho, Nampula, 22 April 1969, 'Relatório da Prospeccção ao Distrito de Moçambique' [hereafter Branquinho], 147, 398–99.
- 11 Direcção dos Serviços dos Negócios Indígenas, Processo Administrativo No. 4/1960, Administração da Circunscrição de Momba, elementos extraídos destinam-se ao Centro de Informação, IAN-TT, SCCIM, Cx. 156, No. 1071, 1960–1961, Processo 2/9/10/9, 'Atitudes Individuais Subversivas, Suspeitas ou Susceptíveis de Subversividade, Distrito de Moçambique', 6–7.
- 12 Branquinho, 351.
- 13 Comando Territorial do Norte, Relatório I/172/61, 19 de Julho de 1961, in IAN-TT, SCCIM, Cx. 60, No. 418, Processos 02/11/1959–28/10/1965, 388.

- 14 Governador Basílio Pina de Oliveira ao SCCIM, Número do BI 3/62, 29 de Dezembro de 1962; Ivens-Ferraz de Freitas ao Comando da Região Militar, 1 de Fevereiro de 1963, Lourenço Marques; António Enes, 29 de Janeiro de 1963, Secretário de Governador do Distrito de Moçambique, Nampula, No. 11/SDI/63, in IAN-TT, SCCIM, Cx. 60, No. 418, Processos 02/11/1959–28/10/1965, 327, 339–342.
- 15 Distrito de Niassa, Vila Cabral, 17 Agosto 1962, Chefe do Gabinete, João Maria Bento ao SCCIM; Nota No. 985/61/GOV, de 22.12.1962, Governo de Cabo Delgado, extracto; Distrito de Quissanga, Posto-Sede, 'Fetichismo e subversividade', in IAN-TT, SCCIM, Cx. 221, No. 1444, 1960–1964, 'Subversão política e social no Ultramar Africano', Processo L/9, 'Fetichismo e subversividade', 44, 188, 210–212, 228.
- 16 IAN-TT, SCCIM, 'Relatório das conversações', 138.
- 17 Michel Cahen, 'The Mueda case and the Maconde political ethnicity. Some notes on a work in progress', *Africana Studia*, Porto, 2, 1999: 38–40.
- 18 David Hedges et al. (eds). *Historia de Moçambique*, Vol. 2 (Maputo: Eduardo Mondlane University, 2000), 246; L.C. de Brito, 'Le Frelimo et la construction de l'état national au Mozambique: le sens de la référence au marxisme (1962–1983)', PhD dissertation, Université de Paris VIII-Vincennes, 1991, 68–71.
- 19 IAN-TT, SCCIM, 'Relatório das conversações', 165–166.
- 20 Ibid., 166–167.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid., 170–171.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Branquinho, 403.
- 25 IAN-TT, SCCIM, 'Relatório das conversações', 177–179.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 A. Crozon, 'Les Arabes à Zanzibar', in F. Le Guennec-Coppens et P. Caplan (eds), *Les Swahili entre Afrique et Arabie* (Paris: Karthala; CREU, 1991), 180–181.
- 28 IAN-TT, SCCIM, 'Relatório das conversações', 153.
- 29 Crozon, 'Les Arabes', 179, 183–84.
- 30 IAN-TT, SCCIM, 'Relatório das conversações', 162–163.
- 31 'Extracto de (BI) Boletim Informativo No 27/63, de 25/9/63, Palma', IAN-TT, SCCIM, Cx. 60, No 418, Processos 02/11/1959–28/01/1965, 282–84.
- 32 Cahen, 'Mueda Case', 45.
- 33 Interviews with Shaykh Abu Dale, 13 July 2007, Maputo; and Mr Nasurullahi Intizane Dulá, 31 March 2008, Pemba city.
- 34 Brito, 'Le Frelimo', 155–160.
- 35 Branquinho, 147.

- 36 H.G. West & S. Kloeck-Jenson. 'Betwixt and between: 'Traditional authority' and democratic decentralization in post-war Mozambique', *African Affairs*, 98 (1999), 472; Paula Meneses, 'Traditional Authorities in Mozambique: Between Legitimation and Legitimacy', in M.O. Hinz (ed.). *The Shade of New Leaves: Governance in Traditional Authority*, (Berlin: LitVerlag, 2006), 100, note 24; Rafael da Conceição, *Entre o Mar e a Terra: Situações Identitárias do Norte de Moçambique* (Maputo: Promédia, 2006), 188.
- 37 Monteiro, *O Islão*, 113, 151.
- 38 E. Medeiros, *História de Cabo Delgado e do Niassa (c. 1836–1929)* (Maputo: Central Impressora, 1997), 65–71, 95–96.
- 39 S. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1990), 212.
- 40 Brito, 'Le Frelimo', 160–161.
- 41 PIDE, Relatório de Informação No. 146, Distrito de Cabo Delgado, 30Set/1966, Assunto: Actividades Terroristas; Montepuez, BI No. 1/1966, de 1 de Julho de 1966; SCCIM, Governo-Geral de Moçambique. 13 de Setembro de 1966, Relatório da Situação No. 13, Distrito de Cabo Delgado No. 4, período de 1 de Abril a 31 de Julho de 1966. In IANT-TT, SCCIM, Cx. 61, No. 410, 'Islamismo', 268–273, 308–316, 359, 362–370, 385–386; Serviço de Acção Psicossocial, Comissão Distrital de Informação. 7 de Dezembro de 1964, Processo Ni 437/A/44, IAN-TT, SCCIM, Cx. 60, No 418, H/9 'Islamismo', 30–33; PIDE, Informação No 895–SC.CI(2), 3/10/66, Assunto; Detecção de agitadores no Concelho de Montepuez, and PIDE, Informação No. 902–SX/CI(2), 7/10/66, Assunto: Islamismo como veículo da subversão não violenta, in Arquivos da PIDE/DGS, IAN-TT, Processo 6037–CI (2), 'Unitários ou Wahhabitas'.
- 42 Relatório da PIDE, 14/9/66, Porto Amélia, No. 590/66–GAB, 27/9/66, 'Islamismo como veículo da subversão não-violenta', and Relatório da PIDE, 8/8/66, Porto Amélia, No 447–GAB', IAN-TT, SCCIM, Cx. 61, No 410, 359, 362–364.
- 43 Branquinho, 132.
- 44 B.B. João, *Abdul Camal (1892–1966) e a História de Chiúre nos Séculos XIX e XX: Um Estudo sobre as Chefaturas Tradicionais, as Redes Islâmicas e a Colonização Portuguesa* (Maputo: Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, Estudos 17, 2000), 119–121.
- 45 Branquinho, 350.
- 46 Monteiro, *O Islão*.
- 47 Brito, 'Le Frelimo', 91–99, 110–127, 161–163.
- 48 Colin Darch & David Hedges, "'Não temos a possibilidade de herdar nada de Portugal": As raízes do exclusivismo e vanguardismo político em Moçambique, 1969–1977', in G.V. Bôas (ed.), *Territórios da Língua Portuguesa: Culturas*,

- Sociedades, Políticas* (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Sociais e Fundação Universitária José Bonifácio, 1996), 139–141; Brito, 'Le Frelimo', 123.
- 49 T.H. Henriksen, *Mozambique's War of Independence, 1964–1974* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1983), 73.
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CHAPTER 3

MOROGORO AND AFTER: THE CONTINUING CRISIS IN THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (OF SOUTH AFRICA) IN ZAMBIA

Hugh Macmillan

The Morogoro Consultative Conference, held in Tanzania from 25 April to 1 May 1969, was called by the African National Congress (ANC) in response to a crisis in the ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in and around Lusaka, Zambia, in the early months of 1969. This crisis arose after the failure of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns of 1967–1968 and the return to Lusaka, at the end of 1968, or the beginning of 1969, of Chris Hani and other members of the Luthuli Detachment, who had participated in the Wankie campaign, and been imprisoned in Botswana for more than a year. These campaigns represented ill-conceived and hastily planned attempts on the part of the ANC's leadership to get trained MK cadres, who had spent several frustrating years in camps in Tanzania, back 'home' to South Africa through Zambia, which had become independent in 1964, and Rhodesia, whose white-settler leaders had made their Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in November 1965. The plan involved a military alliance with the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), one of the two main Zimbabwean liberation movements, whose militarily trained cadres were presumed, wrongly as it transpired, to have first-hand knowledge of the terrain that would be crossed. The majority of the 100 or so MK participants in these two campaigns, and the probably smaller number of ZAPU participants, were either killed in Rhodesia, or imprisoned in Rhodesia or Botswana.

The failure of these campaigns not only prompted a crisis within the ANC, but also prompted Tanzania and Zambia, which provided rear bases for the ANC and ZAPU, to step back from direct confrontation with South Africa and to reduce their support for the ANC's military aspirations.

They made this public through the Lusaka Manifesto, which they issued, together with Botswana, which was never a supporter of military action against South Africa, after a meeting of the East and Central African States in Lusaka in April 1969. This declaration made a distinction between anti-colonial struggles in southern Africa, which were seen as a priority, and the struggle against apartheid, and appeared to question the legitimacy of armed struggle against independent South Africa (Lusaka Manifesto, 1969).

Chris Hani and six other members of MK, only one of whom was a member of the Luthuli Detachment, wrote a memorandum, probably in January 1969, which constituted a devastating critique of the ANC in exile.¹ Prompted primarily by the apparent failure of the military command to show any interest in learning the lessons of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns, or to recognise the sacrifices made by the participants, the memorandum was a protest against the draconian methods of punishment that were being practised in the MK camps around Lusaka, the apparent preoccupation of the leadership with building international solidarity at the expense of work on the more difficult 'home front', and class divisions within the movement, as well as alleged nepotism and corruption within the leadership. The main targets of the memorandum were Thabo More (Joe Modise), commander-in-chief of MK, and Duma Nokwe, ANC secretary-general and head of the departments of Information and Publicity, and Security. Neither took kindly to criticism.²

Oliver Tambo intervened to save the signatories of the memorandum from imprisonment and, at a general meeting of ANC members at ZAPU's Joshua Nkomo Camp, near Lusaka, in February 1969, took personal responsibility for the failings of the leadership. He announced the Morogoro Conference, and set up a tribunal to try Hani and other signatories on charges of breaches of security and the MK oath. They apparently refused to participate in the trial and were expelled from the ANC, narrowly avoiding a death sentence. They were not the only people who were suspended at this time and so prevented from attending the Morogoro meeting. Ambrose Mzimkhulu Makiwane, elder 'brother' (cousin) of Tennyson Makiwane, and Alfred Kgokong (Temba Mqota) were suspended from the National Executive Committee (NEC), initially for six months, in March 1969. According to Tennyson Makiwane, they were suspended after the failure of an attempt to implicate them in the composition of the memorandum. They were then alleged to have defied orders to wait in Dar es Salaam for a meeting of the NEC at which the memorandum was to be discussed, and had insisted on travelling to Lusaka.³

Perhaps half of the 60 or 70 delegates at the Morogoro Conference were representatives of MK. Although the memorandum was not specifically discussed, it cast a long shadow over the proceedings. Although 'Comrade

Mokgomané (Flag Boshielo) thought that delegates from Lusaka ‘dominated the proceedings’, one Lusaka delegate, Dr Randeree, suggested that ‘feeling’ in that place was running so high that some elected delegates from there ‘were refusing to attend [the] conference because they had no confidence in the Exec[utive]’. Tambo spoke of the ‘loss of confidence in the men who have been leading our struggle from Lusaka’ and went on to say that this ‘lack of confidence was not manufactured but grows with experience’. After asking J.B. Marks to act as chairman, he tendered his resignation as acting president and left the meeting. Following an adjournment, the conference passed an unopposed vote of confidence in him, and he was invited to return. He did not do so until the following morning. He had asked for time to consider his position because, he said, his resignation was not a ‘precipitous’ act, but a premeditated one.⁴

This vote of confidence in Tambo, and the conference’s decision to allow him, together with J.B. Marks and Moses Mabhida, as ‘president-in-council’, to select the members of a new, reduced and hopefully improved NEC, considerably strengthened Tambo’s leadership position. The most conspicuous loser in the reshuffle of the leadership was Nokwe, who lost his position as secretary-general to Alfred Nzo and was removed from the NEC. There was little doubt that he was paying the price for his mishandling of the memorandum issue, as well as for other failings. Modise, on the other hand, retained his title as commander-in-chief, at least for another three years, after which he became for a while ‘chief of operations’. The military headquarters was, however, dissolved and he was elevated to membership of the newly established Revolutionary Council. Separate regional headquarters, also called staff commands, for Zambia and Tanzania were established under their own chiefs of staff. Although Modise, as commander-in-chief, was an ex-officio member of the Lusaka military HQ, he was effectively removed from day-to-day control of MK units in Lusaka and was, in a sense, subordinated to the chief of staff—something that may have contributed to discontent among his supporters.⁵

The other major decision of the conference was to open membership of the ANC in exile to people of all races. This went some way towards resolving the anomaly that while membership of MK had been open to people of all races, the ANC had not. It also facilitated the political integration of MK into the ANC and brought MK back under the ANC’s control—the apparent independence of MK and the lack of political control over it had been one of the main complaints of Hani and his fellow signatories. The conference did not, however, go so far as to allow non-African membership of the NEC. As a compromise solution a Revolutionary Council with open and non-racial membership was established as a nominal sub-committee of the NEC.

The conference also adopted a new ‘Strategy and Tactics of the South African Revolution’, which was drafted by Joe Slovo, a member of MK and of the South African Communist Party (SACP), who was only able to become a member of the ANC after the conference as a result of the decision to open the movement in exile to non-African members, with some input from Joe Matthews. This document emphasised that the seizure of state power in South Africa by military means was a primary objective of the struggle. In a concession to the demands of the authors of the unmentioned, and unmentionable, ‘Hani memorandum’, the document insisted on ‘the primacy of the political leadership’, but it made no reference to the failure of the Wankie or Sipolilo campaigns, and devoted only a single sentence to the ANC/ZAPU alliance.

The fate of the suspended members was referred to the NEC with a recommendation that they should be given an amnesty and reinstated. This happened soon after the end of the conference, but it did not solve the problems in Lusaka. Writing from Morogoro on 30 June 1969, Nzo was pleased ‘that the amnesty which was announced in respect of the SEVEN was received well by all sections of our people. We hope that this spirit will have a lasting effect and we must exert all our energies to ensure that it is so.’⁶ His optimism turned out to be premature. Writing from Lusaka a month or so later, Jack Simons was much less sanguine about the results of the conference. He thought that things were:

*[i]f anything rather worse than before the conference. The internal rot continues, and involves increasing pressure from outside—I mean the authorities here ... I think the fault lies with us. We have lost direction and are drifting without guide lines. We can’t fight our way back. We can’t even establish communication, unless our people find their way home ‘by other means’. Sometimes I doubt whether we have the will to do this; and feel that we are involved in some great charade, a play staged for the benefit of the outside world.’*⁷

According to a report on the ‘situation in Lusaka’ written by Thomas Nkobi in October 1969, the commissariat had set out after Morogoro to promote ‘the spirit of the Conference and unity among our men’, but,

there was [then] a crime-wave perpetrated by some of our men ... there were cases of raping, drunkenness (sic) and fighting local residents in bars ... the Zambian government was becoming alarmed by the lawlessness and misbehaviour of some of our cadres who were constantly seen in the bars moving with all kinds of strange people and ... pointed out they could not tolerate and allow trained men to move freely in the street (sic) of Lusaka.

As a consequence of this outbreak of indiscipline, the Zambian government demanded in July 1969 that the ANC remove its MK cadres to Tanzania, and it requested Tambo to return to the country to discuss the matter. Following negotiations a compromise was reached: the ANC would remove its military personnel from Lusaka to a bush camp to the east of the city.⁸

The continuing crisis

The Zambian government was no doubt aware of the drama over the 'Hani memorandum' and of the more serious conflict that had recently broken out within MK as a result of the amnesty and the reinstatement of Hani and his six comrades. A group described by Nkobi as 'the Transvaal fellows', and more politely by Tambo as the 'Transvaal comrades', had taken strong exception to the amnesty and protested even more forcefully over the 'promotion' of Hani, Wilmot Hempe and Jackson Mlenze. Hani and Hempe had been made members of the political commissariat and Mlenze had joined the staff of the reconstituted military headquarters. Members of the Transvaal group sent a deputation with a memorandum to the Revolutionary Council. Tambo paraphrased their arguments in notes for an address to a meeting with the group which probably took place in late July or early August 1969, not long after his return to Lusaka to deal with the crisis there. They had come together 'because there is provincialism practised in the army', with 'some members of the organisation ... organised as a Cape group bound by a common language'. Tambo was said to be 'tribalist in his political disposition'.⁹

The debate with the Transvaal group was full and frank. An underlying theme, and cause of tension, was the knowledge that MK members were at that moment under pressure to leave Lusaka and, possibly, Zambia itself. Tambo demonstrated his almost proverbial talent as a listener, and his ability to take criticism aimed at himself. He took detailed notes of everything that was said, including repeated statements that he was himself a 'tribalist'. The main target for criticism, apart from Tambo himself, besides Hani and other signatories of the memorandum, was Ambrose Makiwane, usually referred to by his nickname of 'Mbobo', who was in Lusaka, where he was alleged to have participated in a 'tribal ceremony'. Several speakers, probably including Modise himself, demanded that he should be expelled from the organisation.¹⁰ Another major target for criticism was Zola Zembe (Archie Sibeko), who had, though allegedly guilty of a serious breach of security, been given a position as a liaison officer between MK and the newly constituted Revolutionary Council, and had returned to Lusaka, from which he had been removed in disgrace in November 1968. It was apparent that

much of the animosity towards these two men could be traced back to earlier events at Kongwa Camp in Tanzania, where ‘tribalism’ was alleged to have appeared for the first time within MK. The identification of the Transvaal group with Modise was emphasised by several speakers, who said they had been described by others as ‘Modise’s thugs’.¹¹ There was clearly resentment about the composition of the new military headquarters, or staff command in Lusaka: the new chief of staff was ‘Mjojo’ Mxwako (also known as Lennox Lagu, but really Johnson Tshali). One speaker, ‘Comrade Champ’, said that after its announcement ‘I felt Memo had succeeded in its intention of furthering ambitions of certain people.’ He thought that the composition of the new HQ was ‘to strike some kind of balance—to placate those who were supporting the memo’.¹²

Although six months had passed since the crisis over the ‘Hani memorandum’, that document was the ultimate cause of the meeting, and many speakers referred to it. Several protested at the lenient treatment, and promotion, of people who should have been dealt with as traitors. One speaker asked why they had ‘not been locked up’. Tambo acknowledged that he had prevented the detention of the seven, but also said that he had on an earlier occasion prevented the execution of another comrade, Mac Futa. Seeking to demonstrate his ethnic impartiality he also said that he had allowed the punishment of others, such as ‘Gatyeni’, who was from the Cape.¹³ An underlying theme of the discussion was the assertion that: ‘Cape comrades have insisted that they do not want to be led—they want to lead.’ The same speaker suggested that ‘It is possible K[unda] wants to chase us out because of the memorandum. To whom has it been delivered[?]’.¹⁴ ‘Comrade Sam’ accused Hani of desertion at Wankie, and Comrade Sparks said: ‘I personally won’t put a foot in Rhodesia.’ Another speaker thought that ‘the Rhodesian affair was suicide—playing with the lives of people’.¹⁵ ‘Comrade Modisane’ noted that ‘it is Cape people who suffered most—arrested most—either because they were most revolutionary or were most prone to give one another up.’ Unlike the rank and file, the leaders had their families with them in exile and so had little incentive to get people home. It was clear to him that ‘we have failed to go back [home]. So what do we do? We start pointing fingers at one another. But the leaders instituted this division—which is tribal.’ He had seen no ‘new spirit of conference ... Conference slowed down our rate of degeneration’. They were waiting for the Zambian and Tanzanian governments to destroy them, but ‘the leaders will remain in comfort.’ Furthermore, ‘As long as one man at the head [Tambo] ... does not favour you [you] have had it.’ He concluded: ‘We have lost the struggle—we must admit defeat. We cannot say fighting in Rhodesia is any benefit for our struggle.’¹⁶

One of the most lucid and rational interventions was by the newly appointed Chief Political Officer and head of the political commissariat, 'Comrade Mokgomane' (Flag Boshielo), one of the most senior and distinguished 'Transvaalers' in the ANC in exile. A leader of the Defiance Campaign in Johannesburg, he had been a founder, together with Elias Motsoaledi and John Nkadimeng, of the Sekhukhuneland resistance movement, Sebatakomo. He was a member of the reconstituted NEC, and was a leading member of both the SACP and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). He had played a significant role during the Morogoro Conference: he was credited with swinging it towards open membership and against Tennyson Makiwane's opposition to that.¹⁷ Confronting the issue of the amnesty for Hani and his comrades, Boshielo commented, in the abbreviated sentences of Tambo's summary,

I have always believed that Conference is highest organ of ANC. Morogoro conference dominated by delegation from here. We emerged from Conf. with decision to open a new page. You are still talking about what happened years ago. The question of the 7 had to be examined in relation to the overall situation and the struggle. Before Conf. expulsion was questioned. This shows this was not a straight forward issue. Conference decided on a new leaf and recommended amnesty to new NEC. Amnesty = pardon ... New leaf means new leaf.¹⁸

As a result of this debate, Hani, Hempe and Mlenze volunteered to step down from the positions in the commissariat and the military headquarters to which they had been appointed. But neither this gesture, nor the arguments of Tambo and Boshielo, satisfied the 'Transvaal comrades', who continued to withhold recognition from the military command and to defy orders. One of the orders was that, in line with the compromise agreement that had been made with the Zambian government, they should withdraw from the town to the 'bush base'.¹⁹

'Defiance' and expulsions

Writing to Nzo from Lusaka on 9 August 1969, Tambo referred in passing to 'the local storms that are raging in these parts', but he also had other things on his mind, such as the worst financial crisis that the organisation had ever faced, and the threat of removal from Tanzania and Zambia, as well as an at least partial breakdown in relations between the ANC and the governments of both countries, which was reflected in the Lusaka Manifesto. The following month the Zambian government, probably more concerned about problems

within the Zimbabwean liberation movements than with the ANC, sent a circular letter to all the seven liberation movements based in Lusaka, requiring each to provide it with lists of its members who were still in the country and waiting to enter 'the war zones' and of those who 'have defected or expressed an unwillingness to continue with the struggle'. The movements were also to give an indication of their strategy for dealing with both categories. The government indicated that it would in future not be willing to allow new recruits to enter the country unless it received an assurance that they would be able to cross into the war zone after the completion of their training.²⁰

In an historical narrative that he included as preface to a report that he wrote in December 1970, Nkobi indicated that 28 men repudiated their membership of the ANC at this time, 'refusing to take any orders whatever and insisting that they could take care of themselves'. He went on to say that:

*no disciplinary action was taken by the Party [the ANC] against them, apart from submitting their names to the Government as required. Having defected from the Party they wandered off to unknown places, stayed with unknown people, their activities unknown. But when on occasions they re-appeared, the Party fed, clothed, and housed them. Meantime they continued with impunity to denigrate the Party and even campaign against it, all this in the face of desperate attempts by loyal members at every Party level to bring them within the fold of the Party and the struggle.*²¹

An account of the 'Lusaka Crisis' produced by the secretariat about six months later referred to the events following the reinstatement of Hani and his comrades as 'an acute political crisis whose dimensions posed a threat to our continued presence in Lusaka'. The withdrawal of Hani, Hempe and Mlenze from the positions to which they had been promoted had not had the desired effect, but '[t]he majority of our people in the long run agreed to subject themselves once again to the discipline of our movement but a certain group still resisted these efforts.'²²

The ANC may have provided a list of names of defectors to the Zambian government towards the end of 1969, but it took no action against them until September 1970. It then expelled 30 members who had continued to defy orders to withdraw from Lusaka to the bush camp. The Zambian government had, in July 1970, issued an order that all members of liberation movements, apart from office staff, should be withdrawn to camps as part of the preparations for the Non-Aligned Conference that was to take place in the city early in September. According to Nkobi, it had then 'become essential to call a firm and final halt to the disruptive and destructive indiscipline whereby carefully considered and clear Party orders were deliberately and openly

defied—conduct that was indisputably aimed at nothing short of destroying the Party itself’. Some of those on the list of expelled members were arrested by the Zambian police and detained for the duration of the Non-Aligned Conference.²³

Those expelled in September 1970 are not necessarily to be identified with the group of ‘Transvaalers’ who protested against the reinstatement and promotion of Hani and his comrades in the previous year. Only half a dozen of those who spoke at the meeting with Tambo at that time appear on the list of those who were expelled. The first name on the list was that of Jeqe Buthelezi, from Port Elizabeth, who had as ‘Jeqe Mbengwa’ been one of the signatories of the ‘Hani memorandum’. It was said that he had been ‘moving around Zambia trying to form a new organisation’. A document that he produced in anticipation of the tenth anniversary of the founding of MK in 1971 referred to the ‘Tambo clique’, a phrase that was reminiscent, or rather anticipatory, of the language used by the ANC (African Nationalists) in their later literature, but his frequent references to the works of Lenin would not have appealed to them. Buthelezi referred to Modise as a promoter of ‘Bantustanism’ within MK, implying that he was a promoter of ethnic blocks, but there does not appear to have been an ethnic, tribal or provincial link between those who were expelled at this time. They included people from the Transvaal, Natal and the Cape. Although both Tambo and Nkobi maintained that the number expelled was insignificant in terms of the strength of the movement as a whole, it was not insignificant in terms of the ANC and MK population of Lusaka. They probably represented about one in four of the former and one in three of the latter.²⁴

The expulsion of ‘defiant’ members created as many problems as it solved. The list was drawn up by a Special Committee, including both military and political members, which was established to manage the affairs of MK during the crisis period, but the expulsions had to be confirmed after the event by the NEC, which did not meet until the end of September. It was then found that there were at least two lists in existence and that some of the names that were supplied to the government were of people who should not have been expelled and some of those who were ‘defiant’ were not on the list. Furthermore, some of those who had been expelled continued to live in ANC residences and the only sanction available was that they should be denied food. This did not work because those who had not been expelled shared their food with those who had been expelled.²⁵

The expulsions also failed to placate the Zambian government, which continued to exert pressure. This was a time of great tension within the Zambian government between President Kaunda and Vice-President Simon

Kapwepwe, who was soon to resign and establish his own opposition party. It is possible that the political crisis in Zambia was itself a product of differences of opinion over the southern African liberation struggle and that the pressure applied by Kapwepwe on the ANC and other liberation movements at this time was a reflection of this on going power struggle. Kapwepwe, who was also the Minister of Provincial and Local Government, summoned Tambo, Nkobi, Modise, Memory Miya and Tennyson Makiwane, who was then back in Lusaka as deputy head of the international department, to a meeting later in September 1969. He told them that there could be only three categories of South African exiles in Zambia: militants who were ready to move into the war zones, administrative staff and refugees. Kapwepwe repeated these arguments at a meeting of leaders of all the Lusaka-based liberation movements on 29 September, when he called upon them to discipline their members and not to allow them 'to move around carelessly' or in uniform.²⁶

The ANC seems to have sent a revised list of expelled members to the government at the end of October. Two weeks later the Ministry of Provincial and Local Government sent a stiff response saying that the expelled men had military training and that they were a security risk. They had been allowed into Zambia only in transit to South Africa. 'This government does not encourage expulsions to take place in Zambia.' Nkobi was summoned to a meeting which would also be attended by three representatives of the expelled men 'so that we could try to find ways and means of bringing Unity into your organisation'. It is not clear whether or not he attended. The letter also had a sting in the tail. 'Let it also be put on record, with due respect to your Party, that as we do not receive progress reports from you we think that your Party is in active [*sic*] and sleeping.'²⁷

Nkobi produced a lengthy, anguished, though delayed, response to this letter in the following month. He claimed that the expulsions had had 'a most salutary effect on our members' and had brought 'fresh vigour and militant preparedness to cadres who were becoming depressed by doubts as to the Party's capacity to make impact ...' He protested, however, that the expelled members had been 'accorded the privilege of direct access to the Government and thereby accorded a status equivalent to that of a political leader ...' They 'have been going around victoriously among our members telling them that the expulsion was a stupid and nonsensical exercise because, according to them, the Government of Zambia will not allow it'. He suggested that, as a result of government recognition, those expelled felt that they had gained from their defiance and that consequently none had sought re-admission to the ANC. While acknowledging the security risk posed by unattached and trained military men roaming around Zambia, he concluded by asking the

government to confirm the right and duty of the ANC to expel its members, to ensure that expelled members 'feel the harsh consequences of anti-struggle conduct in Zambia', to 'deny them the opportunity to further subvert the struggle' and to ensure that 'defectors, deserters and disrupters will receive no Government encouragement, direct or indirect, for their conduct and will not be allowed communication with the Government except through established Government-Party channels.'²⁸

Incident at Roma township

Nkobi did not explain the real cause of the drastic action that had been taken against the 'defiant' members. The ANC acted as it did from the extreme embarrassment it had experienced as a result of an incident early in August 1970. During a police security sweep in preparation for the Non-Aligned Conference, which was due to take place in the newly built and nearby Mulungushi Hall, two prominent members of MK, 'Mjojo' Mxwako, the chief of staff, and Zola (Wilson) Nqose, also a member of the military HQ, were arrested when they were found by the police sleeping in the servants' quarters on Jack and Ray Simons's plot at 250 Zambezi Road with 21 AK47 assault rifles and ammunition. According to Zola Zembe (Archie Sibeko), they had been transferring this material from the 'eastern' to the 'western front' through Lusaka. He had himself provided the key of the quarters to Mxwako and Nqose, who were, within weeks, tried and sentenced to prison terms for illegal possession of arms and ammunition. Jack Simons, who had begun work at the University of Zambia two years earlier, was himself detained in the high-security prison at Kabwe for at least a week under a presidential order in connection with this case. He was released only after intervention from Tambo and a wide variety of friends and political allies.

This incident not only caused considerable embarrassment to the ANC, but also resulted in the dissolution of the Lusaka military headquarters, or staff command, for the second time in a year. A special committee, including Modise, the commander-in-chief, and an apparent majority of non-military members, was set up to manage the affairs of MK in Lusaka and to supervise the movement of men out of town and to the bush camp. It was this committee that recommended the expulsion of 'defiant' members. The establishment of this committee was a dramatic example of the ANC moving to regain political control of MK, as the 'Hani memorandum' had demanded.²⁹

Tambo also set up an internal commission of enquiry, under the chairmanship of Nzo, 'into the facts relating to the discovery of firearms in Roma Township, in circumstances strongly suggestive of grossly reprehensible conduct on the

part of ANC (SA) members and officials'. Its terms of reference included the investigation of whether the arms were intended for sale to members of the public, for use 'to settle possible conflicts within the Party and/or fraternal Parties' or 'for purposes harmful to the good name of Zambia and inspired or engineered by forces and/or countries hostile to Zambia and opposed to her revolutionary role'. Nzo stepped down as chairman and was replaced by John Pule Motshabi, but an interim report was produced after six months and submitted to the Zambian government. A longer report was produced within a year, but there seems to be no trace of the evidence to the commission or of the reports in the ANC archives. Its conclusions were not reported to the NEC meeting that took place in Lusaka at the end of 1971. Motshabi believed that Tambo deliberately suppressed the report and he implied that this may have been because it was critical of Modise. Although the commission was asked to recommend appropriate disciplinary action, or remedial measures, there is no evidence that any such actions were taken. Mjojo Mxwako went on, as Lennox Lagu, to play an important role in the ANC in Mozambique from 1975 onwards. Both he and Nqose eventually became generals in the South African National Defence Force.³⁰

The fate of 'Comrade Mokgomane'

In August 1970 another drama reached its tragic climax. Its roots could be traced back to the demand by MK men for the opportunity to return home—a demand that had led to the hastily conceived Wankie campaign, and to the 'Hani memorandum', which had stressed the failure of the ANC to send any of its leaders home. It was also a response to the pressure of the Zambian and Tanzanian governments on liberation movements to move their trained men into the 'war zones'. Late in March 1970 there was a meeting of seven members of the military HQ and the Revolutionary Council: Castro (Dolo), then acting chief of staff, Lambert (Moloi), chief of logistics, Victor Ndaba (Theo Mkhalipi), an HQ staff member, Mokgomane (Flag Boshielo), Nkobi and Tambo, represented the Revolutionary Council. It is probably significant that the commander-in-chief, Modise, was not present at the meeting, at which the members of the military HQ explained that:

the general situation in Lusaka was having the effect of progressively destroying MK men of great promise; that we had already lost many in the demoralising conditions of defection, provocation and degeneration which prevailed among our men. It was therefore essential that as many men as possible should be saved for the struggle by being permitted to proceed home, immediately.

They emphasised that this was the consensus among ‘the most loyal of MK comrades, who felt that given the necessary determination, there could be no difficulty in reaching assigned destinations at home’. Only Tambo spoke against this proposal, referring to secret plans which would in the long term achieve the same objective, and saying that it was ‘not necessary to abandon them and to resort to methods which in the past had consistently proved costly’. He agreed, however, that ‘the situation in Lusaka was likely to do more rather than less harm to our organisation and the danger of losing more of our men into it was a real one.’ While emphasising that nothing should be done to disturb the plans on which the Revolutionary Council was working, he gave a guarded welcome to the initiative. He did not want to condemn people to ‘prolonged frustration and ultimate political degeneration’, but he gave his support to the proposal only on condition that ‘proper preparations should be made to ensure reasonable success, and the operation must not be in the nature of a reconnaissance operation like some of the previous transit attempts. Certainly ... there should be no suicidal “leap in the dark”.’³¹

While the proposal for an immediate move ‘home’ had initially had the support of a number of people at the ‘bush base’, some changed their minds and only five went ahead with preparations and in the end only four took part. They were aware that:

Lusaka was infested with informers in our ranks, disrupters who sought to undermine every operation of which they had information, and comrades had developed the habit of talking about anything and everything they saw, observed, or heard of ...

They decided, therefore, that they would make ‘their own arrangements and avoid their movements and intentions being known by their fellow MK men ...’³²

It was originally intended that this group, led by Boshielo, would leave for the south in May, but there were delays owing to lack of transport and money. Tambo solved the problem of transport and the Treasury provided part of the R4 000 that was required—the balance was requested from London. But Tambo also insisted on a delay and a rethink of the plans in view of the ‘alarming degree of publicity about the operation’, as well as the tensions and misunderstandings that surrounded it. He eventually persuaded Boshielo and his group to delay until August and there was talk of further delay, perhaps until January of the following year.

In the third week of August Tambo received a report that ‘the enemy seemed to be aware of the activities and intentions of Comrade Mokgomane’s unit’, so he suggested a two-week delay and a further reconsideration of the

plan, but by that time, Mogkomane, together with three companions, Castro (Dolo), (Victor) Ndaba (Theo Mkhali) and Bob Zulu, had embarked on their expedition. On 31 August a report was received in Lusaka that four ANC men had crossed into the Caprivi Strip and that the South African police were looking for them. There was a rumour that their presence had been reported to the police by the boat paddlers who had taken them across the Zambezi. The paddlers had become involved in a dispute with their guide, who, though he had himself been well rewarded, had underpaid them. A week later a report was received that the ANC men had been intercepted and that two had been killed, one captured and one escaped. In mid-September a report was received that all four had been killed. Tambo himself, accompanied by John Pule (Motshabi), Thabo More (Joe Modise) and Chris Nkosana (Hani), proceeded to the border area and made their own investigation, but they were unable to draw any firm conclusions as to what had happened. They could not even be certain that the four men had been intercepted.

Ray Simons recalled that she had begged Mokgomane (Boshielo) and his comrades, who were doctoring themselves with herbs—Boshielo may have had training as an *ngaka* or diviner—in the garden of the Simons's house at 250 Zambezi Road in preparation for departure, not to leave before she returned from an overseas trip. She was shocked to find on her return not only that they had left, but that they had disappeared while crossing the Caprivi Strip. She later recalled rumours to the effect that Boshielo had survived and been seen in a South African prison.³³

The exceptional detail of the confidential report to the Revolutionary Council on this episode, and the emphasis in it on Tambo's initial opposition to the plan, suggest that the report was written by Tambo himself. The loss of Boshielo, an outstanding and senior leader of the ANC, SACP and SACTU, as well as three highly capable MK men, one of whom had acted as chief of staff, and two of whom were Wankie veterans, was a severe blow to the movement. He had opposed what he correctly anticipated might become a suicide mission, but had been unable to stop it. He had in the end facilitated, against his better judgement, a mission that was both expensive and ill-conceived. Even if the group had managed to get across the Caprivi Strip into northern Botswana, they would in all probability have been intercepted by the police there, as had happened to several previous expeditions of this kind in 1966–1967.

The secret project on which Tambo, and no doubt selected members of the Revolutionary Council, were embarking at this time was Operation J, a plan to land MK men on the coast of Pondoland. It had the backing of Tambo, of Joe Slovo and of the Politburo of the Soviet Union. Though conceived on a grand

scale, it was also abortive. In all probability it had no more chance of success than Boshielo's desperate, and somewhat quixotic, attempt to get home.³⁴

Taking stock

Tambo introduced a lengthy discussion of 'Political Leadership and Organisational Problems' at an augmented meeting of the NEC held in Lusaka in August 1971 to take stock two years after Morogoro. There were complaints 'that there is very little spirit of comradeship' and 'talk about disunity in the ANC'. He went on to ask: 'What happened in Morogoro? Did we solve anything, because trouble started in three places soon after delegates had returned to their bases [?]' The three trouble spots were London, Dar es Salaam and Lusaka. 'In London, it is reported that there was great jubilation among the non-Africans because of the decision to integrate members of the other racial groups. Questions relating to the branch and the Chief Representative arose sharply.' This was a reference to the demand for the removal of Reg September as chief representative in London, on the grounds that as a coloured person he could not project an 'African image'. A further source of tension identified by Tambo was the fact that 'In Tanzania a letter was received from the Government giving us twelve days to vacate our camp in Kongwa. We were expected to go either to the Front or to refugees camps.' This had resulted in the evacuation to the Soviet Union of the remaining inhabitants of the Kongwa camp. They stayed there for 18 months.

Tambo also pointed to the crisis or series of crises in Lusaka, insisting that 'most of the problems had arisen because the two comrades [Ambrose Makiwane and Alfred Kgokong] had not attended the Morogoro Conference.' He implied that they had reacted to their exclusion from the NEC and the conference by stirring up 'Africanist' opposition in London, and had influenced the Tanzanian government to take action against the ANC, and also stated that they had travelled to Lusaka where they had not met Tambo himself or Nkobi, but with dissident or expelled members of MK. He suggested that they had had a hand in the attempt to promote a new organisation under the leadership of Buthelezi, and added somewhat cryptically: 'Some members of the ANC supported this organisation. We know who they are.' It was, he said, disturbing that some members of MK in Lusaka were sending reports to Makiwane and Kgokong. 'If there is an underground in the ANC, it may have a good reason for being there and we must know.'³⁵

Kgokong's response was that Tambo's presentation was 'unbalanced'. He owed no one a report on his trip to Lusaka because he had gone there at his own expense. Makiwane also said that they owed the NEC no reports. It had

cut itself off from them, but the MK men had not done so — the expelled men in Lusaka had come to see them on their own initiative. He knew nothing about a new political party and had never ‘indulged in underground political parties’. Difficulties arose from the fact that when two or three people met it was alleged that they were holding a secret meeting.³⁶

The sense of the NEC meeting was, apparently, that there remained unanswered questions about the purpose and funding of the movements of Kgokong and Makiwane to London and Lusaka. It is impossible to say how close to the truth Tambo’s allegations or implications were. An ‘Africanist’ involvement in the problems in London is certain and in Lusaka plausible, but influence on the government of Tanzania seems less likely and the government there had other difficulties with Tambo and the ANC at that time. There can be no doubt, however, that one of the consequences of the Morogoro Conference was the gradual alienation from the ANC of the group, including the two Makiwanes and Kgokong, that was expelled in 1975 as the ANC (African Nationalist) ‘gang of eight’. Tambo was always anxious to maintain the ANC as a broad church and their expulsion appears to have taken place against his better judgement. One of their most inveterate opponents was Nokwe, who, in contrast to the Makiwanes and Kgokong, accepted his demotion at Morogoro and gradually worked his way back to the position of deputy secretary-general.³⁷

The opening of the ANC to the membership of all races was an important step towards non-racialism, and the consequences of the Morogoro Conference may be a case of short-term pain and long-term gain. Hani was in the last months of his life certain that the Morogoro Conference was an important turning point: ‘after Morogoro we never looked back’. He thought that the ‘Strategy and Tactics’ document was the ‘lodestar’ of the movement and that the establishment of the Revolutionary Council led to a new emphasis on political work in South Africa and the development of the underground, as opposed to the earlier emphasis on international solidarity. Hani also claimed, in his later years, that while the Wankie campaign may have been a military failure, in spite of the military competence and heroism of many of the MK men involved, it was a political victory. He even saw in it an inspiration for the development of the Black Consciousness Movement.³⁸

Conclusion

The years from 1969 to 1973 marked one of the lowest points in the history of the ANC in Zambia. Although the ANC insisted that there was an ‘open door’ for the return of those expelled, only a few came back to the fold.

Some, like Alfred Sipetho Willie and Isaac Rani, remained in Lusaka and looked after themselves—Willie rejoined the ANC in April 1990 and returned to South Africa the following year. Rani never rejoined the ANC and has never returned to South Africa—he remains in Lusaka to this day.³⁹ The leadership relieved the frustrations of those who remained by sending some for education overseas and others for military refresher courses in the Soviet Union or the German Democratic Republic. There were also attempts to keep people busy and self-sufficient around Lusaka with poultry and gardening projects. The number of ANC cadres in Lusaka remained fairly stable, at around 100 men and a few women throughout the early 1970s. There is little information available to indicate the number of their dependents, but these probably brought the grand total to between 200 and 300. An upturn in morale and prospects began with the Durban strikes in 1973, and was accelerated by the coup in Portugal, which was followed by the independence of Mozambique and Angola in 1974–1975. Recovery was given real impetus only by the Soweto uprising in 1976 and the influx of new recruits that came after it.

Notes

- 1 The other signatories were J.R. (Jeqe) Mbengwa (Buthelezi), Leonard Pitso (now a general in the South African army), Ntabenkosi Fipaza (Mbali), W. Hempe, Tamana Gobozi (Mikza) and G.S. Mose (Jackson) Mlenze. Though 'the Cape group' implied a Xhosa identity, Pitso came from a Sotho-speaking family in Cape Town.
- 2 For a more detailed account of the background of, and reaction to, the 'Hani memorandum' see Hugh Macmillan, 'The "Hani memorandum": Introduced and annotated', *Transformation*, 69, 2009. For a longer view of the ANC in Zambia see Hugh Macmillan, 'The ANC of South Africa in Zambia: The culture of exile and the changing view of home, 1964–90', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, July 2009.
- 3 T. Makiwane, 'The bogus letter of expulsion', October 1975, ms in Simons's papers, University of Cape Town. ANC Archives, Lusaka Mission [hereafter ANCL], 1/14/55, 'Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive held in Lusaka from August, 27–31, 1971'.
- 4 ANCL 2/3/3, untitled manuscript notes of discussions at Morogoro Conference, 28 April to 1 May 1969, ff. 1–16. Thami Mhlambiso told Luli Callinicos that Tambo's resignation followed a 'clumsy input' from one of the delegates. He did not say that the input came from him. See L. Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Towards the Engeli Mountain* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004), 333.

- 5 Tambo Papers [hereafter TP], Box 31, 'Statement on the relationship between the ANC (Africa) and M K', no signature and no date. From internal evidence the date must be 1971 and the author is Tambo.
- 6 TP, Box 37, A. Nzo to T. Nkobi, 30 June 1969.
- 7 Simons's papers, Jack Simons to Kay Moonsamy in delayed response to a letter of 1 July, circa August 1969.
- 8 ANCL 2/49/19, T. Nkobi to secretary-general, 13 October 1969; 2/90/7, note, possibly of telegram, from Nkobi to Nzo, 13 July 1969. 'Zambian government wants to remove our men from Zambia to Tanzania because of misbehaviour. As a result the government says that O.R. must return to Zambia as soon as possible.' The MK cadres had apparently been withdrawn from camps that they shared with ZAPU after the end of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns in 1968 and were living mainly in residences at Makeni, Lilanda and Kabwata.
- 9 TP, Box 4, undated notebook, ff. 4–5. Cf. Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 345–346, wrongly dated to 1972.
- 10 The speaker is identified only as 'Joe' (f. 6), but it is probable that he was Modise.
- 11 For example, 'Comrade Fiki', f. 8.
- 12 'Comrade Champ' (Champion Jack), ff. 27–28.
- 13 Tambo, f. 19.
- 14 Illegible name, ff. 10–11.
- 15 'Comrade Sam', f. 14; 'Comrade Sparks', f. 21; 'Comrade (Sam) Modisane', f. 33.
- 16 'Comrade Modisane', ff 30–35. Sam Modisane was the MK name of Grassen Moagi. His hostility towards Xhosa speakers in the ANC survived for more than 30 years. See interview in SADET, *South Africans Telling Their Stories*, Vol. 1, 295–299.
- 17 For the earlier political career of Flag Boshielo see, P. Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1996). Personal information on his role at Morogoro Conference from John Nkadimeng. When Makiwane said that people 'at home' would never accept open membership, Boshielo responded by asking him what gave him a greater right than anyone else to speak for people 'at home'.
- 18 Tambo notebook, as above, 'CPO', Chief Political Officer, 'Comrade Mokgomane' (Flag Boshielo), ff. 41–42. There is some ambiguity in the notes. It is possible that these words are Tambo's own.
- 19 ANCL 2/49/19, T. Nkobi to secretary-general, 13 October 1969.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 2/49/19, Tambo to Nzo, 9 August 1969; TP, Box 60, incomplete copy of secret letter to ANC and other liberation movements from an unnamed ministry, probably the Ministry of Provincial and Local Government, 25 September 1969.
- 21 TP, Box 46, T.T. Nkobi, 'Memorandum by the ANC (SA) on the implications and consequences of disciplinary action taken against some party members in Lusaka Zambia,' 14 December 1970. This memorandum appears to have been written

- mainly for the benefit of the Zambian government and was intended to justify the expulsion of ANC members—an action to which the government had taken exception on the reasonable grounds that this placed the burden of finding and disciplining ‘defiant’ members on its shoulders. See below.
- 22 TP, Box 29, ‘Report of the secretariat covering the last two years’, part 2, probably produced for the NEC meeting held in Lusaka in August 1971.
 - 23 Nkobi, ‘Memorandum’, as above.
 - 24 ANCL, 2/53/6: ‘List of ANC (SA) cadres who have chosen to defy Party orders to leave Lusaka in terms of government directives’ (26 out of 30 names), together with ‘List of ANC (SA) cadres for whom permission to remain in Lusaka is requested’ (20 names) and ‘List of ANC cadres most of whom are already out of Lusaka and the rest of whom will have left by the evening of Friday 4 September’ (55 names), with Tambo to Nzo, 16 September 1970; J. Buthelezi, ‘The struggle for liberation still continues’ (mss); ANCL, 1/14/55, ‘Minutes of the Meeting of the National Executive held in Lusaka from August, 27–31, 1971’.
 - 25 TP, Box 33, Special Committee minutes, 11, 12, 17, 24 November, 8 December 1970.
 - 26 TP, Box 60, record of speech by Vice-President Simon Kapwepwe to representatives of liberation movements, no date.
 - 27 TP, Box 60, B.D. Kalwani, permanent secretary, Ministry of Provincial and Local Government to Chief Representative, ANC, 11 November 1970, acknowledging letter giving list of expelled members of 28 October 1970.
 - 28 Nkobi, ‘Memorandum’, 14 December 1970, as above.
 - 29 Zambia National Archives, MHA1/6/33, ‘African National Congress’, L. Manga to Assistant Commissioner, CID, 11 September 1970; author’s conversations with Ray Simons; interview with her by ‘M.V.’, 27 November 1997, as above. In the same source Ray Simons states that Jack Simons was detained on 9 August and released on 16 August 1970. See also Zola Zembe (Archie Sibeko), *Freedom in Our Lifetime*, 95–96. On the structure of MK command and the establishment of the Special Committee, see minutes of NEC meeting, 27–31 August, 1971, as above, and ‘Statement on the relationship between the ANC and MK’, as above.
 - 30 ANCL, 2/29/20, Tambo to Nzo, 16 September 1970, enclosing commission’s terms of reference, 29 August 1970, and ‘Office of the President, Information Bulletin no. 1’, 29 August 1970. The latter document reads like a press release but is headed as ‘for restricted circulation only’. Simons’s papers, John Pule to Tambo, 23 August 1971. Only three copies of the report were produced. Tapes and transcripts of evidence were said, in 1971, to be in the possession of one of the members of the commission, Dr Randeree. See also J.P. Motshabi, ms biography, in Simons’s papers.

- 31 ANCL, 2/49/20, 'Confidential interim report to RC members', undated and unsigned but probably by Tambo, with Tambo to Nzo, 16 September 1970.
- 32 Information in this and subsequent paragraphs in 'Interim report', as above. According to John Motshabi, Chris Hani was one of those who dropped out at an early stage. 'Awolowo' (MK name for Aron Rapolai), who was later in charge of logistics or supplies in Lusaka, was the man who dropped out at the last minute and returned to Lusaka. See J.P. Mosthabi, ms biography in Simons's papers.
- 33 Author's notes of interviews with Ray Simons.
- 34 On Operation J, see Vladimir Shubin, *ANC a View from Moscow* (Cape Town: Mayibuye, 1999), 101–111.
- 35 ANCL, 1/14/55, Minutes of National Executive meeting, Lusaka, 27–31 August 1971; TP, Box 46, Special Committee minutes, 1971–1973.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 348–352.
- 38 Mayibuye Centre, Kodesh collection, MCA6–284, Chris Hani, interview with Wolfie Kodesh, 1 April 1993, notes of tape recording by courtesy of Steve Davis.
- 39 Author's interviews with A.S. Willie, Cape Town, and Isaac Rani, Lusaka, 2008.

CHAPTER 4

THE ANC UNDERGROUND IN SWAZILAND, c. 1975–1982

Thula Simpson

This chapter discusses political, diplomatic and military relations between the African National Congress (ANC) and the government of Swaziland during the later years of the reign of King Sobhuza II, from 1975 until his death in 1982. Until the mid-1970s, the issue of relations between the two was not of much consequence, owing to the fact that Swaziland was landlocked between white-ruled states, and was thus unable to serve as a corridor between the ANC's internal underground within South Africa and its external leadership in Zambia and Tanzania. This situation changed with the achievement of Mozambican independence in 1975. The advent of a FRELIMO government in Maputo transformed Swaziland's strategic significance in the struggle, as the kingdom became the principal route employed by combatants of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), in making incursions into South Africa.

Three distinct phases of the ANC underground's use of Swaziland as a transit area from the mid-1970s onwards can be identified. In the period 1975–1976, the ANC took advantage of a concession by FRELIMO, granting its personnel the right to pass from Mozambique to Swaziland, and managed to establish contact with ANC members within South Africa and involve them in work recruiting people to go abroad and receive military training. In the second phase, between 1976 and 1980, the ANC was able to reassert its military presence within South Africa, relying mainly on the use of Swaziland as a transit area for armed infiltrations. The opening of ANC archival records in recent years enables us to explain in much greater detail than before the close relations between the liberation movement and the Swazi government that facilitated this.

In the final phase Swaziland's protestations to South Africa of its helplessness in combating ANC underground activity in the kingdom—protestations

that accompanied a policy of turning a blind eye to such activities—began to wear increasingly thin. Pretoria delivered an ultimatum that if Swaziland was unable to deal with the problem, South African security forces would intervene unilaterally in the kingdom to tackle the ANC. Faced with the prospect of destabilising cross-border raids, opponents of the ANC within the Swazi hierarchy, who were always an active presence, even in the years of the closest ANC–Swazi relations in the late 1970s, became more vocal and converted more decision-makers in the country to their stance. A policy of terminating the ANC underground’s activity in Swaziland became dominant in the government. ANC archival documents highlight the internal dynamics within the Swazi ruling establishment during this period.

A constant theme is the towering influence of King Sobhuza’s personality. His relatives had been influential in the formation of the ANC, and he was a lifelong member of the organisation.¹ He was the key instigator from the Swazi side in the establishment of close relations with the ANC in the mid-1970s. When these relations had to be recast in the face of intensifying South African pressure in the early 1980s, he was decisive in protecting the ANC from the excesses of its worst enemies in the country.

The ANC begins to operate in Swaziland

The ANC and FRELIMO enjoyed close relations dating back to 1963, when leaders of the two organisations first met.² In the following years, the two organisations collaborated closely, sharing military bases and even engaging in joint operations in Mozambique in 1967.³ After the Armed Forces coup in Lisbon in April 1974, which set the stage for Mozambican independence, FRELIMO allowed the ANC to establish an office in Lourenço Marques (present-day Maputo), but asked its ally to keep its presence low-key so as not to provoke a reaction from the South Africans or the outgoing Portuguese, which would imperil a smooth transition to independence.⁴

FRELIMO did, however, allow the ANC members to pass through Mozambique *en route* to Swaziland during the transitional period. The first ANC personnel to take advantage of the concession were Thabo Mbeki and Max Sisulu, who travelled to Swaziland in December 1974, in preparation for a United Nations conference to be held in the country in January. While in Swaziland, Mbeki and Sisulu contacted ANC members and the broader South African refugee community, and initiated discussions with representatives of the Swazi government.⁵ Although Mbeki and Sisulu left Swaziland after the conference, Mbeki returned in March to try to build an ANC presence capable of exploiting the changes in Mozambique. Among the ANC members in

Swaziland that he brought into his structure were Ablon Duma, Tim Maseko, Stanley Mabizela, Joseph Nduli and Albert Dhlomo.⁶

This nucleus of ANC members in Swaziland had pre-existing close political and even familial ties with members of the organisation across the border in Natal. The Natal underground was centred on former political prisoners who, after their release, strove to revive ANC activity in the areas in which they were based, establish links with members of the organisation trying to conduct similar work in other areas of the country and connect this internal underground with the ANC abroad.

Albert Dhlomo, whom Mbeki made his deputy, was a member of the Natal underground after his release from a two-year prison term in 1970, and when he left for Swaziland in 1973, it was with express instructions from his colleagues in the province to contact the ANC abroad. He was able to do so, and cross-border linkages were established; in January and March 1974, Joseph Nduli made two journeys into Natal from Swaziland to inquire about how ANC work in that province was progressing.⁷ Nonetheless, until Mozambican independence, the ability of the ANC to connect this Natal–Swaziland network with the organisation’s leadership in central Africa was hampered by the fact that Swaziland was landlocked between white-ruled South Africa and Mozambique. With this blockage removed by Mozambican independence, and with Mbeki ensconced in Swaziland on a permanent basis to facilitate lines of contact between ANC headquarters and structures of the organisation closer to home, in April 1975 Dhlomo was instrumental in establishing contact between the new Mbeki-led Swaziland structure and members of the organisation in Natal. Via telephonic communication, he informed his comrades in Natal that the ANC wished to revitalise the underground within South Africa in order to capitalise on the developments in Mozambique.⁸

ANC members trying to revive the organisation in particular parts of South Africa strove to establish contacts with counterparts doing similar work elsewhere in the country. From 1974, members of the underground in Natal had established contact with other ANC ex-political prisoners in the Johannesburg area, and in 1975, the Mbeki group was able to establish contact with ANC members in Johannesburg through the aegis of the Natal structures.⁹ The ANC’s strategy for reviving its underground within South Africa in order to exploit the changes in Mozambique was set out in a document entitled ‘Current Tasks of our Struggle’, which was circulated to all leading members of the organisation in 1975. The document stated that the movement’s immediate task was to activate its internal underground to begin recruiting youths to go abroad and receive training as politico-military organisers. In this training, the recruits would be groomed as the commanders

of a mass army the ANC was to try and build within South Africa. While they were abroad on their commanders' training, the internal underground within South Africa was to find hideouts, store arms caches and begin recruiting local youths so that when they returned they would be able to commence immediately with arming and training networks of military units which they could then lead into action against the enemy.¹⁰

Insofar as the project was premised on sourcing suitable military recruits, its success was premised on establishing contacts with South African youths. The Mbeki group undertook initiatives of its own in this regard by contacting South African students studying in Swaziland, and through them they were able to establish contacts with the burgeoning student movement in South Africa.¹¹ Through the structures of ANC veterans and student activists that the Mbeki group was able to activate, from mid-1975 work began in both Natal and the Transvaal recruiting young South African blacks to go abroad and receive military training.

Mention must be made at this point of two diplomatic developments in mid-to late 1975 that significantly affected the nature of Swaziland's role in the South African conflict. Firstly, in June 1975, Mozambique achieved its independence. Shortly afterwards FRELIMO informed the ANC that it wanted the South African movement to remain highly circumspect in its operations out of Mozambique. This was because FRELIMO had decided to throw Mozambique's resources behind the struggle for Zimbabwean independence, which it thought was more quickly obtainable than the liberation of South Africa. FRELIMO did not want this policy jeopardised, and so did not want South Africa to be given an excuse to intervene in Mozambique. To help ensure that South Africa was not provided with a pretext for establishing a 'second front' in Mozambique, FRELIMO insisted that MK not launch any incursions into South Africa directly across Mozambique's borders, but would instead channel infiltrations through Swaziland.¹² The effect of this was that the advantage accrued to the ANC by Mozambican independence brought Swaziland into the forefront of the struggle.

The second development came in September 1975 when Oliver Tambo secretly visited Swaziland. He was met enthusiastically by King Sobhuza, who brandished his ANC membership card and promised the organisation protection in Swaziland. Although relations were thus established between the two entities, Sobhuza gave no consent for any military activity to be undertaken by the ANC in the country.¹³ Nevertheless, by late 1975, such underground military activity was well established and large numbers of young South Africans were passing through the kingdom *en route* to receiving training further abroad.

The enlisting work done by the ANC's recruitment squads within South Africa was precarious. Among many dangers, it involved the members of the squads approaching, and thus exposing their identities to, large numbers of people, many of whom would then be induced to cross the country's borders illegally without passports. Such activities carried many risks, as was seen in mid-November 1975, when a group of six recruits were ambushed by the South African police, and information that they divulged while in detention led to the arrest of many members of the ANC's Natal network in late November/early December 1975.¹⁴ Then in March 1976, Mbeki was arrested in Swaziland after the pipeline between the kingdom and Natal, which the structure in Swaziland tried to revive after contacting the remnants of the Natal underground in February 1976, was penetrated by the South African police.¹⁵

While Mbeki and his chief assistants, Albert Dhlomo and Jacob Zuma, were under arrest, the ANC dispatched a series of its senior leaders to petition for their release. However, the purpose of ANC diplomacy during this period aimed at more than just securing the freedom of their incarcerated members. The other major objective the ANC pursued in these negotiations was securing from the Swazis the right to establish a diplomatic mission that could represent ANC interests in the country. Success was achieved on both fronts. Mbeki, Zuma and Dhlomo were released (though they were subsequently deported into ANC custody in Mozambique in June 1976), and the Swazis consented to let the ANC establish a mission in the kingdom,¹⁶ consisting of Moses Mabhida, who was its leader,¹⁷ Henry Chiliza and Stanley Mabizela, who were respectively Mabhida's assistant and his deputy, and other associates such as Ablon Duma and Joe Mkhwanazi.¹⁸

The best years, c.1976–1980

Thanks to Mozambique's willingness to serve as a conduit in the ANC's armed struggle, in the late 1970s Swaziland was the main source of MK infiltrations into South Africa. Accordingly, as the decade progressed, both the ANC and the South African security branch became increasingly involved in Swaziland, and the overspill of the South African conflict into the kingdom had deep reverberations for the Swazi state apparatus and, indeed, the wider society.

Within the South African security force structure, the principal responsibility for combating political opposition groups fell to the Special Branch of the police. The Special Branch's duties included targeting such organisations beyond South Africa's borders. The task of countering the liberation movements in Swaziland was handled by the Eastern Transvaal

divisional command of the branch, which had its headquarters at Middelburg, while actual cross-border operations into Swaziland were co-ordinated out of Ermelo police station. In January 1977, Dirk Coetzee, newly appointed by the Special Branch, was dispatched to the Oshoek border post between Swaziland and South Africa.¹⁹

The security branch was especially keen to build up its intelligence profile of the exact nature of the activities being plotted against South Africa by the ANC abroad. In the Swazi context, a particularly useful source of information in this regard was the records of the United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR) in Swaziland, which was centrally involved in the management of refugee affairs in the country. One of the first things that Coetzee did upon his arrival at Oshoek was to contact Rall Mateus, who was the owner of the Mbabane-based office of Deta Air, a carrier owned and administered by FRELIMO. What the UNHCR would do at the time was to take all refugees who wanted to leave Swaziland, and place them on Deta planes headed for Maputo, from where they would find their desired destinations. Mateus was an owner of properties in Mozambique, but was deeply opposed to the socialist direction that the country was pursuing under FRELIMO's leadership, and he was particularly antagonistic to the policy of nationalisation. Although his properties had been exempted from the first wave of state confiscation—partially because of the key role he had played in saving Deta from bankruptcy when uncovering a forgery racket involving thousands of tickets at its head office—he did not hesitate in accepting Coetzee's offer to become an agent for the South African police. From that point onwards, Mateus handed Coetzee the passenger lists of Deta Air flights headed to Maputo whenever refugees were on board. Coetzee then passed these lists to his seniors at Ermelo, who used them to update their files of 'terrorist suspects'.²⁰

Despite the active South African security branch presence in Swaziland, the ANC nevertheless held the upper hand in the contest between the two in the kingdom during the late 1970s. This was because the Swazi government, under King Sobhuza's influence, pursued a policy during the period of offering the ANC the maximum assistance it could get away with without incurring the wrath of South Africa.

This is not to say that all within the Swazi state apparatus approved of this policy, or followed it loyally. Far from it: as part of their penetration of the country, the South Africans managed, with their bribery and largess, to establish extensive networks of collaborators and informers at all levels of the state, and they achieved particular success with the police force. In his memoirs, Dirk Coetzee recalled the commander of the Ermelo security branch

telling him that practically all of the top brass of the Swazi police were on the payroll of the South African security branch, and Coetzee listed a number of instances in which members of the Swazi police assisted the South Africans in operations against the ANC.²¹

However, it remains true that the orientation of Swazi government policy was to render as much clandestine, non-attributable support to the ANC in its struggle as it could, and this limited the scope of the organisation's opponents in the country to act against the organisation. For example, Oliver Tambo, who visited Swaziland in 1977, was able to reach an agreement with Colonel Maphevu, the then Swazi Prime Minister, that MK cadres could transit through the kingdom, although in this particular deal Maphevu emphasised that this could only be to *retreat* from, and not to launch attacks *into*, South Africa.²²

The policy of covert Swazi support also included granting the ANC exemption from whole sections of the country's refugee and immigration policies. For example, one of the laws on the Swazi statute books at the time was known as the '60-day law': it involved limiting non-citizens who travelled regularly in and out of Swaziland to stay 60 days per annum — once they reached this limit they had to stay out of the country for the rest of the year. If enforced on the ANC it would have impeded the movements of the couriers in the underground significantly, and even that of some leaders of the organisation, who travelled frequently to and from the country. But this measure was *not* applied on members of the organisation in Swaziland. This exemption for the organisation was negotiated by Moses Mabhida with the local authorities.²³

It must be noted further that these concessions overruled the terms of any future legislation passed that conflicted with them. For example, in 1978, the Swazis introduced comprehensive new legislation for managing refugee population in the country. The Refugee Control Order, as it was known, stripped refugees of the right to possess firearms, introduced identity cards that they had to carry at all times and required them to have special permission to drive vehicles. It also gave the government the right to deport refugees to the countries from whence they had come to Swaziland, as well as the power to compel them to reside in certain areas of the country.²⁴ On paper this reflected a tough new commitment by the Swazis to prevent their country from being used as a corridor for armed struggle-related activities. However, in practice, only some of its terms were applied on the ANC. Members of the organisation were required to pay for identification in the form of residence permits (although this was a fee that the UNHCR agreed to cover on the ANC's behalf),²⁵ but the

other aspects of the legislation, insofar as they were inconsistent with the exemptions previously agreed with the ANC, were waived for the organisation.

The permissive attitude of the Swazi authorities enabled the scope of ANC underground activities in the kingdom to increase, and despite the conditions Maphevu had specified in his agreement with Tambo, it soon became clear that this included MK incursions into South Africa via Swaziland. The fact that the ANC was using the country as a corridor for attacks into South Africa became an open secret; in fact it was well enough known to be reported in the international media as a possible trigger for a regional conflagration in southern Africa. When these reports were put to King Sobhuza by foreign journalists, he grumbled about the actions of communist-trained agitators entering his realm to sow discontent.²⁶ This was rather disingenuous, given the various commitments the Swazis offered to the ANC to facilitate such activity by neglecting to prosecute it. In practice this extended to a willingness to turn a blind eye to MK infiltrations into South Africa, unless and until such time as the South Africans decided to raise the stakes for the Swazis for allowing this situation to prevail. As Moses Mabhida later wrote, the *de facto* situation that ANC members and supporters enjoyed inside the country in the late 1970s was one of 'free and unhampered movement throughout Swaziland'.²⁷

By the end of the 1970s the likelihood of a South African escalation of the conflict was gaining rapidly. Mention has been made about how the ANC enjoyed the upper hand in the duel in Swaziland during this period. This is reflected in the steady increases the ANC managed to record in both the frequency of its transit work to and from South Africa through Swaziland, and the numbers of people involved in such missions. As the scope of this activity grew, the South Africans complained that Swaziland was not doing enough to prevent it. The Swazis responded by pointing to their legislation that ANC refugees were forbidden from taking part in any political activity whatsoever in the country, while King Sobhuza responded publicly on a number of occasions saying that his government was doing all in its power to prevent the ANC from operating through the kingdom.²⁸ For reasons we have discussed, in offering these protestations Sobhuza was being less than honest with his South African counterparts. However the stand-off approach of the Swazis meant that the ANC underground in the territory continued to grow from strength to strength. From the South African state's perspective, the situation had grown sufficiently serious by 1980 for it to consider resetting its whole

counter-insurgency strategy in south-eastern Africa. Swaziland was living increasingly dangerously.

Silverton, SASOL and after

On 25 January 1980, 25 people were taken hostage by three MK members, who took over the Volkskas Bank in Silverton, Pretoria. In a shootout following a six-hour siege, five people—three guerrillas and two civilians—died.²⁹ In investigations following the attack, the police rounded up a number of people who were part of the same unit as the hostage-takers.³⁰ Some of those arrested decided to become state witnesses, and during their interrogation revealed that they had entered South Africa through Swaziland. Following receipt of this news, a secret South African delegation sent to Swaziland delivered an explicit threat that if the Swazi authorities failed to take effective measures to terminate MK incursions through the kingdom, South African security forces would launch cross-border attacks of their own to flush the ANC out of Swaziland.³¹ A new era had begun.

Shortly after this warning, on 1 June 1980, MK launched the most spectacular attack in the history of its armed struggle, targeting the SASOL refinery responsible for converting coal to oil, which stood 60 km south of Johannesburg.³² Almost immediately afterwards, the Ermelo security branch arranged for a cross-border raid to be undertaken against suspected ANC hideouts in Zakhele, a suburb of Manzini. The two properties targeted were a new transit house being used by the ANC in Swaziland, which belonged to a member of the underground known as Comrade Mashego, and another property belonging to Marwick Nkosi, a Swazi businessman who was an ardent ANC supporter and who the South African security branch suspected was involved in building false panels into cars, thereby facilitating the ANC's smuggling of weapons into South Africa. The attack took place in the early hours of the morning of 4 June. At the bomb blast at Mashego's house, one member of the ANC underground was killed and three injured, and at the latter, Marwick Nkosi's grandchild was killed and two others, including his daughter, severely injured. The ANC mission in Swaziland was deeply unnerved by the incident. They were also convinced that the Zakhele blasts would not be South Africa's last word. Fearing enemy agents 'teeming all over the place', and believing and that they 'as yet did not know what the ultimate reaction' of Pretoria would be, its leaders ceased sleeping in their regular residences for fear of assassination.³³

The Swazi government also feared a second round attack, and at last began to strictly enforce the security legislation it had introduced but had not seriously enforced, including the Refugee Control Order and 60-day law.³⁴ As a result of these restrictions being imposed, ANC transit work through Swaziland ground

to a halt. About 30 members of the organisation seeking passage to Maputo were marooned in the Manzini area, straining the capacity of the homes of ANC refugees, and transit houses used by the movement, to accommodate them.³⁵ What followed was perhaps the most intense flurry of ANC diplomatic activity in Swaziland since the arrests of Mbeki, Dhlomo and Zuma in 1976.

The meetings held to resolve this crisis made clearer to the ANC diplomats the internal dynamics within the Swazi elite regarding South Africa policy. Above all, these meetings highlighted the fact that the Swazi police constituted the backbone of the anti-ANC faction within the local establishment. This was revealed in the first meeting on 8 September 1980. Mabhida, Mabizela and Petrus Nzima met the Permanent and Assistant Secretaries of the Swazi DPM's office, who were accompanied by Edgar Hillary of the police, who was also Minister of Security in the Swazi Cabinet. In this meeting, the Swazi team confronted the ANC representatives with a salvo of accusations, some based on passports captured from ANC members inside South Africa—information which could only have been gleaned from Swazi officials either being present at the interrogation of these ANC members, or having had the contents of such cross-examinations divulged to them by the South Africans. This, combined with Hillary's general demeanour during the meeting, convinced the ANC that relations between the South Africans and certain elements in the Swazi establishment were much closer than the movement had imagined in the halcyon days of the relationship between the movement and the Swazis in the 1970s.

The following meeting, on 8 September, was between the assistant commissioner of the Swazi police and the ANC delegates. In this meeting the ANC asked that members of the movement being held in Swaziland for having violated the terms of the 60-days law be allowed to leave for Maputo. The acting commissioner said he could not authorise such a move as he was a mere titular figurehead, but before the meeting ended, he asked the ANC diplomats to provide him with a list of members of the movement affected by the imposition of the said law. When the ANC men reported back to the Permanent Secretary of the DPM's office about the meeting, he told them that the 60-day law should not have been applied to ANC members, but that he would not allow a list of ANC personnel to be supplied to the Swazi police, because, he said, one could not know for sure where such a list might eventually end up.³⁶

It must be noted in passing that the leaking of sensitive information by the Swazis worked as much in the ANC's favour as against it, owing to the extensive list of well-placed friends it had in the local establishment. For example, during this period, the South African police were keenly

pursuing those responsible for the SASOL raid in June. Part of this search involved them handing over a list of the ANC members being pursued in this connection to the Swazis. The list was headed by Motso Mogkabudi, *nom de guerre* Obadi Khazaramnyanga. (Incidentally, at some stage during this late-1980 crackdown, the Swazi police, unbeknown to themselves, arrested Obadi in one of their routine raids on ANC underground hideouts. Apparently the South African police found out about the true identity of the prisoner before the Swazis, and offered R1 million for his extradition. At this point the Swazis panicked and released Obadi into the custody of the ANC in Mozambique.³⁷) Any way, this list was handed over to the ANC by friendly sources within the Swazi government.³⁸ Furthermore, it is also clear from internal ANC correspondence during this period that the organisation was regularly briefed in detail about the content of secret meetings between the South Africans and the Swazis, insofar as these details related to the ANC.

On 9 September, Mabizela and Nzima, fortified by the message they had received from the Permanent Secretary of the DPM's office the previous day that the 60-day law ought not to be applied to ANC members, held a meeting with the Swazi Police Commissioner about expediting the withdrawal to Mozambique of the ANC members affected by the imposition of the law. The ANC men were taken aback by the aggressive response they received: the commissioner lectured them about the fact that he knew the ANC was not adhering to the agreement reached between Maphevu and Tambo that MK would not be allowed to launch armed incursions into South Africa via Swaziland. He told them he would continue to enforce Swazi law whether they liked it or not, and then dismissed them.³⁹

The ANC delegation was confused as to the source of the commissioner's confidence that he could ignore the will of his seniors in government as apparently expressed clearly by the DPM's office in its communication regarding the ANC and the 60-day law. The reasons for the commissioner's disposition became clearer in meetings held over the next few days.

There was first a false dawn regarding the resolution of the crisis at hand when the ANC diplomats reported the detail of their meeting with the commissioner to the Permanent Secretary of the DPM's office. The Permanent Secretary phoned the commissioner, told him that Swaziland no longer wanted MK guerrillas holed up in the country and ordered him to allow the soldiers to leave for Mozambique. To the surprise of the ANC representatives, the commissioner denied having obstructed the withdrawal of the ANC men. Pleased with the outcome of this meeting, and after double-checking with the Manzini branch of the Swazi police and the DPM's office that ANC cadres would indeed now be allowed to leave for Maputo, the ANC

started to withdraw its personnel to Mozambique on 12 September 1980. They encountered numerous delays at roadblocks and border checkpoints, but were allowed to leave. However, the next morning the Swazi police announced they would not allow any further ANC members to pass. After having referred the matter yet again to the Permanent Secretary of the DPM's Office, the ANC representatives were told that there ought not to be any problems, and that somebody else evidently was issuing contrary instructions to the policemen on the ground.⁴⁰ This was the first indication the ANC received that the decision that members of the organisation be allowed to leave the country was being vetoed by a source with sufficient power to persuade the police that they could ignore such orders with impunity.

A further meeting was convened between the DPM's Permanent Secretary and the ANC on 18 September 1980. There the Permanent Secretary decided to write a letter to the Swazi police commissioner requesting that a blanket permit be issued that would restore to the ANC the same freedom of movement within Swaziland that it enjoyed before the crackdown. The Permanent Secretary was deeply reluctant to author this letter;⁴¹ after all, such a document would offer documentary proof of Swazi complicity with the actions of the ANC underground; furthermore, this document would have been provided to the top brass of the police, who, as discussed earlier, the Permanent Secretary believed could not be trusted not to leak sensitive security information to the South Africans.

Even after the receipt of the Permanent Secretary's letter, the Swazi police refused to end its embargo on the movement of ANC personnel across the borders. When the ANC tried to refer the matter back to the Permanent Secretary, he told them there was nothing more he could do, and that the matter should be raised with the Deputy Prime Minister himself. The ANC did this, and also lobbied other friends in the Swazi government, such as the Minister of Home Affairs, but achieved no success. In the face of such intransigence from the police, the ANC's friends informed the organisation that only the Prime Minister's Office could persuade the police to modify their stance. Mabhida concluded from this run-around that the source of the police's confidence in denying certain cabinet ministries was that it had the ear of the Prime Minister's Office, the supreme cabinet ministry, whom it had persuaded that continued conduct of ANC clandestine activity in Swaziland was a major threat to national security, and that the organisation needed to be driven out of the country.⁴²

Though in time an agreement was reached whereby ANC members were allowed to withdraw to Maputo, these September meetings revealed to the movement that opposition to it in the kingdom was both more extensive than

it had previously thought and gaining strength in reaction to South African pressure.

The consequences: 1981

Swazi and ANC fears that the South African security forces would stage a further, larger attack on the ANC in the kingdom were well founded. Since the SASOL attack, the South African security forces had begun planning a conjoint operation designed to target ANC underground structures in Swaziland and Mozambique.

The target identified by the South African planners for the Swazi end of the operation were two flats, known as Flats 6 and 9, which were based in downtown Manzini. For various reasons, both legs of the planned operation fell behind schedule, after which they assumed different trajectories. Under the new plan, the objective of the Swazi operation became to attack, on a single night, as many properties used by the ANC as could be identified by prior reconnaissance, with the aim of eliminating the movement as a force in Swaziland.⁴³

The attack into Mozambique was conducted late in January 1981, in an operation that has become known as the Matola Raid. With the Swaziland operation lagging behind, Security Branch headquarters recalled the white commanding officers from Swaziland to Pretoria to deliver a progress report. The black troops left behind then leapt into premature action on 19 February 1981, detaining Joe Pillay, a person whom they had identified as a member of the ANC underground, but whom they had been ordered by their commanders not to touch without receiving authorisation.⁴⁴

In the end the affair was botched. A struggle ensued, and one of the black soldiers involved in the abduction left his passport, bank and pass books behind at the scene.⁴⁵ Furthermore, a crowd soon gathered, and they were able to take down the registration number of the car in which the group escorted Pillay away. The public nature of the kidnapping created a minor international scandal, with the Swazi government issuing an official protest demanding Pillay's return. An agreement was soon reached between the two governments for Pillay to be exchanged for the black soldiers, whom the police had captured the day after the kidnapping. During the brief period in which they had the black soldiers in their custody, the Swazis were able to learn of the magnitude of the attack the South African security services were planning.⁴⁶

This revelation came within the context of statements made by representatives of the South African security forces that, since the beginning of the 1980s, the country's borders with Swaziland were 'leaking like a sieve',⁴⁷

and an explicit threat issued from a member of the South African government that Swaziland risked becoming a 'second front' of the South African struggle if this situation did not change.⁴⁸ The information unearthed by the Swazi police in their interrogation of the black troops involved in the abduction of Pillay made clear that these threats were not idle.

Security issues dominated the agenda of Swazi meetings with ANC representatives in 1981. These discussions were conducted against the backdrop of continued accusations by the South Africans that the Swazis were not doing enough to prevent the ANC underground from utilising the kingdom as an operational area in its armed struggle.⁴⁹

Beginning in August 1981, the Swazis imposed a new set of restrictions aimed at cutting back the scope of the ANC underground work in the kingdom.⁵⁰ However, by this time, large groups of ANC combatants were being deployed to Swaziland on a regular basis, and a series of armed standoffs and clashes ensued between MK cadres and members of the Swazi security forces in the final months of 1981, as the Swazis tried to enforce these new restrictions on the ANC underground. These confrontations only served to strengthen the view within the Swazi government that the ANC was a threat to the country's security, and the DPM's Office, which was seen as the main bastion of support for the ANC, became increasingly isolated within the Cabinet.⁵¹

A shooting incident early in December 1981, in which a Swazi border patrol opened fire on an MK group attempting to enter the kingdom, had the effect of decisively tipping the balance within the Swazi government towards a stance of terminating ANC underground work in the country once and for all. The only differences within the government were over whether, once the mass expulsions were complete, a small ANC representative mission would be allowed to remain or not. However, this expulsion plan was vetoed by King Sobhuza when the Prime Minister submitted the scheme to the monarch for approval. In fact, Sobhuza was furious at this conspiracy against his 'family', which is how he referred to the ANC, and rejected the proposal out of hand. The king was particularly angry that, contrary to the established pattern, his government had conducted negotiations about this matter behind the ANC's back.⁵²

Despite Sobhuza's stalwart intervention on the ANC's behalf, the threat that had precipitated his government to agree on action against the movement, namely the threat of a destabilising, unilateral South African cross-border raid in Swaziland, remained in effect. Planning for such actions continued. In January 1982, a South African hit squad began keeping a watch on the house in Matsapa of Petrus Nzima, the treasurer of the ANC mission in Swaziland, with orders to kill him if an opportune moment presented itself to do so.⁵³

Meanwhile, in private bilateral meetings on security matters held between the South Africans and the Swazis during the same late 1981/early 1982 period, the South Africans reissued their threats to intervene militarily in Swaziland to counter the ANC threat. There were two major outcomes of these talks. The first was communicated to the ANC by the Swazi Prime Minister when he travelled to Lusaka early in 1982 to meet its senior leadership. In these meetings he communicated the warnings that South Africa had issued.⁵⁴ Apparently he told the ANC that a clear threat had been directed towards Stanley Mabizela and that if he did not leave Swaziland, the South Africans would kill him.⁵⁵ The ANC opted to withdraw Mabizela from the country, and in early February 1982 announced a reshuffle of the movement's regional structures, which involved Mabizela being sent to Tanzania.⁵⁶

The second outcome of these talks was a secret security agreement (its existence only made public in March 1984) signed by Swaziland and South Africa in mid-February 1982. The agreement came in the form of an exchange of letters that, although unspecific regarding how the principles enunciated in the document were to be implemented, nevertheless committed both sides to act within their own territory to eliminate acts of subversion against the other, to refrain from actions that could jeopardise the security of the other and to call for assistance if either felt threatened by subversion sourced from the other's territory.⁵⁷ This could be interpreted as a South African commitment to act in *consultation* with the Swazis if Pretoria ever envisaged launching a cross-border raid, but much depended on how South Africa—by far the more powerful of the two signatories to the pact—chose to interpret the terms of the agreement.

Beginning in April 1982, the Swazi police launched a new wave of raids against ANC underground facilities in the country. It would be erroneous to interpret this development as representing the Swazi police and other enemies of the ANC in the kingdom, unbridled at last by the terms of the February 1982 security agreement, calling for the elimination of subversion within the country directed against South Africa, branching out to deliver the kind of blows to the ANC that they had long sought to apply, but had been prevented from delivering by their internal opponents. A long-standing problem regarding ANC clandestine work in Swaziland was the regular, practically daily, traffic of people entering and departing residences used by the underground. Neighbours often reported the goings-on at the properties to the police. The traffic included young girls invited to visit the properties by members of the underground, who would even consent to having pictures taken at these residences with the women. Aware of this phenomenon, the South African security branch recruited some of these young women,

and information provided by these female agents enabled the South African police to confront the Swazi authorities with specific, detailed, documented information about the location of properties used by the ANC in ongoing underground activity in the kingdom. The South Africans then warned the Swazis that unless they acted on the information, the South African security forces would intervene with a cross-border attack, targeting the properties in question. When the Swazi police began raiding the ANC's hideouts in April, they informed the South African liberation movement of this backdrop to the crackdown. As a consequence of these raids, the number of arrests of ANC members illegally in the country increased, as did confiscations of weapons of war, and fines and prosecutions of MK members caught in possession of these arms.⁵⁸

While the Swazis subsequently toughened the laws regarding the illegal bearing of arms of war in the country,⁵⁹ in doing so they observed the principle of consultation with the ANC over security matters, in order to minimise the negative impact for the South African liberation movement. The Swazis sought—and received—permission from the ANC to begin arresting members of the movement bearing arms illegally in the country,⁶⁰ thus giving the South African movement advance warning of the measures to be taken. This, obviously, would serve to greatly weaken the impact of the blow. While the ANC complained about the Swazi police being heavy-handed in applying the law on members of the organisation,⁶¹ it would be an overstatement to believe that the February 1982 security agreement saw anti-ANC elements gain ascendancy within the Swazi government, and that they allied themselves with the South African government to destroy the ANC within the country. This would not have happened with King Sobhuza at the helm. The basic principles guiding Swazi policy remained the same; what changed was that South African pressure on Swaziland had become more intense.

In July 1982, the ANC was stunned by the announcement that the Swazi and South African governments had signed a Land Deal, which would have increased Swaziland's territory by almost a half, giving it access to the sea, while tripling its population. Stunned, because, as the ANC pointed out in a memorandum in which it gave its immediate response to the deal, it had not been briefed by the Swazis about the progress of negotiations on the matter.⁶² This failure to consult was in marked contrast to the manner in which the Swazis typically informed the ANC about the content of Swazi–South African discussions as they pertained to the ANC. This discrepancy likely reflected a belief among the Swazis that while the security discussions were a relevant and legitimate concern of the ANC, the issue of Swazi national unification was not any of the South African liberation movement's business.

The ANC believed that the deal carried potentially grave implications for Swaziland's continued allegiance to the cause of liberation in South Africa. In the weeks following the announcement of the signing of the deal, the ANC arranged a couple of meetings with the Swazi authorities, including one in mid-July 1982 between a delegation headed by Tambo and another by the Swazi Prime Minister, Prince Mabandla Dlamini. In this meeting, Tambo said that the deal threatened to turn the ANC and Swaziland into adversaries, even if the Swazis did not necessarily wish this outcome, because the ANC could not accept the deal, grounded as it was in the apartheid ideology of parcelling black South Africans into ethnic and tribal homelands. Hence there was a danger of Swaziland being drawn into an alliance with South Africa against the ANC, in order to be able to preserve its control of the territories. Tambo had no success in persuading the Prime Minister not to go through with the border adjustment, but the two agreed that Tambo should discuss the matter directly with King Sobhuza.⁶³

Perhaps the dynamics of conflict feared by the ANC would have materialised in due course, but for the time being the Swazis felt that their pursuit of a border adjustment could be reconciled with continued support for the ANC. King Sobhuza II certainly was of this view. The meeting between him and Tambo, which Tambo and the Swazi Prime Minister advocated at their July meeting, took place when the ailing king summoned the ANC president to Swaziland. There, without offering any concessions on the Land Deal, Sobhuza said to Tambo, 'It will not be long before I pass away ... What do I tell the ancestors when I join them? Because they will ask me, "What has happened to our organisation, the ANC?"'⁶⁴ This was one of Sobhuza's last contacts with the ANC before the monarch passed away on 21 August 1982.

Conclusion

There were, broadly speaking, three main tendencies within the Swazi ruling establishment in the late 1970s regarding South Africa policy. The first was basically staunchly pro-ANC, with its most prominent member being King Sobhuza II. The second was opposed to the organisation, with the top brass of the Swazi police forming the vanguard of this tendency. The remainder, meanwhile, was uncommitted and persuadable either way. This chapter has shown how the composition of the pro- and anti-ANC tendencies changed over time, in response to growing South African pressure on Swaziland, including threats of direct military intervention into the kingdom. These threats of cross-border raids were themselves a response to an increase in MK

incursions into South Africa via Swaziland in the late 1970s. This increase was facilitated by the Swazi government's stance of turning a blind eye to ANC underground work in the country.

By late 1981, the consensus within the Swazi government was that South African threats of intervention had become sufficiently explicit and threatening that the ANC had to be denied further use of the kingdom as a transit area in its armed struggle. Some hardliners went further, and sought total expulsion of the movement from the country. As long as King Sobhuza was alive, the ANC enjoyed a layer of support protecting it from the worst excesses of its enemies in the country. The December 1981 crisis, when Sobhuza alone prevented a mass expulsion of ANC members from occurring, was the most dramatic example of this. With Sobhuza's death in August 1982, that bulwark disappeared, leaving the ANC in Swaziland facing an uncertain future.

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CHAPTER 5

THE ANC: FROM FREEDOM RADIO TO RADIO FREEDOM

Steve Davis

Beginning with the Rivonia arrests in July 1963, and ending with the lifting of the ban on illegal organisations in February 1990, the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) spent nearly 30 years attempting to direct the liberation struggle from exile. This chapter examines one of those activities—the use of radio broadcasting—as a window into the problems faced by a movement in exile. I argue that leading figures in the ANC and SACP saw radio as an essential component of armed struggle, even if they disagreed about how best to put its perceived potential to good use. By parsing out how each constituency approached radio, we can understand the various ways in which these leaders thought about their stalled revolution, internal power struggles and their international supporters. Piecing together these anecdotal accounts of radio is one particularly revealing method of understanding problems often elided in more celebratory accounts of exile.

While there exists a voluminous archive of recordings and transcripts of broadcasts that have not yet received scholarly attention, my focus is not on these texts *per se*, but on the contexts within which these broadcasts were produced. Nor will I assess audience responses to Radio Freedom broadcasts.¹ However tempting it may be to use Radio Freedom to establish causal connections between the ‘external mission’ and the protest movement that emerged within South Africa, this chapter focuses on what radio can tell us about how the ANC and SACP saw themselves, each other and their struggles in exile. I discuss when broadcasting became a priority for exiles, who controlled and operated the radio units, where radio broadcasts came from and why radio broadcasting was important in the broader struggles between different constituencies in the exile leadership. I read radio broadcasting as

evidence that can illuminate how parties within the alliance perceived various challenges to the liberation movement.

Armed struggle and Freedom Radio

Over two years from its launch in December 1961, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) conducted over 200 bombings and other acts of sabotage in all major cities in South Africa.² Despite the impressive number of attacks, the ultimate objective of this campaign often remained unclear, even to those working within MK. Ronnie Kasrils, then a junior member of the Natal Regional Command, recalled ‘... were we aiming to simply put pressure on the government—to force it to change—or to overthrow it? If so, how? I perceived these questions only dimly at the time’.³ Drawing from a crash course in the revolutionary literature of the day, MK strategists generally agreed that the objective of the campaign was to destabilise the economy in the hope that a popular insurrection might ensue.⁴ Following this, a vanguard of MK guerrillas, trained and equipped by sympathetic African states, would emerge from underground to lead the masses in the overthrow of the state.⁵ As Mac Maharaj remembered his participation in the sabotage campaign: ‘We used to sing a song: “One stick, two sticks, six sticks of dynamite, we’ll take the country the Castro way ...” We were all singing this song, as if to say in six months we would be free.’⁶

Although MK succeeded in a few spectacular bombings, it failed to provoke a widespread popular insurrection. Instead, the government responded by enacting a devastating array of emergency powers that provided arrest without charge, indefinite detention and strict controls over the press. By early 1963, the government had captured MK Commander Nelson Mandela, infiltrated several MK regional structures with spies and ‘turned’ a few key detainees into state’s witnesses. Making matters worse, although MK remained active, the re-organisation of rank-and-file ANC branches into underground cells languished, leaving the military struggle without adequate political structures. Spectacular as these bombings may have seemed to would-be revolutionaries, MK actions did not inspire the vast majority of South Africans with the possibility of revolution. Although opinions differed, some felt that the movement neglected to create the political means with which to capitalise on the armed struggle.⁷ It was in this context that the ANC made its first foray into radio broadcasting.

In April 1963, Walter Sisulu disobeyed a banning order confining him to house arrest in Johannesburg and joined the remaining MK high command at the Lillieslief Farm in Rivonia.⁸ Once in Rivonia, several members of the ANC and SACP gathered together to produce a recorded statement for

broadcast. Like many other actions taken during this hectic period, the details of this discussion about broadcasting remain obscure.⁹ No records exist of the deliberations leading to the broadcast, but the decision to take to the airwaves was probably not the culmination of a carefully planned strategy, but rather a hasty act taken after a series of *ad hoc* decisions, all signalling the increasing desperation felt by the MK leadership.

In early June 1963, Dennis Goldberg recorded Sisulu and Ahmed Kathrada as they read two statements, both totalling less than 15 minutes. Kathrada allegedly addressed the Indian community, urging them to join the struggle and spoke about the importance of radio to the struggle, and formally inaugurated Freedom Radio.¹⁰ Sisulu accompanied Kathrada with an appeal to the 'sons and daughters of Africa', which reassured listeners of the continued existence of the ANC underground, pledged that he would not leave South Africa, informed them of the fate of those arrested in the ongoing struggles and called upon 'workers and peasants, teachers and students, ministers of religion and all churches' to 'unite and struggle'. Concluding his remarks, Sisulu did not define the methods of this new phase of struggle beyond the vague suggestion that 'our unity, our determination, our sacrifice our organisation are our weapons.' He then signed off with 'Amandla!'¹¹

Lionel Bernstein recounts that no attempt was made to publicise the broadcasts beforehand and no plans were made to determine the range of reception or gauge audience response.¹² Nevertheless, on the night of 26 June 1963, Denis Goldberg, Ivan Schermbrucker and Cyril Jones travelled to Parktown, a white suburb of Johannesburg. At the home of Archie Levetan, Goldberg assembled a custom-built, aluminium aerial, spray-painted black to avoid detection by police searchlights. Jones left a rented car nearby for Goldberg, while Schermbrucker stood watch and signalled to Goldberg by 'torchlight and handheld radio' should any police vehicles approach. Goldberg connected the jury-rigged transmitter to a tape recorder, pressed play and broadcast Freedom Radio to an uncertain number of listeners.¹³

The almost obsessive attention to secrecy, as recalled by Goldberg, suggests the truly paranoid atmosphere that pervaded the organisation by mid-1963. Despite these precautions the police clearly had advanced knowledge of the broadcast, perhaps from informants placed within MK units. It is unclear whether the police attempted to trace the signal and failed, or if they were merely content to record a broadcast they knew few might actually hear. What is certain is that less than two weeks after the broadcast, police raided the Lillieslief Farm and arrested seven leaders, including Sisulu, Kathrada and Goldberg. Benefiting from documents collected in the raid on Rivonia,

police made further arrests in the next few weeks, ultimately succeeding in capturing nearly the entire leadership of MK, all but ending the possibility of any future MK operations, as well as critically weakening the ANC and SACP.

Prosecutors foregrounded recordings of Freedom Radio in the evidence presented during the Rivonia Trial—submitted under the more provocative title of the ‘Eye for an Eye’ broadcasts.¹⁴ In June 1964, Judge Quartus de Wet sentenced the seven Rivonia defendants to life in prison.¹⁵ Remaining ANC and SACP members faced arrest and harassment by continuing their activities and dropped out of the movement altogether, or fled the country to join the fledgling external mission hastily organised by Oliver Tambo, Moses Kotane and Tennyson Makiwane.¹⁶

The Freedom Radio broadcast begs the question: what did the MK leadership, operating underground and increasingly circumscribed by arrests, think they might accomplish by making an appeal over the airwaves? The ANC certainly did not originate the idea of using radio to overthrow a state. In fact, by the mid-1960s exiles had no shortage of examples from which to choose. To better understand how radio informed debates on the frustrated liberation struggle and to preface the role that broadcasting assumed in exile, it is necessary to examine the relationship between radio and revolutionaries, as well as the recent history of radio in southern Africa.

Revolutionary readings of radio

ANC and SACP leaders did not develop their ideas about revolutionary radio in a vacuum. Like similar groups in southern Africa, they carefully mined the experiences of a variety of other revolutionary movements for inspiration and guidance. Within this world of nascent guerrilla movements, radio became widely accepted as the inseparable companion of revolution. By the mid-1960s, and certainly lapsing into subsequent decades, it was apparent to all would-be revolutionaries that the leadership of a viable movement—particularly a viable movement-in-exile—needed to broadcast over the radio in order to influence donors, out-manoeuvre their rivals and communicate with the people they claimed to lead, even if the intended audience did not necessarily act upon what they heard over the airwaves. Despite this tacit understanding, not all who used radio understood how to make good on its perceived potential, but certainly everyone who broadcast at least recognised it as a symbolic indicator of their seriousness about revolution. Following the turn to armed struggle, and certainly continuing into exile, the ANC and SACP began long and arduous debate over the appropriate method for fomenting revolution in South Africa. This debate

often referenced radio as leaders gauged their own situation against their readings of more illustrious revolutionary movements.

Because of the wide array of ideological constituencies within the ANC/SACP alliance, ideas about radio and revolution came from a variety of sources. As inferred earlier, intellectuals within the Congress Alliance assumed a variety of ideological guises, often shifting alliances from one faction to the next or adopting any number of positions at a single time. Roughly speaking, however, these positions ranged around three distinct poles. Although the SACP stood as the most disciplined ideological bloc within the alliance, emergent discourses of African nationalism held particular sway among former ANC youth leaguers, while older strands of liberalism—although not identified with any particular faction in exile—nevertheless influenced the thought of at least a few leaders. In order to understand the turn towards radio, it is crucial to grasp at least some of the ways in which these constituencies fitted broadcasting into their overall conception of radical change by examining their readings of radio.

As others have observed, the SACP exerted a disproportionate influence over the direction of the entire movement-in-exile, despite their relatively small membership numbers.¹⁷ This influence can be explained in any number of ways, but in the realm of debates over strategy and tactics, their consistent application of Marxist–Leninist theory gave party members an air of assurance, if not actual advantage. Party members derived much of their theoretical understanding of revolution from the classic texts of the Russian Revolution, and we can safely assume that these texts formed one perspective on how to deploy radio in the service of their cause.

Lenin was the first to discuss the potential of mass communication within the context of a stymied revolutionary movement in exile. In *What Is to Be Done?* Lenin reflects on the obstacles facing the stalled revolution in Czarist Russia, focusing largely on the internecine conflicts then preoccupying the geographically dispersed social democratic movement.¹⁸ In this text Lenin prefigures the use of radio for political propaganda and agitation by calling for an ‘All-Russia newspaper’ that could co-ordinate the activities of party members across the vast distances, thus preventing an ideological drift into ‘rustic craftsmanship’.¹⁹ Calling radio ‘a newspaper without paper ... one which could not be suppressed or confiscated ... and was without boundaries’, Lenin later instructed the Bolshevik state to devote enormous sums from the gold fund towards developing massive shortwave radio facilities for both domestic and international audiences.²⁰ Given this massive investment in broadcasting and infrastructure, Bolshevik leaders clearly believed radio could achieve a number of goals. First, radio offered the best opportunity for

transforming the consciousness of the dispersed masses, the vast majority of whom were concealed behind a barrier of illiteracy and isolated in thousands of villages.²¹ Second, radio permitted Bolshevik representatives to participate in an informal international forum which, for a time, was free from the oversight of any governing body or censorship by hostile governments.²² This allowed later Soviet broadcasters to project a certain ideal image of their society onto a world stage while, at the same time, answering their critics from the moderated comfort of this carefully constructed space.²³ Third, in subsequent years, radio offered the Soviets unparalleled access to foreign audiences, which likewise held great potential for forwarding the message of socialist revolution abroad.²⁴ Thousands of individual listeners could receive the content of a broadcast instantaneously, without leaving a physical record. Additionally, the party vanguard could establish a simultaneous 'direct line' with revolutionaries through radio, giving the impression of an unfiltered, contemporaneous presence and assuring at least the image of the unambiguous communication of the 'correct' party line.

Although it is difficult to categorise any exile faction as exclusively and statically 'Africanist' in outlook, when movement iconoclasts looked beyond the Marxist–Leninist model proffered by the SACP, they often based their alternate understandings of revolution on ideas emerging from the anti-colonial struggles being waged in other African nations. However, not all African struggles equally impacted the thought of would-be African nationalist leaders. Among all the independent African nations in which MK cadres trained, or visited, or at least knew about, Algeria seemed to capture and hold the nationalist imagination more than any other.²⁵ Indeed, as Nelson Mandela later remarked in a lengthy passage in his autobiography, 'the situation in Algeria was the closest model to our own.'²⁶ Consequently, when 'Africanist' factions periodically contested the SACP line, they tended to express their differences from Marxist–Leninist doctrine in a language drawn primarily from their understanding of conflicts like the Algerian liberation struggle. Frantz Fanon was the first to study the effect of radio during the Algerian war. In *A Dying Colonialism*, first published in English in 1965, Fanon argues that radio played an integral, transformative role in what he termed 'the essential mutations in the consciousness of the colonized'. He strongly emphasises that the intended effect of radio is at the level of consciousness—radio-listening initiates and adheres individuals into their place within a single struggle.

Although liberalism later became an anathema to many within the ANC and SACP, the openness that typified the Congress Alliance during the 1950s certainly provided at least an exposure to liberal ideas.²⁷ Unlike communists

and Africanists, liberals held a generic belief in a marketplace of ideas, a notion best seen in their emphasis on the value of a free and open press. However weakly this legacy might now be perceived, these precepts did find expression in central and southern Africa during the 1950s, and two examples demonstrate how liberal ideology refracted into radio broadcasting.

From its inception in 1951, until the arrival of the Bantu Service of the SABC in 1960, the Central African Broadcasting Service (CABS) was the only radio service in southern Africa exclusively devoted to an African audience. The creator of CABS, Harry Franklin, persuaded sceptical colonial authorities that a radio service for Africans could better serve the post-war, developmentalist project in Northern Rhodesia by providing a steady intellectual diet of informative public affairs programmes to the emergent African middle class living on the Copperbelt.²⁸ As nationalist politics outstripped visions of federation, another white liberal administrator, Peter Fraenkel, described how the CABS shifted its emphasis from paternalistic guidance to preparations for independence. In Fraenkel's view, the CABS served as a *vox populi* for an African population that was anxious for independence but, in his view, was not yet ready for full political participation.²⁹ Fraenkel and his colleagues hoped to initiate African audiences into western democratic institutions, placing faith in the idea that radio technology might guide their opinions of alternate systems by 'telling it straight'.³⁰

In South Africa, liberals did not use radio to cultivate a moderate African electorate, but rather to register their own complaints about being excluded from power. As Charles Riddle noted, liberals were the first to use clandestine broadcasting within South Africa.³¹ In 1942, English-speaking SABC staff members took to the air, attacking Afrikaner opposition to South African involvement in the Allied war effort. Later, in 1956, a small circle of Liberal Party members took to the airwaves with the first Freedom Radio, a clandestine radio station that operated for six months from a secret locale in Natal. The broadcasts included tirades against the National Party government, used primitive soundscapes to evoke goose-stepping Nazis and concluded each segment 'full of ringing calls for action'.³² It seems that these broadcasts were intended to draw attention to government controls over the media, and to seek redress through the electoral process, rather than incite armed confrontation. In 1960, the authorities responded by replacing SABC medium-wave radio services with a series of short-range FM networks, which could be heard only on new FM band sets. The resulting Broadcast Act replaced wired radio-diffusion projects in the townships with a series of ethnically distinct 'Bantu' services broadcast in the FM band; each attempted to provide complete coverage for their respective African population.

Government officials hoped that if they could not control international broadcasting, they would at least try to drown it out by offering a palatable alternative on a different technology.³³

Exile malaise

For all their paranoia about radio and insurrection, whether real or imagined, in the first years after Sharpeville the South African government had little to fear from either the ANC or SACP. As ANC and SACP members filtered out of South Africa and settled into an uncertain exile, establishing a radio station was not a foremost concern. In fact, most members believed that exile would be a temporary condition—a kind of strategic withdrawal that certainly did not warrant announcing an established presence from abroad.

Instead of announcing their absence, the ANC and SACP remained focused on returning their forces to South Africa. Upon their arrival at the ANC headquarters in Dar es Salaam, most exiles received assignment and then travelled to a variety of locations in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, North Africa, China and Cuba to receive specialised training in ‘military and combat work’.³⁴ Following this sojourn, these cadres then returned to ANC-operated guerrilla camps in the Tanzanian bush to await the call to march homewards. As Ronnie Kasrils remembered, ‘We expected that we would return as a part of a victorious revolutionary army in a couple of years at the most ... not for a moment did we anticipate that we were going into exile for decades.’³⁵ Despite the setbacks witnessed at the Rivonia Trial, initially, a spirit of optimism buoyed hopes among the MK cadres returning to Tanzanian camps from training abroad. For many of these returnees, the Tanzanian camps seemed less a final destination than a waypoint, *en route* to their triumphant return to South Africa.

By 1966 the ANC operated four Tanzanian camps housing a population of approximately 2000 guerrillas.³⁶ A variety of factors conspired to erode morale in these camps, as recruits completed seemingly endless rounds of drill and exercise. First and foremost, a significant stratification developed within the organisation that divided cadres and commanders, and split relatively privileged political staff from the Spartan conditions endured by most military personnel. Although these categories never became totally exclusive, the upper circles of leadership remained closed enough to prompt chronic accusations from the rank-and-file that the exigencies of exile betrayed the democratic roots of the ANC. Confirming this view, Ben Turok noted in a highly critical review of the ANC in exile, directed particularly at the state of the Tanzanian headquarters during the mid-1960s: ‘bossmanship is the rule

of the day and commandism, a feature that is always a danger in an army, has come to stay in our political relations as well.³⁷

The failure of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns laid bare the weaknesses caused by stratification in the external mission, weaknesses that were only partially resolved during the consultative conference held at Morogoro in 1969. The *Strategy and Tactics* document was one significant pillar of the reform efforts introduced at Morogoro. Joe Slovo, then an influential member of the reinvigorated Revolutionary Council, authored the *Strategy and Tactics* document prior to Morogoro.³⁸ In a review of the events preceding the exile, Slovo admitted that the sabotage campaign was too spontaneous and unplanned. Placing the sabotage campaign in historical context, he argued that it resembled ‘the earlier tradition of armed resistance to the entrenchment of the foreigner’. The problem with this kind of activity, Slovo wrote, was that it occurred in a ‘new situation’ in which ‘the art and science of ... armed liberation struggles in the modern epoch needed to be grasped and applied’.³⁹ With almost 10 years of reflection behind him, Slovo attempted to make sense of the current situation in South Africa in the light of more recent conflicts.

Although Slovo made only oblique references to Algeria and Cuba in *Strategy and Tactics*, the lessons of these recent conflicts, nevertheless, weigh heavily on his analysis of the ‘new situation’ in South Africa.⁴⁰ Implicitly comparing South Africa to Cuba and Algeria, Slovo recognised the conspicuous absence of dense forests or remote mountains within South Africa, but suggested that the masses, if properly politicised, could provide MK guerrillas with a reliable alternative rear base in a protracted conflict.⁴¹ Attempting to correct the inadequacies of the sabotage campaign, he also called for a renewed emphasis on building political structures concurrent with renewed ‘educational and agitation work throughout the country to cope with the sophisticated torrent of misleading propaganda and “information” of the enemy which will become more intense as the struggle sharpens’. Along this line, Slovo forewarned that ‘whomever wins the allegiance of the masses wins the struggle’, and consequently ‘it is vital that the revolutionary leadership is nationwide and that it has roots both inside and outside the areas of combat.’⁴² Although Slovo neglected to include the specifics of ‘political mobilization’—a topic more than likely excluded out of his own uncertainty rather than in the name of brevity—it is possible to infer that radio would play a central role in this process. Both nationwide and at the same time inside and outside the country, shortwave radio would play an increasingly important role in attempts to mobilise the masses from exile.⁴³

Because ideas about radio were both literally and figuratively in the air in southern Africa in the late 1960s, it is difficult to locate the precise date

and circumstances surrounding the first broadcasts made by ANC exiles. Most accounts agree that at least by the time of Morogoro in April 1969, the ANC requested and received a 15-minute slot on The Voice of Freedom, a programme broadcast to southern Africa three times a week from the facilities of Radio Tanzania Dar es Salaam (RTD), an external shortwave service of the Tanzanian government.⁴⁴ Although the ANC had issued press releases through the staff of RTD since the early 1960s, the Voice of Freedom broadcasts were the first programmes in which representatives from the organisation appeared on the air, reading scripts prepared exclusively by the ANC's Department of Information and Publicity. Unlike Freedom Radio, the Voice of Freedom programme was not devoted solely to the ANC. It also featured spokesmen from FRELIMO, the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), Zimbabwe African National Union and the National Liberation Movement of Comoro Islands, all eagerly seeking to reach home audiences with their own 15-minute segments on the two-and-a-half-hour programme. The location of the transmission was readily apparent to listeners tuned into RTD, and individuals appearing on the air at least identified themselves as representatives of their respective organisations. In this way, the appearance of ANC representatives on Voice of Freedom was an important public acknowledgement that the external mission survived as a functioning branch of the ANC. Although the ANC never dropped the hopeful fiction that active internal structures survived the crackdown of the early 1960s, the Voice of Freedom served as a crucial reminder of the enduring existence of the organisation, the presence of an active leadership outside South Africa, and thus inferred the possibility of regenerating activity within South Africa to prepare for a liberation war arriving from afar.

Although aware of the potential offered by radio, the ANC nevertheless failed to incorporate radio into a coherent plan for political mobilisation within South Africa from the late 1960s and into the early 1970s. During this period, the development of political structures within South Africa often took second seat to ongoing internecine conflicts within the ANC/SACP alliance. Just as the Morogoro Conference opened the ANC to SACP influence, it also excluded a certain strata of old guard ANC leaders who received most of the blame for past failings.⁴⁵ Although most of this clique remained after the conference, four lost their seats on the National Executive Committee, the highest decision-making body in the ANC, and many received stinging rebukes from communists and *mgwenya* alike. In response, these dissidents criticised the growing influence of communists and increasingly identified themselves as the defenders of an Africanist tradition under threat within the movement.⁴⁶ Amid this growing acrimony, Oliver Tambo attempted to

forestall yet another split within the ANC by offering token positions to the highest-ranking Africanists at a secret 'meeting in the bush' held outside Lusaka, Zambia, in 1971.⁴⁷

Aside from ongoing power struggles occurring within the external mission, ANC operations were also frustrated by the shifting internal politics of host states. In 1970, Julius Nyerere expelled all ANC personnel from Tanzania, save for a handful of representatives in Dar es Salaam. The expulsion was directly related to the trial-in-absentia of Oscar Kambona, the former foreign minister of Tanzania and chairman of the African Liberation Committee of the OAU, who was accused of recruiting exile armies for a coup. Eventually Nyerere permitted the ANC to return MK guerrillas to their camps in Tanzania, but the awkward affair marred relations between the movement and Nyerere, further tilting Tanzanian sympathies towards the PAC. This caused considerable upheaval within exile bureaucracy as members were forced to relocate out of Africa and back again.

Perhaps most importantly, attempts to broadcast the battle to home audiences also suffered from the lack of any battle to broadcast. As Vladimir Shubin, a Soviet handler for the ANC, observed, after nearly 10 years in exile these self-proclaimed liberators 'failed to fire a single shot on South African soil'.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, in the early 1970s military planners attempted a variety of schemes to infiltrate guerrillas back home, the most dramatic of which was an aborted sea landing, dubbed Operation J. Like Wankie and Sipolilo, Operation J was again evidence of the chronic inability of the military leadership to infiltrate trained guerrillas into South Africa. Although ANC representatives continued to project an image of incremental success to international donors, internally, this stagnation was obvious, and took a serious toll on the organisation. Shubin writes that by 1973–1974, 'the number of people in ANC care was much smaller', dropping as low as 250 cadres in the camps in Tanzania, 130 in Zambia and about 100 in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.⁴⁹

In spite of, or perhaps because of, these setbacks, in late 1973 the ANC and SACP announced a new series of broadcasts. The fall issues of *Sechaba* and *African Communist* each carried announcements of an hour-long daily radio programme broadcast on the external service of Radio Zambia.⁵⁰ These announcements of what was called Freedom Radio by *African Communist*, and Radio Freedom by *Sechaba*, listed the frequencies and times of broadcast, and indicated that these would be in 'English, Tswana, Zulu, Sotho, Afrikaans and Xhosa'. The *African Communist* compared the intended effect of Freedom Radio to earlier Radio Zambia broadcasts directed at listeners in South West Africa that 'unexpectedly influenced the outcome of Owambo elections'.

African Communist also noted that ‘freedom fighters are overjoyed at the effectiveness of this new weapon.’ At the same time, *Sechaba* curiously noted that ‘a listener in Sweden picked up our broadcast by chance’ but that ‘early reports from South Africa indicate that the ANC is on the air every day of the week and is spreading among the people in the townships’.⁵¹

From Soweto to the Mkatashinga

The collapse of Portuguese colonialism, coming on the heels of the April 1974 coup that ousted Marcello Caetano, dramatically changed the fortunes of the exile community and opened a new era in radio broadcasting.⁵² Drawing on their alliances with their co-fraternal Marxist liberation movements in exile, the ANC persuaded the new governments in Angola and Mozambique to either allow the organisation to establish guerrilla camps or at least permit transit through their territories.⁵³ For the first time after over a decade in exile, the ANC could finally operate in territories adjacent to South Africa. Unfortunately for those who waited for this moment, just when the geopolitical situation finally permitted the resumption of armed struggle in South Africa, the external mission lacked the strength to immediately exploit this new opportunity. By 1975 the ANC was anaemic. What remained of its guerrilla army was increasingly aged and disillusioned, made even weaker by a dearth of new recruits after Rivonia, while the recent departure of the Gang of Eight marked the most painful split in the leadership since the fracture that had spawned the PAC two decades earlier.

Despite their misplaced attention, the ANC nevertheless sought to immediately capitalise on the groundswell of student protest erupting across South Africa. Perhaps unsurprisingly, radio played a key role in their earliest efforts to appear at the forefront of a dynamic they neither orchestrated nor completely understood. Two days after the shootings, Radio Freedom released a statement over Radio Tanzania condemning the killings and indicating that ‘the violence of the oppressors can only be met and defeated by the revolutionary violence of the African masses.’⁵⁴ Contradicting a broadcast made a few months before, when ANC spokesman Johnston Makhathini cautioned, ‘our struggle is still at a preparatory stage’, an unidentified ANC radio announcer now told South Africans ‘to get ready for the final showdown with the racists’.⁵⁵ Aside from exhorting ‘the people’ to ‘redouble their vigilance’, the broadcast offered listeners no other practical instruction—a silence due in large part to ongoing debates within the leadership over how best to intensify the largely unanticipated unrest.

The period immediately following Soweto marked a critical time for the entire exile community. As rival exile groups watched events unfold from afar, they implicitly understood that the ongoing uprising inside South Africa had suddenly raised the stakes of the struggle for those outside South Africa. This escalation had two clear implications. First, the violence forced international attention on the abysmal conditions faced by most black South Africans living under apartheid, and with this renewed interest came offers of international aid. Second, exiles also realised that their respective organisations needed to superimpose their particular brand of politics over new forms of struggle evolving in South Africa. These two imperatives were interrelated. In order to expand their respective movements, exile leaders needed to convince sympathetic international donors that their organisation was at the vanguard of the protests they claimed to represent.

Western assistance took this form primarily because donors remained constrained by Cold War-era political sensitivities within their respective nations. No matter how abhorrent the apartheid regime appeared to European and North American audiences, the remarkably 'hot' war being fought by Cold War proxies in southern Africa limited the types of support Western donors could offer an ostensibly Marxist-aligned guerrilla movement engaged in an avowedly violent struggle against apartheid. In lieu of direct military aid, the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA), the Dutch development agency NOVIB and later the Dutch anti-apartheid group *Omroep voor Radio Freedom*, all devised creative strategies for aiding what in their view was a just struggle that right-wing critics unfairly tarred as a communist cabal.⁵⁶ Radio became the junction at which the political constraints faced by Western donors intersected with the changing needs of the resurgent ANC. In this scheme, Radio Freedom assumed a dual meaning; it could be portrayed to critics as providing an essentially non-violent 'counter balance' to a censored society, yet it permitted donors to think of themselves as indirectly supporting the military objectives of the ANC.

Perhaps more importantly, the very idea of Radio Freedom—an exile radio service broadcasting from afar to a captive population—held a particular resonance with a certain European idea of the power of electronic mass media as drawn from the Nazi occupation in western Europe, and the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia.⁵⁷ All three episodes had a familiar arc: 'free radios' beamed defiant broadcasts across closed borders or within closed borders to national resistance groups waging their own guerrilla wars against a domineering foe. Within recent memory many European donors could recall moments when radio was perceived as having real power, and these individuals certainly saw parallels between their own experiences and that of southern Africa.⁵⁸

Tor Sellstrom's voluminous history of Swedish assistance to liberation struggles in southern Africa details this partnership in fine resolution. As Sellstrom notes in his chapter on Swedish aid to the ANC, SIDA initially limited its assistance to food, clothing and modest self-reliance projects.⁵⁹ However, on the insistence of Oliver Tambo, SIDA began to push its definition of humanitarian assistance to include more and more 'home activities', such as living expenses for operatives in the frontline and information campaigns targeting South African audiences. This shift began in as early as 1975, when Tambo submitted a detailed proposal for a 'massive information offensive against South Africa' during annual budget discussions with SIDA officials. Describing propaganda efforts as 'absolutely the most important [component]' of the budget, Tambo lamented that it was an area which, in the past, had been given insufficient attention.⁶⁰ In the intervening years this deliberately disguised budget remained modest, but after Soweto, planners first doubled, then tripled the original sums, all the while continuing to 'stretch the concept of humanitarian assistance' to include 'straightforward political work'.⁶¹

Western donor aid enlarged the Department of Information and Publicity into what can be described as a relatively well-funded fief set amidst the constellation of quasi-independent offices and departments that comprised a growing exile bureaucracy. From an existing nucleus of just a few sleepy offices, the Department of Information and Publicity grew into a formal propaganda outfit, splayed across two continents. The process of 're-organizing and radically upgrading the level, scope and effectiveness of information services' included adding a new research committee, later called the Research Division, headquartered in London. In order to provide an outlet for this production, the Department of Information and Publicity also installed a studio for the Radio Freedom unit operating in Lusaka. This studio, sequestered in a remote farmhouse outside Lusaka, contained the basic necessities needed for producing Radio Freedom programmes, each of which were edited remotely, then compiled onto tape and finally hand-delivered to the facilities of Radio Zambia.⁶² SIDA and *Omroep voor Radio Freedom* equipped the studio with expensive electronics, such as tape recorders, mixing boards and microphones, while Swedish Telecommunications Consulting AB (SWEDTEL) and National Broadcasting Company (Radio Netherlands) flew a few fortunate radio personnel to their facilities for advanced technical training.⁶³ By 1980 the ANC built similar portable studios in five additional countries—Zambia, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Angola and Madagascar—with state broadcasting facility in each respective nation granting at least an hour a day to Radio Freedom programmes.

All this expansion occurred as a new generation left South Africa for an uncertain future in exile. As thousands of school-age refugees poured across the border, the ANC faced a serious problem integrating these potential recruits into the existing structures of the external mission. Aside from the sheer size of this exodus, a troubling generational gap existed between the *mgwenya* who had left South Africa in 1961 and the ‘children of Soweto’. This new generation of exiles carried their own language of protest and left a country that was markedly different than the one many older exiles remembered.⁶⁴

How did demographic shifts and generational gaps impact Radio Freedom? Depending on educational background, demonstrable ability, familial connections or political allegiance, one recruit could be directed to dig trenches in an isolated guerrilla camp in Angola, while another could be sent to study political science at a prestigious Western university. Those sent to work for Radio Freedom could, therefore, consider themselves relatively fortunate, given that radio staff received training either in communist agitprop in Eastern bloc universities or technical training in Western broadcasting houses.⁶⁵ Within the Department of Information and Publicity itself, Radio Freedom staff members occupied a relatively privileged position in the bureaucratic hierarchy in their immediate location, remaining connected to the wider world of events, privy to advanced knowledge of internal debates and decisions, while a select few actively shaped outside perceptions of the movement as reproduced in broadcasts. Above all else, radio work demanded that cadres have an understanding of politics, an aptitude for communication as well as the ability to interpret and synthesise information. Although incoming recruits did not always meet these expectations, it is safe to assume that the leadership made every effort to draw radio personnel from among the most educated, articulate or at least well-connected of the ‘Soweto generation’.⁶⁶

Above the level of general staff, the Department of Information and Publicity, and Radio Freedom in particular, served as important ‘proving grounds’ for a new generation of elite, Western-educated intellectuals. From the early 1970s, until his death in 1978, Duma Nokwe assumed most responsibility for Radio Freedom in Zambia. He appeared regularly on the air, and helped ‘to produce ANC radio announcers and radio journalists’.⁶⁷ However, following Nokwe’s death, Oliver Tambo placed Thabo Mbeki at the helm of the Department of Information and Publicity, making him the *de facto* chief of Radio Freedom as well.⁶⁸ Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to sketch the career path of this ‘liberation aristocrat’,⁶⁹ suffice it to say that Mbeki, articulate, Western-educated and with the cachet afforded by a ‘royal’ movement pedigree — together with Pallo Jordan, his counterpart in the Research Division

of DIP—increasingly served as the youthful face of a movement-in-exile, eager to place itself ahead of an equally youthful internal protest movement.⁷⁰

While this new leadership took control of the Department of Information and Publicity, the Revolutionary Council began yet another comprehensive strategic review as it planned for a renewed military campaign. Drawing from lessons learned from meetings with the Vietnamese, the Revolutionary Council produced *The Green Book* in August 1979. Borrowing from Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Green Book* introduced a concept of warfare in which victory is not measured strictly in military terms, but rather in the number of spectacular attacks calculated to have a political effect.⁷¹ This ‘holistic’ approach relied on clearly articulated slogans and phrases reinforced by propaganda of the deed, the penultimate goal being a ‘people’s war’ led by the vanguard guerrilla army.⁷²

In the absence of any obvious aboveground counterpart in the years prior to the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF), Radio Freedom played a critical role in this new era of armed propaganda. Beginning with the detonation of oil storage tanks at the Sasolburg refinery complex in June 1980, MK guerrillas attacked a number of military and economic installations in rapid succession—marking their first successful sabotage campaign within South Africa in nearly 20 years. And while Radio Freedom made ample mention of large-scale attacks such as the SASOL bombing, these same broadcasts also reported smaller, less conspicuous operations—all in an effort to counteract the effect of government censorship and give the overall impression of a nearly continuous assault.⁷³

While the ANC attempted to escalate guerrilla activity within South Africa, the exile organisation strained to cope with a series of counter-reprisals. In early 1981, the chance discovery of a spy ring in Lusaka uncovered the identity of several government agents secretly working in the Angolan guerrilla camps.⁷⁴ Adding to an already tense situation, South African agents succeeded in assassinating several leading figures in the ANC and SACP. Finally, in December 1982, Botswana police, acting on a tip-off from an informant, arrested MK Commander, Joe Modise, and Head of Ordinance, Cassius Make, as they waited to deliver military plans to internal organisers.⁷⁵ The combined effect of infiltration, assassination and capture effectively precluded the large-scale infiltration then dubbed the ‘People’s War’, which military planners had tentatively scheduled for mid-1983. As Radio Freedom continued to proclaim bombing after bombing, and called on listeners to ‘join the revolutionary stream led by the ANC that will sweep away fascism and aggression from Southern Africa’, the rank-and-file stationed in the Angolan camps began to clamour for a mass deployment that never seemed to arrive.⁷⁶

Amid this atmosphere of heightened suspicion between elites and growing impatience among the rank-and-file, the National Executive Committee (NEC) granted an unusual degree of latitude to National Intelligence and Security, an internal security department some called by the name Mbokodo, and others by the abbreviation Nat.⁷⁷ Although Mbokodo operated throughout exile structures in African host states, it enjoyed a particularly free hand in Angola, where the leadership felt infiltration was most damaging, and the potential for unrest most acute. One camp cadre suggested Mbokodo could single out almost any individual they deemed suspicious, interrogating some, torturing others and imprisoning a few at the detention facility known as Quadro.⁷⁸ While the threat from infiltrators was real, the arbitrary nature of some arrests suggests that at least a few Mbokodo agents also manipulated the paranoia to settle scores, fabricated accusations for personal advancement or simply attempted to suppress dissenting voices.

The Department of Information and Publicity—operating a prominent Radio Freedom unit in Luanda—was not immune from Mbokodo. As Mbokodo comrades surveyed the structures in Angola for infiltrators, they cast a particularly wary eye on the Department of Information and Publicity—led by a conspicuous coterie of Western-educated ‘aristocrats’ who cultivated exclusive ties with western European aid agencies and support groups. The arrest of Pallo Jordan, then head of a research unit supporting propaganda efforts in Luanda, casts these internal struggles into high relief. In June 1983, Peter Boroko, the deputy head of the Mbokodo in Angola, ordered his men to arrest Jordan and to hold him for questioning at Quatro.⁷⁹ In a statement made to a later commission of inquiry into human rights abuses, an anonymous member of this security detail gave a particularly candid account of the reasons behind Jordan’s arrest. This source revealed that Mbokodo specifically targeted Jordan because he warned the Department of Information and Publicity staff to avoid an Mbokodo informant working within the department, while openly ridiculing security staff as *amapolisa*.⁸⁰ For his impolitic remarks, Mbokodo then imprisoned Jordan without any formal charge, forced him to write and then rewrite his biography and subjected him to a series of humiliating interrogations. During one particularly tense interrogation session, this source recalled that another unnamed agent remarked, ‘*eli intellectual laseMerika liijwayela kabi*’ which means ‘this American-trained intellectual is uppity’.⁸¹ This unnamed officer interpreted this threat as indicative of the wider ideological rift that divided Western-educated intellectual elites from the East German-trained security chiefs, with junior Mbokodo staff merely parroting the anti-Western gestures of their superiors.⁸² Although ideology certainly was the language these ‘comrades’ used to express displeasure with

Jordan and others like him, this episode also shows how ANC elites were perceived by less advantaged cadres—all eager to demonstrate the extent of their newfound authority by transgressing the bounds of rank and privilege. Although it is possible that the ‘comrades’ harboured some special dislike for Jordan in particular, it is more likely that his inopportune comments merely served as a good excuse to send a message to anyone who might contemplate crossing the security service or their allies. After six weeks in detention Mbokodo released Jordan without any formal charge.

By early 1983, the ongoing ‘armed propaganda’ campaign raised the expectations of MK cadres while increased government surveillance simultaneously inhibited the ANC’s ability to infiltrate guerrillas into South Africa.⁸³ Echoing the situation preceding the Wankie Campaign, the Politico-Military Council (PMC) decided to preoccupy the increasingly restless rank-and-file by organising a joint operation with their Angolan hosts.⁸⁴ Beginning in mid-1983, MK detachments joined The People’s Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA) units in the Luta Contra Bandidos (LCB), a counter-insurgency operation designed to push UNITA rebels from Malanje Province back to their strongholds in southern Angola.⁸⁵ Casualties suffered during this campaign devastated morale. By January 1984, detachments occupying the towns of Kangandala and Caculama mutinied—sparking an insurrection that enveloped nearly 90 per cent of the army in Angola.

This mutiny, later known as the Mkatashinga, the Kimbundu word for ‘burden’, provides a number of suggestive hints about perceptions of radio among the rank-and-file in MK. At the behest of MK Commissar Chris Hani, mutineers elected a Committee of Ten to relay their demands to the leadership. Of the 10 elected members, three worked for the eight-person Radio Freedom unit operating in Luanda.⁸⁶ Zaba Maledza was the chief propaganda officer in Angola, while Kate Mhlongo and Grace Motaung enjoyed minor celebrity among camp cadres who listened to their segments on Radio Freedom, relayed over Radio Luanda.⁸⁷ After caucusing with mutineers, Maledza, as leader of the Committee of Ten, submitted three demands to the ANC leadership: first, the dissolution of the security department; second, an inquiry into the stalled armed struggle; and third, a conference at which a new leadership could be democratically elected. The Committee of Ten also invited the remainder of the Radio Freedom staff to the camp.

The ANC leadership did not meet any of these demands. Instead, in the early hours of 7 February 1984, MK Commander Joe Modise attempted to take Viana with the help of an armoured column of the Angolan Presidential Guard.⁸⁸ At the same time a squad of security staff attempted to disarm the Radio Freedom staff at their flat in Luanda. In Viana, mutineers repelled Modise,

killing several Angolan soldiers. Meanwhile at the flat in Luanda, Mbokodo agents failed to disarm the Radio Freedom staff peacefully and killed all three occupants in the ensuing *mêlée*.⁸⁹ After the failed raid at Viana, Chris Hani addressed the entire camp and convinced all mutineers to surrender their arms without further bloodshed.⁹⁰ After the surrender, Mbokodo took the Committee of Ten into custody, transferring a few to Angolan prisons in Luanda, while holding others in their own detention camps. In March 1984, Maledza died in detention, allegedly hanging himself in his cell. While Mhlongo and Motaung were later seen at a prison hospital receiving treatment for injuries suffered during interrogation.⁹¹ In the wake of the Mkatashinga, six of the eight staff members of Radio Freedom Luanda were directly implicated in the mutiny, with four of the six dead, and the remaining two imprisoned by the Mbokodo.⁹²

What can be said about the prominence of Radio Freedom staff members in the Mkatashinga? What kinds of conclusions about radio can be drawn from this agonising episode in the history of exile? Before drawing any conclusions, it is important to note the political context in which the details of the Mkatashinga first came to light. In February 1991, while the ANC and the National Party government negotiated the terms of the transition to democracy, several exiles publicly commented on their treatment in Angola.⁹³ After some hesitation, the ANC acknowledged the abuses and created two commissions of inquiry to investigate the charges and determine restitution. Critics regarded both commissions as biased: chaired by ANC members themselves or by individuals with close ties to the organisation. On the eve of the first elections, yet another exile, Mwezi Twala, then associated with the Inkatha Freedom Party, published an exposé of his imprisonment at Quatro.⁹⁴ Arguably, what can be known of this period in exile history must be carefully extracted from the highly politicised context in which this history was first revealed.

Despite this caution, several aspects of the Mkatashinga cut across these widely varied accounts and conflicting agendas. The election of Radio Freedom personalities by mutineers suggests that cadres perceived radio in a way that was unanticipated by various factions in the ANC leadership. For whatever revolutionary theorists thought about the impact of radio on home audiences, rank-and-file guerrillas clearly engaged with radio in their own way, eventually placing their fate in the hands of the broadcasters they elected to the Committee of Ten. Furthermore, as the stand-off entered its final stages, it is particularly telling that mutineers called upon the remaining Radio Freedom staff to visit Viana, and that security forces applied lethal force to prevent these journalists from leaving Luanda.

A few weeks after the events at Viana, ANC investigators conducted interviews with detainees and compiled these findings into a detailed report

on the causes of the uprising. This committee concluded that radio had indeed figured prominently in the causes of the uprising, but instead of directing their attention to perceptions of Radio Freedom, they pointed to Radio South Africa, and 'Radio Potato', as sources of corrupting misinformation.⁹⁵ Describing the political consciousness of the cadres as 'low' and suggesting that mutineers were easily 'influenced and manipulated' by enemy broadcasts and rumour campaigns, the authors portrayed rank-and-file mutineers as being naïve dupes, and swept aside their legitimate grievances and strategies. If anything, the demands made by mutineers—reform of security structures, a return to democratic leadership, a refocus on the armed struggle—all suggest that political consciousness within the camps was particularly high, but it was the kind of idealism that established authorities found too inconvenient or too threatening to act upon.

Although the history of Radio Freedom does not end with the Mkatashinga, the direction of the struggle changed dramatically after the Vaal Triangle uprising of 1984, an event which ushered in a largely uninterrupted period of unrest that precipitated the 'talks about talks'. Radio Freedom broadcasts continued until the end of these negotiations, so radio spanned the entire exile period—from the dark days preceding the Rivonia raid to the democratic elections in 1994. What can one make of the various incarnations of Freedom Radio? Arguably, their greatest significance lies in what they tell us about certain continuities within the exile experience. Exiles were constantly anxious about their connection to home, and their preoccupation with radio broadcasting is evidence of this anxiety. While it remains to be seen how audiences engaged with these broadcasts, one thing is certain: the absence of sustained contact between the exile community and the emergent protest movement within South Africa elevated radio as a strategy for mobilising a distant constituency.

Notes

- 1 I have not found any systematic studies of audience response conducted by the external mission of the ANC. If radio listeners corresponded with the external mission, none of their letters found their way into the major archival collections on the ANC in exile. Nor does Radio Freedom figure prominently in testimonies of activists within South Africa. Ascertaining audience reactions and writing a true social history of radio in South Africa will have to await a more comprehensive collection of oral histories from ordinary listeners.
- 2 Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London: Longman, 1983), 233.
- 3 Ronnie Kasrils, *Ronnie, Armed and Dangerous* (Cape Town: Mayibuye Books, 1998), 41; Lodge, *Black Politics*; Vladimir Shubin, *ANC: The View from Moscow*

- (Cape Town: Mayibuye, 1999); Ben Turok, *Nothing but the Truth* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2003); Ray Mhlaba, narrated to Thembeke Mufamadi, *Raymond Mhlaba's Personal Memoirs* (Pretoria: HSRC, 2001); Baruch Hirson, *Revolutions in My Life* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995); Elinor Sisulu, *In Our Lifetime* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002); Martin Legassick, *The Armed Struggle in South Africa: Consequences of a Strategy Debate* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2003).
- 4 Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 44–46; Rusty Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting* (London: Viking, 1999), 226–252.
 - 5 Turok, *Nothing but the Truth*, 277–287.
 - 6 Radio Diaries, www.radiodiaries.org/mandela/mstories.html#2
 - 7 Lodge, *Black Politics*, 239; Howard Barrell, *MK; The ANC's Armed Struggle* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 18.
 - 8 Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 252, 253.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, 229–231.
 - 10 Unfortunately there are no transcriptions of Kathrada's statements.
 - 11 'Broadcast on ANC Radio by W.M. Sisulu', <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/ug/rf630626.html>
 - 12 Curiously the *New York Times* printed a paragraph on the broadcast a week later. 'Freedom Radio in Africa', *New York Times*, 2 July 1963, 58.
 - 13 Interview with Denis Goldberg by Wolfie Kodesh, Mayibuye Centre Archives.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, Bernstein, *Memory*, 311.
 - 15 N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Little Brown, 1995), 350–378.
 - 16 L. Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004), 253–302.
 - 17 Ellis, 54–59; Turok, *Nothing but the Truth*, 215–229; S. Thomas, *The Diplomacy of Liberation* (London: Taurus, 1996), 149–172.
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- 27 F. Meli, *South Africa Belongs to Us* (London: James Currey, 1988), 19, 85, 112; Lodge, *Black Politics*, 87, 211.
- 28 P. Fraenkel, *No Fixed Abode: A Jewish Odyssey to Africa* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2005), 54.
- 29 Ibid., 122.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 C. Riddle, 'This is Freedom Radio, (Again and again and again ...)', *Rhodes University Journalism Review*, December 1994, Vol. 9, 17.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 R. Tomaselli, 65, 66; somewhat predictably, these efforts to shape African audiences in concordance with state policies contained multiple contradictions. See Liz Gunner, 'Wrestling with the present, beckoning to the past: Contemporary Zulu radio drama', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, June 2000.
- 34 Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 54.
- 35 Ibid., 41.
- 36 S. Ellis & T. Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 47.
- 37 Turok, *Nothing but the Truth*, 289.
- 38 Slovo penned the *Strategy and Tactics* document under the *nom de guerre*, Sol Dubula.
- 39 *Strategy and Tactics*, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/stratact.html>
- 40 Cf. Martin Legassick, *Armed Struggle*.
- 41 Ibid., 2.
- 42 *Strategy and Tactics*: <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/stratact.html>
- 43 As Legassick notes, SACP strategists never knew which foot to put forward—whether political mobilisation should precede military action, or vice versa. A similar vacillation is reflected in Howard Barrell's dissertation 'Conscripts to their age; African National Congress operational strategy 1976–1986'. DPhil dissertation, Oxford University, 1993.
- 44 S. Head, *Broadcasting in Africa* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974) 223; Hale, *Radio Power*, 98. Although it is unclear which organisation took to the airwaves first, the ANC was periodically accompanied by their rival, the PAC, which also received a similar segment on Voice of Freedom.
- 45 Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades*, 63.
- 46 Ellis & Sechaba suggest that many of these so-called 'Africanists' had belonged to the SACP at one time, suggesting that ideology was a mere cover for more personal vendettas: *Comrades*, 54–56.
- 47 Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades*, 76
- 48 Shubin, *ANC*, 124.
- 49 Ibid.

- 50 Radio Freedom, *Sechaba*, September 1973; Freedom Radio, *African Communist*, Fourth Quarter, 55 (1973), 18.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades*, 80–85; Hirson, *Revolutions*, 34.
- 53 The ANC occupied the South African embassy in Luanda, broadcast over Radio Luanda and occupied several training camps in the north-eastern provinces of Angola.
- 54 FBIS, MEA E7, 18 June 1976.
- 55 BBC, ME/5146/B/1, 28 February 76, FBIS, MEA 18 June 76, E7.
- 56 T. Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Uppsala; Nordic Africa institute, 2002), 23–39, 592–608; ‘Dutch opposition to apartheid: Facts and fallacies’, Karel Roskam Collection, *Mayibuye Centre Archives*.
- 57 Sellstrom, ‘Dutch opposition to apartheid’.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Sellstrom, *Sweden and National Liberation*, 592–596.
- 60 Ibid., 601.
- 61 Ibid., 602.
- 62 Telephone interview with author: Dan Kahn, 26 August 2005; Bill Nowlin, 22 August 2005.
- 63 ‘Omroep voor Radio Freedom’, *Radio Freedom*, 1988, Karel Roskam Collection, *Mayibuye Centre Archives*.
- 64 Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 125.
- 65 Roskam Collection, *Mayibuye Centre Archives*.
- 66 Evidence suggests that promotions within the radio staff were often guided by connections rather than ability. Dumisani Charlton Oupa Khosa, a ‘Soweto generation’ Radio Freedom staff member, and speechwriter for Oliver Tambo, revealed in a statement to the Motsuenyane Commission investigating human rights abuses in the Angolan camps that there ‘was a need for better training programmes’, and that ‘nepotism was becoming a demoralizing factor in the organization’. Khosa mentioned all three problems at an ANC meeting in March 1981, and later found himself under suspicion, eventually spending four years in detention at Quatro: Motsuenyane Commission, 70.
- 67 ‘Duma Nokwe, Honourable son of Africa’, *Sechaba*, 12 (1978), 31–41.
- 68 According to Mark Gevisser, Thabo Mbeki also served as an assistant to Nokwe at some point in the 1960s. ‘The Thabo Mbeki story’, *The Sunday Times*, 16 May 1999.
- 69 Jacobs et al., 1–22.
- 70 Mark Gevisser, ‘The bag carrier’, *The Sunday Times*, 6 June 1999.
- 71 Vo Nguyen Giap, *How We Won the War* (Philadelphia: Recon Publications, 1976), 43–54.

- 72 Although Howard Barrell and others describe this fortuitous meeting as a 'Damascene conversion'. Giap did not convert as much as remind and elaborate.
- 73 FBIS 10 January 82, U3, FBIS 16 September 83, U5.
- 74 Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades*, 116–121.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 119.
- 76 BBC, 20 October 1983, ME/7469/B/1.
- 77 isiXhosa for grinding stone; 'Nat' is a fairly obvious play on words.
- 78 Trehwela, <http://www.revolutionary-history.co.uk/supplem/Hirson/Quatro.html>.
- 79 S. Ellis, 'Mbokodo: Security in the ANC camps, 1961–1990', *African Affairs*, 93, 371 (April 1994), 279–298.
- 80 isiXhosa for police, interpreted here as an unwelcome comparison between the ANC security personnel and the South African police. In an interview in 1992, Chris Hani commented that 'Cde Jordan ... apparently has a very big mouth [laughs]' and suggested the reason for his arrest was that 'he said something derogatory about the security department, about its methods—he had criticized it openly with some other people', *Work in Progress*, June 1992.
- 81 Jobodwana Report as cited in S. Ellis, 'Mbokodo; Security in the ANC camps, 1961–1990', *African Affairs*, 93, 371 (April 1994), 279–298.
- 82 This description of the demographics of Mbokodo is also supported by other statements made by Quatro detainees. See Paul Trehwela, 'Inside Quatro', *Searchlight South Africa*, 5, July 1990: <http://www.revolutionary-history.co.uk/supplem/Hirson/Quatro.html>.
- 83 Barrell, *MK*, 54, 55.
- 84 As a token gesture toward reform in January 1983, the NEC reorganised the Revolutionary Council into the Politico-Military Council or PMC. This reorganisation opened a few more seats on the highest military council, but included many of the same members of its predecessor body. Barrell, *MK*, 49; Ellis & Sechaba, *Comrades*, 127–128.
- 85 Mwezi Twala & Ed Bernard, *Mbokodo: Inside MK—A Soldier's Story* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1994), 57.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 62.
- 87 After brief imprisonment in Quatro in 1980/1981, Maledza returned to his post at Radio Freedom 'where his unwavering opposition to men like Piliso and Modise, and clarity of mind earned him the respect of both friends and foes within the ANC ... ': <http://www.revolutionary-history.co.uk/supplem/Hirson/Quatro.html>.
- 88 Stuart Commission Report. Twala & Bernard, *Mbokodo*, 64, 65.
- 89 Stuart Commission Report.
- 90 'Hani opens up', *Work in Progress*, June 1992.

- 91 Twala & Bernard, *Mbokodo*, 73; Ellis, 'Mbokodo', 132–134.
- 92 Stuart Commission and Moetsuenyane Commission Reports.
- 93 Ellis, 'Mbokodo', 280.
- 94 Twala & Bernard.
- 95 Stuart Commission Report. 'Radio potato' was the term used by exiles for gossip or rumour between camps.

CHAPTER 6

THE INTERSECTION OF VIOLENT AND NON-VIOLENT STRATEGIES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBERATION STRUGGLE

Janet Cherry¹

The sequence of events leading to liberation in South Africa is well understood. What is less well understood, and still a source of contention, are the strategies of the liberation movement and the effectiveness of these strategies. This chapter re-examines the strategies of the South African liberation movement, providing a critique of recent analyses from the 'strategic non-violence' and 'people's war' perspectives. Academic analyses of the South African liberation struggle focus on empirical evidence which shows the co-existence of factors that resulted in a negotiated transition to democracy. Among these are the violent and non-violent strategies adopted by the liberation movement. Analysts either describe these strategies as being complementary and running in parallel, or as both being part of a single strategy. Different perspectives give different emphasis to the contribution and effectiveness of either violent or non-violent strategies.

Through a discussion of how these strategies were implemented at a grassroots level by ordinary activists, this chapter comes to the conclusion that both of the above views are flawed. There was a lack of strategic coherence. The integration of both violent and non-violent tactics at grassroots level combined with strategic flexibility in response to a range of pressures resulted in an outcome that was generally positive. However, the costs to the movement and to the people of South Africa could have been lower had a disciplined non-violent strategy been systematically implemented.

Agency and strategy

When apartheid rule ended in South Africa in 1994, it was hailed as a miracle by some, because of the avoidance of a bloody race war, the prevalence of a

negotiated settlement, and the consolidation of a unitary and democratic state. Liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique, not to mention those further afield, are rightly envious of the success of this struggle: only about 30 000 lives lost; minimum impact on infrastructure; a legitimate government and a strong economy at the end of it all.

Who can claim credit for this? Was it a lucky stroke of history, or can it be attributed to the strategy of the liberation movement? The empirical evidence of the chain of events is not under scrutiny here, but, rather, the human agency involved in the formulation of strategy by the liberation movements. For people in, say, Western Sahara or Palestine, whose liberation movements have not been so successful, is there anything to be learned from South Africa?

Underlying the argument presented below is Marx's famous assertion that 'men make their own history ... but they do not make it in circumstances of their own choosing'. It is human agency that is the concern of this chapter, not the structural conditions of the world economy, or the end of the Cold War in 1989. Neither is it the influence of 'great individuals' on history, but it is the movements—the social movements and liberation movements through which millions of ordinary people become actors in history—that is the concern of this chapter.

As Peter Ackerman has argued, in popular (non-violent) struggles against authoritarian regimes, skills can be mobilised to overcome even the harshest of conditions:

We have to confront the reality that civil resistance is not only a political and social phenomenon operating under various conditions. It is also a course of human action taken by tens and hundreds of thousands of people, whose skills in engaging in these conflicts have a substantial impact on the outcomes.²

This view was reflected on 8 February 2010, when South African President Jacob Zuma, in a speech commemorating the release of Mandela from prison, stated that it was 'the intensity and depth of the struggle' that brought about Mandela's release and the subsequent negotiated transition, rather than the negotiations of elites.³ Relevant for the argument below is that some news reports quoted President Zuma as saying 'armed struggle'. Consistent with such arguments is the view that the strategic thinking and planning of the movement is of paramount importance. If this is the case, what was the strategy in South Africa? Can it be considered to have been successful and, if so, why?

Tom Lodge, acknowledged academic authority on liberation struggle politics in South Africa, argues that violent and non-violent methods of struggle in South Africa were complementary.⁴ This argument is the accepted analysis of

most political analysts and historians, and conforms to the view of intellectuals within the ruling African National Congress. In this view, the liberation movement's strategies of armed struggle and mass mobilisation complemented one another to bring pressure to bear effectively on the apartheid regime. Together with international isolation and an underground network, which kept the other three in synch (at least in theory), these 'four pillars' of the ANC strategy combined to force the regime to the negotiating table.

There is still debate around the relative importance or effectiveness of each one of these 'pillars'. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu claimed that it was largely through non-violent resistance that apartheid was overthrown. Former Military Intelligence Colonel Lourens du Plessis stated that the 'armed struggle came to nothing. It was mass action and international pressure that brought about change.'⁵ Former security police analysts and underground ANC members were in agreement that MK did not have the military capacity to seize state power, given the overwhelming strength of the apartheid state's security apparatus. Even so, ANC leaders today, as well as many historians and analysts, continue to emphasise the armed struggle as the decisive strategy in bringing about liberation. While more critical analysts of the South African liberation movement have argued convincingly that the armed struggle was ineffective in military terms,⁶ the dominant analysis is that the armed struggle played an important role in mobilising and motivating people. While it is popular nowadays to claim, within the ANC, that 'negotiations were always an option' and that the limitations of armed struggle were accepted, there are many who did not accept that kind of thinking in the course of the struggle. It will be argued that the militarism of the ANC 'on the ground' was an important determinant both of strategy and of the outcome of the struggle.

Whatever the importance or weight of the contribution allocated to the armed struggle in these analyses, they do not challenge the view of the armed struggle as being complementary to other forms of resistance. The argument here is not about the measurement of effectiveness or the weighting given to each strategy. Rather, it is about strategic coherence. Contemporaneity or simultaneity does not mean complementarity; nor does it mean strategic coherence. And four pillars standing side by side do not automatically amount to a coherent strategy.

In sharp contrast to the popular perception of the armed struggle in South Africa, recent studies of non-violent movements argue that it was the non-violent strategies of the mass movement that were decisive in bringing about the transition to democracy.⁷ In contrast to the conventional analyses that the armed struggle was both positive and necessary, they come to the conclusion that the armed struggle was ineffective at best and

counterproductive at worst. The problem with these ‘non-violent strategy’ analyses of the South African struggle is that one could easily be led to believe that there were two parallel resistance movements: one engaged in armed struggle the other adopting the classic Gandhian methods of non-co-operation to put pressure on the apartheid state. Now empirically, at least superficially, there is no problem here: the different strategies were used simultaneously over many decades. The problem is that historians of the liberation struggle have tended to describe these events and processes of struggle without looking at the relationship between the different strategies involved—in other words, without looking at the liberation struggle strategically in retrospect. This chapter attempts to formulate an argument which does precisely this.

In the literature on strategic non-violence one finds the argument that violent strategies can never be complementary to non-violent strategies: that violence is always strategically a detraction or, in activist language, a ‘contaminant’ of non-violent struggles. It is always costly, and it is sometimes counterproductive or even contradictory. It is obvious that a strategy cannot be both complementary and a contaminant. However, where the strategy is from the outset a military one (which embraces violence) it is not correct to talk about violence as being a contaminant. This term can apply only in a situation in which the overall strategy is non-violent, and violence is something ‘smaller’ that ‘poisons’ the overall strategy. In a case such as South Africa, it is more appropriate to assess whether the strategies employed were complementary or contradictory. This argument will be explored through an examination of the strategies employed by the liberation movement in the Eastern Cape in the 1980s—both violent and non-violent strategies—and an examination of the relation between these strategies; their intersection with one another; their impact on each other, where they did intersect; and, ultimately, whether they were complementary or contradictory.

South African liberation movement strategy in the 1980s

Taking as a starting point the ANC’s ‘four pillar’ approach to the liberation struggle, which embraced both armed struggle and mass mobilisation, what was the relation between the two? Greg Houston, writing in the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) volume on the liberation struggle in the 1980s, has summarised the phases in the armed struggle conducted by Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC. During the phase of armed propaganda until 1982, armed actions were ‘aimed at mobilizing the population to participate in the struggle’ and included attacks on symbolic economic and government installations, as well as security force members.

The second phase, from 1983 to 1985, saw a shift to 'preparing for a people's war, with the emphasis on creating an armed presence inside the country'. The third phase, from mid-1985 to 1989, saw 'the ANC's military policy shift(ed) from preparing for a protracted struggle to preparing for insurrection. MK was now charged with building its forces inside the country, ensuring that they linked up with the popular struggles inside the country, and drawing the masses into the people's war.'⁸

As Houston writes, the ANC underground engaged in mass mobilisation and building of organisation as a means towards laying the basis for the strategy of protracted people's war and/or insurrection. This was very successfully done—in fact, the mass movement soon went way beyond the ANC's strategic thinking, and the ANC in exile, by the mid-1980s, could not respond adequately. The underground network was weak, and in practice the internal leadership took the initiative, while waiting for some 'grand strategy' to unfold.

Those who have analysed the armed struggle critically argue convincingly that the military success of MK was extremely limited and the rate of attrition was very high.⁹ Even after the success of the mass uprising of 1984–1986, where there were some quasi-military victories as are illustrated below, through the 'taking of power' in certain areas of certain townships, these victories were geographically limited and temporal. By 1987 the state had reasserted control over the townships through violence. Despite this failure to respond to the 'insurrectionary moment', the ANC's strategy remained doggedly militaristic, and its strategy remained: escalate the armed struggle. The latter half of the 1980s saw a steady escalation in armed attacks and less restraint in the choice of targets, as frustrated MK units engaged in attacks on restaurants and other civilian targets. While remaining considerably more restrained and disciplined than most armed insurgents, this escalation of armed actions could not change the balance of power.

McKinley argues that the ANC's 1985 Kabwe conference rejected the idea of a negotiated settlement with the apartheid state and 'confirmed the shift to people's war strategy' with victory envisaged through the seizure of power. This seizure of power would occur through the arming of the masses in preparation for insurrection. While Oliver Tambo is credited with having an understanding of forcing the regime to the negotiating table, McKinley notes the crucial difference between some elements of the leadership (such as O.R. Tambo) and 'the masses' in strategic understanding.¹⁰ He agrees with Zunes and others, who argue that MK did have an important psychological impact but was constrained by its military weakness.¹¹

Turning to the major organisational structure of mass mobilisation against apartheid, the United Democratic Front (UDF), Jeremy Seekings has argued

that in the critical 1987–1988 period the UDF also lacked a viable strategy for effecting political change. Despite its enormous effectiveness in mass mobilisation, by the end of 1985 the UDF's lack of an overall strategic vision was apparent. The UDF deferred to its liberation movement leadership for strategic direction, but the ANC 'had no convincing answer'.¹² The UDF did not have a coherent non-violent strategy for challenging the apartheid state, and was correctly understood by the security forces as 'a front organisation created by a revolutionary movement for the purpose of creating legitimacy for the struggle'. As such, the UDF was 'never violent—this is not the purpose of a front organisation; the purpose is to "create a footprint" and get the message of the movement across'.¹³ Having achieved this with spectacular effectiveness—legitimising the liberation movement while delegitimising apartheid institutions—the UDF suffered from paralysing repression. It spent the following three years in 'rebuilding organisation, strengthening alliances, mobilizing among white elites', and while 'all might help ... none could break the stalemate between anti-apartheid groups and the apartheid state'.¹⁴ There was thus, in effect, a kind of strategic 'holding operation' until the 'doves' in the leadership on both sides reached an accommodation.

Zunes's claim that within the ANC there was a 'clear consensus by early 1980s that liberation had to be achieved through largely nonviolent means' is thus inaccurate. While he is correct that the ANC strategy was multi-faceted, included mass resistance and gave 'primacy to the political', it was not the case that the armed struggle was understood as a 'means of providing moral support for the unarmed resistance, rather than what many had anticipated as an unarmed resistance being used primarily to support the armed struggle'.¹⁵ Moreover, mass mobilisation was understood strategically in terms of providing the organisational base for conducting warfare, not in terms of withdrawing consent from the apartheid state, as non-violent theorists would argue.

Schock argues that while violence accompanied what he defines as a 'nonviolent insurrection', 'violent challenges were by themselves unable to topple the regimes, and it was methods of nonviolent action rather than violence that provided the most serious challenges to the regimes and culminated in democratic transitions'.¹⁶ According to this argument, in the 1980s the 'strategic implementation of methods of nonviolent action resulted in undermining of state power, exacerbation of elite divisions, cultivation of third party support and the demise of the apartheid system by end of the 1980s'. Now while it can be argued that this was the *de facto* result of the implementation of these tactics, the strategic objective was by no means clear: 'render the townships ungovernable' was a slogan rather than a strategy. Once it had been achieved at local or tactical level, there was no idea of how to

integrate this into a national strategy—military or otherwise—for what we now call regime change.

Schock agrees with those who stress that the ANC had no military success, and argues that it had ‘only limited tactical influence on internal protestors’.¹⁷ Although the ANC encouraged violent insurrection, it didn’t have the capacity for direction and co-ordination of the internal uprising. He thus relegates the ANC to a symbolic role, though noting that having no capacity for armed overthrow of the state, it started giving assistance to the internal uprising. His conclusion is that ‘contrary to a typical armed insurgency where the civilian populace is relegated to a supporting role for armed insurgents, the struggle in SA can more accurately be described as an unarmed insurrection in which civilians were the main actors and they were supported by the symbolic resistance of the ANC’.¹⁸

This is not only not how the ANC saw it, but is empirically inaccurate, as will be seen in the analysis of the intersection of violent and non-violent tactics below. In sharp contrast to Schock’s and Zunes’s analyses, a recent study by Anthea Jeffery has emphasised the complementarity of the strategies of mass mobilisation and armed struggle. She argues that all UDF campaigns and political actions, including non-violent tactics such as stay-aways, boycotts and strikes, were part of the ANC strategy of people’s war, with the implication being that they cannot be separated out as a distinct non-violent strategy.¹⁹ And indeed, the ANC claims mass struggle as one of its ‘four pillars’ of strategy; the lessons from Vietnam as outlined in *The Green Book* of 1979 did see mobilisation of the masses as a critical component of people’s war, and not a strategy able to contest power ‘in its own right’, as the non-violent strategists would do.

Jeffery and the non-violent theorists cannot both be right. Jeffery’s analysis, while inaccurate in many respects, comes closer to the ANC’s own understanding of its strategy. The big weakness in Jeffery’s analysis is that mass mobilisation is presented as entirely reliant on violence, threat of violence, fear and intimidation to make it effective. The reality was that, on the contrary, the mobilisation of millions of ordinary people in voluntary participation was what made such tactics enormously effective. Moreover, the armed struggle was, by any comparative standards, very restrained. But in order to respond adequately to Jeffery’s arguments, as well as those of the non-violent strategists, it is necessary to look at how the tactics of struggle were played out ‘on the ground’.

Strategy and tactics in the Eastern Cape: Port Elizabeth’s townships

Schock argues that the ANC ‘realised’ that the power of non-violent tactics ‘was more likely to topple the apartheid regime than armed insurrection’.²⁰ This

is retrospective wishful thinking. While the ANC certainly saw the enormous power of mass mobilisation and attempted to integrate the tactics being used into its overall strategy, at no stage did it have a strategic understanding of how these tactics would lead to the demise of the apartheid regime. In the 1980s, theorists within the UDF talked about Gramscian concepts of hegemony, the destruction of the legitimacy of the state and ‘splitting the ruling bloc’. Those within the ANC talked of Leninist theories of seizure of state power, or embraced the more politically nuanced strategies of Vietnamese military theorists of people’s war.²¹

It can be accepted that even if the ANC did not consciously embrace the power of non-violent action and integrate it into its overall strategy: for liberation, it did understand the mass action going on around the country as an integral part of the liberation struggle. And indeed, the millions of people who participated in mass action during the mid-1980s saw themselves as an integral part of the liberation struggle. As MK leader James Ngculu puts it,

It was a period during which the people rendered South Africa ungovernable and apartheid unworkable ... The duty of the liberation movement was to seize this opportunity. We had to ensure that MK was the hammer of armed struggle and the people’s mass uprising the anvil that was certain to crush apartheid rule.²²

In this limited sense, one can accept the idea of ‘complementarity’ between violent and non-violent strategies, even if there was no strategic integration.

However, we need to take the argument a bit further, and examine whether the parallel co-existence of violent and non-violent strategies was effective. Did violence contribute to the effectiveness of non-violent strategies, or was it counterproductive? However ineffective the armed struggle was in South Africa, it did have enormous symbolic and mobilising value. As will be shown here, most of those involved in non-violent tactics of struggle perceived themselves as part of a liberation struggle which was violent. Tom Hastings has argued that ‘when nonviolence is not the perceived method, violence is attributed to all’ and that ‘the consequences are enormous’.²³

What were the consequences for the South African liberation movement of the dominant strategy of violence, both in the perception and the reality? The perception was shared by the opponents of the mass movement—the apartheid state—and the supporters of the ANC. The reality was that although there were those within the liberation movement who understood the strategic importance of non-violent strategies, and saw the futility

or counterproductiveness of violent strategies, their position was never accepted as the overall strategy of the liberation struggle. The consequences were many.

For the liberation struggle itself, there were consequences in the building of unity of the movement as a whole. The tension between military and non-violent strategies is illustrated here with a few examples. There were others, of course: the struggle over strategy within the labour movement is an important example, which is not dealt with here. Another important strategic tension was around strategies aimed at shifting the loyalty of security forces (including conscripts), while the military strategy of the liberation movement saw all security force personnel as legitimate military targets. A third is the consequences to various parts of the mass movement of its leadership's close connections to the ANC underground.²⁴ There were high costs to the activists of the UDF and its affiliates, who were perceived by apartheid security forces as an integral part of the ANC's military strategy. The assassination of key civic leaders in the Eastern Cape, and the torture and detention for three years or more of most of the leadership of organisations at this level in 1986–1989 were a direct result of the security force's understanding of this strategy. Apart from the costs to individuals and their families, the loss of this leadership stratum for that critical period had severe strategic costs for the movement.

And there were, of course, very high costs to the MK guerillas and their associates who died without having made any military impact on the apartheid regime.²⁵ More significantly, what is argued here is that the higher cost was the political cost to the movement of strategic confusion. The dominant militarism of the ANC meant that it could not effectively take the initiative at the moment when the mass movement was strongest. In addition to the costs to the movement, there were the costs to ordinary people of political violence, which raged for a decade. It is worth noting the high cost of the violence of the transition period, between 1990 (when the ANC suspended its armed struggle) and 1994. In this four-year period, more people died in political conflict than in the three decades of armed struggle before 1990.

Port Elizabeth's townships: Violent and non-violent tactics

These dynamics can best be understood by looking at specific examples of activists in the liberation movement. Lodge and Nasson argue that non-violent tactics, such as consumer boycotts, had greater success in the townships of the Eastern Cape than elsewhere because they had well-organised networks

of street committees that co-ordinated the implementation of such tactics.²⁶ Consumer boycotts (and many similar tactics) were adopted because of both pragmatism and legitimacy: these non-violent tactics were effective, and were weapons that ordinary black South Africans could use. While there was a demand for guns so that people could join the armed struggle, the ANC was unable to respond. Hence, almost by default, ordinary people's own (unarmed) actions proved to be immensely effective, as well as empowering to them.

Lodge and Nasson note that the UDF in 1985 assessed that 'organisation trails behind the masses, thus making it more difficult for a disciplined mass action to take place.'²⁷ Lodge also notes that the township uprising had little impact on the white population, except when consumer boycotts and sanctions hit business interests. Hence the situation where, by 1986, UDF leader Stone Sizani was calling (in line with ANC strategy) for 'taking the struggle into white areas'. Sizani's controversial speech at a Queenstown funeral was seen by some as evidence of the UDF's ambivalence to violence and its inability to control youth.²⁸

Except for the consumer boycott of white businesses in 1985, whites in Port Elizabeth were hardly affected by the struggle until the 1989–1990 occupation of the Port Elizabeth city centre, which involved some temporary disruption of 'business as usual' and through the tragic, but limited, attacks on white civilians by APLA in the 1992–1994 period. The cost of the struggle to whites was very low. Hence Zunes argues that the violence of the mid-to late 1980s was essentially counterproductive, having no impact on the white community; it served only to create divisions within the black community.²⁹ This has to be borne in mind when the costs of violent strategies are estimated: the costs to activists and to communities of the oppressed were far higher than the costs to the oppressor communities.

Even more problematic than the consequences of 'mixing strategies' for individual activists, it can be argued that the strategic emphasis on military options overruled a creative response to the real power that had been gained by the mass movement in the mid-1980s. This is the really interesting debate, as it concerns the notions of dual power and popular power, and how these manifested in the 1985–1987 period. It also concerns the local-level participation of hundreds of thousands of activists in structures and both violent and non-violent tactics of struggle.

The Port Elizabeth township of Kwazakhele provides an excellent illustration of how the street and area committees were implemented in this period, and what role they played.³⁰ The overall conclusion was that they were an extraordinary and positive expression of the power of ordinary,

working-class people—in the words that we used at the time, ‘to take control of all aspects of our lives’. These community structures were not established as part of a military strategy (in the Eastern Cape at least), whereas some other structures, like the later Self Defence Units, were para-military structures. However, the *amabutho* (youth militia) did see themselves as part of the military strategy, and developed links with MK. They in turn related to the street committees who were ‘older people’ in the community, creating a very interesting dynamic and intersection between violent and non-violent tactics. The older residents of the community did not always approve of the violence of the youth, and in some cases were able to act as a restraining factor; in other cases they were threatened with the same violence if they did not comply with the ‘comrades’. The intolerance of militarist strategies was in clear tension with the proto-democratic structures of most residents of this community, which often played a role in solving disputes.

The enormous support and pride that residents had in these structures gives the lie to Jeffery’s argument that mass mobilisation was premised on violence and fear. This is not to say that such tactics were not coercive: they involved a force exercised on the opponent which was not inherently violent. As Tom Hastings argues:

Nonviolence is not a cattle prod with variable voltage, but rather a far more complex approach than the most elaborate military assault, campaign, or even war. At the end, even noncoercive inducements are coercive. That is, even when I give you something with zero overt expectation of a quid pro quo, you and I and everyone expects reciprocity. So the attempt to separate nonviolence from coercion is, for the vast majority of actions, futile and irrelevant.³¹

It was the extent of voluntary participation in such tactics that made them effective in changing the balance of power at community level, destroying the legitimacy of the apartheid state as it created legitimacy for the movement. Such participation could not have been created through elite manipulation and fear. But these creative and powerful tactics were not linked to a strategic vision, except for the liberation movement’s ‘ungovernability’ mantra, which it adopted as the mass movement escalated in intensity.

The corollary of the lack of a non-violent strategic vision and non-violent discipline was the escalation of grassroots violence. As violence escalated in the Port Elizabeth townships in early 1985, unemployed youth responded with extreme anger to the security force shootings. It is impossible to describe or explain the actions of these youth as a single group. Some operated outside of any organisational control, and were not accountable to any leadership

grouping. Others gathered around local civic leaders during the feud between UDF supporters and those of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO). Through a combination of the infiltration of agents provocateurs by the security forces, and the intolerance of the UDF to a rival movement, this feud descended into a deadly year-long struggle perpetrated by groupings of militant 'guards'.

Yet other youth identified 'targets' and engaged in attacks on black policemen, collaborators or suspected informers, often with gruesome results. In some cases, those suspected of collaborating with the enemy were burned with tyres—the notorious 'necklace' method—which was used as a warning to others not to think of collaborating. While the *amatshaka* (black municipal police brought in from KwaZulu-Natal) would have been considered legitimate targets by MK, civilians were also attacked and killed by youth as collaborators, sometimes for as little as being the girlfriend of a policeman, or distributing government welfare parcels. The overwhelming majority of victims of the *amabutho* were black residents of the same townships. The occasional attack on white civilians—who as a rule did not enter the townships—was the exception; there is one documented case in the Port Elizabeth townships of the killing of a white civilian, who was stabbed and burned by *amabutho* on 3 July 1987. As older residents became critical of these acts of violence, they attempted to bring the *amabutho* under some kind of control.

Some of the *amabutho* leaders were drawn into the struggle through their involvement in burial committees, which were organising the funerals of those killed by security forces; as a result they were filled with anger and a desire to take the offensive against the security forces. The *amabutho* were 'listening to the burial committee', which consisted of older leaders in the local community, who directed them not to attack innocent people but to create a disciplined organisation.

These local leaders of *amabutho* were not formed on instructions from MK, but developed working relationships with the MK cadres who were coming in and out. The *amabutho* thus became a kind of youth militia, who organised themselves in military structures with a hierarchy of generals, commissars and commanders, and spoke of 'engaging the enemy' in military terms. The generals of each 'base' would meet together and plan their military operations. The *amabutho* also linked in with the ANC underground networks that were ensuring passage for those—many thousands—who wanted to go into exile and 'get training and guns' so as to come back to fight, better equipped. For many of those who left, this was effectively the end of their involvement in the struggle; many stayed for years in exile, coming back during the

transition period and never getting to use their new-found military skills and equipment.³²

It was in 1985 that the ANC adopted the strategy of a protracted people's war. It responded to the township uprising by calling on the people to 'make the townships ungovernable, make apartheid unworkable' — which is precisely what they did. As the process unfolded, the ANC talked about the need for 'arming the masses' and began to take groups of youths out for 'instant courses' before sending them back with instructions on how to make petrol bombs, or how to use the few grenades or AK47s to which they had access. The strategy was thus to 'bring the armed struggle home' and integrate it with the township uprising. While some analysts have argued that by the mid- to late 1980s 'defiance had reached a point where the government had clearly lost control',³³ this is not strictly accurate. However, security forces acknowledged that they had lost control in some townships in the Eastern Cape in 1985; by 1988 they had re-established control through State of Emergency measures.

Throughout this period, from 1986 to 1988, MK did not change its strategy, continuing to escalate the same forms of warfare, and yet being unable to change the balance decisively, as the security forces responded with even greater aggression. This really raises a critical question of what the strategy was in these years, and what the ANC hoped to achieve — once it was clear that it had 'missed the insurrectionary moment'. Jeffrey has argued that the ANC's strategy of people's war was responsible for the extensive intra-community violence that occurred from this period through the transition period of the early 1990s, and in fact that that violence was an integral part of the strategy of the liberation movement in order to establish hegemony over its rivals, such as the Inkatha Freedom Party.

Those who stayed 'on the ground' fighting inside the townships saw themselves as the 'cutting edge' of the struggle. The *amabutho* in PE organised on an area basis, with 'bases' in each area where they used to meet and plan operations. Some bases used a network which involved travelling underground — literally — through a storm-water drainpipe to avoid security forces. The *amabutho* would post sentries on each corner, who would warn others when security force vehicles were approaching. The *amabutho* operated with the co-operation of the residents of the area, making escape routes through the backs of houses and through the yards. They organised such routes through the system of street and area committees organised by the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO), requesting the elder residents through the street committee structures to 'open the back of their yards' to allow for easy access.

The extensive street committee network served a number of purposes besides the protection of *amabutho*. They assisted in communicating decisions around consumer boycotts, stay-aways and other strategies of resistance involving ordinary residents, called in many cases by PEBCO and other UDF-affiliated, mass-based organisations. They also provided a support network for families or individuals suffering from repression, dealt with community or inter-family disputes and enforced social control through 'shebeen curfews' and 'people's courts' in some areas. As a result, members of the street committees were themselves subject to harassment and detention under the State of Emergency.

The *amabutho*, in their self-styled military, engaged in what they called 'operations' which were both offensive and defensive. An example of an 'offensive operation' was throwing a primus stove bomb into the open top of a Hippo (armoured vehicle). The *amabutho* relied primarily on their own handmade weapons: petrol bombs, primus stove bombs and a crude dart-throwing gun called a *skorpion*. The second source of weapons were the guns that they obtained from their attacks on security force members; they would throw the petrol or primus stove bomb inside the armoured vehicles, and when the soldiers were forced to jump out, they managed in some cases to obtain their R1 rifles. Thirdly, there were some weapons reaching the *amabutho* through underground MK networks, and on occasion they were accompanied by training in the use of hand grenades and guns.

The *amabutho* did not have sophisticated strategies; they employed creative military tactics using whatever was available to them. While they did not express it in such terms, their major achievement was to create 'liberated zones' in certain areas of certain townships: to create 'no-go zones' for the security forces, and to frustrate all attempts of the security forces to move freely around the townships through the use of 'Casspir traps' or trenches. Burning down 'tent hostels' and police stations in the townships, attacking trapped vehicles, luring soldiers out of the vehicles and killing and disarming them was also part of their offensive repertoire. However, there were few white soldiers or policemen killed by the liberation movement, whether by MK or by *amabutho*. In the Port Elizabeth townships, one SADF member and one riot policeman were killed in this kind of combat. Black policemen, councillors and other civilian collaborators were the overwhelming majority of victims of the *amabutho's* actions.

The *amabutho* expressed their objective simply as the immediate attaining of freedom: 'we want freedom now!' But what does this mean in strategic terms? On one level it is undoubtedly true that the armed struggle inspired hundreds of thousands of young militants like these *amabutho*, and even

without weapons, their dedication and organisation was impressive. On another level, they were at least partially successful in tactical terms: in gaining effective control over certain areas of certain townships for limited periods, and rendering the townships—if not the country—ungovernable. The intersection with non-violent strategies was very tight at tactical level: the *amabutho* were involved in implementing and monitoring nearly all the mass-based resistance strategies, including consumer boycotts, transport, rent and service charge boycotts, strikes and stay-aways, education boycotts, mass funerals and demonstrations against the Black Local Authorities. In addition, the older people in the same townships were supporting the *amabutho* through the street and area committee networks, while at the same time being critical of them when they used violence arbitrarily and not against ‘the enemy’.

Can it be argued that non-violent tactics such as consumer boycotts would have been successful without the element of coercive violence involved as described above? Could they have possibly been more successful, and linked to a ‘grand strategy’? Lodge notes that the taking of control by the movement at the township level was made possible by the integration of violent tactics by township activists:

Many members of the activist community over which the UDF presided often took their tactical cues from the ‘armed propaganda’ of Umkhonto we Sizwe ... activists engaged as combatants in an insurrectionary struggle, quite ready to use violence against policemen, councilors, alleged informers and, to an extent, political rivals. The collapse of routine municipal administration in the townships was largely a consequence of this violence.³⁴

It is hard, but not impossible, to imagine these tactics being successful without violence; as noted above, they were not reliant on violent coercion of the whole community. But the case study above demonstrates that at a tactical level, violent and non-violent methods of struggle were complementary. The description of the operations of the Port Elizabeth *amabutho* above make it impossible to posit a disciplined non-violent movement operating in parallel to an undisciplined and spontaneous violent youth uprising. But neither can the *amabutho* be seen as a component of MK, a formal military institution. This has now become a point of contention, as former *amabutho* have re-organised to demand that their role in the struggle be recognised, so that they can gain access to the same benefits as MK veterans. It is a sad irony that the largely ineffective MK soldiers are recognised; the leaders of mass organisations are recognised (though somewhat less than their military counterparts); but those

who conducted the struggle at the cutting edge of the people's war strategy in the townships are the least recognised.

What was the strategy in this context? Once the townships had been made ungovernable, and apartheid made unworkable, how was the transition to a nonracial democratic unitary state to be effected? McKinley³⁵ has argued that:

The notion of people's power and the idea that dual power (parallel institutions controlled by the masses) was on the verge of delivering national liberation, confused hope with reality. Although resistance had certainly made substantial inroads into the apartheid state's control of the townships and to a lesser degree in some of the rural areas, the national authority and coercive capacity of the apartheid state was nowhere near being threatened with disintegration.

This was because, despite the ANC's commitment to arming the masses for insurrection, the 'key ingredients for insurrectionary seizure of power were absent.' However, according to the non-violent struggle theorists, the point at which the country is 'ungovernable' because the masses have withdrawn their consent is the point at which decisive change becomes possible.

There were two concurrent strategies in the liberation movement: on the one hand, the UDF (and to some extent the ANC) followed a non-violent strategy of putting pressure on the apartheid state — 'rendering apartheid unworkable' through civil disobedience — that brought it to the negotiating table. On the other hand, the ANC continued to give primacy to a military strategy of seizure of state power by violence — alternatively of weakening the state through people's war to a point where it had to negotiate. We have seen how activists 'on the ground' interpreted these strategies and implemented tactics which conformed to them. We have also seen how neither strategy was effective in the 1984–1986 uprising, how the liberation movements and mass movements lost the initiative in 1987–1988 and how conditions changed in 1989 to allow for a negotiated settlement to emerge. The ANC, to its credit, was able to adapt to these changing conditions and adopt a strategy of negotiation, although this was by no means uncontested.

Is it possible to conclude that, far from being complementary to the mass organisation taking place, the armed struggle was detrimental to the liberation struggle, both in its devastating consequences to those who were directly involved and their loved ones, and to the legal organisations of which they were part? It is a hard conclusion to arrive at; and is outweighed in part by the argument that whatever the failures of the armed struggle in military terms, it was enormously successful in the morale-boosting effect it had on the population, who embraced

it as the 'people's army' and saw all MK members as heroes. The point has been made that the costs of involvement in the underground were very high; the strategic advantages gained from the underground links to the mass movement were, in many cases, outweighed by the blurring between military and political acts, the failure of military strategy while the movement was heavily militaristic in its strategic approach, and the inability to convert enormous popular support and organisational strength into a strategic advantage. On the other hand, the limitations on the militarism of the armed struggle, and the relative strength of civil society (in particular the labour movement, as Lodge argues), and the democratic and empowering tendencies within the mass movement, had important implications for the democratic outcome of the struggle.

Who can lay claim to the liberation struggle? The ANC is wrong in its glorification of the effectiveness of armed struggle; and Jeffery is equally wrong in her demonisation of the armed struggle. Armed struggle was, at best, ineffective and costly; at worst it was counterproductive. The non-violent strategy theorists are correct in their estimation of the relative effectiveness of non-violent tactics. However, the non-violent strategy analysts are wrong in their understanding of the coherence of non-violence as the determining factor in the struggle. The reality was a messy combination of different strategies, without much coherence.

Conclusion

Having examined some of the empirical evidence on the intersection of tactics and strategies of the liberation struggle, I return now to the key issues of debate raised in the introduction. The first issue is the importance of human agency in understanding and conducting struggles against oppressive regimes, and the understanding of these processes as able to empower ordinary people. In contrast to analyses of the South African transition which give primacy to structure—the changing conditions which made a negotiated transition possible—this analysis gives primacy to agency. As Brian Martin has argued in his critique of non-violent action theorist Gene Sharp's approach to power, 'the strength of Sharp's approach is that his core ideas are ideally suited for fostering non-violent action, whereas the core ideas in structural approaches are better suited for analysis than action'.³⁶ In Ackerman's words, skills can 'trump' conditions. It can be argued that the key skill in liberation struggle is strategy. While it can also be argued, as Martin does, that this is an 'essentially voluntarist' approach, it is consistent not only with 'fostering' a particular (non-violent) kind of struggle, but also with historical analysis based on a 'people's history' approach—documenting and understanding human agency, and giving primacy to the actions of ordinary people in our understanding of historical process.

The second issue is that if we give primacy to human agency, we have to reach some conclusion about the strategies adopted by the liberation movement, and specifically about the relationship between violent and non-violent strategies adopted by the same movement. The tentative conclusion reached here is that while both violent and non-violent strategies were employed simultaneously by the liberation movement, and in some circumstances were closely integrated at a tactical level, they were not integrated at a national strategic level. The truth—as testified by UDF leaders to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—was that the mass movement was out of control. It did not have a coherent strategy, even less a disciplined non-violent strategy. From the evidence, it is argued that the costs of integrating violent and non-violent struggle were higher than if the struggle had been purely non-violent. On the positive side, the extensive participation of ‘the masses’ in various forms of the struggle—primarily non-violent tactics—was one of the factors which enabled the transition to a stable and genuinely democratic government with a high level of legitimacy.

So were they complementary or contradictory? On balance, I come to the conclusion that they were complementary at tactical level, but not at the strategic level. The exclusive use of a coherent non-violent strategy could have been more efficient and resulted in less human suffering than occurred with the combined strategies. But this is counterfactual history, and that is never satisfactory. We have to try to understand what did happen and draw lessons from it for other struggles.

Notes

- 1 This chapter derives from a paper, stimulated by attending the Oxford conference on ‘Civil Resistance and Power Politics’ in March 2007, which was presented to the workshop on ‘New perspectives on liberation struggles in southern Africa’ at the University of Cape Town in September 2008. I would like to acknowledge the International Centre on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) and the South African Democracy Education Trust for research funding. Thanks to those in ICNC and at UCT and Oxford who gave me feedback and debate on this issue.
- 2 P. Ackerman, ‘Skills vs conditions’, paper presented at conference on ‘Civil Resistance and Power Politics’, Oxford University, March 2007.
- 3 ‘Armed struggle secured Mandela release’, *The Herald*, 8 February 2010.
- 4 T. Lodge, ‘The interplay of violence and non-violence in the movement against apartheid in South Africa, 1983–1994’, paper presented at a conference on ‘Civil Resistance and Power Politics’, Oxford University, March 2007.
- 5 *A Force More Powerful*, Episode 3 (York: Zimmerman, 2000).

- 6 See H. Barrell, 'Conscripts to their age': African National Congress operational strategy, 1976–1986', DPhil thesis, St Antony's College, Oxford, 1993.
- 7 K. Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); S. Zunes, L. Kurtz & S.B. Asher (eds), *Nonviolent Social Movements: A geographical perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).
- 8 G. Houston, 'The ANC's armed struggle in the 1980s', *The Road to Democracy*, Vol. 5, 2010.
- 9 See H. Barrell, 'Conscripts'; S. Zunes et al., *Nonviolent Social Movements*; D. McKinley, *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography* (London: Pluto press, 1997).
- 10 McKinley, *ANC*, 78.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 81.
- 12 J. Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983–1991* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2000), 227.
- 13 Interview with L. Mouton, former analyst for the South African Security Police, Port Elizabeth, 1 June 2010.
- 14 Seekings, *The UDF*, 227.
- 15 Zunes et al., *Nonviolent Social Movements*, 211.
- 16 Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections*, 51, 58–59.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 66.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 67.
- 19 A. Jeffery, *People's War: New light on the struggle for liberation in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2009).
- 20 Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections*, 67.
- 21 For details of the Vietnamese influence, see Barrell, 'Conscripts'; Jeffery, *People's War*; J. Ngculu, *The Honour to Serve: Recollections of an Umkhonto soldier* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2009).
- 22 Ngculu, *Honour to Serve*, 181.
- 23 T. Hastings, *The Lessons of Nonviolence: Theory and Practice in a World of Conflict* (Jefferson: MacFarland, 2006), 49.
- 24 The high costs of this link to the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) in the Eastern Cape are explored in J. Cherry, 'No easy road to truth: The TRC in the Eastern Cape', unpublished paper presented to the Wits History Workshop conference, Johannesburg, June 1999.
- 25 J. Cherry, 'Hidden histories of the Eastern Cape underground', in *The Road to Democracy*, Vol. 5.
- 26 T. Lodge & B. Nasson, *All, Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (New York: Ford Foundation/Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), 81.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 76.

- 28 Seekings, *The UDF*, 159, quoting S. Mufson's *Fighting Years: Black Resistance and the Struggle for a New South Africa* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990); I was present at this funeral and discussed Sizani's speech with him afterwards.
- 29 Zunes et al., *Nonviolent Social Movements*, 227.
- 30 J. Cherry, 'Hegemony, democracy and civil society: Political participation in Kwazakhele township, 1980–93', in Glenn Adler & Jonny Steinberg (eds). *From Comrades to Citizens: The South African Civics Movement and the Transition to Democracy* (London: Macmillan, 2000).
- 31 T. Hastings, 'Nonviolence is force': [www.http://hastingsnonviolence.blogspot.com/2010/06/nonviolence-is-force.html](http://hastingsnonviolence.blogspot.com/2010/06/nonviolence-is-force.html). Accessed 25 June 2010.
- 32 This information is drawn from my interviews with Port Elizabeth *amabutho*, conducted for SADET on 16 and 18 October 2007 in Port Elizabeth. For a detailed account, see J. Cherry in *The Road to Democracy*, Vol. 5 (SADET, 2010).
- 33 Zunes et al., *Nonviolent Social Movements*, 221.
- 34 Lodge, 'The interplay of violence and nonviolence', 27.
- 35 McKinley, *ANC*, 71.
- 36 B. Martin, 'Gene Sharp's theory of power', *Journal of Peace Research*, 26, 2 (1989), 213–222.

CHAPTER 7
‘THE SPY’ AND THE CAMP: SWAPO
IN LUBANGO, 1980–1989

Christian Williams

In early November 1976 Joseph ‘Pereb’ Stephanus departed from Namibia for exile.¹ Over the preceding months Stephanus had been mobilising fellow students at St Therese in Tses and southern Namibia’s other secondary schools to organise a strike of the final exams, thereby marking their rejection of Bantu Education and solidarity with the students of Soweto, South Africa.² After being expelled from school for these activities, Stephanus made his way to a point near the Buitepos border post, where he crossed over to Mamuno, Botswana, and registered as a refugee. Over the following weeks he was joined there by about 50 others who had participated in the November strikes, the first large cohort of exiles from southern Namibia.³ They were transported by the South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO) to Maun and, a few months later, to Zambia, where they underwent military training at Oshatotwa, where Stephanus was appointed as ‘group commander’. Later that year Stephanus was selected to attend the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN), a tertiary institution which had been established in Lusaka in 1976. Upon completing his studies and a brief internship in Benin, he was sent for military training again, this time outside Lubango, Angola, where, since the late 1970s, SWAPO had maintained a network of camps. Thereafter, he was given a position as political information officer for the SWAPO Youth League (SYL). First from Lusaka and later from Luanda, he edited the SYL’s newspaper and represented the organisation in meetings at SWAPO’s larger settlements and at conferences organised by the liberation movement’s allies around the world.

On 9 March 1985, after celebrating his thirtieth birthday with friends at his Luanda apartment, Stephanus was arrested by SWAPO. After being held at a

SWAPO-owned house for several days, he was escorted by two armed guards on one of the liberation movement's supply convoys to Lubango. Almost a week later the convoy arrived and Stephanus was dropped at SWAPO's Karl Marx Reception Centre, where he was put in a solitary cell and told to write a statement about his life. After several days soldiers returned to his cell and escorted him to a chamber where he sat in front of a group of commanders affiliated with PLAN, SWAPO's guerrilla army. There Stephanus was informed that in his statement he had forgotten to mention something—his 'life as a South African spy'.⁴ When Stephanus denied the accusation, he was stripped naked and his hands were tied to the ceiling. Suspended from the ground, the soldiers beat him with bundles of freshly cut sticks while insulting him for his alleged spying, his education and his cultural background. He was later sent back to his cell where hot water was applied to his fresh wounds and where he waited until he was led out again for another session.

At some point Stephanus was visited by one of his interrogators, whom he had recognised as the former bodyguard of a friend on the Political Bureau, SWAPO's highest organ. The man came to Stephanus alone and advised him: 'You just lie to these guys or they will kill you. Then you will go to where your brothers and friends are.'⁵ After enduring torture almost daily for a month, Stephanus 'confessed' that he was a spy. In turn, he was asked several questions: 'Who recruited you? Who was your contact in exile? Who were you trained with? What was your mission?' In his responses, Stephanus told stories which anyone with basic knowledge of his personal history and the places in which he had lived in Namibia could easily have contradicted, but which his interrogators accepted without question. After the interrogators had transcribed Stephanus's story and Stephanus had signed it, he was taken to one of the 'dungeons', rectangular underground holes covered with corrugated iron where hundreds of accused spies, including most of his 1976 exile cohort, were detained. For the next four-and-a-half years, Stephanus lived in one or another dungeon administered by SWAPO outside Lubango, where he suffered from poor health and many others died from illness. Some of his fellow detainees were also commanded to leave the dungeons and subsequently 'disappeared'.

More than two decades after his release from the dungeons and repatriation to Namibia, Stephanus still tries to understand why he and others were accused of spying and were submitted to such brutality in Lubango. The structures shaping national history pull against a thorough inquiry into this topic, however. SWAPO officials implicated in spy accusations have hidden themselves behind an official narrative, according to which a large number of South African spies infiltrated SWAPO in exile during the 1980s and

the liberation movement responded with appropriate measures. In turn, ex-detainees, scholars and others have published histories which challenge this narrative, drawing attention to the innocence of many accused spies and to the individuals and groups within SWAPO responsible for a purge.⁶ And yet, as Stephanus's narrative suggests and as the historiography confirms, there was often no relationship between how 'spies' were identified in Lubango and attempts to gather verifiable evidence of these persons' collaboration with the enemy. Moreover, many who identified others as 'spies' were subsequently identified, tortured and detained themselves. Under the circumstances, grasping what happened to Stephanus requires more than knowledge of the physical activities of South African spies, SWAPO officials or others who may have betrayed the nation. It requires knowledge of 'the spy', an invisible power through which events were explained and cruelty legitimated in a national community.

This chapter examines 'the spy' from the perspective of the camp, the space in which most exiles from Namibia and other southern African countries lived during the region's liberation struggle. Drawing from anthropological literature on relationships between witchcraft discourse and social context,⁷ I consider the qualities of camps which made spying a plausible and powerful explanation for the misfortunes which people could experience while living in this space. There, where inhabitants were constantly at risk of South African violence, SWAPO officials drew from their control over public discourse to focus attention on dangers emanating from outside the camp, which they were authorised to address as national representatives. At the same time, they could exploit the ambiguities surrounding who spies were and how they accomplished their work to heighten fears and direct them towards people already marginalised inside camps. This chapter discusses these observations about the SWAPO camps in general and then applies them to the circumstances in Lubango during the 1980s, examining how 'the spy' became an agent used to coerce and eliminate rivals, but which no single person or faction could ever entirely control.

Explaining misfortune in the camps

From 1963 to 1989 SWAPO administered about 60 000 Namibians in exile, most of whom lived in camps in Tanzania, Zambia and Angola. There was considerable diversity to these sites. Some were small and mobile, catering to populations of guerrillas infiltrating Namibia and other Namibians fleeing from their home country. Others were semi-permanent settlements for thousands of people located far from the border, which offered health care

and school facilities. Across these and other differences, however, the camps shared common features. These features shaped how Namibians lived in exile in general and how they encountered and explained misfortune in particular.

Even before entering the camps, Namibian exiles had suffered in similar ways. All came from a country whose government implemented apartheid laws and inflicted violence on blacks who resisted them. Many had been harassed, imprisoned or tortured by South African officials before fleeing the country, and some encountered violence during their journey into exile when they crossed the Namibian border and travelled through combat zones. For those who had passed through such hardships prior to reaching the camps, these settlements may have seemed relatively secure, especially those located some distance from the front. And yet inhabitants knew that as members of SWAPO living in exile, they were all at risk. SWAPO camps were attacked by the South African Defence Force (SADF), including Cassinga, a camp inhabited by hundreds of Namibians without military training located deep inside Angola.⁸ Also, from the mid-1970s, SWAPO's Angolan camps were targeted by South Africa's ally UNITA, as were the convoys which carried people and supplies between these camps.

Many of the misfortunes that Namibians experienced before and after arriving in the camps could be attributed to spying. Some events, such as enemy surprise attacks and ambushes, particularly lent themselves to spy explanations because of the insider knowledge of SWAPO that seemed necessary for their implementation. Namibian exiles would be unlikely to discount the possibility that South Africa had a hand in any setbacks they encountered, however. Many had personal experiences with, or deep suspicions of, people in their home communities who had informed the police about SWAPO meetings or about soldiers of SWAPO's army infiltrating the northern part of the country.⁹ Thus, the notion that the South Africans were sending agents to inflict harm on Namibians living in SWAPO camps would have seemed both plausible and likely.

The impetus to attribute misfortunes to 'the spy' did not come solely from dangers emanating from outside the camp, however, but also from those inherent to it. The hierarchical social order of camp life made those on its bottom rungs vulnerable. All were to follow the orders of the camp commanders and, when they were visiting, the political leaders. Questioning orders from these officials was discouraged on the premise that to do so threatened Namibians' unity of purpose in resisting South African rule. There was generally no place to appeal to personally held moral values or rights in resisting the camp authorities' commands. And officials controlled the distribution of food, shelter, clothing, medicine and weapons—all essential

resources for survival and for conducting the war. These differences could often cause resentment between SWAPO officials and rank-in-file members and, on several occasions, erupted into open conflict and attempts to alter the liberation movement's leadership.¹⁰

Under these conditions, SWAPO officials had strong impetus to project exiles' fears onto 'the spy'. By attributing misfortunes in the camps to South African spies, officials focused attention on a threat to national security, which they, as the nation's representatives, were authorised to address, and away from the inequalities and conflicts in the camps, which might undermine their authority and endanger their lives. They used the fear of spies to coerce other Namibians to align with their will and to eliminate rivals for power in a national community. In the process, 'the spy' became a weapon in the power struggles which occurred within the camps, even as it presented itself as a constant danger originating outside of them.

To understand how SWAPO officials projected exiles' fears onto spies, the camp is, again, an important context. Through announcements at the daily parade, officials could shape a discourse on spying among members of an exile community, all of whom either lived in or passed through the camp space. Generally, SWAPO officials spoke about South African agents who had been sent into exile to undermine SWAPO and endanger Namibians.¹¹ Exiles, in turn, were exhorted to be vigilant and report suspicious behaviour to camp authorities so that all might avoid future catastrophes.¹² In some instances, announcements focused on specific individuals who were accused of spying, including high-ranking SWAPO officials and others known to smaller groups of exiles.¹³ At the same time, officials encouraged exiles to imagine the hidden and maleficent powers of spies, the possibility that they might be anywhere and could do anything to cause harm to SWAPO and Namibia.

Much of the specific content of speeches by officials played on pre-existing sources of suspicion among camp inhabitants. Significantly, most individuals accused of spying were minorities in an exile community that consisted predominantly of Oshiwambo speakers from rural, northern Namibia.¹⁴ In the context of fear prevailing in the camps, cultural differences might easily become sources of mistrust. Several research participants indicated that they felt mistrusted by 'people from the North' who interpreted what participants saw as benign questions or reasonable grievances as signs of disrespect. Urban, educated women were particularly likely to violate prevailing social taboos if they addressed questions to older men or looked men directly in their eyes when they spoke.¹⁵ Some southern Namibians were ostracised because of the way in which they responded to camp food, which often consisted of porridge, garnished with beans or kapenta, components of traditional diets in

the north but not in the south.¹⁶ Race too may have been a source of mistrust. Several interviewees suggested that they were not entirely accepted by other exiles because of their skin colour, which in the case of Namas, coloureds and Basters tended to be considerably lighter and less 'African' than most other Namibians.¹⁷ As individuals from minority groups were identified as spies, their cultural practices and racial features also became associated with spying and used to justify the persecution of those who possessed them.

Language appears to have been a particularly significant marker of difference and source of suspicion in the camps. Although officially the language of SWAPO as an organisation and its proposed language for independent Namibia was English, most exiles had little exposure to English before travelling abroad. Therefore, in day-to-day conversation, Oshiwambo was used primarily. Those who felt left out of conversation because they could not speak or understand Oshiwambo well, or who sought the company of others with whom they could communicate more easily, often associated with people who spoke their mother tongue. Such practices, as when people speaking the same language gathered around one another at a meal or moved from one section of a camp to another to meet same-language friends, could result in accusations that these groups were being 'tribalist'.¹⁸ If exiles spoke in Afrikaans, the lingua franca in southern Namibia, they were particularly susceptible to suspicion since many northern Namibians did not speak the language and had come to associate it with the Afrikaner colonizer.¹⁹ Particular groups of people in Oshiwambo were also associated with derogatory terms based on their use of language. For example, Stephanus and others who spoke Khoekhoegowab were frequently referred to as *kwangara*, a word used to refer to 'Bushmen' and others who spoke Khoisan languages.²⁰ Those who spoke Oshiwambo in a manner considered improper by people raised in the north might be called *mbwiti*,²¹ a term for Ovambos who had settled in the south and whose Oshiwambo had incorporated elements of Afrikaans and other languages to which they had been exposed. Accused spies report that during their interrogations and detentions in Lubango they were often mocked for being either *kwangara* or *mbwiti*.

SWAPO officials exploited other sources of camp inhabitants' fears during their parade announcements. In describing how spies accomplished their work, officials spoke of items hidden inside spies' bodies which were used by them to transmit messages to the South Africans or to kill Namibians directly. Scars on the body and large breasts were identified as locations in which people could hide radios and send messages to the enemy.²² On at least one occasion it was announced that a spy had a hollow wooden leg, which appeared to look like a normal leg while he went about his activities during the day, but which

he would dismantle at night, and use the radio inside it to communicate with his South African colleagues.²³ Weapons might also be hidden in or near the body. For example, a pistol might be attached to the head of a woman whose hair was particularly long and wavy.²⁴ Some women were also alleged to have inserted poisoned razor blades into their vaginas. After enticing a SWAPO official to have sex, the official's penis would be cut in the act of intercourse and he would be poisoned or bleed to death.²⁵

Parallels between such claims made about spies in the SWAPO camps and ethnographic literature on witchcraft in northern Namibia are striking. As Maija Hiltunen details in her study of Finnish missionary writings on witchcraft (*uulodhi*) in Ovamboland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the evil power (*iigzwanga*) possessed by a witch (*omulodhi*) was understood to reside physically in the witch's body.²⁶ Although claims about the content of this substance and its location varied, it was sometimes said to be located in a small bag in a woman's breast.²⁷ The methods by which witches did their work were mysterious and always enacted at night.²⁸ It was thought, however, that they did not go to the persons whom they bewitched directly but rather communicated with the ancestral spirits (*aathithi*) who were then sent to those whom the witches wanted to harm.²⁹ One source indicates that a witch 'is able to release her arms, legs and head from her body when falling asleep' and in the morning 'joins them together becoming a whole human being again'.³⁰ Another notes that witches may 'shoot a small magical arrow' or 'inject poisons' into their victims.³¹ Although both men and women could be witches, women were generally seen as 'better mediums' for harnessing the power of the ancestral spirits for harming living men than men were themselves.³²

It would be misleading to infer from Hiltunen's research that Namibians accepted what SWAPO officials said about spies because the content of their messages confirmed what they already 'believed' about witchcraft.³³ In fact, several research participants who recounted officials' claims about how spies did their work mentioned these incidents to register their scepticism. One said that he doubted the claims because neither the radios and weapons nor the bodies of the spies into which they were allegedly inserted were ever shown to people at the parade.³⁴ Another noted that the officials who were killed through hidden weapons were never identified.³⁵ They and others questioned whether it was biologically possible for spies to carry radios and weapons inside their bodies, drawing in some cases from science they had learned in school to discredit these claims.³⁶ As for the SWAPO officials making the announcements at the parade, they did not refer to witchcraft directly in their speeches but used a distinct terminology for spying. When addressing

gatherings in Oshiwambo, the words *espy*, *omatuma* (someone who has been sent) and *omapuli* (traitor) were generally used.³⁷ On the far fewer occasions when officials referred to *uulodhi* (witchcraft), they appear to have done so primarily to denounce it as superstition. As the authors of one particularly urgent report to the SWAPO president noted, efforts to educate the rank-in-file in SWAPO's 1976 political programme had been impeded because 'a very large section of our cadres ... are deeply stopped [sic] in superstition (the numerous cases of with-craft) [sic].'³⁸

But who could afford to discredit or discount the claims that SWAPO officials made about spies, especially if their powers might overlap with those of witches? As suggested, witches were sources of fear among people living in the camps. While cases of witchcraft usually involved breaches of social taboo involving small groups of people, accusations often focused on marginal figures in the exile community—the same people who bore the brunt of spy accusations.³⁹ By describing spies in a manner that resonated with an Oshiwambo discourse on witchcraft, SWAPO officials simultaneously played on exiles' fears and affirmed officials' authority to confront agents who were, first and foremost, a threat to a national community. Moreover, an explicit discourse on witchcraft, with its connotations in the West of superstition, could only be a liability to SWAPO as it represented itself to an international community, whereas spying could be used abroad to justify all manner of happenings in an internationally recognised liberation movement.

It must also be noted that even the most sceptical exile could not easily question what was said about spies. Classrooms in camps, such as in which commissars taught scientific socialism during the late 1970s and 1980s, were likely to corroborate claims about spies dispersed at the parade. Some persons had the access to radio, but the ability to listen to news was impaired by the remote location of camps, by the language skills of camp inhabitants and by the suspicions of others living in camps.⁴⁰ The socially acceptable radio station to which exiles often had access and could understand was SWAPO's 'Voice of Namibia', which, predictably, confirmed claims made in the camps about spies.⁴¹ Few exiles would have had the opportunity to hear the perspectives of the 'spies' themselves after they had been accused. Most were taken to separate camps, where they lived apart from the rest of the exile community, with the exception of the commanders and soldiers who were assigned to guard them.⁴² The locations to which accused spies were moved were not publicly announced, and free movement both inside and outside of SWAPO camps was generally restricted to a few senior officials. It was also not unusual for people to 'appear and disappear' from camps. Camp residents rarely knew where they were going when they were commanded to leave a given settlement,

and information about other exiles' location was often unavailable, even to their closest family members.

All this movement in and out of the SWAPO camps did open camps to knowledge exchanges occurring outside of them. Especially when SWAPO members returned to the camps from assignments overseas, there was opportunity to share information between the rank-in-file living primarily within the camps and the political leaders and students living primarily outside of them, where information flowed more freely. Nonetheless, any knowledge that people did have about spies that contradicted official claims was constrained by the fears which surrounded 'the spy'. Questioning claims could be seen as an affront to the authority of figures making them and mark one as a potential spy, especially if SWAPO planted spies to identify those who asked subversive questions, as some suspected.⁴³ In such a context, as when people gossip more generally,⁴⁴ any exchange of information varying from the official discourse had to occur within a group of people who trusted one another. It is not surprising, therefore, that when research participants mentioned conversations that they had with others about spies, these were almost always held with people they knew before entering exile or with whom they shared a common language and ethnic identity. Even when they mentioned speaking privately with senior SWAPO officials about spy accusations, these conversations usually occurred on tribal lines.⁴⁵ Counter-evidence and alternative theories about spying could, therefore, travel along personal networks shaped by region, language and ethnicity, but were unlikely to extend outside this range.

Under these circumstances, exiles might privately question aspects of the spy discourse, but they were unlikely to dismiss its content altogether. In turn, 'the spy' became an agent with powers of their own. 'Spies' influenced to whom exiles spoke, what they said and where and how they said it. They encouraged people to mistrust others with different cultural practices and racial features, and to entertain ideologies derived from witchcraft that might explain how the enemy was threatening people's lives. They changed forms as individuals imagined spies being in places and doing things which only they could conceive. And, as we shall see, they crossed social boundaries, threatening or attacking officials who had done much to heighten the fear of spies and make dubious accusations in spies' names.

Lubango and the 1980s

Although 'the spy' was part of the lives of all Namibians living in SWAPO camps during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the purge which enveloped Joseph Stephanus and others in Lubango should also be understood in terms of a

more specific history. Following the coup in Portugal on 25 April 1974, Angola became accessible to Namibians fleeing their country of origin for exile and combatants of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) returning from exile to infiltrate Namibia. In March 1976, after South African forces retreated from Angola following the Angolan Civil War, SWAPO pledged its allegiance to the now ruling The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), establishing an office in Luanda and a network of camps in southern Angola with the support of the Angolan government. For the next several years, PLAN combatants operated out of a variety of mobile camps near the Angolan–Namibian border from which they regularly infiltrated Namibia and easily received Namibians fleeing across the border into exile.⁴⁶ These camps were supported by others further removed from the front, including the defence headquarters, Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre, and specialised logistical camps, all clustered between 12 and 30 km north-east of Lubango.⁴⁷

At the turn of the decade, the war's tide began to change. From May 1978, when the SADF raided Cassinga, South Africa launched attacks deep into southern Angola almost every year,⁴⁸ utilising its superior military technology, including its air force, mechanised units and ability to monitor some SWAPO radio communications,⁴⁹ to push PLAN back from the border. By 1982 the SADF occupied much of southern Angola, resulting in the relocation of PLAN's southern-most camps 100 to 150 km north of the border and making combatants' attempts to enter Namibia much more difficult.⁵⁰ At the same time, UNITA, which had been forced to withdraw to south-eastern Angola following the retreat of its South African allies from the country in March 1976, was becoming an increasingly strong presence in southern and central Angola and UNITA ambushes of SWAPO convoys were a common occurrence. By the early 1980s all SWAPO settlements, including those outside Lubango and in Kwanza Sul, seemed increasingly vulnerable to enemy attacks.⁵¹

As setbacks mounted, developments both external and internal to SWAPO influenced how the liberation movement's members understood and responded to their misfortune. In 1978 the South African government established its counter-insurgency unit, Koevoet.⁵² Known for the reign of violence that it unleashed in northern Namibia, Koevoet pressured civilians to provide information about the activities of PLAN infiltrators and those assisting them, and is likely to have heightened anxieties about South African informers entering exile. In 1980 the government extended conscription to all young men in southern Namibia to create the South West African Territorial Forces (SWATF). From thenceforth PLAN found itself facing a black and white army.

The formation of SWATF also increased the number of Namibians from south of the Red Line living in exile, which had expanded gradually since 1976, when students involved in mobilising southern Namibia for SWAPO and organising strikes following the Soweto uprising fled the country. These newcomers from the south carried many of the characteristics that marked people as different in the SWAPO camps. Many did not speak Oshiwambo, but all spoke Afrikaans. Some had light skin and other physical features that differed significantly from most people already living in exile. Almost all had some education, and many were secondary school students, who through schooling had been exposed to Namibians from a wide range of backgrounds and communities.

The migration of Namibians fleeing conscription coincided with the development of a conflict within the SWAPO military. By 1980 PLAN had begun to respond to SADF attacks by establishing a more conventional army, transforming its small, mobile guerrilla platoons into larger units and, eventually, mechanised brigades.⁵³ In this context there was impetus for the liberation movement to increase not only the number of combatants, but also the number of educated persons working in PLAN, which to that point had consisted primarily of exiles who were unable to access the scholarships which the international community had made available to SWAPO.⁵⁴ At the same time, the SWAPO Secretary for Defence, Peter Nanyemba, placed a large number of secondary school-educated exiles, most of whom were from southern Namibia, at the defence headquarters outside Lubango. Nanyemba rationalised these appointments as he and others moved educated persons to the front more generally, saying that SWAPO 'can no longer have an illiterate army'.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, this precipitated a conflict between the defence headquarters and command headquarters, from which PLAN co-ordinated military operations closer to the front.⁵⁶ According to research with participants stationed at both defence and command headquarters, Nanyemba's appointments were threatening to officials at command headquarters because they reproduced the same structures of authority that had already been established there.⁵⁷ At the same time they created a stark dichotomy in the educational and regional backgrounds of the two headquarters, with defence made up primarily of educated Namibians from the south, led by Nanyemba and Ndonga, and command consisting largely of uneducated Namibians from Ovamboland, led by PLAN army commanders, Dimo Hamaambo and Solomon 'Jesus' Hawala, both of whom were Kwanyama.⁵⁸

By this time the Soviet Union and its allies had become actively involved in how SWAPO was conducting all aspects of the war, including maintaining

the liberation movement's security. Although the Soviet government had supported SWAPO diplomatically and militarily as early as 1964, during the late 1970s, when SWAPO shifted its operations to Angola, the personal exchanges between the liberation movement and its Soviet allies increased greatly. In addition to Soviet and Soviet-allied officials interacting with SWAPO leaders in Luanda, Soviet advisers were assigned to a range of units stationed at defence headquarters and the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre.⁵⁹ Based in Lubango proper, they travelled to and from their homes and the SWAPO camps where they trained PLAN commanders in various fields, including organisational security.⁶⁰ At the same time SWAPO members were selected to attend military training courses in Eastern bloc countries, including classes held in East Germany between 1979 and 1984 aimed at preparing military personnel for security work.⁶¹ Allegedly, persons involved in these classes were incorporated into the SWAPO security apparatus, when it was established by the Central Committee under the command of Solomon Hawala in 1981.⁶²

It is in these circumstances that the first 'spies' were interrogated and detained in SWAPO's Lubango camps. One well-documented instance, involving six PLAN members from southern Namibia stationed at Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre, occurred in the middle of 1980. Told that they were being sent on a party mission, the group was led to a deep underground dugout or dungeon on the outskirts of the camp, and detained for four weeks. Detainees were later ordered to exit the dugout one by one and pressured through torture to admit that they had been sent by South Africa to spy on SWAPO. According to Oiva Alikie Angula and Hans Pieters, two of the six who were detained, the group was released after a delegation from the defence headquarters, led by its chief commissar, Tauno Hatuikulipi, intervened on behalf of the detainees, several of whom Hatuikulipi knew through their joint activities with SWAPO inside Namibia and their work as commissars in the camps. Thereafter the six learned from Hatuikulipi and some of their interrogators that they had been accused of spying by another detainee, who had implicated as many as 70 others under the influence of torture.⁶³

This group was not the only one imprisoned in Lubango on spy accusations during the early 1980s. Pieters notes that while he was detained he discovered that there were other people accused of spying held in the same area outside Hainyeko, and after his initial interrogation he was held for a short time with about 30 others there.⁶⁴ At least some of these early detainees were exiles from southern Namibia who were imprisoned immediately after arriving in the SWAPO camps. As survivors of the detentions at Lubango discovered

following their imprisonment, many of those from the south entering exile in the early 1980s were intercepted at the Karl Marx Reception Centre, where they were interrogated and tortured until they confessed to being spies.⁶⁵ From there they were sent to the dungeons without having entered any SWAPO camps other than those which they would have passed through between the Namibian–Angolan border and Lubango. Although most exiles were not aware of these detentions at the time, some, including friends and family of the newcomers stationed at SWAPO camps in Lubango, clearly were. Andries Basson, PLAN’s chief protocol officer stationed at defence headquarters, knew of Namibians arriving at the reception centre who then ‘disappeared’.⁶⁶ In several meetings held at defence headquarters during Basson’s tenure there from 1981 to 1983, the matter of disappearing people was discussed. Meetings included not only the administrative staff at defence headquarters proper, but also PLAN commanders based at defence, who were responsible for security and whose immediate superior officer was Solomon Hawala.⁶⁷ While the security officers indicated that those detained had been identified as enemy agents, they would not offer additional detail, even when the ‘spies’ were people that Basson and Hatuikulipi, who also attended these meetings, knew from their work for SWAPO in southern Namibia.⁶⁸ It appears that even Peter Nanyemba was excluded from information about the disappearing persons. According to Basson, in these meetings Nanyemba questioned security officers about how they knew that certain persons were sent by the enemy and was privately furious about developments in PLAN occurring outside his control.⁶⁹ It is also alleged that Nanyemba tabled the issue for discussion in December 1982 at a meeting of the Political Bureau, but that the issue was not discussed on the premise that it should be addressed directly by ‘the comrades in PLAN’.⁷⁰

On 1 April 1983, on the eve of a SWAPO Central Committee meeting in which PLAN’s command structure was to be discussed,⁷¹ Peter Nanyemba died in a car crash. Namibians living in the Lubango camps who were later detained remember Nanyemba’s death as a turning point, after which people whom they knew living in those camps began to vanish.⁷² According to Hans Pieters, who was then working at defence headquarters as political editor of *The Combatant*, the permanent staff at defence headquarters was gradually arrested after Nanyemba’s death. By the mid-1980s most of its 50 members had ‘disappeared’.⁷³ Those arrested included the highest-ranking officials from the Namibian south based at defence, Andries Basson and Tauno Hatuikulipi. According to Oiva Angula, on the morning of 8 November 1983, only hours after he had last seen Basson while working on guard duty at defence headquarters the previous night, he learned from a PLAN

commander that Basson had 'defected to the enemy'.⁷⁴ Over the coming weeks the story of Basson's defection was announced from Lubango camp parades and inhabitants warned that Basson could lead the South Africans to them at any time, a claim which seemed to be confirmed in December by Operation Askari, an offensive, in which the SADF bombed the SWAPO settlements outside Lubango and caused extensive damage to defence headquarters.⁷⁵ Within weeks Hatuikilipi also disappeared. In July 1984, in an address at a Lubango parade, SWAPO President Sam Nujoma announced that Hatuikulipi had been identified by SWAPO security as a traitor and that when apprehended he had committed suicide by swallowing a poison capsule hidden in a gold-filled tooth.⁷⁶

From 1983 Namibian exiles living outside Lubango were also brought to the camps there and detained.⁷⁷ In some cases, people were arrested directly by SWAPO security. For example, a number of SWAPO officials living in Luanda and Lusaka, such as Joseph Stephanus, were captured directly. Students studying in Eastern bloc countries were arrested by the police there and flown to Luanda, where they were handed to security and transported in SWAPO convoys headed to Lubango.⁷⁸ Others were told through official SWAPO correspondence to return to Angola, where they were detained either after they had been sent on a mission to Lubango or immediately upon their arrival in Luanda. Among these detainees were a large number of students studying in Western countries and at UNIN in Lusaka, as well as teachers working at the SWAPO-administered schools on the Isle of Youth in Cuba. In the latter cases, some disobeyed orders and left SWAPO because they had heard of people disappearing in SWAPO's Angolan camps and wanted to avoid this fate. Many, however, elected to return, citing confidence in their ability to defend themselves against spy accusations and fear that if they did not return that they would be accused of spying and forced to leave SWAPO to support their actions.

Those detained or who left SWAPO to avoid detention included a large proportion of the educated southern Namibian leaders and students living abroad.⁷⁹ Namibians from the south were not the only ones who were accused and detained, however. Following Mishake Muyongo's expulsion from SWAPO in 1980, people from the Caprivi region were accused by the security apparatus of attempting to revive CANU, which was allegedly working with the South Africans.⁸⁰ Among the detainees were a number of prominent Ndonga officials, such as SWAPO camp chief administrator and Central Committee member, Victor Nkandi, fuelling theories that spy accusations were also motivated by an ethnic rivalry between Solomon Hawala and other Kwanyamas at command headquarters and Peter Nanyemba's Ndonga

allies. Well-educated SWAPO leaders, especially those who had received scholarships to study in the United States during the 1960s, were frequently named in accused spies' interrogations as being responsible for leading the collaboration with the enemy. High-ranking officials within SWAPO security were arrested by others in the apparatus.⁸¹ And in 1988 even President Sam Nujoma's wife, Kowambo Nujoma, and brother-in-law and Central Committee member, Aaron Muchimba, were detained in Lubango.

The methods of interrogation and detention experienced by 'spies' were very similar. Having been separated from all other camp inhabitants by armed PLAN personnel, the accused was led to a group of commanders for questioning, usually at the Karl Marx Reception Centre.⁸² There they were asked to offer an account of experiences before and since entering exile. When the accused was told that they had forgotten to mention their work as enemy agents and denied these claims, torture followed until a confession was made. Torture took place over days, and sometimes over weeks and months, and usually involved the accused being stripped naked and tied to poles while interrogators beat them with sticks. It was also common for accused spies to have hot water and painful ointments applied to their torture wounds, to be told to build their own graves and be buried in them until they were unconscious and to have close friends and family members living in exile threatened with death.

During their ordeal some accused spies were approached individually by an interrogator who indicated that they should fabricate a story about their collaboration with the South Africans. Those who did provide a fictional account, indicating where and when they were trained and their fellow agents, usually other Namibian exiles whom their interrogators pressured them to name, were taken to camps near to, but separated from, the other SWAPO settlements outside Lubango.⁸³ There they were detained in various dungeons with anywhere from a handful to more than 100 others who had also been accused of spying. Movement into and out of the dungeons was restricted by their physical structure, which, at 3 to 4 m deep, could only be entered and exited through a sink plate at one end, where guards inserted a ladder. Also, the camps in which the dungeons were located had their own commanders and guards, who ensured that detainees could not leave and outsiders could not enter the camp. At least twice a day inmates were permitted by guards to vacate their dungeon and use toilet facilities in the camps. Otherwise they were usually confined to their dungeon or assigned manual labour by the guards or commanders.⁸⁴ Detainees took their meals in the dungeons, usually left-over mealie-meal, rice and soup, which they were given once or twice daily. They slept in sacks that had carried food donated to SWAPO. With little

access to ventilation, nutrition and medical care, many suffered from poor health and died from illnesses thought to have been asthma, beriberi, cholera and tuberculosis. Other detainees were commanded to leave the dungeons and never returned to them.⁸⁵ Hundreds of persons detained in Lubango remain missing.⁸⁶

Who is responsible?

Given the nature and brutality of the spy purge in SWAPO's Lubango camps, it is not surprising that much of what has been written and said about them focuses on who is responsible. In 'A Report to the Namibian People,' an account of the Lubango spy detentions written by survivors in Angola shortly before their repatriation and Namibia's first democratic elections in 1989,⁸⁷ blame is laid, first and foremost, at the feet of SWAPO security and its leader, Solomon Hawala, 'the Butcher of Lubango'.⁸⁸ This analysis is supported by scholars Colin Leys, John Saul and Justine Hunter, whose writing links the Lubango detentions with the formation of the SWAPO security led by Solomon Hawala and its unchecked abuse of power.⁸⁹ It is also affirmed by ex-detainee participants in my research, who detailed the involvement of known security officials in their ordeals and indicated that Hawala, specifically, had led some of their interrogations, was a regular visitor in their detention camps and was involved in soliciting 'confessions' from all detainees who were released in conjunction with the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 in 1989.

Where sources differ is in the extent to which they portray senior SWAPO leaders as aware of and/or actively involved in supporting these abuses. For example, 'A Report to the Namibian People' emphasises President Nujoma's responsibility: 'Despite incessant appeals by members of the Organisation, including those under detention, to the leadership of SWAPO especially its President, to act timely and decisively in resolving the [early 1980s spy] crisis through investigation, the leading clique ... led by Sam Nujoma utterly and *deliberately* (italics mine) failed to launch an investigation, thereby exacerbating the crisis to the point where no solution could be found to avert it. The problem was in fact left in the hands of the ... so called SWAPO security'.⁹⁰ The authors further maintain that the SWAPO president used Hawala and his subordinates to drive 'a wedge between the political leadership and the military one' as a means of securing his own power. Colin Leys, John Saul and Justine Hunter provide another perspective. Whereas they note that Nujoma was the only person who had authority over SWAPO security, they also suggest that security's activities were beyond his control and he may

have been threatened by them, an argument strengthened by the fact that Nujoma's wife and brother-in-law were both detained.⁹¹ In a similar contrast, 'A Report' emphasises the culpability of all SWAPO leaders for not launching an investigation to resolve the spy crisis, while Leys, Saul and Hunter note that political leaders, especially those named during the interrogations, may have been directly threatened by it. My research participants also offer their own theories to account for the awareness and involvement of the leaders in the abuses at Lubango. Some maintain that Nujoma and/or other SWAPO leaders were fooled into believing that those detained were spies through false information planted in SWAPO by the South Africans.⁹² Others insist that, in addition to Solomon Hawala, there was some person or faction in the SWAPO political leadership deliberately using false claims about spies to eliminate rivals, especially those belonging to other tribes.

That some senior political leaders were aware of particular people who were detained and the location of camps in which detainees were held is beyond question. In late 1984 or early 1985,⁹³ Hidipo Hamutenya, SWAPO Secretary for Information and Publicity, visited Lubango, where he and others were involved in filming several detainees' confessions. According to Hamutenya, he was commissioned to this task by the SWAPO Political Bureau, whose members were discussing whether 'all those people that were being picked up were the agents of the enemy.'⁹⁴ It was thought that as Secretary for Information and Publicity, he and others trained in recording and film-making 'should go record these people, put their voice on tape ... so people are able to judge whether they were indeed credible'.⁹⁵ Those whose stories were recorded during Hamutenya's visit recall being pressured to reproduce their confessions in front of either him or other members of his entourage.⁹⁶

Detainees also remember visits by three other members of the Political Bureau, President Sam Nujoma, Secretary of Defence (after Nanyemba's death) Peter Mueshifhange and Administrative Secretary Moses Garoeb, each of whom addressed them at the parade ground.⁹⁷ Of particular significance to many ex-detainees is President Nujoma's visit on 21 April 1986, which they remember as the first time that they saw Nujoma at one of the detention camps. Oiva Angula's narration of Nujoma's speech delivered at Mungakwiyu, a camp located just outside the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre, closely resembles the accounts of others who were present on that occasion:

When Nujoma arrived in the company of Hawala and senior security officers, the whole atmosphere was tense. We were made to line up a hundred meters from the dungeons ... The SWAPO leader stepped forward ... 'Viva SWAPO! Viva PLAN! ... I greet you in the name of the Mandumes, the Witboois, the Mahereros and the

Ipumbus that you have betrayed ...⁹⁸ When Namibia is freed, SWAPO will parade you at Freedom Square. The Namibian people will decide what to do with you.' Before the SWAPO leader could finish ... some detainees raised their hands. 'Can I ask the President a question?' a detainee said. 'No, it's no time for questions' [a commander] intervened ... Hawala then motioned to Nujoma that it was time to go. They left unceremoniously.⁹⁹

For some ex-detainees this speech was a turning point in their understanding of their detention. Whereas previously many imagined that President Nujoma was unaware of what was happening in Lubango and that, once he knew, he would intervene on the detainees' behalf, Nujoma's 1986 visit and subsequent ones disabused them of this hope. Nonetheless, it seems likely that there were limits to what SWAPO leaders knew of the happenings in Lubango. Hamutenya indicates that he visited the detention camps only once, on which occasion he met only a few detainees and did not visit the places where they were imprisoned.¹⁰⁰ Based on ex-detainees' testimonies, it may be that Nujoma visited only a fraction of the total number detained, and he might never have seen the dungeons himself.¹⁰¹ There is no evidence that SWAPO political leaders were part of the interrogation of accused spies. Security appears to have maintained some contact with political leaders, at least with President Sam Nujoma, but the dispersal of information may have been limited. Certainly, its content remains opaque.

Even Solomon Hawala is unlikely to have known about all the activities of SWAPO security members. In the case of Pieters's and Angula's four-week detention outside Tobias Hainyeko some months before the new SWAPO security under Solomon Hawala was formally established, the matter appears to have been resolved when Tauno Hatuikulipi intervened with 'Lawrence', the *nom de guerre* of the man responsible for security at Tobias Hainyeko camp. Although the interrogation and detention methods used on this occasion resemble those experienced by detainees across the 1980s, Pieters doubts that Solomon Hawala or any security officials outside Hainyeko were aware of his 1980 detention.¹⁰² Even after Hawala became the head of SWAPO security in 1981 he did not live primarily in Lubango, but at command headquarters near the front, where he was responsible for co-ordinating day-to-day operations with PLAN.¹⁰³ He could not easily have known what all of these officials were doing while he was at the front, let alone more junior personnel responsible for maintaining security in particular camps.

Although such ambiguities make it difficult to apportion blame for what transpired in SWAPO's Lubango camps, they are critically important for

understanding how a spy discourse achieved its power there. In the camps, where inhabitants were at constant risk of South African violence and reliant on commanders to access information and other resources, senior SWAPO officials need not have naively believed in, or knowingly manipulated, a story about spies to create conditions for a purge. They need only have drawn attention to the threat of spies and played on exiles' fears of who these spies might be, and the methods they might be using. In turn, some officials used spy accusations to coerce and eliminate rivals. But they could never entirely contain the ambiguity of 'the spy', and the possibility that they too would become victims of its invisible power.

Notes

- 1 The story about Joseph Stephanus is derived from two of my interviews with him (29 May 2005; 31 May 2005). The interviews cited in this chapter are transcribed, paginated and available at the National Archives of Namibia and the University of the Western Cape's Mayibuye Centre. Although the details of Stephanus's personal story are his own, the general contours of his military training, his education at UNIN and his detention at Lubango overlap with many other sources that are cited in this chapter and my doctoral dissertation, 'Exile history: An ethnography of the SWAPO camps and the Namibian nation' (University of Michigan, 2009).
- 2 Christian A. Williams, 'Remembering St Therese: A Namibian mission school and the possibilities for its students' (MA Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2002); *Remembering St. Therese* (Windhoek: Out of Africa, 2003); 'Student political consciousness: Lessons from a Namibian mission school,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 3 (2004), 539–558.
- 3 'Northern Namibia' and 'southern Namibia' are used here to refer to two regions with distinct geographies and histories. Northern Namibia refers to the area north of the 'Red Line', a checkpoint established by the German colonial government in 1896 to protect cattle in southern Namibia, where settlers lived, from the rinderpest epidemic which had broken out to the north. Unlike southern Namibia, areas north of the Red Line were never settled by Europeans and were administered by indirect rule. By this definition, 'central Namibia', a label used by some to refer to the area between Windhoek and the Red Line, is a part of southern Namibia.
- 4 Stephanus, 31 May 2005, 11.
- 5 Ibid., 11–12.
- 6 Published histories include: Political Consultative Council, 'A report to the Namibian People: Historical account of the SWAPO Spy-Drama' (Windhoek: Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement, 1989, 1997); Nico Basson & Ben Motinga (eds). *Call Them Spies: A Documentary Account of the SWAPO Spy Drama*

- (Windhoek: Africa Communications Project, 1989); Paul Trehwela, 'A Namibian horror', *Searchlight South Africa*, 4 (1990), 78–93; *Inside Quatro: Uncovering the Exile History of the ANC and SWAPO* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2009), 140–158; Colin Leys & John S. Saul, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword* (London: James Currey, 1995), 53–58, 63–65; Siegfried Groth, *Namibia: The Wall of Silence* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1995); Justine Hunter, *Die Politik der Erinnerung und des Vergessens in Namibia: Umgang mit schweren Menschenrechtsverletzungen der Ära des bewaffneten Befreiungskampfes, 1966 bis 1989* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2008), 92–107. See also two films about SWAPO's Lubango detentions: *Nda Mona* (directed by Richard Pakleppa, 1999); *Testimony* (directed by the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement, 2003).
- 7 In my doctoral dissertation I discuss work by Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) and Harry West, *Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique* (Chicago: University of the Chicago Press, 2005), considering how these authors reframe the literature on witchcraft in anthropology ('Exile history', 123–127). Here I draw implicitly from Ashforth's and West's insights, applying them to the study of misfortune generally and suggesting how different discourses through which misfortune is explained (like witchcraft and spying) may inter-penetrate one another.
- 8 I discuss Cassinga at length in my doctoral dissertation and in an article titled 'National history in southern Africa: Reflections on the "Remember Cassinga?" Exhibition', *Kronos* 36 (2010), 207–250.
- 9 In her MA thesis, 'Our memories of the liberation war: How civilians in post war northern Namibia remember the war' (University of the Western Cape, 2003), Martha Akawa specifically examines suspicions and accusations about South African collaborators in Ovamboland.
- 10 See, for example, my research on the SWAPO Crisis of 1976 in 'Exile history', 73–118.
- 11 See, for example, Hans Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007, 29; Steve Swartbooi, Interview 21 September 2007, 21; Oiva Alikie Angola, 'Brutalised innocence: The turns of destiny and tyranny' (unpublished manuscript, given to the author), 64; 'Comrade President attends SWAPO Camps', *The Combatant*, 2, 4 (November 1980), 4–5; 'President Nujoma visits SWAPO camps', *The Combatant*, 2, 10 (May 1981), 7.
- 12 SWAPO President Sam Nujoma associated the South African attack on Cassinga with the work of spies: 'SWAPO President visits southern Angola', *The Combatant*, 3, 2 (September 1981), 4; Sam Nujoma, Interview 4 March 2008, 4–5.
- 13 Three individuals were frequently associated with spying after their dismissal from SWAPO: Mishake Muyongo, Andreas Shipanga and Leonard Philemon 'Castro' Nangolo. Muyongo, Shipanga and Castro could be linked to one another

- in a seamless narrative of South African spying: 'Racist hopes surviving on malicious propaganda', *The Combatant*, February 1986, 10–11.
- 14 Some Oshiwambo-speaking, northern Namibians had never travelled outside the Ovamboland region to southern Namibia, where people spoke different languages and lived in segregated townships. Ellen Namhila was not the only exile to discover upon first arriving in a SWAPO camp that 'there were other language groups in Namibia besides Oshiwambo to which I belonged', in *The Price of Freedom* (Windhoek: New Namibia Books, 1997), 12.
- 15 Emma Kambangula, Interview 15 February 2007.
- 16 For example, Steve Swartbooi, Interview 29 January 2007, 12.
- 17 Nama, coloured and Baster are categories that were used by the South African government to classify Namibia's inhabitants and which Namibians often use to identify themselves. As suggested, they all have a racial component.
- 18 Pauline Dempers, Interview 23 May 2007; Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007; Stephanus, Interview 31 May 2005.
- 19 For example, Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007, 27.
- 20 Joseph Stephanus and Steve Swartbooi, Interview 25 April 2009.
- 21 The word *mbwiti* literally refers to 'weeds' and connotes impurity.
- 22 Kambangula, Interview 15 February 2007, 12; Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007, 28.
- 23 Nambinga Kati, Interview 8 December 2007, 28.
- 24 Kati, Interview 8 December 2007, 28.
- 25 Kambangula, Interview 15 February 2007, 12–13; Kati, Interview 8 December 2007, 28–29; Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007, 28–29; Stephanus, Interview 31 May 2005, 10; S. Swartbooi, Interview 21 September 2007.
- 26 Maija Hiltunen, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in Ovambo* (Helsinki: Suomen Antropologinen Seura, 1986). Hiltunen worked for the Finnish Missionary Society in Ovamboland from 1958 to 1962 and from 1964 to 1966. Her text draws primarily from material collected and written by Finnish missionaries since the 1870s when they first began to work in the Ovamboland region. See also *Good Magic in Ovambo* (Helsinki: Suomen Antropologinen Seura, 1993).
- 27 Hiltunen, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in Ovambo*, 44–45.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 59–67.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 61.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 62.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 63.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 24–25, 46. In some southern African witchcraft traditions, witches may harm their victims through sexual intercourse by means of a 'tokoloshe', a familiar which works on the witch's behalf. Hiltunen, however, does not identify this as one of the powers of owls, the Ovambo familiar, 65–67.

- 33 Note Adam Ashforth's distinction between witchcraft as 'belief' and witchcraft as plausible explanation in a social context: Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa*, 123.
- 34 Kati, Interview 8 December 2007, 28.
- 35 Stephanus, Interview 31 May 2007, 10.
- 36 Pieters, 9 September 2007, 29.
- 37 For example, Jackson Mwalundange, Interview 23 April 2009.
- 38 University of Namibia, Katjavivi Collection, Series B1, Category 3, File 1 'Report to the President: Office of the Administrative Secretary', 1977.
- 39 For example, Namhila, *Price of Freedom*, 45–47; Swartbooi, Interview 29 January 2007, 15–17. In one particularly striking instance, an interlocutor narrated a story about an Ovambo man from the north accusing an Ovambo woman from the south of witchcraft because, after going to bed with him, the woman had offended him by 'touching him on his genitals'. Thus, 'the *mbwiti* woman', one of the chief objects of the spy discourse, had been declared a witch.
- 40 For example, Swartbooi, Interview 21 September 2007, 24.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 42 Exiles who lived in SWAPO camps during the mid-1970s report instances in which accused spies were tied to gates and trees in places where all camp inhabitants could see them. Even under these circumstances, however, the accused would have had little opportunity to express themselves (Ndamono Ndeulita, Interview 18 March 2007, 2; Phil Ya Nangoloh, Interview 19 February 2007, 4).
- 43 Immanuel Engombe, Junius Ikondja, Ndamono Ndeulita, Hizipo Shikondombolo, Interview 29 July 2007; Swartbooi, Interview 21 September 2007, 38.
- 44 Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy*, 66; Max Gluckman, 'Gossip and Scandal', *Current Anthropology*, 4, 3 (1963), 307–316.
- 45 Andries Basson, Interview 30 May 2007, 15–16, 21–22; Kandi Nehova, Interview 7 April 2008, 14–15; Pieters, Interview 21 May 2007, 1; 9 September 2007, 27; 14 November 2007, 36; Stephanus, Interview 31 May 2005.
- 46 Susan Brown, 'Diplomacy by other means', in Colin Leys & John S. Saul, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-Edged Sword* (London: James Currey, 1995), 27.
- 47 The exact locations of all the SWAPO camps outside Lubango are noted in Annex I to 'The Report of the United Nations Mission on Detainees', 11 October 1989 (Vereinigste Evangelische Mission, Groth Collection, File No. 1335).
- 48 Brown, 'Diplomacy', 30, 32; Leys & Saul, *Liberation Struggle*, 55.
- 49 Apparently, the SADF was monitoring SWAPO radio communications to an extent that SWAPO officials did not grasp at the time (Leys & Saul, *Liberation Struggle*, 55).
- 50 Brown, 'Diplomacy', 27, 29.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 35.

- 52 Koevoet is Afrikaans for crowbar.
- 53 Brown, 'Diplomacy', 31; Stephanus, Interview 29 May 2007, 5; S. Swartbooi, Interview 21 September 2007, 19–20.
- 54 For example, most of the UNIN class of 1981 was called to the front immediately after graduation (Michael Kahuika and Joseph Stephanus, Interview 20 September 2007, 2).
- 55 Leys & Saul, 'Liberation struggle', 55.
- 56 The actual location of command headquarters shifted repeatedly in response to the war (Brown 1995, 31; Willy Swartbooi, Interview 12 December 2007; Charles Namoloh, Interview 9 July 2008).
- 57 Pieters Interview 21 May 2007, 3; W. Swartbooi 12 December 2007, 8.
- 58 Leys & Saul, 1995, 55; Pieters, Interview 21 May 2007, 3; Andries Basson, Interview 22 September 2007. Ndonga and Kwanyama refer to the two largest sub-ethnic groups among the Ovambo.
- 59 Basson, Interview 22 September 2007, 18; Kahuika & Stephanus, Interview 20 September 2007, 3–4; Pieters, Interview 21 May 2007, 8.
- 60 Basson, Interview 22 September 2007, 18; Pieters, Interview 21 May 2007, 8; Hunter, *Die Politik der Erinnerung*, 95–96.
- 61 Hunter, *Die Politik der Erinnerung*, 95–96.
- 62 Basson, Interview 30 May 2007, 8, 13; Kahuika & Stephanus, Interview 20 September 2007, 4; Pieters & W. Swartbooi, Interview 9 September 2007, 36; Leys & Saul, 1995, 55–56; Hunter, *Die Politik der Erinnerung*, 99. Since at least the mid-1970s PLAN had appointed several commanders, including Jackson Kakwambi, 'Pondo' and James Hawala (no relation to Solomon 'Jesus' Hawala), responsible for 'intelligence' and 'counter-intelligence'. It seems that both the training and formal mandate of intelligence and counter-intelligence differed from that of the new apparatus, some of whose personnel had been trained in the Eastern bloc and whose responsibilities extended beyond PLAN to SWAPO in exile as a whole (Basson, Interview 30 May 2007, 8; Nehova, Interview 7 April 2007, 10, 12; Pieters, Interview 21 May 2007, 2; Pieters & W. Swartbooi, Interview 9 September 2007, 34–35, 36; W. Swartbooi, Interview 12 December 2007, 7).
- 63 Angola, Interview 14 July 2008, 72–84; Pieters, Interview 21 May 2007, 1–2; Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007, 19, 31, 35; 'A Report to the Namibian People', 16–17.
- 64 Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007, 19.
- 65 Basson, Interviews 30 May 2007 and 22 September 2007; Kahuika & Stephanus, Interview 9.9.2007; Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007; S. Swartbooi, Interview 21 September 2007. Passing through the Reception Centre was standard procedure for those joining SWAPO in Angola from the late 1970s, although the interrogations and detentions were not.

- 66 Basson, Interviews 30 May 2007; 22 September 2007.
- 67 Basson, Interviews 30 May 2007, 13; 22 September 2007, 20–21, 23. Apparently, Solomon Hawala was not part of these meetings himself.
- 68 Basson, Interviews 30 May 2007, 8, 15, 16; 22 September 2007, 21–22.
- 69 Basson, Interview 22 September 2007, 21.
- 70 'A Report to the Namibian People', 17.
- 71 According to Colin Leys and John Saul's sources, Nanyemba hoped at this meeting 'to get support for a radical reconstruction of the PLAN command structure which would have put power decisively into the hands of a reduced general staff recruited by himself' (Leys & Saul, 1995, 55).
- 72 Angula, Interview 14 July 2008; Basson, Interviews 30 May 2007; 22 September 2007; Dempers, Interview 23 May 2007; Pieters, Interviews 21 May 2007; 9 September 2007.
- 73 Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007, 27.
- 74 Angula, Interview 14 July 2008, 88.
- 75 Ibid., 88–94; Dempers, Interview 23 May 2007, 3; Pieters, Interviews 21 May 2007, 1; 9 September 2007, 25–26.
- 76 Angula, Interview 14 July 2008, 95–96; 'A Report to the Namibian People', 15–16.
- 77 The following account of the arrest, interrogation and detention of accused spies in Lubango draws from the previously cited published histories as well as archival sources and personal interviews with ex-detainees: Vereinigte Evangelische Mission, Groth Collection, File Nos. 1369a, 1369b, 'Tagebuchaufzeichnungen'; Oiva Angula, Interview 14 July 2008; Andries Basson, Interview 30 May 2007; Theresia Basson, Interview 1 June 2005; Pauline Dempers, Interview 23 May 2007; Kala Gertze, Interview 21 February 2007; Michael Kahuika, Interview 16 May 2007; Michael Kahuika & Joseph Stephanus, Interview 20 September 2007; Emma Kambangula, Interview 15 February 2007; Willem Meyer, Interviews 16 June 2005; 17 June 2005; 'I left the country on the 15th of November', 1990 (unpublished manuscript, given to the author); Hans Pieters Interview 21 May 2007; Hans Pieters and Willy Swartbooi Interview 9 September 2007; Joseph Stephanus Interviews 29 May 2005; 31 May 2005; 18 September 2007; Steve Swartbooi, Interview 29 January 2007; Willy Swartbooi, Interview 12 December 2007. Where individuals identify details that differ from the experiences narrated in all the aforementioned sources, they are cited accordingly.
- 78 Before being transported to Lubango accused spies sometimes were taken to Viana, a town and SWAPO camp located about 20 km south-east of Luanda. The camp was used by a variety of SWAPO members who were travelling through Luanda *en route* to other locations.
- 79 In preparing my master's thesis on St Therese, one of the four secondary schools offering a standard 10 (grade 12) education to black students in southern Namibia

- by 1976, I learned that 23 of the 27 former students who travelled into exile were detained as accused spies. One of the four who were not detained died in exile before 1980; the other three left SWAPO, apparently to avoid detention (*Remembering St Therese*, Windhoek: Out of Africa, 2003).
- 80 Alex Kamwi, Interview 26 February 2007, 3, 8–9; Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007, 4, 19; 'A Report to the Namibian People', 20–21; Leys & Saul, 1995, 63. It may be, as some allege, that Caprivians were among the first to be accused as spies and detained in dungeons during the early 1980s.
- 81 Among the most commonly mentioned are James Hawala and 'Babino' Khaibeb, who, according to research participants based at defence headquarters and command headquarters, were responsible during the early 1980s for PLAN intelligence and counter-intelligence (Pieters, Interview 21 May 2007; Pieters & W. Swartbooi, Interview 9 September 2007).
- 82 Soldiers who guarded accused spies during their interrogations and led them to and from questioning did not interrogate or apply torture themselves. There were instances in which guards tortured accused spies after their detentions, however (Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007, 27; Swartbooi, Interview 21 September 2007, 25, 38).
- 83 The names and locations of the primary camps where most detainees were held are Etale (aka Etare), about 15 km north-east of Lubango, Minya (aka Ominya, Security Prison), some 16 km north of Lubango, and Mungakwiyu (aka Bwana's Base), Shoombe's Base and Ethiopia Camp, all of which are within a kilometre of one another at least 20 km, possibly 25 km, north-east of Lubango, on the edge of the Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre. Estimates are based on the 'Report of the United Missions on Detainees', conversations with ex-detainees and a trip made by the author to Lubango in December 2007.
- 84 Women inmates detained at Minya Base usually spent the day outside their dungeons and helped with various projects.
- 85 Ex-detainees remember numerous occasions in which those imprisoned in the camps were called out and then disappeared, several of which Justine Hunter narrates (*Die Politik der Erinnerung*, 104–105).
- 86 Ex-detainees under the aegis of the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement published a document entitled 'Lists of Namibia's "Missing Persons"' (Windhoek: BWS, 1996). The lists name 708 people, including 554 SWAPO detainees who have not been accounted for and 93 SWAPO detainees whose deaths were witnessed by repatriated detainees.
- 87 Hans Pieters, Interview 22 July 2008.
- 88 'A Report to the Namibian People', 13, 15.
- 89 Leys & Saul, *Liberation Struggle*, 55–56; Hunter, *Die Politik der Erinnerung*, 97–100.

- 90 'A Report to the Namibian People', 13.
- 91 Ibid., 14; Leys & Saul, *Liberation Struggle*, 56; Hunter, *Die Politik der Erinnerung*, 99–100.
- 92 One piece of evidence supporting this claim which merits further scrutiny is 'Spies from nowhere', an article published in *Times of Namibia* (23 November 1990). The author offers an account of how the South African government planted false information about spies in SWAPO. The article is based on the testimony of a Cuban officer who liaised between SWAPO, Angolan and Cuban forces in Angola and later defected to a Western country.
- 93 Hidipo Hamutenya, Interview 2 April 2007, 5; Siegfried Groth, *Namibia: Breaking the Wall of Silence* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1995), 115.
- 94 Hamutenya, Interview 2 April 2007, 7.
- 95 Ibid., 6.
- 96 Basson, Interview 22 September 2007, 27; Groth *Breaking*, 115.
- 97 Basson, Interview 22 September 2007, 27; Kahuika & Stephanus, Interview 20 September 2007, 11–12, 12–13; Meyer, 'I left the country on the 15th of November 1976,' 3; Stephanus, Interview 18 September 2007, 38; Swartbooi, Interview 21 September 2007, 31; Angula, Interview 14 July 2008, 152–153; Groth. *Breaking*, 107; Trewhela, 'A Namibian horror', *Searchlight South Africa*, 4, 1990, 89–90. According to the latter source, Sam Nujoma and Peter Mueshange were accompanied on one of their visits by Peter Tsheehama, SWAPO Representative to Central Africa, and Ananias Angula.
- 98 Prominent figures in the early resistance to colonial rule in Namibia.
- 99 Angula, 14 July 2008, 137–138. See also Groth, *Breaking*, 125; Trewhela, 'Namibian horror', 89–90; Gertze, Interview 21 February 2007, 6; Kahuika & Stephanus, Interview 20 September 2007, 11–12, 12–13; S. Swartbooi, 21 September 2007, 30–31.
- 100 Hamutenya, Interview 2 April 2007, 5, 6.
- 101 Gertze, Interview 21 February 2007, 6; S. Swartbooi Interview 21 September 2007, 30–31.
- 102 Pieters & W. Swartbooi, Interview 9 September 2007, 35.
- 103 Basson, Interview 21 May 2007, 8; Pieters, Interview 9 September 2007, 21.

CHAPTER 8

THE FREEDOM PARK FRACAS AND THE DIVISIVE LEGACY OF SOUTH AFRICA'S 'BORDER WAR'/LIBERATION STRUGGLE

Gary Baines

Every war is fought twice: militarily and then discursively. The war of words or discursive struggle tends to be particularly acrimonious following civil wars. This is true of South Africa's 'Border War'/liberation struggle, which is far from being a closed chapter. Notwithstanding the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the legacy of this conflict remains divisive. Contestations over the meaning and memory of the war have manifested themselves in a number of ways. These include tensions during the integration of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the armed wings of the liberation movements and a commemorative crisis that followed the erection of new memorials, such as Freedom Park, to honour heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle. A fracas followed the decision of the park's trustees to omit the names of deceased SADF soldiers from the Wall of Names. This chapter examines how Freedom Park became the site of struggle between self-styled representatives of SADF veterans and cultural elites of the post-apartheid order. It suggests that this controversy exemplifies the functioning of memory politics in transitional societies.

If one person's 'terrorist' is another's 'freedom fighter', then South Africa's white minority's 'Border War' was the black majority's 'liberation struggle'. The term 'Border War' was usually assigned to the war waged in Angola/Namibia, which was designated as the 'operational area' by the South African Defence Force (SADF). In fact, the State Security Council declared *all* South African territory an 'operational area' in a proclamation issued in 1985.¹ And the 1957 Defence Act empowered the SADF to counter external threats and internal unrest.² As an arm of the apartheid security forces, the SADF fought against whoever it defined as enemies of the state,

whether they were Cubans, the armies of the frontline states, guerrilla insurgents or ‘terrorists’ operating in the country. Unlike Steenkamp, who holds that the liberation struggle and the ‘Border War’ were separate issues,³ I believe that the one was actually an extension of the other; that the country’s low-intensity civil war was very much part of the liberation movement’s struggle for decolonisation that occurred within the context of the late Cold War.

Between 1967 and 1992 approximately 600 000 young, white males were conscripted by the SADF to defend apartheid. These national servicemen were initially deployed in Namibia and Angola, but from the mid-1980s were called up to police the black townships.⁴ The militarisation of white society was reinforced by social institutions, such as the family, education system, mainstream media and the churches. By far the majority of conscripts regarded their duties as a necessary commitment to make in order to ensure the continuation of white power and privilege. Occasionally, those liable for national service (or *diensplig*) refused to be conscripted, and some national servicemen objected to patrolling the townships. Some supported the campaign of the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) for alternative forms of service. And in rare instances national servicemen went into exile to join the ranks of the armed wings of the African National Congress (ANC) or Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC).⁵ But, by and large, they believed the apartheid regime’s ‘total onslaught’ rhetoric that the forces of African nationalism and communism were intent on destroying white society in South Africa. With the end of the conflict (and the phasing out of conscription), however, former soldiers have had time to reflect upon their experiences. Some have published memoirs or posted their stories on Internet sites, while others have recounted their stories to journalists.⁶ These soldier-authors have sought to make sense of their experiences during the country’s transition from white minority to black majority rule.

I have argued elsewhere⁷ that certain of these former SADF national servicemen believe that they have not been acknowledged for doing their duties and making sacrifices on behalf of their country. They have chosen to remember the part that they played in making the country safe for continued white rule, only to be betrayed by untrustworthy politicians. Others wish to shrug off the shame of being regarded as vanquished soldiers who lost the war and so ended on the wrong side of history. Others have dismissed any suggestion that they share a measure of blame for being complicit in an oppressive system and have embraced victimhood instead. And still others have disavowed victimhood in favour of reaffirming their contribution to the making of a ‘new’ South Africa. Clearly, ex-conscripts are not a homogeneous

group and do not speak with a single or cohesive voice. And the individuals and organisations that became involved in the Freedom Park fracas were not necessarily representative of all SADF veterans.

Memorials serve as significant markers of postcolonial society's (re)construction of its past. This is evident from Richard Werbner's critique of the memorialisation of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. In developing his notion of a 'postcolonial memorial complex' in respect of the Heroes Acre site in Harare, Werbner queries the privileged place accorded to the struggle narrative in the war memorial.⁸ The narrative constructed by the leadership of the ruling party serves to define the nation and becomes part of the official history of the new nation state. Heroes' Acre on the outskirts of Windhoek serves much the same purpose in Namibia.⁹ However, the commemoration of the liberation struggle in post-apartheid South Africa exemplified by Freedom Park does not mimic the Zimbabwean and Namibian models of remembrance. Whereas the governments and ruling parties of Zimbabwe and Namibia considered it wiser or more expedient to pursue a policy of reconciliation that does not stir up past conflicts,¹⁰ South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) favoured an approach that investigated and constructed a record of human rights violations. Although those who fully disclosed their involvement in politically motivated human rights abuses were granted amnesty, the TRC's findings were deemed to have vindicated the conduct of the liberation armies at the expense of the security forces by apartheid apologists. Instead of promoting reconciliation and unity, the process of memorialisation has become divisive. This will be illustrated by reference to the counter-memorials that have been erected to honour those who served in the SADF after the trustees of the state-sponsored Freedom Park memorial project declined to do so.

My approach to memorialisation is informed by Annie Coombes's seminal study of memorials and museums in which she examines the tensions inherent in narratives of belonging in the imagined community of the South African nation and whether these can (and should) be resolved.¹¹ It also owes something to Sabine Marshall's exploration of the ANC government's strategy of juxtaposing new memorials with existing colonial and apartheid-era monuments so as to 'counter' the commemoration of a singular version of the past.¹² By reference to a controversy that erupted over the flagship memorial project, Freedom Park, it will be shown that the relationship between reconciliation and nation-building is a fraught one. Memorialisation is often a highly charged political process that leads to contestation between competing interpretations of past events. This contestation, in turn, raises questions that should concern us: who gets to claim ownership of the past and, in particular, the narrative of the liberation struggle/'Border War', and who gets to define

the nation in post-apartheid South Africa? This chapter explores these and related issues.

A changing landscape of memory

The apartheid regime erected a monument to pay tribute to those who lost their lives in defence of the Republic of South Africa.¹³ A twice-life sized statue of an infantryman¹⁴ was erected on a hill called Klapperkop south of Pretoria (now Tshwane). It is situated at the entrance of Fort Klapperkop, a military museum that houses artefacts of the South African War (1899–1902). Unveiled on 31 May 1979 by the then Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Security, P.W. Botha, the memorial includes a realist statue of a soldier in a combative posture that resembles the design of war monuments the world over (Figure 8.1).

The site became the locus of regular Republic and Remembrance Day memorial parades. On one such occasion, P.W. Botha admonished the audience with these words:

... if you become faint hearted, and if you become tired, and if you are filled with despair, go to Pretoria, to Fort Klapperkop, and look at the simple statue of a soldier in combat uniform who gazes far over the horizon of the future, and look at the symbol of that monument which looks to the future and not the past, with faith in the Lord and with the knowledge that civilization must triumph.¹⁵



Figure 8.1 Fort Klapperkop: Statue of a uniformed soldier
(Photo: Dudley Baines)

The equation of white society with civilisation was commonplace in the rhetoric of the apartheid regime, and the invocation of God's name was a feature of Calvinist-inspired Afrikaner nationalism. Nonetheless, it was no guarantee of victory. Indeed, as the conflict dragged on, ceremonies staged at the site by the SADF failed to reproduce the ritual of national self-sacrifice in apartheid South Africa that was necessary to legitimise the war effort. The absence of reaffirmation had a deleterious effect on public morale and memory. For, as James Mayo argues, 'Memorials lose the forcefulness of their meaning when past wars and events are forgotten. A nation may cherish the memory of a particular war, but when persons and places are forgotten their monuments are not preserved and honor rituals are no longer held.'¹⁶

The memorial site on Klapperkop also includes a series of walls to which the names of deceased soldiers inscribed on slate plaques are affixed. Nearly 2 000 names are inscribed on these plaques (Figure 8.2).¹⁷

At annual Remembrance Day parades prior to 1994 tributes were paid to these soldiers, as well as those who lost their lives in the Korean and World Wars. However, since the transition the site has been seldom used for official ceremonies. During a 2003 visit to the site, I spotted a solitary wreath and gained the impression that the memorial had been neglected. In fact, the status of the Klapperkop memorial has diminished since the integration of the statutory and non-statutory armed forces into the South African National Defence Force



Figure 8.2 Fort Klapperkop Memorial Wall
(Photo: Dudley Baines)

(SANDF). A wreath-laying ceremony in 2005 was designed to ease tensions between former enemies, the SADF and UmKhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), the armed wings of the ANC and PAC, respectively. This symbolic gesture was an attempt to find common ground and 'bury the hatchet'.¹⁸ However, the ceremony did little to heal rifts in the ranks of the SANDF. And the choice of site for the ceremony—Freedom Park rather than Klapperkop—suggested that the latter had been rendered virtually invisible, notwithstanding its elevated position on the Tshwane landscape. It has become a forgotten memorial to an undeclared war.

By contrast, Freedom Park has been described as 'a major landmark that is reshaping and enhancing the skyline of the capital city'.¹⁹ Erected upon Salvokop south of Pretoria's CBD, it was deliberately juxtaposed with the nearby Voortrekker Monument, which was erected to commemorate the centenary of the Great Trek and celebrates Afrikaner nationalism's heyday.²⁰ With a budget in excess of R700 million, Freedom Park was one of the most ambitious legacy heritage projects championed by the Mbeki presidency in terms of the National Heritages Resource Act No. 25 of 1999.²¹ As a state-funded memorial site, Freedom Park is dedicated to fostering a sense of national identity. Its mission statement commits the project to the following:

- Provide a pioneering and empowering heritage destination in order to mobilise for reconciliation and nation-building in our country
- Reflect upon our past, improving our present and building our future as a united nation
- Contribute continentally and internationally to the formation of better human understanding among nations and peoples²²

This inclusive vision is derived from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which suggested that there should be some form of symbolic reparations for those who suffered during the apartheid years. According to the TRC report, symbolic reparations are those that aid in 'the communal processes of remembering and commemorating the pain and victories of the past'.²³ To this end, it proposed a memorial site that would enable visitors to come to terms with South Africa's divided history by providing a place where people could not only mourn the loss of loved ones who died in various conflicts, but also celebrate the victory of democracy and freedom. In short, the site would enable the public to remember the struggle for humanity and freedom.

The Freedom Park Trust not only derived its mandate from the TRC, but followed its lead in adopting the notion of 'ubuntu' as the foundational formula for an integrated nationalism.²⁴ Ubuntu is an invented tradition and type of

cultural essentialism that seeks to minimise the historical fault lines in South African society. It is a synthesis of African philosophy that stresses a common humanity and Christian theology that emphasises the need for forgiveness as a prerequisite for reconciliation. Championed by former Archbishop Desmond Tutu who coined the phrase ‘rainbow nation’ to describe the nascent nation in the post-apartheid period, ubuntu became the cornerstone of the nation-building project. Nationalism is an ideology of integration that serves to exclude those that can be defined as ‘different’.²⁵ Notwithstanding the Africanist cultural nationalism promoted by President Mbeki, the trustees of Freedom Park conceived of the nation in inclusive terms. According to a statement on its website, the project was committed to ‘foster a new national consciousness’, ‘play a primary role in healing our nation’s wounds by uniting the diverse peoples of South Africa’ and so forth.²⁶ In order to promote such goals, the park hosted ritualistic cleansing ceremonies that symbolically ‘purified’ traces of the country’s divisive past.

Freedom Park’s 52-hectare site includes *Sikhumbuto* (siSwati for ‘those who have passed on’), a commemorative compound designed to showcase the spirit of the nation and ensure that the history represented is based on the principles of redress and corrective action.²⁷ The precinct comprises indoor features such as the Gallery of Leaders and a sanctuary with an eternal flame. The outdoor features comprise an amphitheatre and the Wall of Names.



Figure 8.3 The Wall of Names, Freedom Park
(Photo: freedompark.org.co.za)

The latter is actually a series of inter-connected walls nearly 700 m in length and reaching at least 6 m in height in parts (Figure 8.3).

The walls make provision for listing the names of all who died during the conflicts that shaped present-day South Africa. These are enumerated as follows:

- Pre-colonial wars
- Genocide
- Slavery
- Wars of resistance
- The South African Wars (First and Second Anglo-Boer Wars)
- World War I
- World War II
- The liberation struggle

It is envisaged that some of the lists of names will be representative of only those who died in these conflicts, but that others will be as definitive as possible.²⁸ Space is provided for the inclusion of 136 000 names on the walls. At the time of my visit to the site in 2008, 75 000 names had been verified for inclusion on the walls. Space has been allocated for some 5 000 names of (deceased) 'heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle who laid down their lives for freedom'.²⁹

The Freedom Park Trust made an appeal for the nomination of names to be included on the Wall of Names as part of a public participation process.³⁰ Interpreting the directive to include SADF soldiers who died in combat during the apartheid era, veterans' organisations submitted the names of fallen comrades to the Trust. They sought to have these names included in the wall's roll of honour. However, the Trust summarily rejected these submissions.³¹ This perceived slight caused a controversy that was further fuelled by the intervention of Afriforum, a lobby group that took up the issue on behalf of some of these veterans. Together with its sister organisation, the trade union Solidarity, Afriforum serves as a watchdog for the protection of minority group rights.³² Afriforum has repeatedly accused the ANC government of deliberately undermining the rights of white Afrikaners. It has opposed measures such as affirmative action, which it regards as being designed to marginalise its constituency. Yet, its assertion of an exclusive white Afrikaner identity sits uneasily with its demand for recognition of their contribution to the making of the new 'rainbow' nation. These countervailing imperatives serve to reinforce the fault lines in society at large, as well as in the ranks of the SANDF. In fact, little headway has been made with respect to accommodating all stakeholders and special interest groups who put forward suggestions as to who should be included on the Wall of Names.

In January 2007, Afriforum made further representation on the matter to the Freedom Park Trust.³³ This time it requested that additional concerns be addressed. It asked for recognition of the fact that the innocent civilians and security force members who died as a result of ANC ‘terror attacks’ should be acknowledged as victims of the liberation struggle. This effectively sought to broaden the base of those deserving of tribute to all who could lay claim to have suffered in some way or another from the violence of the country’s conflicts. Afriforum also objected to the proposal to include the names of Cuban soldiers who died in Angola fighting the SADF on the grounds that they were fighting for communist world domination and not freedom.³⁴ The CEO of Freedom Park Trust, Wally Serote, agreed to recognise the victims of ‘terror’ (although he did not elaborate as to how victimhood would be defined, nor as to how such victims would be honoured). However, he reiterated the Trust’s previous stand that the names of deceased SADF personnel did not deserve inclusion on the wall on the grounds that they had fought to preserve apartheid and defeat the struggle for liberation.³⁵ This was regarded by former soldiers as rubbing salt into their wounds: the betrayal by apartheid politicians of what they had fought to preserve was followed by the ANC government’s refusal to acknowledge their contribution to the making of the ‘new’ South Africa.³⁶



Figure 8.4 Steve Hofmeyr salutes the alternative monument (<http://www.centurionnews.co.za/artikel.asp?nID=813>)

Certain SADF veterans responded to the perceived affront by erecting an alternative memorial at the access road to Salvokop on 16 January 2007.³⁷ It was dedicated by shamelessly self-promoting singer, activist and SADF veteran, Steve Hofmeyr (Figure 8.4).³⁸

The plaque mounted on the memorial bears the following inscription in Afrikaans, English and north Sotho:

For All Those Who Fell heeding the Call of Their Country including those whose names are not on the Freedom Park wall. So We May never Forget the Dearly Fought Freedom of all Ideologies, Credos, and Cultures and their Respective Contributions to our rich South African Heritage.

Obviously not all ideologies are committed to the cause of freedom—and white supremacy in the guise of apartheid was most certainly not—yet Hofmeyr suggests that all contributed equally to the making of the ‘new’ South Africa. He also invokes the trope of historical impartiality to validate his view that public memorials should represent all sides where there is contestation over the meaning of past events. This much is evident from the plaque’s poorly worded (or translated) explanation of the memorial’s symbolism:

This triangular monument’s various sides symbolise the fact that history is not one-sided. It is erected to ensure that those who will, as a result of Freedom Park’s one sided usage of history are not being honoured, will get the recognition they deserve. Even though this monument does not cost the R716 million that Freedom Park cost, it is a sincere effort to pay homage to those who died in conflicts.

The unnamed conflicts presumably refer to those within living memory, that is, to the ‘Border War’. The plaque also, rather pointedly, quotes a statement attributed to Serote: ‘Because at the depth of the heart of every man beats the love for freedom.’ The citation of the Freedom Park CEO suggests Serote’s insincerity and even hypocrisy in not including SADF members on the wall of names. The erection of this cheap counter-memorial was a token but symbolic act by a group of disgruntled, former SADF, national servicemen protesting the perceived exclusiveness of Freedom Park’s remembrance of conflicts in the country’s recent past.

A meeting involving Afriforum executive member Kallie Kriel, Hofmeyr and the trustees of Freedom Park was held subsequently on 30 January 2007. Serote proclaimed this an opportunity to promote dialogue and further debate on the SADF issue. While he spoke of the need for inclusivity, Serote is also quoted as saying that ‘the issue of reconciliation and the past can be pitted

against the history of the SADF.³⁹ His mention of the fact that the names of SADF combatants had been recorded elsewhere was presumably a reference to the Klapperkop memorial. Yet, there was no discernible attempt by Serote to appreciate why Hofmeyr, Kriel and company felt compelled to erect their own alternative monument rather than gather at the SADF site. For his part, Kriel reckoned that: 'To sing the praises of participants in the struggle while the rest are vilified will be a recipe for undesirable polarisation.'⁴⁰ A subsequent workshop, which included representatives from the South African Veterans Association, the Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereniging, SA Heritage and the departments of defence and justice, was held on 8 February 2007.⁴¹ The workshop apparently did little to resolve the differences of opinion and the issue became polarised and racialised. According to one report, it 'was split between those intent on reconciliation and others dead against displaying oppressors' names in the same place as those of freedom fighters'.⁴²

Subsequent steps aimed at resolving the impasse proved counter productive. A road linking the two sites on proximate kopjes (hills) has done little to challenge the mindset that regards them as symbols of two mutually exclusive versions of South Africa's past. This much was evident when Major-General Gert Opperman, the chief executive officer of the Voortrekker Monument and Heritage Foundation (now retired), announced that his organisation would no longer participate in the debate about Freedom Park's Wall of Names and, instead, erect its own wall of remembrance for fallen SADF soldiers. He denied that the project was a reaction to the Freedom Park Trust's decision to exclude SADF members from the Wall of Names.⁴³ Consequently, a privately funded Wall of Remembrance with the names of SADF members who died between 1961 (the establishment of the Republic) and 1994 (the formation of the SANDF) was erected in the heritage site's garden. Apart from the semi-circular wall, the precinct comprises a small triangular memorial in honour of the 'unknown soldier'. At the unveiling ceremony held on 25 October 2009 (see Figure 8.5), former Chief of the SADF, General Constand Viljoen, remarked that the memorial wall was an acknowledgement of the guilt felt by those paying tribute to others who had sacrificed their lives for a free South Africa. It was some consolation for those families who had lost loved ones and whose names had been omitted from Freedom Park's Wall of Names.⁴⁴

The Wall of Remembrance is a project of the Directors of the Voortrekker Monument and Nature Reserve, a Section 21 company not for gain. It is being constantly updated to include the names of all who died while on active service (that is, in military operations) and those who died while on duty in 'other incidents' (that is, accidents). The initial figure of 2 521 names has since been supplemented as a result of Opperman's inclusive approach to adding

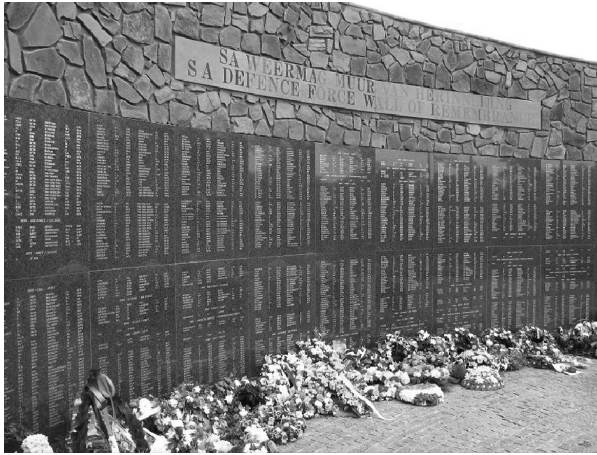


Figure 8.5 Wreaths at the SADF Memorial Wall
(Photo: Gary Baines)

names.⁴⁵ Ceremonies in 2010 and 2011 were attended by the next-of-kin of the deceased, representatives of various military veterans' organisations and political parties as well as former SADF generals, who laid wreaths. A noteworthy addition to the dignitaries at the latter ceremony was the (new) acting CEO of Freedom Park, Peggy Photolo, whose presence was hailed by the media as (another) attempt by the organisations to 'bury the hatchet'.

However, the likelihood of the trustees of the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park finding common cause seems remote. The ANC insists that it wants Freedom Park and the Voortrekker Monument integrated into a single precinct. This was suggested as a strategy to counter the tendency of particular groupings to appropriate certain history and heritage as their own while disavowing a common past.⁴⁶ But the Voortrekker Monument and Heritage Foundation's board of directors has rejected amalgamation with Freedom Park and preferred to remain a Section 21 company, which was not financially dependent on government funding.⁴⁷ Its CEO, Opperman, rejects the current Freedom Park CEO and her predecessor's attempts to criminalise the SADF and impugn its integrity.⁴⁸ The Freedom Park fracas appears to symbolise irreconcilable memory regimes.

Discursive struggles and the politics of memory

Discursive struggles over the legacies of past wars continue in the guise of memory politics.⁴⁹ The rancour regarding Freedom Park's Wall of Names

hinges on the question of how the respective roles of the statutory and non-statutory forces during the 'Border War'/liberation struggle are defined. Many SADF veterans see themselves as having fought a legitimate and necessary war against the enemies of South Africa. They and their defenders contend that the Freedom Park Trust has not been consistent in upholding the principle of inclusivity when remembering those who lost their lives in South Africa's conflicts. Their case rests on the argument that combatants on both sides of the South African (or Anglo-Boer) Wars are inscribed on the wall of names, whereas the names of those who lost their lives in the liberation struggle are not offset by those killed in the 'Border War'. Both conflicts were arguably civil wars and rather than treat one side as victims and the other as perpetrators, it would be more even-handed to regard these conflicts as a shared tragedy. The premise of this viewpoint is that there is a moral equivalence between being prepared to sacrifice one's life for the armed struggle and defending white supremacy. Their opponents reject this viewpoint. For instance, the National Chair of the MK Veterans Association, Kebby Maphatsoe, contends that: 'You cannot equate the former freedom fighters, who were fighting for freedom of the people of South Africa, with the former soldiers of SADF who were fighting an unjust war.'⁵⁰ The ANC's claim to the moral high ground rests on the fact that the United Nations declared apartheid a crime against humanity and therefore the armed wings of the liberation movements had fought against an illegitimate regime.

The Afrikaner historian Hermann Giliomee has branded Freedom Park an 'ANC monument'. Similarly, language-rights activist Jaap Steyn reckons that it is an exclusive monument that reinforces divisions rather than promotes reconciliation.⁵¹ And the aforementioned Major-General Gert Opperman reckoned that the Freedom Park memorial space was not contributing to nation-building but was 'a pet project of the ANC, aimed at dividing the nation and praising that party's achievements.' This was in response to Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leader Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's claim that Afrikaners and Zulus shared the same struggle to preserve their cultural heritage and identity.⁵² In his capacity as the CEO of a monument dedicated to celebrating the Great Trek, an episode which constitutes the foundation myth of Afrikanerdom, Opperman acts as a custodian of an exclusive narrative of the past. Although the Voortrekker Monument has, under his watch, sought to become more accessible to a broader cross-section of the country's population, it is an act of reciprocity rather than reconciliation. For Opperman expects others to respect Afrikaner culture and heritage while seemingly oblivious to the fact that his people's struggle for independence and nationhood resulted in the dispossession and repression of the majority of South Africans.

For their part, Freedom Park spokespersons have refuted charges that they define freedom (narrowly) as that won as a result of the liberation struggle led by the ANC or that the site articulates the ANC's version of history. Instead, they have insisted that they have embraced the principle of inclusivity. According to the Freedom Park Trust's heritage manager, *Sikhumbuto* is not a war memorial but is dedicated to those who fought for freedom and democracy in the country.⁵³ So it is not surprising that when the Freedom Park trustees affirmed the contribution of those with struggle credentials to building the nation, while rejecting the claims of SADF soldiers for recognition, they should have been accused of bias; nor is it surprising that it would have rekindled the tendency of some white Afrikaners to see themselves as being victimised for who they are rather than for what they did in the past. Indeed, they have come to see themselves as being excluded from the foundation narrative of the incipient nation, as well as a major memorial site of the 'new' South Africa.

Prolific military historian and publisher, Peter Stiff, holds that the omission of the names of SADF personnel who died on 'the border' would be understandable if Freedom Park's wall of names was dedicated only to heroes and heroines of the freedom struggle.⁵⁴ But the inclusion of the names of those who died in other southern African conflicts renders this omission inconsistent. He believes that in terms of the TRC's mandate to promote reconciliation, the park should have been established to honour both sides of the freedom struggle. He also believes that conscripts and citizen force soldiers were not necessarily supporters of apartheid. This may have been so in certain instances, but this does not gainsay the fact that the majority of white South Africans were complicit in upholding the system of minority rule.

While retired military correspondent Willem Steenkamp does not believe that SADF members should be included on the Wall of Names, he dismisses the idea that they were upholders of apartheid. He says that many believed that they were 'combating Soviet imperialism and authoritarianism'. He also makes the spurious argument that these soldiers 'would not have fought as hard as they did if they had no motivation except a fear of going to jail'.⁵⁵ Steenkamp quite correctly insists that not all conscripts and volunteers were white, but he overlooks the fact that most of those who joined the South West African Territory Force (SWATF) or paramilitary police units, such as Koevoet, did so for a mixture of motives that included coercion and material inducements rather than fighting to preserve apartheid. He concludes that to insist on the inclusion of SADF names on *Sikhumbuto* will only serve to force the ANC to dig in its heels and that this would polarise race relations further.

There are good reasons why SADF soldiers' names should not be added to the wall. Young, white males who were conscripted might have been

discriminated against in this one regard, but they certainly benefited from the apartheid system. Yet they have not been forthcoming in admitting their complicity in defending apartheid. Unlike the US veterans who acknowledged being witnesses or party to atrocities in Vietnam during the so-called Winter Soldier hearings in 1971,⁵⁶ white conscripts showed little willingness to testify before the TRC and acknowledge their culpability for war crimes and other abuses. 'Of the 256 members of the apartheid era security forces that applied for amnesty. ... only 31 had served in the SADF. In contrast, there were close to 1 000 applications for amnesty from members of the various armed structures aligned to the ANC.'⁵⁷ MK (and APLA) combatants were prepared to make more extensive disclosure than their SADF counterparts. The latter remained largely silent either out of a (misplaced?) sense of loyalty to the old regime and fellow soldiers, or for fear of being held accountable by the ANC government for human rights violations. With the benefit of hindsight and following the revelations made before the TRC, ignorance and naivety constitute a limited defence against the view that veterans should accept their fair share of responsibility for what was done in their name by the SADF. While there are merits to the argument that conscripts had to make difficult choices and should be regarded as both 'victims' and 'perpetrators' of apartheid, I believe that there is a need for SADF veterans to admit at least a degree of agency and to own up to their culpability.

There are equally good reasons why the names of SADF soldiers should be included on the Wall of Names. If the Freedom Park project is committed to reconciliation, it could be argued that historical consensus is a prerequisite for achieving this goal. Accordingly, such an imperative might seem to point towards the desirability of the Freedom Park trustees going out of their way to accommodate those disavowing a memorial dedicated to remembering those who sacrificed their lives for an exclusive nationalist project (Klapperkop) in favour of a more inclusive nation-building project (Freedom Park). According to this line of argument, all sectors of the public must feel comfortable in the knowledge that they can relate to names of the deceased on both sides of the liberation struggle/'Border War'. Indeed, including the names of SADF soldiers alongside those of 'freedom fighters' would be a fitting way to commemorate the end of apartheid, because such a gesture rejects the process of 'othering' upon which white minority rule was founded. Moreover, Freedom Park must move beyond paying lip service to nation-building and dialogue, and make a concerted effort to remember the sacrifices of all who suffered and died for the freedom of their country. Given this mutual experience of suffering, it is only right that the names of the dead of both sides should be inscribed on the Wall of Names as a token of reconciliation.

It is noteworthy that the Freedom Park's trustees regard the *Sikhumbuto* memorial as a work in progress, as a 'living monument'. The park's website states that '[t]he wall is not conceptualised and designed as a *fait accompli* and the design allows future generations to add their heroes and heroines.'⁵⁸ A process of validation has to be followed before names are accepted for inclusion on the wall and it is not exactly clear what criteria have to be met by nominees to qualify. The park's trustees and curators are not exactly sure what they wish to achieve. As an anonymous researcher admitted to a *Mail & Guardian* reporter,

*Its mandate is a little confused ... There is dissonance between the nature of political violence that took place in the past [in the past], the casualties and the criteria chosen by Freedom Park ... it has a very simple notion of heroism and doesn't take into account the complexity of political violence in South Africa.*⁵⁹

This confusion has resulted in a number of anomalies. For instance, Dimitri Tsafendas, who assassinated Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd and was then declared insane by the courts, cannot be regarded as a 'freedom fighter' by any stretch of the imagination. And many of those killed in the 1960 Sharpeville massacre and during the 1976 Soweto uprising, whose names were added to the wall,⁶⁰ were not necessarily political activists but innocent bystanders. Thus, there has been slippage between the categories of 'hero/heroine' of the liberation struggle and 'victims' of apartheid, as well as a blurring of the distinction between combatants and civilians. It seems that suffering or victimisation, rather than furthering the aims of the liberation struggle, has effectively become the qualification for inclusion of names on the walls, and, for now, trustees are not willing to entertain the idea that SADF soldiers' names should be included. However, they have been prepared to compile a register of SADF personnel who died in the execution of their duties and to add these names to Freedom Park's database. But this has not satisfied those who have advocated the inclusion of SADF soldiers on the Wall of Names. Having failed to achieve this, they have preferred to erect their own Wall of Remembrance.

Conclusion

In a slot on the current affairs programme *Carte Blanche*, presenter Derek Watts opined: 'The Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park are probably the two most visual symbols of a nation struggling to come to terms with its past. Two monuments, two histories, two walls, and the gap between them seems to be widening.'⁶¹ In fact, there are now three memorial walls, two of

which are dedicated to SADF soldiers, one erected by the apartheid state and the other by private donations. The Voortrekker Monument site is likely to become a well-frequented place of remembrance or mourning for friends and families of deceased SADF soldiers, while the Klapperkop site will be rendered redundant. Thus the fracas over Freedom Park's Wall of Names has resulted in the reconfiguration of the memorial landscape in post-apartheid South Africa, which is a sure sign that the construction of a consensual past remains elusive.

According to Peter Carrier,⁶² disputed sites of memory offer a basis for public negotiation of historical memories and their political function. It is not necessarily a zero-sum game. Therefore, so the argument goes, a compromise could and should be found between creating an inclusive (national) and exclusive (sectional) memorial at Freedom Park to promote both reconciliation and nation-building. This begs the question whether it is at all possible (or even desirable) to create a truly all-encompassing national memorial in a society that has experienced civil strife? And whether the situation is more complicated when the memories of the South African conflict are still recent and raw?

There are precedents for honouring the dead on opposing sides of a civil conflict. For instance, in Italy there are monuments that include the names of Mussolini's Fascists and the partisans killed during the latter stages of the Second World War. And memorials erected on battlefields such as Gettysburg pay tribute to both the Union and Confederate forces involved in the American Civil War.⁶³ However, examples of inclusive memorials are the exception rather than the rule. Most war memorials represent sectional interests and memory cultures are seldom national in scope and appeal. Indeed, if their conceptualisation and design is hotly contested they can actually undermine political consensus.⁶⁴ Is this a bad thing? Are differences of opinion necessarily inimical to the nation-building project? I am not convinced that we should be prepared to sacrifice a robust democratic culture, where differences of opinion are tolerated—even cherished—for the sake of achieving consensus.

In the final analysis, what is at stake is whose version of the past is commemorated and institutionalised.⁶⁵ The conventional wisdom is that winners get to write the history while losers are likely to be relegated to the margins of society, with the official histories disseminated by the new political elites becoming hegemonic. However, hegemonic historical narratives are always contested, and there is nothing sacrosanct about the liberation struggle, especially if its custodians betray its principles and thereby cede the moral high ground. Indeed, it is not inevitable that the victors—or liberators—will

have the last word in how South Africa's divisive past is remembered. Nor should we seek an end to such contestation for it is a normal—even necessary—occurrence in the practice of democracy. Instead, we should seek to develop the institutions and structures to manage conflict.

Notes

- 1 Magnus Malan, *My Life with the SA Defence Force* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006), 151, 338.
- 2 Kathy Satchwell, 'The power to defend: An analysis of various aspects of the Defence Act', in J. Cock & L. Nathan (eds), *War and Society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip 1989), 40.
- 3 Willem Steenkamp, *Freedom Park: Roots and Solutions* (Durban: Just Done Publications, 2007), 4, makes the point that 'the SADF and MK/APLA never clashed operationally in any significant way.' This may be so as the liberation armies never developed the capacity to wage anything but a war of insurgency and chose their battles accordingly, while Namibia and the frontline states served to buffer the white minority regime from direct attacks. But the war of liberation was not confined to 'operational areas'; it included the entire region of South Africa and its neighbouring states.
- 4 Universal conscription of all able-bodied, white males replaced the lottery system that had existed since 1952. The call-up was extended to coloureds and Indians after the creation of the tricameral parliament that accorded these groups token rights and added responsibilities of citizenship. White males in South West Africa were also conscripted by the SADF and from 1980 national service was extended to all Namibians—excluding Owambos, because they were deemed to be supporters of South West Africa Peoples' Organization (SWAPO)—who were assigned to the South West African Territory Force (SWATF) and the South West African Police (SWAPOL).
- 5 See, for instance, Richard Jürgens's partly fictionalised autobiography, *Many Houses of Exile* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 2000).
- 6 For discussions of this literature, see G. Baines, 'South Africa's Vietnam? Literary history and cultural memory of the Border War', *South African Historical Journal*, 49 (2003), 172–192 and Henriette Roos, 'Writing from within: Representations of the Border War in South African literature' in G. Baines & P. Vale (eds). *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008), 137–157.
- 7 G. Baines, 'Blame, shame or reaffirmation: White conscripts reassess the meaning of the Border War in post-apartheid South Africa', *Interculture*, 5, 3 (2008), 214–227.

- 8 R. Werbner, 'Smoke from the barrel of a gun: Postwars of the dead, memory and reinscription in Zimbabwe', in R. Werbner (ed.), *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power* (London: Zed Books, 1998), 71–102.
- 9 Reinhart Kössler, 'Public memory, Reconciliation and the aftermath of war: A preliminary framework with special reference to Namibia' in Henning Melber, ed. *Re-examining Liberation in Namibia: Political Culture since Independence* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2003), 99–112.
- 10 Kössler, 'Public memory', 103.
- 11 Annie Coombes, *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
- 12 Sabine Marschall, *Landscape of Memory: Commemorative Monuments, Memorials and Public Statuary in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
- 13 *Paratus*, 29, 1, Special supplement (February 1978), v.
- 14 A replica of the statuette presented posthumously to the next-of-kin of those who died in action during the aborted Angolan invasion of 1975 (known by the code name 'Operation Savannah').
- 15 *Paratus*, 30, 7, Special Supplement (July 1979), i.
- 16 James Mayo, *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond* (New York: Prager, 1998), 74–75.
- 17 The toll of those killed while on active duty remains unclear. In a statement to Parliament in 1982, the then Minister of Defence Magnus Malan said that the SADF had a casualty rate of 0.012% (or 12 in every 100 000) of the average daily strength of its armed forces in South West Africa. It is not clear whether this figure includes casualties from accidents and suicides, but this figure is a gross underestimation of the actual situation. According to Professor R. Green, the official death rate of white troops killed on the border, expressed as a proportion of all white South Africans, was three times that of the US forces in Vietnam. See *The Cape Times*, 4 January 1985, quoted in Catholic Institute of International Relations, *Out of Step: War Resistance in South Africa* (London: CIIR, 1989), 31. My research suggests that the number of national servicemen who died in accidents or by their own hand while in uniform outnumbered those killed in action by about 3:1 and that the total number of troops killed during the 1970s and 1980s numbered about 5 000. This figure does not include black members of the SADF or its surrogate forces. Steenkamp's estimate of 715 SADF personnel killed in action between 1974–1988 is clearly too low. See his 'The citizen soldier in the Border War', *Journal for Contemporary History*, 31, 3 (December 2006), 20. John Dovey's roll of honour lists 1 986 SADF members killed on active duty over the period 1964–1994 (but has no data for 1980 and 1981). See http://www.justdone.co.za/ROH/stats_Static.htm. Stiff's (see Appendix to Steven Webb), *Ops Medic: A National Serviceman's Border War* (Alberton:

Galago, 2008) roll of honour of those killed in active service numbers 2 095 and is based on the tally of names listed at the Klapperkop site, supplemented by his own research.

- 18 www.freedompark.org.co.za, Press Release, 5 July 2005.
 19 www.freedompark.org.za.
 20 Marschall, *Landscape of Memory*, 213.
 21 Freedom Park was to be completed in 2009 at an estimated cost of R719 million according to *The Daily Dispatch*, 17 January 2007 ('Unbiased' monument unveiled), <http://www.dispatch.co.za/2007/01/17/SouthAfrica/dmonu.html>
 22 www.freedompark.org.za.
 23 Cited in Zayd Minty, 'Post-apartheid public art in Cape Town: Symbolic reparations and public space', *Urban Studies*, 43, 3 (2006), 423.
 24 Christoph Marx, 'Ubu and ubuntu: On the dialectics of apartheid and nation building', *Politikon*, 29, 1 (2002), 58.
 25 Marx, 'Ubu and ubuntu', 59.
 26 www.freedompark.org.za.
 27 Ibid.
 28 Informal conversation with Ramzie Abrahams, Freedom Park, 16 June 2008.
 29 www.freedompark.org.za.
 30 Ibid., Media Release, 8 March 2006.
 31 South African Press Association, *News 24*, 29 January 2007 ('SADF names at Freedom Park?'), at: http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa.
 32 Afriforum, Media statement, 10 January 2007 ('Freedom Park must also honour members of former defence force, Afriforum asks'), at www.afroforum.co.za.
 33 Afriforum, Media statement, 14 January 2007 ('Steve Hofmeyr and Afriforum rally against "one-sided" Freedom Park'), at www.afroforum.co.za.
 34 A Freedom Park Trust media release, 31 August 2006, announced that the names of more than 2 100 Cuban soldiers would be inscribed on the wall. This has since been accomplished. See <http://www.freedompark.org.za>.
 35 *Pretoria News*, 17 January 2007 ('Include us, says ex-SADF members').
 36 See, for example, 'Some thoughts of a NSM!!!', *Army Talk Magazine* (Just Done Publications), Issue 1 (April 2008), 12–13, reproduced as Appendix N in Jan Breytenbach, *Eagle Strike! The Story of the Controversial Airborne Assault on Cassinga 1978* (Sandton: Manie Grove Publishing, 2008), 585–587.
 37 *The Herald*, 17 January 2007 ('Alternative "freedom" wall unveiled').
 38 Hofmeyr's statement that 'the omitted soldiers never resorted to killing fellow South Africans' (see 'Singer Steve Hofmeyr protests Freedom Park Wall', available at <http://www.jetstreak.com>) might have held for most individuals who wore the SADF uniform, but not for the institution. As such, it is either deliberately self-serving or incredibly naïve. Apart from failing to acknowledge that SADF troops deployed in

the townships killed anti-apartheid activists and MK/APLA cadres in the course of their duties, it ignores the evidence of cross-border operations by special forces (such as the Matolo raid by recces on Maputo in January 1981) that killed exiled South Africans. Hofmeyr also ignores the evidence of the 'hit squads' and other 'dirty tricks' directed by the Military Intelligence Division and the SADF front organisation, the Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB). See James Sanders, *Apartheid's Friends: The Rise and Fall of South Africa's Secret Service* (London: John Murray, 2006).

- 39 *The Herald*, 30 January 2007 ('Freedom Park dialogue').
- 40 *Mail & Guardian*, 30 January 2007 ('Freedom Park: Committee to discuss SADF inclusion').
- 41 *The Herald*, 31 January 2007 ('Workshop to discuss names').
- 42 *The Herald*, 9 February 2007 ('SADF addition mooted for wall at Freedom Park').
- 43 *Die Beeld*, 24 July 2009 ('Gevalle SAW-soldate gaan hul eie muur kry'), http://m.24.com/afr/FullArticle.aspx?aid=ARTICLE_2541861&cat=Beeld&sh=Hoofsto...?ref=Sex%C5%9Ehop.Com.
- 44 *Die Beeld*, 26 October 2009 ('Muur van herinneringe betaal skuld, sê Viljoen'), <http://www.beeld.com/Suid-Afrika/Nuus/Muur-van-herinnering-betaal-skuld-se-Viljoen-20091026>.
- 45 Voortrekker Monument, media release, 'Annual commemoration service at the SADF Wall of Remembrance', Pretoria, 20 May 2011 at www.voortrekkermon.org.za/downloadDocument.php?filename...doc. For a summary of the sources consulted by Major-General Opperman and the criteria employed for the inclusion of names, see Status Report on the SADF Wall of Remembrance, 1 September 2009 at <http://www.warinangola.com/Default.aspx?tabid=721>.
- 46 *The Times*, 30 March 2010 ('ANC wants Freedom Park, Voortrekker Monument linked'), <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/article380613.ece/ANC-wants-Freedom-Park-Voortrekker-Monument-linked>.
- 47 SABC News, 1 August 2010, 'Voortrekker Monument to remain independent of government', <http://www.sabcnews.com/portal/site/SABCNews/menuitem.5c4f8fe7ee929f602ea12ea1674daeb9/?vgnnextoid=2b31af7e0f92a210VgnVCM10000077d4ea9bRCRD&vgnnextfmt=default%20&channelPath=South%20Africa%20%3E%3E%20General>.
- 48 M-Net, *Carte Blanche*, 'War stories' (Part 1), 5 June 2011, <http://beta.mnet.co.za/carteblanche/Article.aspx?Id=4367&ShowId=1>.
- 49 Jeffrey K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 139.
- 50 M-Net, *Carte Blanche*, 'War stories' (Part 1), 5 June 2011, <http://beta.mnet.co.za/carteblanche/Article.aspx?Id=4367&ShowId=1>.
- 51 *Die Beeld*, 18 January 2007 ('Letsels aan twee kante na oorlog').

- 52 Censor bugbear, 5 April 2009, 'Zuma: "Afrikaners the only white African tribe"', <http://censorbugbear-reports.blogspot.com/2009/04/zuma-afrikaners-only-white-african.html>.
- 53 Informal conversation with Ramzie Abrahams, Freedom Park, 16 June 2008.
- 54 Peter Stiff, 'Freedom Park' in Steven Webb, *Ops Medic: A National Serviceman's Border War* (Alberton: Galago Books, 2008), 246.
- 55 Steenkamp, *Freedom Park*, 13.
- 56 John Fitzgerald, 'The winter soldier hearings', *Radical History Review*, 97 (Winter 2007), 118–122.
- 57 D. Foster, P. Haupt & M. de Beer, *The Theatre of Violence: Narratives of Protagonists in the South African Conflict* (Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2005), 15–16.
- 58 www.freedompark.org.za.
- 59 *Mail & Guardian*, 7 November 2007 ('Freedom Park: Own up to "our" pain').
- 60 Freedom Park Trust, media release, 8 March 2006.
- 61 M-Net, *Carte Blanche*, 'War stories' (Part 1), 5 June 2011, <http://beta.mnet.co.za/carteblanche/Article.aspx?Id=4367&ShowId=1>.
- 62 Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany since 1989* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 214.
- 63 William Kidd & Brian Murdoch, 'Introduction', in *Memory and Memorials: The Commemorative Century* (London: Ashgate, 2004), 4.
- 64 Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 17.
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SECTION 2

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITIES

CHAPTER 9

NATIONAL LIBERATION AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY: ANATOMY OF A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Colin Bundy

There were perhaps three major instances in the twentieth century of political mobilisation and solidarity crossing national frontiers, bridging divides in local politics and winning mass support from ordinary people imbued with a sense of moral and historical urgency. The international support for the Republican cause during the Spanish Civil War was the earliest of these. For 'liberals and those on the Left who lived through the 1930s', remarks Eric Hobsbawm, the anti-Franco commitment 'remains the only political cause which, even in retrospect, appears as pure and compelling as it did in 1936'.¹ The second case was the international opposition to the American war in Vietnam. Shrouded though it was in the veils of the Cold War, US aggression in South-East Asia not only divided and demoralised the home front, but also enlisted a mass base of citizens in countries that might usually have rallied to the support of America.

The third such moment began in the early 1960s, and peaked in the late 1980s: it was the wave of international opposition to white minority rule in South Africa and the policies of apartheid. There is at least a whiff of political hyperbole in Essop Pahad's claims: that the world-wide Anti-apartheid Movement became 'the most successful global solidarity movement in human history ... different in structure, form and purpose, organisation and mobilisation from previous movements'.² But there can be little doubt that international opposition to apartheid 'was perhaps one of the first [movements] to insist successfully in international fora that human rights are more important than national sovereignty',³ or that 'the most significant impact of international solidarity is the way in which it shaped public opinion, particularly in the West',⁴ or that it constructed transnational networks and forms of action that had 'an impact on the political cultures of countries all over the world'.⁵

In 1969, the African National Congress (ANC)—in a bout of introspection spurred by an internal crisis—acknowledged the importance of international solidarity in support of its own struggle against Pretoria. It specified the forms that the liberation struggle took, and used the metaphor of four pillars. These were an underground presence within South Africa; the political mobilisation of the masses within the country; an armed struggle launched from without; and the international isolation of the apartheid regime through the widest possible solidarity movement. Years later, Pdraig O'Malley neatly extended the metaphor. The British Anti-apartheid Movement (AAM), he suggested, was 'the cornerstone of the ANC's fourth pillar'.⁶ This chapter explores how the cornerstone was set in place; how central it was to the stability and prominence of the fourth pillar; and also how secure that pillar proved to be as the fight against apartheid entered its decisive final phase.

In other words, this chapter assesses the AAM and its significance for the liberation struggle in southern Africa. Although the AAM at the outset gave equal recognition to the ANC and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), and although it continued to assert its own non-partisan identity, the focus here is almost entirely on the salience of the AAM for the liberation movement as represented by the ANC and its Congress partners. This is because for 35 years the AAM maintained a special relationship with the ANC, a relationship that shaped, energised and distinguished the British solidarity movement. 'It began almost as an offshoot of the South African Congress movement', noted Christabel Gurney⁷; and from then on AAM remained 'a movement which had at its heart its relationship with the African National Congress'. Over three decades the AAM developed a 'unique working relationship with the ANC'.⁸

They did have a special relationship—but it was one between two distinct organisations, which, for all their shared objectives, had different social bases, different priorities and different political cultures. There is an understandable tendency among ex-activists to celebrate what the AAM and ANC had in common, to emphasise their co-operation, and to link them in a teleological narrative—actors in a moral fable or passion play. To do so presents, at best, a partial history of the organisational relationship and sidesteps or ignores those aspects of the relationship that were shot through with ambiguities and contradictions, and bore their share of tensions, anxieties, suspicions and resentments. This chapter attempts to redress the balance. While it acknowledges that the history of the AAM, in particular, is virtually inextricable from an account of its close links to the ANC and its Congress partners, it also seeks to assess the relationship more critically,

tracing some of its fault lines and, in particular, considering the slightly bathetic concluding chapter to the history of their interaction.

Constructing the fourth pillar

Various accounts exist of the AAM's antecedents and formation.⁹ It was variously parented: by the Committee of African Organisations, by older anti-colonial bodies, by Christian activists, such as Huddleston and Collins and (arguably decisively) by exiled and expatriate South Africans. These included a network of Communist Party members and sympathisers, associated with Vella Pillay; but also Ronald Segal, Patrick van Rensburg, Ros Ainslie, Kader Asmal and Tennyson Makiwane. These London-based South Africans were individually and collectively important. They brought 'an extraordinary political commitment which they later transmitted to some of their British supporters in the AAM'. Their 'energy and single-minded commitment' breathed life into the British movement and subsequently spurred its growth.¹⁰ Most of these individuals (but certainly not all) were supporters of the ANC. Pillay was at the centre of those who were members of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) or fellow-travellers. Mac Maharaj may overstate the case in claiming that—of the South African Freedom Association, the Boycott Movement and the AAM—'[w]ithout disclosing that we were Communists, we helped these things grow',¹¹ but he does indicate correctly how intimately the external arms of the Congress Alliance were involved in the creation of the AAM.

The AAM emerged from the Boycott Movement through a series of steps in March and April 1960. Its foundation was more or less coterminous with the Sharpeville and Langa shootings and the bannings of the ANC and PAC. As the ANC and PAC took the first tentative steps towards establishing an external presence, in May 1960 they entered the South African United Front (UF), which also included representatives of the South African Indian Congress and the South West Africa National Union. Despite the ANC sympathies of most of the South Africans on the national AAM committee, the fledgling body was at pains to maintain correct relations with the PAC (which was given equal recognition with the ANC by the United Nations) and did so by co-operating closely with the UF. Within a short space of time, the essential characteristics of the AAM had been established. While it co-operated with other organisations with overlapping concerns, it made opposition to apartheid its core concern. It insisted on its non-partisan status; its (1962) constitution committed it to work with all South African bodies opposed to apartheid; it 'aspired to be an autonomous and democratically run British mass movement but which had at its heart its relationship with the Congress Movement'.¹²

This potentially paradoxical birthright—autonomy and separate identity on the one hand, and an inbuilt commitment to the ANC on the other hand—characterised the entire history of the AAM. The balancing act became a little easier with the dissolution of the UF in March 1962. Throughout 1963 and 1964, Masizi Kunene and his colleagues in the ANC's London office worked closely with the AAM in its campaign to intensify economic sanctions against South Africa. They also operated in unison to publicise the Rivonia Trial and the plight of political prisoners more broadly. The ANC's London Committee and the AAM also designed a programme of action in relation to a meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers.¹³ The mid-1960s also saw the AAM engage in early moves to cut cultural and sporting ties with South Africa, and the launch of a world campaign for the Release of South African Political Prisoners. By April 1966, says Sifiso Ndlovu, the two organisations had 'established a solid working relationship',¹⁴ issuing a joint newsletter, sharing information, lobbying together and ensuring that speakers from both bodies addressed public meetings.

These were all positive developments for the AAM, although Roger Fieldhouse is surely correct in suggesting that the 'fundamental policy shift in emphasis from the consumer boycott to economic sanctions' involved the AAM in political lobbying at the expense of direct action by large numbers of people.¹⁵ But the 1960s were fraught with difficulty for the AAM's primary partner, the ANC. The external missions were wracked with dissension over issues of 'dual membership, ethnicity, race, personal ambition, location of members and their leaders on different continents'—issues heightened by a 'rising tide of Africanism in newly independent [African] states', which left the ANC feeling vulnerable to attacks by the PAC and its supporters.¹⁶ The PAC also renewed an abiding accusation: that the ANC was manipulated by South African communists, especially white comrades. These pressures forced the ANC to renegotiate its working relations with its partners in the Congress Alliance. White, coloured and Indian exiles who regarded themselves as organic allies of the ANC found themselves in 'organisational limbo' once the ANC decreed that it alone should open offices abroad.¹⁷

By early 1965, the ANC had offices in Algiers, Cairo, Dar es Salaam and Lusaka as well as the earlier London establishment. So there is piquancy in that the intense discussions that took place on the role of exiles of all races in ANC activities took place as the 'London debates'. These talks precipitated a meeting of Congress Movement leaders in exile in Morogoro, Tanzania, in November 1966, the first official such gathering. Lissoni sums up: 'Whereas the London-based, non-African leaders pleaded for greater participation in the ANC external mission, either through the opening of membership

of the creation of suitable structures, their Africa-based, African colleagues continued to resist such proposals.¹⁸ No lasting solutions were devised; and the tensions remained. Indeed, they resurfaced as one component of the acute crisis that challenged the ANC's exiled leaders and members in 1969.

This, of course, was the fall-out from the failed Wankie and Sipililo incursions by Umkonto we Sizwe (MK) guerrillas; the Hani Memorandum's startling critique of the tactics, practices and lifestyles of the ANC leadership; and the Morogoro Conference convened in consequence—and with the recognition by the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ANC that 'radical changes are required in our machinery and style of work.'

The Morogoro Consultative Conference has been subject to a good deal of scholarly analysis in recent years¹⁹ and it is not necessary to provide here a detailed account of its redefinition of guerrilla warfare and its insistence on the primacy of political mobilisation; the constitutional changes including a slimmed-down NEC and the creation of a Revolutionary Council; and the adoption of a new central policy document, *Strategy and Tactics*. More important to a consideration of the relationship between the AAM and ANC is the definition of the 'four pillars' of the struggle for national liberation.* They were:

- Extension and consolidation of an ANC underground machinery
- Political mobilisation of the masses into active struggle around local and national issues
- Intensification of armed struggle—ensuring that revolutionary violence was a permanent feature of the struggle
- International isolation of the regime, further raising the strength and combativeness of the international solidarity movement ... to get the majority of the international community to accept our liberation movement as the representative of all the people of our country.

The last of these is a careful and suggestive formulation. It sets the task as promoting international solidarity *and* the specific political objective of increasing the diplomatic profile and leverage of the ANC. It also reflected that international pressure upon the South African government had been at least as important as (and, in 1969, actually more important than) the other three pillars in combating apartheid. To a significant extent, this pressure had been exerted by the efforts of the AAM in partnership with the ANC, and through its links with other anti-apartheid organisations internationally.

* Incidentally, the 'four pillars' are frequently ascribed to *Strategy & Tactics* but they do not appear in the text. I have been unable to establish if they were the subject of a separate resolution at Morogoro or a later gloss.

Ndlovu may overstate the case: 'The impact of the joint solidarity action by the ANC and AAM on international relations and the policies of the superpowers was reflected in the emergence of anti-apartheid movements in Europe, Scandinavia, North America and almost all the countries of the Commonwealth.'²⁰ Historians of anti-apartheid efforts in Sweden and the other Nordic countries would rightly point out that they had more leverage with their governments than the AAM in Britain, and that they were thus able to provide considerably more material assistance.²¹ However, there is no doubt that the theorisation of international solidarity politics as the fourth pillar derived substantially from the ANC's experience of working with the AAM.

If the years 1968 to 1972 were the nadir of the exiled ANC's fortunes, Gurney has identified the 1970s as the 'difficult decade' for the AAM. In this decade it made little impact on British policy towards South Africa and failed to persuade trade unions, churches and other natural allies of the desirability of total disengagement with Pretoria.²² Some of the complications and contradictions that affected the AAM because of the closeness of its relations with the ANC are discussed later in this chapter. Here, the focus is on the forms of co-operation between the two bodies. By 1970, they had established the practice of holding more formal joint consultative meetings. At the beginning of 1972, the AAM requested such a meeting to discuss a range of specific issues, and this fitted well with the ANC's assumption, when it restructured its London office, that much of its public work would be undertaken by the AAM and other solidarity structures.²³

The most important joint activity by the AAM and the ANC in the 1970s concerned political prisoners. Genevieve Klein has shown how the AAM and its partner organisation, the SATIS (South Africa: The Imprisoned Society) Committee, placed a new emphasis and generated increasing momentum with a campaign that focused on political prisoners in South Africa in human right terms. The highly personalised focus on Nelson Mandela stemmed from a campaign in 1978 to mark his sixtieth birthday, and subsequently became a major vehicle of anti-apartheid sentiment.²⁴ From 1973 onwards, SATIS and the AAM worked closely with the ANC on these campaigns, especially as in that year the principle of regular meetings between the officers of the AAM and the ANC's London office was agreed.²⁵

Over time, this pattern of close co-operation became increasingly institutionalised. By December 1980 it was agreed to convene informal tripartite meetings of the AAM, the ANC and SACTU (South African Congress of Trade Unions) and in April 1981 these became scheduled monthly meetings. In October 1988, the ANC's senior officer based in London

suggested that the monthly meetings ‘need to be made more effective’: he thought that with both movements rapidly increasing their support base, it was necessary to improve the contacts between them. Towards the end of the 1980s, the ANC actually appointed an AAM-liaison officer and sought weekly meetings. In 1988, a liaison group linking anti-apartheid structures across Europe was created. Mike Terry felt ‘it vital that the Liaison Group works in such a way that it has the full confidence of the ANC’. Supplementing the many meetings between the two organisations, much correspondence flowed, ‘exchanging information, coordinating their approaches and attempting to avoid divergences’.²⁶

Ironically, this intensification of formal co-operation between AAM and ANC took place shortly before the relationship suffered real and unforeseen setbacks. By the end of the 1980s, the frequency of exchanges between the two bodies was due, in part, to ‘the desire to be singing from the same hymn book and an anxiety that this was not always happening’.²⁷ At moments in the early 1990s, it sometimes seemed as if the two parties had somehow come by different hymn books, with discordant results. This unexpected denouement is discussed later.

The exile condition

Until recently, only limited scholarly attention was paid to the condition of exile as a dimension of the liberation struggle. The exception was a study published in 1987 by Tom Lodge.²⁸ He noted that the environment of exile politics ‘is usually viewed as hazardous, sterile, corrosive and demoralising’, making individuals prone to ‘loneliness, frustration, inactivity, hardship and insecurity’, so that exile as an experience is ‘inherently detrimental and problematic’. However, Lodge proposed, in the case of the ANC, an organisation operating outside its country of origin ‘has not only survived exile but has ... been strengthened by the experience’. The ANC’s ‘buoyant morale and diplomatic impact ... self-confidence and vitality’ were partly due to the revival of resistance inside South Africa and the relaunching of the movement’s guerrilla insurgency, but also to the reach and robustness of the exiled movement’s structures and practices.²⁹ His analysis concludes with a ringing assessment of the exiled ANC as a national movement:

*It is an army, an educational system, a department of foreign affairs, a mini economy, a source of moral hegemony, in short, a government ... it is a state-in-exile and only in exile could such a state have been constructed.*³⁰

In the last few years, there has been renewed interest in the ANC's exile experience. In part this has derived from disapproval of what is seen as a particular set of political traits understood to have developed in exile (and associated with Thabo Mbeki's presidency). Thus:

*The ANC in exile developed a self-perpetuating inability to deliver on any aspect of its internal struggle against the apartheid government; the ANC in government continues to use the paradigm of exile to govern ... reinventing the exigencies of exile in a post-liberation South Africa ... In exile, the ANC leadership was secretive, conspiratorial, and paranoid, decidedly nondemocratic—and with good reason ... In government the ANC has yet to unlearn these behaviours.*³¹

But closer attention to exile has also been stimulated by the flow of memoirs and interviews of people who returned after 1990; and in this context is part of the turn towards histories of the liberation movement that are less partisan and justificatory, more rounded and reflective.³² Hugh Macmillan's major study of the ANC in Zambia has already yielded several studies vivid with detail, and sensitive to the price exacted by exile.³³ In Luli Callinicos's biography of Oliver Tambo, there is a very fine chapter entitled 'Family in exile'. In a balanced and suggestive account, Callinicos describes the toll of exile, but also explores mechanisms of survival. After the shock and relief of having fled from imminent danger or long-term threat at home,

*[A] sense of loss began to settle over the exiles. Family, community and landscape, language and personal identity—all seemed gone. A 'psychological deportation' had taken place. Anxiety about those left behind, rumours, tormenting memories and anguished tales of the increasing brutality of apartheid wore at the consciences of many.*³⁴

The wounds of exile could be dressed, to a degree, and shared membership of a self-conscious exile community was an important healer. Moeletsi Mbeki told Callinicos how validating it was in a new country 'to find an ANC office, attend the branch meetings, congregate with comrades and communicate in his mother tongue'. The ANC (in Callinicos's metaphor) could not provide a home from home—but could play the part of family, linking people through language, memories, shared values and a sense of purpose. That ANC exiles could make the effort to get to know local society as intensely as possible was due, in part, to their sense of belonging to a 'powerfully bonded, political culture'.³⁵

It is in this dual understanding of exile—both its exactions and its easements—that one can locate the significant role played by the British AAM. Especially for those living in greater London, but for the UK more generally, the AAM provided a base, a network and a support structure in the everyday lives of exiles, expatriates, refugees and émigrés. Any mapping of the spread of support would begin with the topography of activists' London, the offices in Bloomsbury (Gower Street, Rathbone Place, Charlotte Street), and recall how these provided purpose to displaced activists. '[W]e set up the Anti-Apartheid Movement,' recalled Kader Asmal, 'and all my undergraduate days—apart from one month studying for my finals—were devoted to the AAM, five or six hours every day.'³⁶ The record of support would also describe a broader, looser circuitry. It was one that could be activated to provide practical help: arranging tickets to bring Adelaide Tambo and her children to London; ensuring that Nelson Mandela, in 1962, should meet Hugh Gaitskell, David Astor and various ambassadors;³⁷ speeding a passage through immigration or getting a supportive MP to Heathrow to ease entry to a newcomer without a passport;³⁸ arranging lodgings for displaced comrades and generally offering a welcome and South African-accented friendship. Ben Turok recalls his London days:

*Exile wastes the spirit. The resources of encouragement are scarce and not shared equally among the comrades ... To be in exile is to live on remote hope. Every mite of news from home is passed around, chewed on like tough steak, embellished: 'Did you hear that Paul received a letter from Kathy?' 'It's quite amazing he remembers the names of so and so's children.' 'Did you hear that so and so's been released from detention?'*³⁹

Ronnie Kasrils sounds a similar note: 'South Africa was a long way off. The difficulties of exile were partly assuaged by a growing political community from home and our involvement in the AAM.'⁴⁰ In his wonderful essay on exile, Edward Said wrote about nationalism as identity: 'an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture and customs: and by doing so, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages.'⁴¹ For South Africans living in Britain, the AAM provided access to just that sort of community.

A long-term relationship—and the end of the affair

Any attempt to characterise the relationship between the AAM and the ANC for the 35 years over which it endured will find it difficult to avoid the metaphor of wedlock. It was (recalled one informant) like 'a very long-standing

marriage where each partner knows the other's faults and strengths and weaknesses, and you get on each other's nerves something terrible, but it hangs together somehow! Passages of cordiality and convergence were punctuated by dissension and disagreements. Behind their backs, the partners could be quite testy about one another. Alan Brooks recalled that 'ANC comrades clearly regarded as some sort of terrible disease I suffered from that I had to work in the AAM office. They did not have a good word to say about the movement.'⁴²

It is not difficult to identify some of the recurring irritants, on both sides. The ANC chafed intermittently at the AAM's insistence on working with the PAC. It felt that the AAM could not be relied on to maintain the same levels of security and confidentiality that exile imposed on it and accused the AAM of leaks. Some of the AAM National Committee and also some of its organisational associates fretted for three decades at the extent to which the ANC was swayed by the South African Communist Party and were anxious about a perceived 'entryism'. And while the AAM leadership accepted early on the ANC's position that armed struggle was inevitable, it found it very difficult at times to convince its own members of this. In addition to specific issues, the relationship was never immune to the tensions and heightened sensibilities inherent in South Africa's racial history and identities. Arianna Lissoni reminds us of the tensions between the ANC and some of its non-African supporters in exile between 1962 and 1966—and the same tensions gripped the discussions at the Morogoro Conference.

And yet, even when these and other difficulties have been identified, it is clear that over the long haul the working relationship between the two organisations was strikingly successful: durable, flexible and accommodating. The AAM successfully established its own organisational identity, but managed to balance this with a strategic position that accorded political primacy to the ANC. The AAM determined its tactics in relation to British politics and to international links with other structures; but always insisted that it was only aiding the fight against Pretoria, only supporting the liberation movement. This was the key to the long marriage, the secret of their successful co-operation.

This key may have underpinned the success of the partnership, but it also came at a political cost. To yield strategic primacy to the ANC was an entirely defensible position—as long as the ANC's strategic choices and directions were correct. When the liberation movement made questionable decisions, it could and did take the AAM with it. Two instances illustrate the point. The ANC's prickly, suspicious and sectarian responses to the independent trade unions and to Black Consciousness were replicated within the AAM. The mushroom growth of new unions in the 1970s saw the AAM 'ambivalent'

and unsure of how to respond to the political independence of the new worker organisations.⁴³ It was selective in its contacts with South African unionists, and adhered closely to SACTU's favoured links. The AAM 'virtually ignored' the launch of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in 1979: FOSATU was airbrushed out of the AAM's Annual Report and the *Anti-Apartheid News*.⁴⁴

Similarly, the AAM essentially followed the ANC's critique of Black Consciousness as romantic, confused and ideologically bankrupt. After the Soweto uprising, the AAM's concern was to 'bolster the role of the ANC', which it did by giving prominence to ANC claims of links with the young insurgents and by quoting statements by exiled ANC leaders.⁴⁵ Similarly, the AAM's campaigning around political prisoners and trials was sectarian in approach: it championed the plight of the 'Pretoria 12', accused of working for the ANC underground; but paid minimal attention to the 'Bethal 18', which suggested links between the PAC and the Soweto Students Representative Committee.⁴⁶ Despite Steve Biko's impact while alive, and the nature of his death during detention, the AAM paid him little attention — not even covering the inquest proceedings into his death.⁴⁷ The AAM justified its lack of response to the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) with the excuse that the latter had no formal representatives abroad. When the BCM opened an external base in Botswana, the AAM found it difficult 'to assess its legitimacy', according to Mike Terry. By 1979, the BCM had a representative in London who contacted the AAM, gave them the address of their London office, and asked for literature to help stock a resources centre. They also invited the AAM to participate in a picket and to attend a memorial meeting for Steve Biko. 'There is no indication that AAM responded to any of these overtures.'⁴⁸

It was noted above that the relationship between the AAM and ANC became more difficult by the end of the 1980s. In South Africa, the balance of forces had reached an unstable equilibrium. The state was unable to reimpose order from above; the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), by now explicitly pro-ANC, could not seize power from below; and both came to a reluctant recognition of this stalemate. Emissaries scurried back and forth; there were talks about talks; meetings took place in London, in Lusaka, and in secret; and in South Africa MDM organisers instructed their mass base that 'negotiations are also a site of struggle'. On 2 February 1990, de Klerk effectively entered that site, by announcing the unbanning of the ANC, the PAC and the CPSA. A few days later Mandela strode out of Victor Verster prison into bright sunshine — and the even fiercer glare of the world's media.

These were breathless days, and disconcerting for the ANC's solidarity partners. By December 1990 the AAM warned its members at its Annual

General Meeting that the movement faced ‘the most challenging period in its history’. Retrospectively, Gurney confirmed that in many ways the four years between de Klerk’s speech and the first democratic election ‘were among the most difficult in the AAM’s 35-year history’.⁴⁹ Why were these years so difficult for the AAM? There were practical problems. Many of the AAM’s grassroots members assumed that the cause they had supported had effectively run its course with Mandela’s release and the imminence of a new political order in South Africa. A fall in membership meant reduced income. The AAM had to cut back its national office, make staff redundant, and manage its resources sparingly.

There were also political problems. As the major players in South Africa considered negotiations, and then engaged in them, the ANC, at best, failed to keep the AAM fully informed of what was taking place. At worst, it created a fog of confusion over whether sanctions or boycotts were still in place. Fundamentally, the ANC was now engaged in a different kind of international work, caught up in a round of official and semi-official contacts; ‘looking for a broader spectrum of friends’. As the ANC found itself a government-in-waiting, the AAM slipped down the priority rankings. In an interview conducted in 1998, Mike Terry’s recollections of this period struck a note somewhere between philosophical and peeved:

Some elements [in the ANC] thought that if they distanced themselves from the AAM they could make more friends with the business community and others who had been on the other side but who a new South African government would have to relate to in the future ... They didn’t want to be just allied to the AAM.⁵⁰

This partial estrangement in what had been a special relationship was in part merely an outcome of the pressure of events at a hectic time. However, it was also in part indicative of a more profound shift in the objectives of the liberation movement—and hence a different relationship with its international partners. Although they argue in very different registers, Adrian Guelke and Dale McKinley require us to consider these changing dynamics.

The international context of South Africa’s lurch into negotiations was crucial. It included the ambivalent outcomes of *glasnost* and *perestroika*; the domino collapse of erstwhile Soviet Union satraps; the fall of the Berlin Wall; and the acceleration of economic globalisation. While the negotiated transition is frequently explained entirely in terms of dynamics internal to South Africa, Guelke—mindful of this context—proposes that on the contrary ‘the extent of South Africa’s penetration by transnational influences at the start of the age of globalisation suggests just the opposite. It also suggests the need for external influences to be more fully woven into the story.’⁵¹

McKinley weaves with a vengeance. The real significance of all those air-miles for the ANC leadership is that Western governments and big business had come to accept that the ANC was the major representative of opposition to the apartheid state; it was also ‘a coming home of sorts for the ANC leadership ... now openly pursuing its wider strategy of seeking a negotiated settlement’.⁵² What disconcerted Mike Terry and the AAM loyalists in London, in this perspective, was not absent-mindedness on the part of their ANC allies. It was ‘a strategic convergence (albeit not a planned one) between ANC-led, international, anti-apartheid forces and Western governments, banks, and international financial institutions’. By 1989, they all desired the end of apartheid—and all agreed that a negotiated settlement was the best way to achieve this.⁵³ As collaborative evidence, there is Ben Turok’s wry account of visiting the ANC head offices in the late 1980s:

*If you went to Lusaka to see a member of the working committee ... you were lucky [to find one] ... the top members of the ANC were permanently in the air ... it had a terrible effect ... it meant that international and solidarity work took priority over everything else.*⁵⁴

What he was really describing was that the content of ‘international and solidarity work’ had changed dramatically: 1989 was a long way from Morogoro. In 1969, the report of the ANC’s National Executive Committee at Morogoro held that the ‘pillars of the anti-imperialist movement are the Soviet Union, and the socialist states, in alliance with the progressive states in Africa, Asia and Latin America’.⁵⁵ The outcome of Morogoro was *Strategy and Tactics*. Its first sentence proclaimed that ‘The struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa is taking place within an international context of transition to the socialist system.’ Twenty years later, the international context was the collapse of the ‘socialist system’, in its historic form. The Berlin Wall came down; the Washington Consensus—‘stabilize, privatize, and liberalize’—seemed unstoppable. Over the next few years, the ANC, de Klerk’s National Party and South African capital found that they could agree relatively easily on far-reaching political restructuring in return for broad continuity in economic structures and relations. Even before de Klerk’s speech made negotiations possible, the ANC set out its conditions for negotiations, formalised as the Harare Declaration: the ANC proposed that once a settlement was reached ‘the international community would lift the sanctions that have been imposed against apartheid South Africa’. In September 1993, Mandela addressed the United Nations in person.

The interim constitution had been agreed but not yet implemented; it was time, he said for the UN to lift economic sanctions. The fourth pillar had been unceremoniously and unilaterally toppled.

Throughout the early 1990s, the ANC's negotiators responded to township attacks and economic scenarios, to right wing sabre-rattling and business blandishments, to Inkatha's demands and the expectations of its followers. Meanwhile, in Britain the AAM pondered its future and the possible forms of post-apartheid solidarity. There was a consensus that any major changes should take place only after a democratic election. In May 1994, a fortnight after the polls closed, a special meeting of the AAM national committee proposed that the movement be reconstituted as a new structure, focusing on the whole of southern Africa. The ANC welcomed the decision to dissolve the AAM and to create Action for Southern African (ACTSA). ACTSA continues to operate as a lobby for development and democracy in South Africa. It remains 'a small organisation with limited funds',⁵⁶ without the emotional appeal, political verve or membership commitment of the struggle against apartheid.

There is a parallel between the brisk, tidy dissolution of the AAM and the creation of its successor body with the folding up of multiple civil society organisations in South Africa and their incorporation into official ANC structures. In both cases, the transition appeared a logical one. Solidarity with and support for the ANC as a liberation movement was now being translated into formal alliance with the ANC as government. For an international solidarity movement like the AAM, as also for the youth, women's, township and other grassroots organs, the unanticipated outcome was that energies were sapped and visions blurred by the responsibilities—and opportunities—of office. For AAM activists and their counterparts in other countries, there was a significant adjustment. It involved a shift from solidarity—as Mai Palmberg described it: 'the unconditional support to a group of people who struggle for their rights in a distant place'⁵⁷—to a more conditional support for a post-liberation government coping with HIV/AIDS, allegations of corruption, popular protests against service delivery failures and the pressure of popular expectations.

Notes

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- 4 Gregory Houston, 'Introduction', *Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. 3, pt. 1, 38.
- 5 Håkan Thörn, 'The meaning(s) of solidarity: Narratives of anti-apartheid activism', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2 (2009), 417–436, 421.
- 6 Padraig O'Malley, *Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj and the Struggle for South Africa* (New York: Viking, 2007), 80.
- 7 Christabel Gurney, 'In the heart of the beast: The British Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1959–1994' in *Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 3, pt. 1, 256.
- 8 Abdul Minty, 'The Anti-Apartheid Movement—What kind of history?', Kader Asmal, 'Making hope and history rhyme', both in *The Anti-Apartheid Movement: A forty year perspective*, 22, 75.
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- 10 Gurney, 'Heart of the beast', 262; Hilda Bernstein, *The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), 252.
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- 12 Gurney, 'A Great Cause', 144.
- 13 Sifiso Ndlovu, 'The ANC and the world', in *Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 1 (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 541–71, 551.
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- 17 Arianna Lissoni, 'Transformation in the ANC External Mission and Umkonto we Sizwe c. 1960–1969', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2, 287–302, 293.
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- 21 Tor Sellström, 'Sweden and the Nordic countries: Official solidarity and assistance from the West', *Road to Democracy*, 3, 1, 421–533; *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 1999); Håkan Thörn, *Anti-apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

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- 23 Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid*, 273.
- 24 Genevieve Klein, 'The British Anti-apartheid Movement and Political Prisoner Campaigns, 1973–1980', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2 (2009), 455–470.
- 25 Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid*, 273.
- 26 Paragraph based on Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid*, 273–275.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 275.
- 28 Tom Lodge, 'State of exile: The African National Congress of South Africa, 1976–86', *Third World Quarterly*, 9, 1 (1987), 1–27, reprinted in Philip Frankel, Noam Pines & Mark Swilling (eds). *State, Resistance and Change in South Africa* (Pretoria: 1988).
- 29 Lodge, 'State of exile', 1, 2.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 31 O'Malley, *Shades of Difference*, 491–492.
- 32 Such work is showcased in the special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* on Liberation Struggles, Exile and International Solidarity, 35, 2 (June 2009); the symposium on 'Liberation Struggles in southern Africa: New perspectives' in *Social Dynamics*, 35, 2 (September 2009); the feature 'Liberation history in southern Africa' in *South African Historical Journal*, 62, 1 (March 2010), and the other chapters in this volume.
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- 34 Luli Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004), 410. The phrase 'psychological deportation' is from the Kenyan poet and academic Micere Githae Mugo.
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- 44 Ibid., 482, fn. 69.
- 45 Gurney, 'Difficult decade', 480.
- 46 Klein, 'Political Prisoner Campaigns', 464.
- 47 Ibid., 465.
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- 49 Ibid., 441; Gurney, 'Heart of the Beast', 345.
- 50 Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid*, 453.
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- 53 Ibid., 96.
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CHAPTER 10

THE 1970S: THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT'S DIFFICULT DECADE

Christabel Gurney

The British Anti-apartheid Movement (AAM) grew from a small organisation set up by expatriate Africans and their British supporters in 1959 to a mass movement, which peaked in the mid-1980s and dissolved itself with its mission accomplished after South Africa's first democratic election in 1994.¹ World politics and the global economy underwent profound changes during this period, and there were many twists and turns along the way. International solidarity was symbiotically linked with the progress of the liberation struggle within southern Africa. Developments within Britain that were quite unrelated to southern Africa also affected AAM campaigns.

Nearly the whole period of the AAM's existence was dominated by the Cold War, which had huge implications for the struggle within southern Africa, for international solidarity and for the AAM in Britain. Attitudes to race changed, so that by the 1980s apartheid was seen as an anachronism rather than, as in the early 1960s, an extreme solution to a difficult racial situation. There were seismic shifts in the world economy: from being one of Britain's and the West's biggest trading partners and investment outlets, South Africa became an outsider knocking on the door of the rich man's club.

Britain was transformed from a largely white society into a country rich in its ethnic and cultural diversity. At the beginning of the period immigration from the Caribbean stirred deep racist currents among the British people; attitudes slowly changed, but in the early 1980s many of the children of the first immigrants still felt marginalised in inner-city ghettos and the tensions erupted in inner-city riots. Other shifts in social and political attitudes had implications for the AAM, for example, the shift to the left within sections of the British labour movement in the 1970s and the Thatcher government's

attacks on trade unions and restriction of the power of local authorities in the 1980s. Most obvious was the ebb and flow of party politics—not just the political complexion of governments, but the attitudes towards them of potential anti-apartheid supporters.² There were also developments within those the AAM identified as its key constituencies—trade unions, churches, students and local authorities.

In 1975 Mozambique and Angola won their independence, transforming the prospects for liberation struggles in the rest of the region, but thrusting southern Africa into the frontline of the Cold War. Escalating guerrilla war in Zimbabwe, where Britain was still the colonial power, lent urgency to British and US attempts to negotiate a settlement that would stave off the revolution they feared would follow outright victory by the liberation movements. In South Africa, where internal opposition seemed to have been crushed, first the Black Consciousness Movement and then the independent trade union movement signalled the development of a multi-faceted resistance. The AAM welcomed the rebirth of above-ground opposition in South Africa. But the emergence of the new forces tested its political maturity. It had been founded by South African supporters of the Congress Movement, and although it followed the OAU policy of recognising both the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the ANC, its first loyalty was to the ANC. It was still unclear in the 1970s how the development of worker militancy and student rebellion, and the growth of independent trade unions and the Black Consciousness Movement would impact on the development of the struggle within South Africa and the role of the ANC. Meanwhile the new forces were embraced by sectors in Britain, notably the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the churches, that were opposed to apartheid, but which saw the new organisations as an alternative to the liberation movement, whose politics they distrusted and with whose commitment to armed struggle they disagreed. At the same time, changing attitudes to race and growing opposition to the West's economic involvement in apartheid gave rise to the new argument of 'constructive engagement'³—a convenient cover for business and governments, but also embraced by groups genuinely opposed to apartheid who feared the implications of rapid disengagement.

Constructive engagement— or isolation

In June 1970 the AAM, together with Stop the Seventy Tour (STST), won its biggest victory so far in the campaign to isolate South Africa by forcing the cancellation of the Springbok cricket tour. The Conservative Party then came to power in the June 1970 general election, and the new Prime Minister,

Edward Heath, announced the resumption of arms sales to South Africa. The AAM mustered a broad coalition in support of the arms ban, and, although the government never publicly reversed its decision, the only arms contract it signed was for seven helicopters.

In a major strategic shift, the AAM had already recast its sanctions campaign, moving away from set piece presentations of the case for sanctions, designed to support the case for mandatory UN action, to 'exposure of the role of individual firms in collaboration with apartheid'.⁴ Fired by its sporting success, it drew up plans to take the strategy forward. The campaign had three strands: exposure of how individual British companies profited from apartheid; attempts to persuade trade unions, church bodies, local councils and universities to sell their shareholdings in such companies; and a call for the British government to curb new investment and loans to South Africa.

In the AAM's 1970–1971 annual report, its president, Bishop Ambrose Reeves, wrote that 'some apparently liberal voices are calling for "change" in South Africa, but they are calling for "change" which in no way threatens the system of apartheid ... The AAM rejects these voices and will continue to work for the cessation of all links with the apartheid system'.⁵ The voices were calling for companies with subsidiaries in South Africa to use their influence in favour of reform and were arguing that economic growth, rather than political struggle, would lead to the breakdown of apartheid. Their conclusion was that opponents of race discrimination should encourage British companies to pay higher wages and train their African employees, rather than campaign for withdrawal. Behind this argument lay the 'shift in norms' which Guelke has argued took place during the 1960s; he suggests that the concept of racial equality became the norm in Western societies only after the success of the US Civil Rights Movement and the completion of the process of decolonisation.⁶ In the 1960s, business and the political establishment could get away with making rhetorical denunciations of apartheid: by the 1970s overt racism was becoming unacceptable and there was greater pressure on them to put forward a strategy for ending it.

The argument that overseas investors could use their influence to bring about change in South Africa was partly a cover for British captains of industry, happy to take advantage of the cheap labour guaranteed by apartheid.⁷ But it was also embraced by people who genuinely wanted an end to apartheid, and at the same time abhorred bloodshed and feared the revolution they thought would follow. The churches, especially, and many in the British trade union movement detested the South African system, but had deep misgivings about the political and economic implications of disengagement.⁸ For the AAM, on the other hand, disengagement was non-negotiable. Its fundamental belief

was that apartheid could be overthrown only through a struggle between the people of South Africa, led by the liberation movement, and the apartheid government; and that the most meaningful form of international solidarity was to campaign for sanctions against South Africa. It argued that 'investment from abroad props up the white regimes and comes into direct confrontation with the forces of freedom.'⁹

Throughout the 1970s the AAM grappled with the problem of how to persuade the constituencies whose support it was convinced it needed of the correctness of this strategy. What was even more difficult, it had to react to initiatives that were sincerely meant and often on the face of it hard to oppose, but which it believed undermined its arguments for the isolation of South Africa. In 1972 Ruth First, after discussions with the AAM, proposed a book which would meet the constructive engagement argument head on by elaborating a new concept, 'the floating colour bar'. *The South African Connection* accepted that the developing industrial economy in South Africa needed skilled black labour, but argued that this need could be accommodated within the system: jobs were being reclassified, but the status and income gap between white and black workers remained. The book was well received and widely reviewed.¹⁰ The AAM had put its case freshly and forcefully. The material for the book's company case studies was provided by *Sunday Times* correspondent Denis Herbstein, who, at the suggestion of South African journalist Benjamin Pogrand, prolonged a holiday in South Africa to interview managers of British-owned factories. His story was buried in the *Sunday Times* business section, where he implied that firms should increase the wages of their black workers rather than pull out, but the facts contained in his article were seen as useful ammunition by the AAM.¹¹ Over the next two years the movement upped its campaign. The disruption of Barclays Bank's annual general meeting in April 1972 received national press publicity. The AAM compiled files on leading companies for distribution to activists. In January 1973, the TUC sold shares in six companies in response to a resolution passed at its 1972 annual congress.¹² Camden Council in London and Manchester University also sold shares.

Then, in March 1973, poverty wages hit the headlines on a scale that far surpassed any publicity won by AAM initiatives. *The Guardian's* front page was given over to a report headlined 'British firms pay Africans starvation rate'. Investigative journalist Adam Raphael showed that 100 leading British companies, many of them household names, were paying wages on which it was impossible for families to feed themselves. More features and editorials followed and the issue was taken up by the other broadsheets.¹³ The emphasis was on the need to shame companies into paying higher wages, rather than

pressure them into pulling out of South Africa. The AAM rushed to defend its advocacy of disengagement, holding a press conference at which it announced a programme of intensified activity for an end to all investment in South Africa, and a debate in the House of Commons between its Honorary Secretary, Abdul Minty, and Adam Raphael on the pros and cons of withdrawal from South Africa.¹⁴

The *Guardian* exposé prompted an enquiry by the Trade and Industry Sub-committee of the House of Commons Select Committee on Expenditure, to which the AAM gave written evidence putting the case for British withdrawal. This was ignored in the report of the committee, which proposed a code of practice for British firms operating in South Africa. The British code was taken up by the EEC in 1977 at the initiative of Foreign Secretary David Owen.¹⁵

A more immediate result was the decision of the TUC to take up an invitation from the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) to send a fact-finding mission to South Africa. Ever since it had advised the newly formed TUCSA in 1954 to comply with the South African legislation outlawing racially mixed trade unions, the TUC had been close to TUCSA. In April 1973 the TUC international department consulted the British employers' organisation, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), and the pro-South African lobby group, the United Kingdom South Africa Trade Association (UKSATA), about South Africa. At the same time it rejected a request from the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) for a meeting.¹⁶ Nevertheless, when the AAM discovered that the TUC was considering sending a delegation, it reacted cautiously, expressing its reservations, and only after 11 mineworkers were shot dead by South African police at Carletonville in the Transvaal in September 1973 did it call on the TUC to cancel the visit.¹⁷

The TUC delegation's subsequent report proposed the establishment of an African trade union centre and called for disinvestment by British companies that were hostile to independent trade unions. The AAM criticised the report on the grounds that it condoned investment in South Africa and that its proposals to foster the growth of African unions ignored black South Africans' own union traditions. At the 1974 TUC annual congress, the AAM discouraged any attempt to force a vote on the report after consulting sympathetic union leaders, who advised that such an attempt would fail.¹⁸ Instead, it emphasised the stand taken by the international trade union movement at a conference held in Geneva in June 1973, which asked governments to end all links with South Africa. It also stressed existing TUC policy to urge the government 'to curb further investment in South Africa'.¹⁹ Instead of confronting the TUC leadership, the AAM briefed sympathetic

delegates to make points from the floor of the conference about international trade union and TUC annual congress policy. It held to this line in the face of objections from SACTU members, who were planning to distribute leaflets to demand a vote on the TUC report.²⁰ At a meeting with Jack Jones on 22 July 1974, an AAM delegation made clear its disagreement with the TUC proposals, but concentrated on discussion of how it could work with Jones's union, the Transport and General Workers' Union.²¹

For the rest of the decade, the AAM pursued a strategy of working at all levels of the trade union movement to convince unionists of the need for disengagement. With very limited resources it held conferences for grassroots trade unionists, engaged with the growing shop-stewards movement and made contacts in companies that supplied military and other sensitive material to South Africa. It worked with sympathetic union leaders to propose resolutions at the TUC annual congress and used these, and international trade union initiatives, to promote union action.²² Without compromising on its demand for South Africa's isolation, it was pragmatic in its attitude towards the TUC. In November 1976, the ICFTU asked its affiliates to organise a week of action on South Africa in January of the following year.²³ Again, in June 1977, a conference organised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) proposed an international week of anti-apartheid action. The TUC took up these initiatives and on both occasions the AAM used the TUC's request to trade unionists to take part in the weeks of action to press the case for sanctions, leaving the TUC to ask union members to 'uncover the facts' about the pay and conditions of South African workers.²⁴

In the early 1970s British trade unions moved to the left; the rank-and-file were mobilised in mass demonstrations against the Heath government's Industrial Relations Act, and bargaining shifted from national agreements to factory deals hammered out by shop-stewards' committees. The AAM also moved left. It appealed for trade union support, not just for humanitarian reasons, but on the grounds that British and South African workers had a common interest in fighting multinational companies and that it was in the interests of British workers to demand that capital was invested in Britain rather than in South Africa.²⁵ In 1975 it set up an investment unit to commission papers from academics who discussed the extent to which recession in Britain was linked to economic exposure in southern Africa.²⁶ There were tensions between the investment unit and the AAM's trade union committee. In the run-up to its 1979 labour movement conference, an internal AAM trade union committee paper argued that 'only those members of the working class who are already politically sophisticated will perceive the common elements in their aims and those of the South African liberation movement ... an appeal to

the British working class based on common class interest will only appeal to a limited group'.²⁷ By the end of the decade the humanitarian appeal approach was winning out within the AAM.

By 1980, 35 national trade unions were affiliated to the AAM, compared with 14 in 1971. At the beginning of the 1970s, support had come mostly from small left-wing craft unions; over the decade this base was broadened to include the manual workers' General and Municipal Workers' Union and white collar unions in the civil service and local government. At leadership level the AAM was winning support for disengagement. At the grassroots it succeeded in stimulating trade union interest in southern Africa among active trade unionists, especially in the repression of South African unions. But it was still concerned about the depth of understanding of its isolation policy. The 1978–1979 annual report commented on the March 1978 trade union week of action: 'Many trade union bodies, reflecting the concern and commitment of their members, co-operated and worked in close liaison with the AAM, especially at a local level'. But the achievements were modest and it was clear that many trade unionists did not accept all aspects of AAM policy, especially the need to isolate South Africa economically.²⁸

Nevertheless, by the end of the decade, the AAM was well on its way to building the broad base of trade union support that was one of its main strengths in the 1980s. Even at the TUC, attitudes were changing. When South African government emissary Nic Wiehahn visited London in 1979 to canvass international support for his commission's proposals to give Africans limited trade union rights, the TUC's official response was that it would not meet him.²⁹ This rebuff would not have happened six years earlier. In May 1981, a TUC delegation told the Conservative Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, that it was concerned at the government's veto of mandatory sanctions against South Africa at the UN. Later that year, the TUC annual congress passed its first resolution calling for South Africa's total isolation, including UN mandatory economic sanctions.³⁰

The churches

Just as, for much of the 1970s, the TUC took its line from TUCSA, the British churches were guided by their white-led sister denominations in South Africa. In the early 1960s the close links between the British and South African churches stymied almost any protest against apartheid. In 1964 the British Council of Churches (BCC) rejected a request from the AAM to take part in a vigil for South African political prisoners on the grounds that this would 'invite a barrage of misunderstanding and even vituperation from South

Africa'.³¹ But from the mid-1960s the churches spoke out against arms sales to South Africa; the BCC was represented on an AAM delegation that urged Labour Foreign Secretary George Brown to maintain the arms embargo in December 1967.³² In 1970 the BCC opposed the Springbok cricket tour, and it protested against the 1970–1974 Conservative government's decision to lift the arms ban.³³

The British churches failed even to provide a forum for discussion of Britain's economic links with South Africa and to give guidance on their own investments. In 1972, the World Council of Churches decided to sell its holdings in companies that operated in South Africa and urged its members to press international corporations to withdraw.³⁴ The BCC made no formal response, but implicitly rejected the recommendation. In a letter to the AAM explaining why it could not sign a statement for publication in *The Guardian* calling for British withdrawal, the BCC's General Secretary came down firmly in favour of the Code of Conduct approach:

*The British Council of Churches has not committed itself to such a policy [divestment]—and incidentally neither has the World Council of Churches ... Many in our constituency, I believe, will need a great deal of convincing that the better way forward is not to remain economically involved in South Africa but to pressurize the firms so involved to insure [sic] that they pay proper wages, provide social service benefits and educational opportunities for their black staff.*³⁵

The BCC had little influence over the policies of its constituents, the weightiest of which was the deeply conservative Church of England. By the early 1970s there was a feeling among at least some church activists that the question of investment in southern Africa was a burning issue and, among others, that to be credible the churches must be seen to take a public stance. In October 1973, the BCC asked member churches if they would support the setting up of a special unit to discuss the various strategies. The Church of England refused to fund the unit and the BCC's Executive Committee recommended to its 1974 assembly that the proposal be dropped in view of the inadequate response.³⁶ It was left to an *ad hoc* and under-funded body, Christian Concern for Southern Africa (CCSA), run by Catholic Tim Sheehy and Quaker Trevor Jepson, to act as a forum for discussion on the churches' attitudes to economic links. This was in spite of the fact that the Anglican Church commissioners were one of the largest shareholders in the country. In 1972 they announced they would no longer invest in firms whose main operations were in South Africa and sold shares in the mining multinational Rio-Tinto Zinc. But the definition of companies from which they would

disinvest excluded conglomerates whose operations did not concentrate on South Africa, but which had huge stakes in the apartheid economy, such as ICI, British Leyland, GEC and Barclays Bank.³⁷

As new currents emerged within the South African churches in the 1970s, attitudes in the British churches began to change. Towards the end of the decade the Church of England's Board of Social Responsibility and the BCC organised seminars and forums to discuss investment in South Africa. But significantly, in their consultations with anti-apartheid South Africans, the churches talked to representatives of the Black Consciousness Movement to the exclusion of the liberation movements. Seminars and consultations on investment in South Africa, organised by the BCC's Division of International Affairs and by the Board of Social Responsibility in 1978 and 1979, included representatives of the Black Allied Workers' Union and the Black People's Convention, but not the ANC or PAC.³⁸

The AAM, acutely aware of these differences, pursued a two-track approach of working with the churches on consensus issues, such as the arms embargo and apartheid education, and putting the case for economic disengagement. It accepted invitations to participate in church-sponsored discussions and invited staff members of the churches' international policy departments to AAM meetings. Abdul Minty told a seminar organised by CCSA in 1976: 'It is our belief that as the crisis grows ... those with a stake in the apartheid system, including overseas investors, will stand more and more on the side of the white power system.'³⁹ The AAM tried to initiate dialogue between the churches and the liberation movements: in June 1979 it wrote to the BCC's General Secretary suggesting a meeting with the staunchly Anglican Oliver Tambo.⁴⁰ However, by the end of the 1970s it had not dispelled the churches' wariness of the ANC.⁴¹ The British churches were reflecting the attitude of their South African counterparts. Brian Brown, former Africa Secretary of the BCC, recalls how 'the closeness of the relationship between SWAPO and Namibia's church leaders was not replicated in the relationship between the ANC and South Africa's emerging black church leadership.'⁴² He argues that the allegiance of much of the new church leadership to the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s reflected the fact that the movement was then the main anti-apartheid opposition within South Africa. The churches were also influenced by the 'real and perceived links' of the ANC to communist countries, 'bearing in mind the persecution then experienced by Christians in many parts of the Communist world'.⁴³

The British churches were far from monolithic, however. In 1976, the Methodists set up an informal task force for 'co-operative action on Southern Africa', which functioned largely as an information-sharing forum and focused

on Zimbabwe.⁴⁴ But even the Methodists were constrained by their grassroots. Brian Brown tells how the church had to stop its grants to the World Council of Churches Programme to Combat Racism: 'We did agree to give grants to the Programme ... and that brought all hell upon our heads when the right-wing press got hold of the story. After a while we stopped making the grants, because our church was terribly divided.'⁴⁵ Instead, the Methodist Church asked congregations who wished to support the programme to send their cash direct.

The South African government's banning of the Christian Institute in 1977 provoked a significant change in church attitudes. The Archbishop of Canterbury telegraphed Prime Minister Vorster expressing his 'deep shock and distress' and the BCC described the ban as a 'tyrannical action'.⁴⁶ In the last years of the decade the churches began to give serious consideration to economic disengagement. After vigorous debate within its member churches, provoked by a report which argued that the situation had been 'altered radically' by the banning of organisations committed to peaceful change, the 1979 BCC general assembly adopted a policy of 'progressive disengagement'.⁴⁷

From the late 1970s individual church people began to play a bigger part in AAM campaigns. The 'Conference Against Repression' in April 1977 was the first SATIS (South Africa: The Imprisoned Society) or AAM conference to have a workshop for church activists. This tactic was not always successful; the AAM and its message were still too strident for many potential grassroots supporters. The report of the religious organisations workshop at an AAM conference held in March 1982 noted: 'Many church people feel frightened ... by the aggressive political overtones of AAM which act as a barrier to church ... participation'.⁴⁸ But the AAM's careful cultivation of contacts paved the way for closer co-operation in the 1980s, and for the formation of the Southern Africa Coalition which grew from a conference organised by the BCC and Christian Aid in 1989.⁴⁹

'The masses are on the move'⁵⁰

On 16 June 1976, school students marching through Soweto were shot down by police, triggering a wave of student demonstrations and worker stay-aways that engulfed South Africa.⁵¹ While celebrating the heroism of the students, the AAM was quick to locate the uprising in a longer-term strategy. It stressed that the demonstrations had spread to include workers and whole communities all over South Africa and that the protests were not just against the government's plan for lessons in Afrikaans, but against the whole apartheid system.⁵² Underlying its reaction was a concern to bolster the role of the ANC.

It did this by giving prominence to the reaction of the ANC underground and by quoting statements by external ANC leaders. *Anti-Apartheid News* reproduced the text of an ANC leaflet proclaiming 'We have taken the road of armed struggle under the leadership of the ANC' and reported its call for a three-day work stoppage.⁵³ It quoted ANC leader Duma Nokwe as saying that 'The school children's revolt against being taught in Afrikaans was their way of taking part in the maturing revolutionary situation in our country.'⁵⁴

The AAM's main response to the uprising followed from its analysis of its own role as a solidarity movement whose function was to exert pressure on the British government. It called on all those who were outraged by the killings in South Africa to demand that the government ban all exports of military and police equipment to South Africa and support a UN mandatory arms embargo.⁵⁵

In fact, the reaction in Britain to the Soweto shootings was more muted than to Sharpeville or the township insurrections of the mid-1980s. The immediate public response was disappointing—the AAM's emergency demonstration held 11 days after the massacre was attended by about 6 000 people, fewer than those who demonstrated more or less spontaneously against the Sharpeville shootings 16 years before. Its 'No Arms for Apartheid' petition, which aimed to channel protest at the shootings into opposition to military collaboration, was signed by 64 000 people—fewer than the 100 000 who had signed the declaration calling on the Conservative government to maintain the arms ban in 1970. The AAM's initiatives received very little press coverage.⁵⁶ This was partly because Britain was preoccupied with threats of cuts in public expenditure and record post-war unemployment. But it was also because the AAM was in organisational disarray.⁵⁷ The organisation had no previous contacts with the Soweto school students and there were tensions when the president of the Soweto Students Representative Council, Tsietsi Mashinini, reached London.⁵⁸

The 1973 Durban strike wave was a prequel to the growth of the independent trade union movement, which gathered strength throughout the decade. As strikes and worker action spread, the AAM publicised them as a crucial new development. In principle it welcomed the growth of independent trade unions, but it saw them as an unknown political factor. The unions reflected conflicting and rapidly changing ideological currents and their organisers came from various political traditions.⁵⁹ Some had a history of involvement in SACTU and some came from the Black Consciousness Movement; some of the most effective of the new union leaders argued, for reasons of pragmatism or ideology, that trade unions should stay out of the political struggle. The AAM was, therefore, ambivalent about the new movement. While it mobilised

support for worker action and against government repression of trade unionists, it had underlying concerns about the new trade unions' attitudes to sanctions and the strategy of the national liberation struggle.

The AAM publicised disputes over union recognition and strike action, especially when they involved the subsidiaries of British and American companies, such as Pilkington's Armourplate Safety Glass and Heinemann Electrical. In 1977–1978 it worked with unions in Britain to pressure British-owned Smith and Nephew to reverse its decision not to renew its recognition agreement with the National Union of Textile Workers. In 1979 it called for solidarity with the Food and Canning Workers' Union in its dispute with the Cape Town food manufacturer, Fattis and Monis, and with workers at Ford's Port Elizabeth plant, who downed tools in protest against the sacking of community leader Thozamile Botha.⁶⁰ But it followed SACTU in singling out the community-based South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU) as South Africa's fastest-growing union and virtually ignored the formation of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in 1979.⁶¹ It was selective in its contacts and arranged a British speaking tour for Thozamile Botha, who told *Anti-Apartheid News*: 'All the ... unions are in touch with SACTU, and so it should be trusted as the organisation that really represents the people.'⁶²

When the Wiehahn Commission recommended that black unions should be given bargaining rights if they joined a government registration system, the South African trade union movement split; FOSATU decided that its affiliates should register, while SAAWU, the Western Province General Workers' Union and other unions decided against registration. Consistent with its contention that no real progress could be made by trade unions as long as apartheid was in place, the AAM argued strongly against registration, contending that it would make it virtually impossible for unions to organise.⁶³ In fact, the independent unions succeeded in using the legislation based on the Wiehahn Commission's recommendations to their own advantage, and FOSATU, together with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), was the leading force behind the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985.

From the early 1970s the AAM worked closely with John Gaetsewe, SACTU West European representative and later General Secretary, who was based in London. Gaetsewe was an exemplary worker-ambassador, with whom British trade unionists found it easy to identify. In 1976 SACTU formed its own British Liaison Committee, and the AAM encouraged British trade unionists to work with SACTU. As the South African trade union movement grew, SACTU's claim to be the sole 'gatekeeper' of links between British and South

African unions became increasingly untenable. The AAM came under pressure from an alliance of South African exiles and left-wing British groups to foster independent contacts between British workers and their counterparts in South Africa. It construed this as an attempt to promote a worker-led, anti-capitalist programme as an alternative to the ANC strategy of national liberation, as well as to undermine its own broad appeal by co-opting it into a sectarian far-left alliance within Britain. Neither side was totally open about the ideological basis of their positions.⁶⁴ Instead of openly confronting what it saw as an ultra-left position, the AAM argued that approaches from overseas trade unionists would expose South African activists to arrest and detention and jeopardise their safety. Those advocating 'direct links' had pockets of support in local anti-apartheid groups and affiliated Labour Party branches, but they remained a small minority. The defeat of motions calling for direct links with South African trade unions became a ritual at successive AAM annual general meetings.⁶⁵ The argument over direct links was not just a sectarian squabble: it raised a problem at the heart of any solidarity movement—how to support a freedom struggle without interfering in it and distorting it.

The Cold War

After a thaw in US–Soviet relations in the early 1970s, the US defeat in Vietnam and a rash of 'Third World' revolutions triggered tensions that have been described as the Second Cold War.⁶⁶ The coming to power of FRELIMO in Mozambique and of MPLA in Angola in 1975 turned southern Africa into a frontline in this conflict. The new governments were openly Marxist, but the biggest provocation to the US and other Western powers was the arrival of Cuban troops in Angola in November 1975 to defend the MPLA government against South African attack.⁶⁷ The liberation of Mozambique and Angola radically changed the prospects for the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. It gave the liberation movements forward bases from which to infiltrate South Africa and Namibia, and opened up a new front along Zimbabwe's eastern border. Just as important, it raised the morale of anti-apartheid activists within South Africa, demonstrating that seemingly impregnable regimes could be overthrown. It was an inspiration to the young people who defied police bullets in 1976.

This also meant that southern Africa moved up the Cold War agenda. In April 1976, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger declared in Lusaka that the US wanted to see 'a comprehensive solution to the problems of Southern Africa'.⁶⁸ Its aim was to head off further revolutions in the region by installing pro-Western black majority governments in Namibia and

Zimbabwe, which would maintain the economic and political status quo. The objective of American policy was to forestall revolution by reaching settlements in Zimbabwe and Namibia that would put in place multi-racial governments acceptable to the white minority. On Zimbabwe, the proposals put forward by Kissinger were followed by a peace conference in Geneva and the Anglo-American plan promoted by British Foreign Secretary David Owen and Andrew Young. Britain was still technically responsible for Zimbabwe, and reaching a settlement that would end the guerrilla war and guarantee a future for the country's white population was one of Owen's main preoccupations.⁶⁹

Even before the rise in Cold War tensions, the AAM had been accused in government and other circles of being too far to the left and close to the communist Party.⁷⁰ This was partly the result of the AAM's perceived closeness to the ANC. The ANC was doubly denigrated in Britain and the West in the late 1960s and early 1970s for depending on the Soviet Union for support and for failing to establish a visible presence within South Africa. Among the South Africans on the AAM's National Committee were well-known South African Communists, such as Brian Bunting and Fred Carneson. Many of the AAM's most committed and hard-working supporters were British communists. In the early 1970s the few trade unionists who were willing to speak on AAM platforms were on the left and often close to the Communist Party. The Party was far from the caricature of hatchet-faced Stalinists drawn by its opponents: it had a big student membership and a lively feminist wing. It also had an internationalist outlook and many of its members were naturally drawn to campaigns on southern Africa. They were staunchly pro-ANC. But there was a deep current of anti-communism within the British Labour movement. Some Labour MPs had always been solid in their support for the ANC and AAM: but in the early 1970s others, including members of the Party's Southern Africa Solidarity Fund Committee, were suspicious of the ANC's communist links.⁷¹ Attitudes in the Labour Party began to change after Swedish Social Democrat leader Olof Palme led a Socialist International mission to southern Africa in 1977. His report came out sharply against seeing the southern African struggle in a Cold War frame and recommended that the Socialist International should back the ANC.⁷² The report had a significant influence on British Labour leaders and in the second half of the 1970s attitudes began to change.

Within the AAM there was always a consensus on sanctions and support for the liberation movements, but there was debate and disagreement on how important it was to avoid being seen as communist-aligned. When South Africa invaded Angola in the autumn of 1975, the AAM asked British Foreign Secretary James Callaghan to initiate UN action and co-ordinated protests

from other organisations. MPLA's declaration of Angolan independence on 11 November provoked a sharp, though brief, division of opinion within the AAM between those who wanted to campaign for British government recognition of the new Angolan People's Republic and those who argued that the AAM's role should be restricted to campaigning against South African aggression.⁷³ Behind the dispute was the issue of how to remain a single-issue organisation that appealed to the widest possible spectrum of British public opinion. A majority on the Executive Committee was opposed to calling for recognition of the MPLA government, but a subsequent National Committee meeting disagreed.⁷⁴ The argument was resolved after the AAM's then Vice-Chair, Labour MP Bob Hughes, flew to Luanda to attend an international solidarity conference, and the British government recognised the Angolan government on 18 February 1976.

For the rest of the decade the AAM was trenchant in its analysis of US and British intervention in southern Africa. It accused the US of embarking 'on a major diplomatic and political offensive to control change ... so that the African revolution does not sweep away the structure of economic and political power in Southern Africa'.⁷⁵ It warned against a scenario in which South Africa would co-operate with Western governments to install undemocratic, but multi-racial, regimes in Zimbabwe and Namibia, as the price of the West abandoning all pressure for an end to apartheid. On Zimbabwe, which throughout the decade was the dominant British concern in southern Africa, it stressed that a just settlement could be achieved only through the defeat of the white minority regime by the liberation movements. In 1978 and 1979 the AAM organised 'Months of Action' on Zimbabwe, asking supporters to collect material aid for the Patriotic Front and using the fact that the apartheid government was breaking sanctions against Rhodesia to reinforce its campaign for UN mandatory sanctions against South Africa.⁷⁶ During the 1979–1980 Lancaster House conference it continued to warn against bad faith on the part of the Thatcher government.

The very excesses of the apartheid government helped the AAM to overcome Cold War prejudice and broaden its political base. The AAM's reputation always depended on the energy and integrity with which it campaigned on issues that united all sections of anti-apartheid opinion, like deaths in detention, political trials and the banning of anti-apartheid organisations within South Africa. In the months before the Soweto uprising, more and more people were detained without trial and there was growing evidence of police torture. The AAM asked particular groups to act in solidarity with their colleagues in South Africa. In October 1976, stars of stage and screen held placards outside South Africa House protesting against the detention of actors John Kani and Winston Ntshona. TUC General

Secretary Len Murray led a deputation of General Council members to call for the lifting of bans on trade unionists. Hundreds of students joined the protests and the President of the National Union of Students, future Labour Minister Charles Clarke, handed in a letter to 10 Downing Street. The protests climaxed after the murder of Steve Biko by security police on 12 September 1977—the forty-sixth detainee known to have died in police custody. The AAM's call for an international inquiry received wide backing and Foreign Secretary David Owen attended a memorial service for Biko arranged by the International Defence and Aid Fund in St Paul's Cathedral.

The AAM was uncompromising in its opposition to an undemocratic settlement in Zimbabwe and Namibia, but it was pragmatic in its dealings with the 1974–1979 Labour government. It campaigned for an end to military collaboration with South Africa and for step-by-step measures to reduce Britain's economic stake. In 1974 the government announced that it would comply with the UN arms embargo and withheld the last of the helicopters sold to South Africa under the Conservatives. The following year it announced the termination of the Simonstown Agreement.⁷⁷ But it gave the go-ahead to joint naval exercises with South Africa, and made clear that Royal Navy ships would continue to call at South African ports. In its first few years, the government made no move to cut trade and investment with South Africa or even to stop nationalised industries like the British Steel Corporation expanding there. The AAM asked for meetings with ministers, but in the early years of the government was offered only a meeting with Joan Lester, who was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office in 1974 and was already a strong AAM supporter.⁷⁸

The AAM lobbied the government unremittingly, presenting detailed memoranda on breaches of the arms embargo. It exposed NATO collaboration in the construction of a secret underground naval surveillance system, Project Advokaat, at Silvermine in the Cape. Relations improved after the appointment of David Owen as Foreign Secretary in February 1977. Owen was by far the most approachable of Labour foreign ministers. He met AAM deputations twice in 1977 and agreed to investigate breaches of the government's voluntary arms ban. In May 1977 the government told the AAM that it was no longer supplying South Africa with NATO codification data.⁷⁹ Then in November 1977, Britain voted for a mandatory arms embargo under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The significance of this was largely long-term: faced with its inability to replace fighter aircraft detected by Soviet-supplied radar in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale in 1988, South Africa had to reconsider its strategy. The more immediate effect of the UN resolution was to place growing

strains on South Africa's economy as the country was forced to become more self-sufficient in armaments.

The AAM continued to call for economic sanctions, but in its day-to-day dealings with government it lobbied for incremental steps, such as a freeze on new investment and an end to bank loans and trade missions. In December 1977 it organised a joint conference with the Labour Party, at which David Owen was the main speaker. He defended the government's use of Britain's UN veto against economic sanctions, but argued that on a 'prudential risk basis' Britain should look at the level of its South African involvement. When the UN declared 1978–1979 as International Anti-apartheid Year, the AAM initiated a broad committee of British organisations, which invited Owen to speak at a meeting in January 1979, although it knew he would advocate a code of conduct. Owen defended the code, but said the government had 'shown a determination to start on the difficult path of reducing our economic profile and economic commitment in South Africa'.⁸⁰ As the AAM engaged in dialogue with government, its arguments began to be treated with a new seriousness.

Conclusion

Should the AAM have spent so much energy on rebutting the constructive engagement argument and the dangers of Western appeasement of South Africa—and on opposing direct links with South African trade unions? Should it have been so distrustful of British initiatives on Zimbabwe in the run-up to the 1979 Lancaster House conference? In its support for the liberation movements and its acceptance of the strategy of armed struggle and revolution in southern Africa, the AAM was out of step not just with the right in British politics, but with large sections of the labour movement. Did its insistence on the need to isolate South Africa and its support for the ANC limit its appeal in Britain? Should it have compromised on these issues in order to win wider support? In the event, the problems posed by constructive engagement and Western appeasement fell away as much as a result of their inherent contradictions and the intransigence of the apartheid regime, as a result of the efforts of the AAM. This was far from clear at the time. But the AAM's exposition of its political strategy was always more hardline than its practice. In its dealings with the TUC it held back from confrontation; it sought to establish a dialogue with the churches; and it pressed the 1974–1979 Labour government for an arms ban and incremental measures, rather than emphasising the call for comprehensive UN sanctions. It was only with the advocates of direct links that it eschewed all compromise.

The AAM emerged from the 1970s with its organisation intact and with a stronger campaigning base. It had built support in the trade union movement, established contacts in the churches and had an expanding local group structure. The resolution of the conflict in Zimbabwe in 1980 left it free to concentrate on South Africa and Namibia. The formation of the UDF in 1983 and the insurrection in the South African townships in 1984–1986 changed the whole potential for solidarity action in Britain. The AAM was able to realise the aim of its founders in 1959—to create a coalition of anti-apartheid forces and reach out to people who had never been involved in a formal political organisation, but who wanted to express their instinctive feeling that apartheid was wrong. It did this by turning the multiplicity of British links with South Africa into a weapon against apartheid by challenging them at every level. Although it came up against a Conservative government led by a Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who was viscerally opposed to sanctions, its 1988 ‘Nelson Mandela: Freedom at Seventy’ campaign was its biggest ever initiative and helped give Mandela a global reputation as the leader of South Africa’s anti-apartheid forces. Whatever mistakes it made in its difficult decade, the AAM emerged well-placed to seize the initiative in the 1980s.

Notes

- 1 The AAM evolved from the Boycott Movement, launched by the Committee of African Organisations (CAO) on the initiative of South African exiles on 26 June 1959.
- 2 For example, the 1964–1970 Labour government provoked a feeling of betrayal, especially among young people, largely because of its failure to disassociate itself from the US in Vietnam.
- 3 Although the argument for change through involvement emerged in the early 1970s, the phrase ‘constructive engagement’ was coined in a different context, by US Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker in his negotiations with South Africa on Namibia in the 1980s.
- 4 Rhodes House (hereafter RH): MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report, September 1967.
- 5 Ibid., AAM Annual Report, September 1970–August 1971.
- 6 A. Guelke, *Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), Chapter 10.
- 7 It was also argued that withdrawal could benefit the South African economy by transferring assets to local entrepreneurs at knock-down prices.
- 8 The TUC General Council, for example, opposed sanctions on the grounds that ‘some industries would be particularly affected ... and unemployment in these industries might be on a scale that would make it necessary to seek financial

- contributions from trade unionists in other industries.' TUC Annual Report, 1965, 248–249.
- 9 RH: MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report, September 1971–August 1972.
- 10 Ruth First, Jonathan Steele & Christabel Gurney, *The South African Connection: Western Investment in Apartheid* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972).
- 11 *Sunday Times*, 18 April 1971.
- 12 RH: MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report, October 1972–September 1973. The Congress resolution called on the TUC to withdraw its investments in all companies that had South African subsidiaries. TUC Annual Report, 1972.
- 13 *The Guardian*, 12 March 1973. For a detailed analysis, see James Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media 1972–1979. A Struggle for Representation* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), Chapter 5.
- 14 RH: MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report, October 1972–September 1973.
- 15 Martin Holland, *The European Community and South Africa: European Political Co-operation under Strain* (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1988), 32–33. Holland argues that the EEC Code was intended to forestall anti-apartheid protests in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising.
- 16 *Ibid.*, Box XXXI, Minutes of TUC International Committee, 17 April 1973.
- 17 RH: MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report, October 1972–September 1973.
- 18 The AAM consulted Ken Gill of AUEW (TASS) and Bob Wright of AUEW (Engineering). RH: MSS AAM 71, Matters arising from Minutes of EC Meeting of 15 July 1974.
- 19 The June 1973 International Labour Organisation (ILO) workers section conference was remarkable in that it brought together the pro-Western International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the communist-oriented World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). The 1971 TUC annual conference passed a resolution which also asked affiliated unions to ensure they had no investments in firms with South African subsidiaries. TUC Annual Report, 1971.
- 20 RH: MSS AAM 67, Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 8 August 1974. The disagreement was resolved at a meeting with SACTU West European representative, John Gaetsewe, on 10 August. *Ibid.*, Matters arising from Minutes of EC Meeting of 8 August 1974.
- 21 RH: MSS AAM 67, Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 8 August 1974.
- 22 RH: MSS AAM 161–163, Minutes and papers of Trade Union Action Group (1968–1972) and Trade Union Committee (1972–1979), *passim*.
- 23 For a report of the Week of Action, 17–24 January 1977, see *Anti-Apartheid News*, February–March 1977. RH: MSS AAM 2201.
- 24 'TUC asks for facts on UK firms', *Anti-Apartheid News*, April 1978. The 1978 Week of Action took place on 13–22 March.

- 25 See, for example, 'Companies create redundancies in Britain', *Anti-Apartheid News*, February 1973. RH: MSS AAM 2201.
- 26 See Dorcas Good & Michael Williams, 'South Africa: The crisis in Britain and the apartheid economy', and Simon Clarke, 'Changing patterns of international investment in South Africa and the Disinvestment Campaign (AAM, 1976)'. Papers in the possession of the author.
- 27 Paper headed 'How should the AAM respond to the repercussions on the UK economy of disengagement from the South African economy?' in the possession of the author.
- 28 RH: MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report, 1978–1979.
- 29 TUC Annual Congress Report, 1979. Unknown to the AAM, the TUC's international department met Wiehahn unofficially.
- 30 TUC Congress Report, 1981.
- 31 RH: MSS AAM 149, BCC to Dorothy Robinson, November 1964.
- 32 RH: MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report, October 1967/July 1968.
- 33 RH: MSS AAM 43, Minutes of National Committee Meeting, 6 March 1971.
- 34 See David Haslam, *Go Sell* (London: Epworth Press, 1975), 31–35.
- 35 RH: MSS AAM 149, Kenneth Sansbury, BCC General Secretary, to Ethel de Keyser, 13 June 1972.
- 36 Haslam, op. cit., 46–47. This was in spite of the fact that £6 000 of the estimated running costs of £10 000 had been pledged by other donors.
- 37 Ibid., 43.
- 38 RH: MSS AAM 149.
- 39 RH: MSS AAM 1697.
- 40 RH: MSS AAM 149, Mike Terry to Harry Morton, 8 June 1979.
- 41 However, attitudes were beginning to change—when the ANC's London office was bombed in 1982, the BCC offered temporary office space to the ANC's Information Department.
- 42 E-mail communication from Brian Brown to the author, 2006.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 RH: MSS AAM 152.
- 45 Interview with Brian Brown by Håkan Thörn, 3 March 2000.
- 46 RH: MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report, October 1977–September 1978.
- 47 RH: MSS AAM 2202, *Anti-Apartheid News*, June 1979. The AAM, End Loans to Southern Africa and the Namibia Support Committee held a fringe meeting at the 1979 assembly.
- 48 RH: MSS AAM 152.
- 49 The Southern African Coalition was remarkable in that it included the TUC, BCC, development agencies and the AAM.
- 50 RH: MSS AAM 2201, *Anti-Apartheid News*, July–August 1976.

- 51 RH: MSS AAM 43, National Committee Minutes, 12 June 1976, report by Horst Kleinschmidt, who had recently arrived from South Africa.
- 52 *Anti-Apartheid News* argued that 'The protest by high school students in Soweto and other areas against the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction was their way of asserting their rejection of the whole apartheid system.' RH: MSS AAM 2201, *Anti-Apartheid News*, July–August 1976.
- 53 *Anti-Apartheid News*, July–August and September 1976.
- 54 *Anti-Apartheid News*, July–August 1976.
- 55 The demonstration held on 27 June to protest against the shootings was led by a banner stating 'No British military or police equipment for South Africa'. *Anti-Apartheid News*, July 1976.
- 56 This was a cause of concern within the organisation. RH: MSS AAM 43, National Committee Minutes, 4 September 1976.
- 57 Mike Terry had only recently taken over as AAM Executive Secretary after a brief incumbency by Basil Manning; Bob Hughes took over from John Ennals as Chair after the uprising, in October 1976. The year before, the AAM had alienated its supporters on the Labour NEC by its maladroit organisation of a demonstration against British naval exercises with South Africa.
- 58 The AAM organised a press conference for Mashinini on 4 October 1976. A good relationship was established with Nkosazana Dlamini, then Vice-President of the South African Students Organisation, who arrived in London shortly afterwards.
- 59 See Jeremy Baskin, *Striking Back: A History of COSATU* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), Chapter 1. Steven Friedman gives a full account of the independent trade unions in the 1970s and early 1980s in *Building Tomorrow Today* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).
- 60 RH: MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report, October 1979–September 1980.
- 61 There is no mention of FOSATU in the AAM Annual Report for October 1978–September 1979 or in *Anti-Apartheid News* during 1979.
- 62 RH: MSS AAM 2202, *Anti-Apartheid News*, December 1980.
- 63 *Ibid.*, April 1981.
- 64 See 'Why workers need direct links: A reply from Coventry South-East Labour Party to note from the Executive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement', 27 June 1981. RH: MSS AAM 18.
- 65 The TUC also pursued a version of direct links, but from a right rather than a left perspective. While the left espoused socialist revolution in South Africa, the TUC advocated gradual reform. Both were suspicious of SACTU, the ANC and the AAM.
- 66 Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes* (London: Abacus, 1995), Chapter 8.
- 67 Victoria Brittain, *Death of Dignity: Angola's Civil War* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 2–3. Cuban instructors arrived by sea in October 1975 and the first fighting troops by air in November.

- 68 Quoted in Thörn, *op. cit.*, 161.
- 69 See David Owen, *Time to Declare* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), Chapter 13.
- 70 A confidential Foreign Office memo dated 21 December 1964 wrongly described Mazisi Kunene of the ANC and Abdul Minty (then known as S. Abdul) as communists and stated: 'The fact is that Communists have to a considerable extent taken control both of the African National Congress and of the Anti-Apartheid Movement'. National Archive, FO 371/177072.
- 71 The Southern Africa Solidarity Fund was set up by the Labour Party NEC to implement a resolution passed by the 1970 Party conference offering moral and material support to the southern African liberation movements.
- 72 The report is at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/solidarity/palme-c3b.html>.
- 73 The Communist Party of Great Britain's International Secretary, Jack Woddis, and British communists on the AAM National Committee supported the EC's arguments against campaigning for immediate recognition of the MPLA government, while South African communists on the committee were passionate advocates of campaigning for recognition. E-mail communication from Paul Fauvet, 30 December 2008.
- 74 RH: MSS AAM 43, National Committee Minutes, 31 January 1976. There was an earlier difference of opinion between the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea (CFMAG) and the AAM, when CFMAG pressed the AAM to set up an Angola sub-group in support of MPLA. RH: MSS AAM 67, Executive Committee Minutes, 12 May 1975.
- 75 RH: MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report October 1975–September 1976.
- 76 See RH: MSS AAM 2201, *Anti-Apartheid News*, April 1978 for plans for the May 1978 Month of Action; RH: MSS AAM 2202, *Anti-Apartheid News*, January/February 1979 for the Month of Action on Zimbabwe, March 1979.
- 77 The Simonstown Agreement was signed by a Conservative government in 1955. It gave British warship facilities at the Simonstown naval base in the Cape.
- 78 RH: MSS AAM 72, Executive Committee Minutes, 13 January 1975.
- 79 RH: MSS AAM 13, AAM Annual Report, October 1976–September 1977.
- 80 A copy of his speech is in RH: MSS AAM 1379. There was a strong Cabinet lobby against this view and overwhelming opposition within the civil service.

CHAPTER 11

BLACK BRITISH SOLIDARITY WITH THE ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE: THE WEST INDIAN STANDING CONFERENCE AND BLACK ACTION FOR THE LIBERATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Elizabeth M. Williams

Immigration to Britain from the Caribbean was a direct legacy of over 200 years of British imperialism. From the 1950s there was a substantial increase in the numbers arriving to work and settle, largely due to post-war British government appeals to workers from former colonies to come to Britain. These new migrants produced children who were soon radicalised by the racial discrimination their parents faced and their own experiences. Whether it was the education authorities, the judiciary, the brutality of the police or discrimination in employment or housing, many became emboldened and defiant through local community resistance against the symbols of the state, in particular the police, whom they confronted almost on a daily basis. These experiences instilled a determination to fight for their rights as black British citizens and also to look internationally for inspiration from others fighting against similar injustices. It is hardly surprising that due to the blatant nature of its racial policies, South Africa would become the main focus of attention and actions of solidarity, especially as the main European supporter of the apartheid state was the British government under the leadership of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

In an election interview in 1979, Mrs Thatcher talked of the English — by implication white people — being ‘swamped’ by immigrants, and her draconian immigration laws more or less stopped dark-skinned Commonwealth immigrants from entering the country, while leaving the door open for white European immigrants, so many in the black community considered her a racist. Many activists also saw their own anti-racist struggles in Britain as part of a broader international anti-racist struggle. Therefore their own

anti-racist campaigns were often viewed in parallel with those struggling against white minority rule in southern Africa. Moreover many activists came from a tradition in the Caribbean where racial inequality had been challenged vigorously and consciousness of global injustice was well-formed, particularly when it came to African affairs. These individuals and their children were acutely aware of their place within an international diaspora of African peoples and their histories of connection to the continent of Africa. The enduring legacy of Marcus Garvey¹ and Pan-African sentiment ensured most black people had a sympathy and understanding about their relatedness to Africans, no matter the geographical and cultural factors of detachment bought about by the legacies of slavery. The significance of the continuing political, economic and social exploitation of the continent and the need for African agency to bring about change was clearly understood.

This chapter explores the way in which two socially active black groups based in London, determined to fight against racial discrimination in British society, also drew upon solidarity against apartheid South Africa as a critique of the wider failings they saw in British society. The concern shown by various black communities settled in Britain regarding the treatment of Africans in South Africa had been a perennial matter of active interest from the late nineteenth century. These concerns were famously given voice in the series of Pan-African conferences from 1900, most notably the 1945 conference held in Manchester.² Prominent community leaders, such as Harold Moody, Learie Constantine, David Pitt and many others, actively spoke out against apartheid, even before the formation of the Boycott Movement in 1959, which later transformed into the British Anti-apartheid Movement (AAM).³

Although the ethnic and political nature of black communities throughout the twentieth century changed, by the 1980s the black groups that sought to show solidarity with the liberation struggle in South Africa comprised a heterodox mix of political and ideological perspectives. They can be described as falling into two main categories. The moderates had no objections to forming alliances and sharing platforms with white allies or the AAM, and they fully subscribed to the non-racial ANC view of a post-apartheid South Africa because their own ethos was one of equality and respect between peoples, irrespective of cultural background. Black nationalist groups, on the other hand, were explicit in asserting their self-autonomy and agency in fighting for equality within the society and saw no place for white allies, whose patronage they perceived as disabling, whether within the anti-racist context of British society or in anti-apartheid struggles in southern Africa. In particular, they saw neither a place for multi-racial alliances in the fight against apartheid nor a

leading role for Europeans in a post-apartheid government under black African majority rule. Nearer to home, they were hostile to the AAM, which, in their view, was led and dominated by white activists who blunted African agency. There was resentment, furthermore, over the AAM's perceived monopoly in building a national anti-apartheid front and over visiting representatives of the various liberation groups. Other groups were Pan-Africanist in focus, seeing the struggle against discrimination and for racial equality in Britain as part of the fight against a legacy of imperialism. The liberation movement in South Africa was viewed as part of a wider international struggle of Africans, both on the continent and in the diaspora, to regain a political, economic and social equality alongside all peoples. The need for unity and self-determinism among African peoples was strongly emphasised.

These characterisations are, of course, not mutually exclusive: there existed a variety of opinions and objectives across all the groups. The varying ideological perspectives often reflected the multi-faceted generational, regional, class and political diversity in black communities up and down the country. Like any group of people, political outlook, lived experiences, family background and even religious beliefs shaped the choices individuals made with respect to joining community struggles against discrimination of any hue, or to expressing any type of solidarity with a people and events unfolding thousands of miles away at the tip of the African continent.

The West Indian Standing Conference

One of the moderate groups formed in 1958, a year before the AAM, was the West Indian Standing Conference (WISC).⁴ It was an umbrella organisation formed to build a collective front to meet the needs of West Indian communities in Britain. WISC spoke in a collective voice to promote the interests of their members for racial justice and equality within British society. Its headquarters were in London, but there were also regional branches in cities around the country where black communities existed in significant numbers, such as in Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool.

WISC's membership was multi-ethnic and comprised initially 28 different African–Caribbean organisations that were an extension of Caribbean political groups which had British affiliates. Over time, members were drawn from the wider African–Caribbean community in Britain. WISC's founding principle was to bring races together, not to separate them, especially when whites and blacks shared the common objective of eradicating racism from society.

Members of WISC came from the first generation of post-war Caribbean migrants to Britain during the 1950s and 1960s. These were mostly young

men, and later women, who came to Britain to work and study. They were not necessarily radicals who sought a change in the status quo. They simply wanted to contribute to, and integrate seamlessly into, the society they encountered. They were moderate in their political expectations and sought fairness and equality before the law. In the 1960s and 1970s, WISC members tended to be formally educated, church-going individuals.⁵ Among listed members are names with MBEs and OBEs, and these individuals were awarded and commended for work in their communities and in the wider population.⁶ Others achieved distinction within their chosen field as lawyers, doctors, teachers and businessmen.⁷ WISC promoted and attracted support for its campaigns and social events through businesses such as travel agents, hairdressers, West Indian food stores and others who were often located in the centre of the local black community.

In analysing the significance of WISC among a number of community groups, one academic describes the organisation as a 'broker group' in that from the beginning it sought to form a bridge between the white community and the newly settled black communities. According to Goulbourne, these groups were more likely to be moderate and conservative than radical in their nature. Their 'middle man' position meant they presented their case in terms that were acceptable to the status quo and to the institutions they sought to court. This was in the overall attempt to foster an open and continual dialogue in a mutually beneficial relationship.⁸

In 1976, a watershed year in the re-emergence of internal resistance inside South Africa against the apartheid regime, WISC's anti-apartheid activity exposed one of the fundamental grievances the black community had in London (this was the case in urban areas all over Britain in which black communities lived): the role of the police. The treatment of black youths at the hands of the police throughout the 1970s and 1980s has been well documented.⁹ However, the significance here is that police insensitivity towards anti-apartheid protesters was not merely one of annoyance at the threat of public disturbance. WISC members joined demonstrations organised by the AAM to protest against the South African government's violent suppression of African protests. On 26 June, WISC organised a 24-hour vigil of remembrance outside the South African embassy for the victims. This date was chosen to coincide with the ANC's observance of 'Freedom Day' on 26 June in South Africa. In anti-apartheid circles, those seeking to demonstrate their protest against apartheid usually kept an all-night vigil outside South Africa House to commemorate those who had lost their lives fighting for freedom in southern Africa. During the evening of the 26 June, 40 WISC members and supporters gathered with placards outside the South African embassy. Members handed

out literature and engaged passers-by in conversation regarding the plight of the victims of apartheid and the regime's activities in the wider region. One WISC member, Mrs Rupee Singh, a South African by birth, addressed a small group of the public,

I live in England because in this country I am able to live in dignity. I can stand here with a placard and discuss things with you knowing that these officers will not shoot me like the police did to the children in Soweto.¹⁰

This comment provoked a police officer, who responded within the hearing of WISC members and the gathered audience that white South Africans were:

Bloody right ... If I was a policeman in South Africa I would have done the same thing ... I really mean what I say; I would do the same thing to any of you lot!¹¹

When challenged by WISC members, two other police officers stepped forward to support their colleague by arguing that:

Despite the fact that the PC is a police officer, he has a right to his own opinion hence he is not in the wrong to say what he said at the time and place in question.¹²

The general secretary of WISC, who was present, recalled that this outburst,

[caused] concern among the crowd, finding that police officers were aggravating the situation to the extent that many of those who were on vigil became unsure about the relationship between the police officers who were there and themselves.¹³

In fact the vigil was suspended earlier than planned on the morning of 27 June as it became clear that there could be trouble between the police and the increasingly angry demonstrators. In his letter of complaint to Home Office minister Roy Jenkins, the general secretary of WISC stated,

The reason for bringing this before you is to show that even in the presence of West Indians who are trying their utmost to create harmonious relations between police and black citizens, matters of this kind which are prevalent among PCs in the area are the general cause for the alienation of police relations with young people. If there were younger people at the vigil there might have been a number of arrests.¹⁴

In the letter WISC demanded that strong measures be taken to reprimand the officers involved in the incident, as well as their removal from any situation

in which they would be in contact with black people.¹⁵ Furthermore WISC demanded a written apology over the offensive comments of the police officers.¹⁶ It seems that the organisation never received one.¹⁷

The Home Secretary Roy Jenkins, however, was not unaware of the endemic racism within sections of the police force. Rank-and-file policemen resented the race relations legislation which provided the opportunity for black people to report cases of racial harassment and discriminatory treatment by the police. In 1973, during a House of Commons debate on race relations, Roy Jenkins stated that since 1966, when the first black recruit joined the Metropolitan Police Service, only 70 more had been recruited. This was less than one-tenth of one per cent of the force. In his words this 'bore no relation to the fact that approximately three per cent of the population is coloured'.¹⁸ During a speech at a police conference, Jenkins expressed a hope that police attitudes had changed and that there would now be a warmer reception of black colleagues since his previous address to their annual conference in 1966. Tellingly, he told parliamentary colleagues that the reaction to his call for increased recruitment of black policemen was 'greeted with a noise which I did not take to be the sound of enthusiasm'.¹⁹

The WISC's aborted 24-hour vigil was significant with regard to the domestic issue of race. It demonstrated that institutions were limited by their apathy in recognising the depth of racism in their own ranks and the rest of society. The issue of race within the South African context illuminated the symmetries in both countries of political officialdom that seemed to place less value on black lives.²⁰ In fact, in its correspondence to government ministers on a totally unrelated matter, the British AAM expressed its concern at the training that British police gave to their South African counterparts.²¹

The South Africa House incident brought into ugly focus clearly prejudiced elements in the police force. There was evidently a culture within the police force which allowed a racially biased attitude to be expressed without challenge. In this instance, a policeman felt clearly at ease while wearing emblems of the state on his uniform to express not only his disgust at the peaceful protesters outside the South African embassy, but wholehearted agreement with the tactics employed by his South African counterparts who, in June 1976, had indiscriminately gunned down school children.

After the vigil episode, WISC did not let the hostile encounter with members of the Metropolitan Police hamper its efforts to educate and raise the awareness of the public about apartheid. From the late 1970s, the organisation seized every opportunity to protest against the British government's support of the regime.²² Furthermore, it encouraged its members to follow consumer boycotts in support of AAM campaigns. WISC encouraged members to mount

pickets outside shops, stores, supermarkets and 'all retail establishments selling South African goods'.²³ It also called for the banning on British television, on radio and in the press advertising and any promotional material regarding South Africa, especially while the State of Emergency continued and while apartheid remained in place.²⁴ They also called upon black people to assist the disinvestment campaign by,

*removing personal savings bank accounts and any interests from companies and financial institutions which continue to maintain investment and other connections with apartheid.*²⁵

More controversially during the 1980s, signed petitions for the immediate release of Nelson Mandela were made in conjunction with collections 'in support of the armed struggle for freedom and justice in South Africa'.²⁶ Raising money specifically for the armed struggle went further than the AAM were prepared to go, at least publicly.

Anti-Botha protest

P.W. Botha's visit to Britain in 1984 once more placed WISC in prime position to excoriate the British state in its treatment of its black citizens. This time it eloquently expressed in print the sense that the sacrifices made by black citizens in fighting for the 'mother country' and supporting its ideals for justice and equality and the difficulties encountered by many in migrating to Britain meant little to the British government—particularly if it was prepared to accept with open arms the leader of an avowedly racially ordered state. Once more the politics of racial discrimination in South Africa would make transparent the unease and growing discontent black citizens felt towards the British state.

The catalyst was the announcement of the visit of the South African Prime Minister to Britain for talks with the British Prime Minister. This galvanised not only the AAM but also organisations such as WISC, which had a concern for civil liberties and matters of equality at home and abroad. Both AAM and WISC members were visible, side by side at South Africa House, picketing in protest at the planned Botha visit. They formed part of the crowds of anti-apartheid supporters who listened to speakers, including MPs Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn and Peter Hain who called for the isolation of the Botha government.²⁷ In the run-up to Botha's visit, there was a flurry of activity by WISC members who publicly appealed to Mrs Thatcher not to entertain discussions with the South African leader on British soil. The WISC wrote to

the press and sent literature and flyers to members to attach to their premises and distribute to the public, explaining the reason for its objection to the visit.²⁸ The organisation issued a press statement, in which it declared that Botha's visit was especially insulting to black Britons:

Black people fought in the last war, under the British flag, when Great Britain fought to destroy racism in the form of Nazism which was based upon the concept of the so-called superior race. Apartheid South Africa is similar in its practical intention of the degradation of man. It delimits black fellow human beings who are capable of unlimited achievement, to the role of sub-animal status without rights in their inherent country. Therefore Great Britain must destroy it and not accommodate it. Britain must practice what it preaches or it shall lose its customary position of credibility.²⁹

For WISC, this indifference to the sensitivities of black citizens was part of the wider apathy of a ruling establishment that refused to acknowledge the historic contribution that blacks of the British Empire had made to Britain's economic standing in the world. The organisation informed readers that:

Black people have made and continue to make significant, contributions which have transformed the UK society especially in its social, economic and cultural recovery since its costly experience in human and financial resources, because of that war against racist Nazism ... black people like white people must have similar rights of equal opportunity in South Africa or in fact anywhere they choose to live permanently.³⁰

WISC viewed Botha's invitation to Britain as a snub to the black presence in Britain. Its denunciation of the British government for inviting Botha conveyed the outrage and sense of betrayal felt by WISC members and the wider black community.³¹ The black press also condemned the invitation of Mrs Thatcher's government to P.W. Botha. *The Caribbean Times*, a popular weekly newspaper, stated, 'We ... emphatically condemn the British Prime Minister for extending the invitation and for the implied contempt shown to the black people of Britain.'³² Readers were informed that the British government had a responsibility to its black citizens at home, as well as living up to its claim of impartiality in matters of race in South Africa:

Mrs Thatcher represents the leadership of what is now a multi-racial society, which, despite many faults, constitutes Great Britain including over 3 million people of Afro-Caribbean and Asian origin. The Prime Minister of South Africa represents a minority regime of apartheid that denies equality, self-respect and equal

*participation and even physical safety to the majority black population of that country and is therefore a regime of oppression immorality and injustice. Furthermore WISC strongly urges Mrs Thatcher to reconsider political sanctions to a racist leader of a racist regime.*³³

WISC argued that the ruling political and business elites were concerned less with justice for the victims of the apartheid state than with the maintenance of trade and investment interests under the white minority regime. In its critique of the government's intransigence, WISC placed the government firmly on the side of Botha's regime in its opposition to African freedom fighters, described as 'terrorists' by the British Prime Minister. WISC also argued that supporters of Pretoria in Europe displayed double standards in their assessment of the struggles of repressed groups struggling for political freedoms. Modern European democracy had come about through revolutionary struggle, it was argued, so there should be an empathy with the freedom struggle in southern Africa.

In response to such criticism, government ministers replied that the invitation to Botha did not signal a shift in the government's condemnation of apartheid, but that it was part of the solution as it offered an opportunity to convince Botha and his entourage that apartheid must be dispensed with. WISC continued to apply pressure by writing directly to the Prime Minister as well as to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).³⁴ Another official assured WISC that:

*The visit in no way represents a weakening of the government's consistent resolve to promote racial equality and integration in this country ... the government believes that it is only through dialogue that we can hope to influence South Africa's policies.*³⁵

The government's rationale for Botha's invitation was still unacceptable to WISC members, as well as the wider Anti-apartheid Movement. WISC members took part in an all-night protest vigil starting on the evening of 11 June 1984. It also contributed financially to a full-page advertisement placed in *The Times* newspaper, which published the names of many anti-apartheid groups and individual activists that disapproved of Botha's visit.³⁶ Black community leaders were determined to mobilise large numbers of black protesters at the planned anti-Botha demonstrations.

Despite the best efforts of WISC members and the wider Anti-apartheid Movement, P.W. Botha's visit went ahead as proposed. Nevertheless, WISC members and anti-apartheid activists left the government in no doubt of the strength of feeling that thousands of people felt about the racism of Botha's

regime. Many anti-apartheid supporters gathered the following year when a bust of Nelson Mandela, by sculptor Ian Walters, was unveiled in the presence of the exiled ANC President Oliver Tambo and GLC councillors such as Ken Livingstone.

Black Action for the Liberation of South Africa

The Black Action for the Liberation of South Africa (BALSA) was the archetype of a Black Nationalist group resentful of the prominence of the AAM in building anti-apartheid solidarity on a national scale and determined that African agency must be the only determinant in leading this fight at home and in southern Africa. The clue to their ethno-nationalist approach was in the name. Furthermore, the distaste that some black activists felt towards forming alliances with white counterparts was expressed in BALSA's pronouncements from its formation in August 1986.³⁷ BALSA mirrored the PAC's distrust of the involvement of whites and other races in the struggle, whom they considered to have an agenda at variance with the interests of black majority rule. BALSA was formed specifically to engage in anti-apartheid activity from a black perspective. The members were already radicalised by their experiences in the parliamentary Labour Party. They had tried unsuccessfully to establish 'Black Sections' within the Labour Party.³⁸ Black Sections proponents had written a document called *The Black Agenda*. This was presented by advocates as a document that sought to articulate and address the concerns of the black community in Britain. In a detailed section on South Africa, also referred to as Azania³⁹, they set forth their ideas regarding the role of domestic black support for the struggle of Africans in southern Africa:

*The Black Section position on this vital question is bound to be different from that of other solidarity groups in Britain like the AAM because, as part of the black diaspora we identify directly with the Azanian struggle. We see our struggle in Britain as being similar in content to that of African and Asian people worldwide. There is a clearly defined link between our struggle against racism and the battle against imperialism in the Third World. Our struggle for black self-organisation is intertwined with the fight for genuine self-determination and national independence in the black world. The struggle of black youth in the South African townships has inspired black youth in Britain from St Pauls, Handsworth and Leicester to Brixton, Tottenham and Southall. We are ever conscious of the fact that British imperialism is the major Western capitalist exploiter in South Africa.*⁴⁰

Taking a swipe at black activists prepared to work with white allies and therefore ‘Steeped in the politics of white colonising Leftism’,⁴¹ they argued that fighting racism in Britain, which the document calls ‘the National Question’, should not be linked to debates about eradicating class divisions; it was an issue that had to be addressed uniquely. Moreover, regarding South Africa’s future,

The current tactic of imperialism is to attempt to con us into believing that by getting rid of racialism and apartheid the black masses in Azania will be freed. The reality is that capitalism would remain with a ‘multi-racial’ face instead of an exclusively white one ... The Charterists and the South African Communist Party make much play of ‘non-racialism ... those who make much play of non-racialism overlook the fact the whites are an oppressing nation. The white working class is thoroughly imbued with colonialist and racist attitudes. They have enjoyed enormous privileges on the backs of the black working class ... the principal national task is to regain the country for its rightful indigenous owners—the African people.’⁴²

In its vision of the future, the chances of reconciliation between African and European seemed impossible. This perspective clearly left no room for the reconciliation that the leadership of the ANC encouraged in order to keep South Africa from a bitter, ethnically driven civil war. It clearly stood at odds with the ANC’s racially inclusive vision, which rejected the system of apartheid entrenched by successive white minority governments and supported by white South Africans. The ANC leadership acknowledged the role that all whites could play in a future South Africa if they were prepared to live in a fully democratic state that protected equally the rights of all, regardless of race or ethnicity. Instead the tone and sentiment of this part of *The Black Agenda* were more in keeping with the PAC, who saw whites as irredeemably the enemy of the future well-being of Africans and whose role should be negligible in any future political dispensation.

Former members claim that PAC representatives approved of the sentiments expressed in *The Black Agenda*.⁴³ A remarkable document that articulates the extent of separatist thinking among black activists, *The Black Agenda* provides an alternative view of race relations in Britain, a viewpoint that was overlooked by mainstream commentators in the press. Black commentators of whatever political opinion were rarely allowed to present an erudite perspective in the national mainstream press. During their activities, members of Balsa came into contact with southern African exiles, and, in leaflets distributed to the public, it proudly boasted that ‘Black Section national officers have met with representatives of the ANC, PAC, AZAPO

and BCM. We will continue this policy in the solidarity group BALSAs'.⁴⁴ Unfortunately detailed records of these meetings and the issues discussed have not been preserved.

Neil Kinnock, a staunch supporter of the AAM, saw Black Sections as a threat to unity within the Labour Party and a divisive and potentially unmanageable force, as well as representing a reverse form of apartheid.⁴⁵ Fundamentally though, the former Black Sections advocates, such as Marc Wadsworth and Lambeth councillor Linda Bellos and others, believed that only through black agency could true freedom be achieved and this sentiment was taken into BALSAs⁴⁶ which became an umbrella body with affiliated members drawn from a range of Pan-Africanist political, social and welfare interest groups.⁴⁷ BALSAs stated, 'We are our own liberators.'⁴⁸ Presumably the 'we' meant black activists only, as criticism of the interference of 'white liberals' began to emerge. For these activists, BALSAs would be an organisation *of* black people *for* black people in Britain, and the group stated its intention, 'to pool together our resources and to contribute to the liberation struggle of the people of Southern Africa'.⁴⁹ At its official launch on 22 August 1986, the Ghana People's Solidarity Organisation (GHAPSO), an affiliated member, provided this founding statement. Based in Camden, GHAPSO had called on all black organisations there to come together as a united force in solidarity with the liberation struggle in southern Africa. It said,

*There is much controversy over the Anti-Apartheid Movement among activists. Problems arise because it is seen as a white, middle-class liberal's organisation. The more aware activists are concerned about its exclusive support for the ANC— though the AAM deny this is true. More disturbing is the AAM's image as a white dominated movement that refuses to take up issues of racism in Britain and thereby make itself relevant to domestic black struggle.*⁵⁰

This criticism of the AAM and its refusal to take up black domestic concerns would occur repeatedly from activists in the black community. It points to a perennial weakness in the movement's efforts to appeal to the black community. Its failure to adopt the domestic struggles of black communities in turn alienated the movement from a potentially large source of black support. Harbouring resentment against the leadership of the AAM, members of BALSAs rather ambitiously sought to usurp the territory that the AAM had gained over nearly a 30-year period, which was based on a wide variety of support from a cross-section of the population and political establishment. In a bitter diatribe, BALSAs stated:

Our role should be to regain black leadership of an issue which belongs to us and has been hijacked ... the priorities and agenda are currently decided by influential white race 'spokesmen' like the AAM chair, Bob Hughes MP. White liberals have a strangle-hold on the issue ... our support for the armed struggle will pose problems with white liberal allies as more white people are killed in Azania. We will be under pressure to condemn violence or the killing of 'innocent' victims of 'terrorism'.⁵¹

The belief that the AAM acted as a barrier between domestic black groups and visiting ANC members or southern African exiles never went away. BALSAs reference to support of the armed struggle clearly placed it at odds with the AAM, where support for the armed struggle remained controversial. BALSAs emphasised racial exclusivity in the fight against apartheid and called on 'Black peoples everywhere and in particular those in Britain to join forces to aid the struggle against national oppression, racism and exploitation in Southern Africa.'⁵²

Furthermore, with implications of a global white conspiracy against blacks, it was argued that those who benefited from the oppression of Africans in South Africa and the occupation of Namibia were the same people who profited from racism in Britain. In short, the struggle of Africans in the southern tip of the African continent for self-determination, national liberation and democracy and in defence of the sovereignty of the Frontline States was part of a wider global struggle of blacks against racial oppression. BALSAs characterisation of the political struggle in southern Africa stretched beyond the struggle against the apartheid state. From its perspective the struggle was the latest manifestation of the African struggle against European imperialism, which demanded black unity and support to overcome the onslaught and for the recovery of their lost heritage, history, culture, country and land. It was a fight against total material and spiritual dispossession. Therefore the struggle was on a qualitatively different level from being merely a struggle against apartheid:

The struggle of the black people of Azania summarises the nature of the historical oppression of Africa and the black diaspora based as it is on colonialism, racism and imperialism. For this reason the ongoing struggle has not only a global impact, but its resolution also has a particular significance for Pan Africanism. All the contradictions found in the Azanian struggle are found in the struggles of black people elsewhere.⁵³

Through its literature, BALSAs presented itself as providing a platform for the liberation movement to inform blacks in Britain about their struggle. In its

leaflets, BALSAs continued to urge members of the black community to provide greater support for the liberation struggle in southern Africa by contributing moral and material aid to the Frontline States and calling for full economic sanctions and disinvestment in order to 'Bring Pretoria to its knees'.⁵⁴ It also called on its members to organise boycotts of all South African goods and raise material support for the armed struggle and called for unconditional release of the regime's political prisoners.⁵⁵

The impact of BALSAs is hard to quantify; the group certainly did not realise its ambitions to replace the AAM and take the lead in building and leading the consensus against the apartheid government. One cannot measure the impact of the circulation of its literature into black community areas as distribution details and figures of its publications have not been preserved if they were ever recorded.⁵⁶ However, frequent fund-raising events were held in the form of dances and dinners. For example, on 28 February 1987, the Third World Centre in London was hired for such an occasion.⁵⁷ The group also put together a library of books and Pan-Africanist-themed literature with the aim of educating the black community about international relations in southern Africa, and publicity packs were produced.⁵⁸ Precisely who used the library and how many packs were disseminated is open to conjecture, but these were clear attempts to educate the black community across London regarding the affairs of southern Africa through encouraging household boycotts, leafleting and participation in conferences and demonstrations. In 1987, members of BALSAs organised a 'Soweto Commemoration Day' of discussion and workshops in London. The main theme was the origin of Black Consciousness and its current manifestations in South Africa. The significance of 16 June 1976 was discussed as a turning point for the African struggle and political poetry was read between panel discussions. There was a strong PAC bias, as speakers were mainly represented from this group, although ANC representatives were present. The day ended with musical entertainment, including the BALSAs choir put together for the occasion, and food and dance.⁵⁹

In the same year, a Mozambican campaign was launched in May at the Africa Centre in London. Exiles from Mozambique were present and were the main speakers. Through this campaign BALSAs aimed to 'raise funds and resources, and to focus on educational and health establishments in Mozambique which have been damaged, in order to rehabilitate them'.⁶⁰ The accompanying displays, posters, literature and information about Mozambique were targeted at an invited audience of southern African exiles and black social welfare groups. Members from various black churches, businesses,

the media and health workers also attended. At the same event, members of BALSAs arranged a press conference to record the handover of the sum of £3 000 from its fund-raising around its Mozambican campaign.⁶¹ Members had also collected clothing for refugees, and once the clothes arrived in southern Africa they were distributed by the Association of Women's Clubs, based in Zimbabwe.⁶² Gathering this material aid was much helped by the fact that a BALSAs member was also a Lambeth councillor. This individual provided information on sympathetic black councillors in London from whom support could be gained from their network of associates and black communities throughout the city and beyond.

BALSAs members were also active contributors and participants during the annual African Liberation Day (ALD) celebrations. They often staffed an information stall during ALD activities and set up a stall and distributed information during the West Indian carnival weekend in Notting Hill Gate, West London. Both events provided an opportunity to inform and raise its profile among the black community. In late 1987, speakers were also provided for the All-African Students Conference, and a stall was staffed for three days at the Africa Centre during a three-day conference entitled 'Struggle for Freedom and Development'.⁶³ At this time it is recorded that similar Pan-Africanist groups in Sweden and Australia contacted BALSAs to express solidarity and exchange information.⁶⁴

However, by the late 1980s, although BALSAs members had a high profile at black cultural events and Pan-Africanist-themed conferences at which members of the black community congregated, these efforts did not help to increase substantially the levels of attendance at its monthly meetings. The group noted that there remained a:

*lack of long term organisational planning and consequently an inability to be responsive when necessary ... some members were not pulling their weight and fulfilling their responsibilities, no membership expansion.*⁶⁵

Eventually there were splits within the group, individuals joined other anti-apartheid solidarity groups and membership fell away. The existence of BALSAs, no matter its temporality and the constituency it served, demonstrates the clear cleavages and competing perspectives that existed in the solidarity movement in Britain. Not only was there tension and unease in national politics between black and white party activists, as seen in the background context of the formation of BALSAs that emanated from Labour Party activity,⁶⁶ but these tensions were taken full scale into the broader anti-apartheid solidarity movement in Britain. These sentiments

existed not only in Balsa, determined as it was to extend black agency to a national movement and to surpass the AAM, but also in the British Anti-apartheid Movement, where the setting up of a Black and Ethnic Minority Committee initially faced opposition from an executive that feared internal cliques and rejected the mirroring of apartheid-style separation of the races in its organisation.⁶⁷ Once more the opposition to apartheid revealed as much about racial tensions within the UK as it did about South Africa.⁶⁸

It should be remembered that alongside this engagement with anti-apartheid issues, for the black community there were significant problems to address at home, such as the disproportionate numbers of black homeless people, especially those released from local authority care and the prisons, the growing number of excluded black school children and police harassment of black youth. Confronting and dealing with these problems created activists who were shaped by these experiences of domestic racism.⁶⁹ Their ideologies were often a cocktail of Marxist theory and Black Nationalism encompassing notions of black power and the belief that black people could and should take charge of their own destinies. These groups placed a great emphasis on cultural self-awareness, and focused on African and Caribbean history, as well as on the local, national and international politics and economics and their effect upon black communities.⁷⁰ In this atmosphere of a growing black activist culture, the AAM failed to capitalise on black activist energy because it remained largely detached from the local anti-racist struggles that black communities waged in London and around the country. This was partly because it saw itself as a single-issue pressure group and feared that the incorporation of domestic anti-racism campaigns would side-track it from its main purpose.⁷¹ Nevertheless this failure of identification alienated those in the community who might otherwise have engaged more readily with AAM activities if they had felt the movement was prepared to fight racism on its doorstep as well as thousands of miles away in southern Africa. Former Labour councillor Russell Proffitt commented:

[The AAM] had always set itself as a single issue question ... and to be able to break out of that would have been beyond its remit ... I think it was a flaw, I think the important thing would have been to push the boat out, to make the local connections, to speak to, engage more with people across the whole spectrum.⁷²

Tentative collaboration between some black community groups and the AAM began in earnest from the mid-1980s when activists from the AAM staffed a

'Free Mandela' stall at the Notting Hill Carnival.⁷³ According to Christabel Gurney, the editor of *Anti-Apartheid News*, the AAM was able to make a moderate impact within the black community through its Black and Ethnic Minority (BEM) Committee. The committee became involved in providing a float in the procession on both days of the Notting Hill carnival and contributed to the ANC stalls.⁷⁴ Every year from 1985, volunteers distributed flyers and posters, met at the home of AAM members and were asked to wear T-shirts with slogans that proclaimed 'South Africa Freedom Now!' Later in the early 1990s, the AAM set up a carnival committee to plan how the anti-apartheid message could be conveyed to the crowds. In making links with racism in Britain and South Africa, the BEM produced flyers headlined 'Black Solidarity Smash Apartheid Now!'⁷⁵ At carnivals, signatures were collected and AAM material distributed. Black councillors in London were prominent in campaigns for 'Apartheid-Free Zones' in local boroughs.⁷⁶ Apartheid-Free Zones were declared in boroughs such Lewisham or Camden, and outside London in the St Paul's area of Bristol, where the black community took the lead in organising a boycott of the local supermarket chain of Tesco.⁷⁷ It was noted in the annual AAM report that black newspapers such as *West Indian World* and *The Caribbean Times*, and the 'Black Londoners' radio programme were outstanding in their constant support and publicity given to the AAM and its campaigns, unlike the mainstream press.⁷⁸

The AAM continued to strengthen its links with black groups such as the Black British Standing Conference Against Apartheid Sport, Caribbean Labour Solidarity, the West Indian Standing Conference and the African Liberation Committee, all of which encouraged their members to support AAM campaigns. The Black British Standing Conference Against Apartheid Sport in particular was commended for vigorously opposing the private tour of West Indian cricketers to South Africa, and for contributing to the success of the international conference on sanctions against apartheid sport by ensuring the participation of substantial numbers of black sportspeople, 'as well as giving a tremendous amount of organizational support'.⁷⁹ Encouraged by the significant numbers of black protesters at their anti-Botha demonstrations, and influenced by its few black members, the AAM executive decided to capitalise on this show of black anger and protest. The decision was made to strengthen and deepen contact with black organisations, both nationally and locally, as well as make a greater effort to increase black membership. Black members of the executive committee of the AAM set up a working party charged with exploring the perceived obstacles against black members joining the AAM.⁸⁰ The AAM

was now prepared to establish a committee similar to others within its structures whose brief would be to draw in black support; the organisation saw this as a watershed in the movement's development.⁸¹ At its annual general meeting in January 1987 it noted,

*The Black and Ethnic Minority communities constitute a unique resource and potential for this, and should be made a key strategic priority. In light of this assessment, we propose that the work of the AAM in the Black and Ethnic Minority communities should be placed firmly on the agenda of the Movement.*⁸²

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how black social activist groups in Britain, representing distinct streams of thinking in fighting discrimination, expressed solidarity with the liberation struggle in southern Africa out of a sense of empathy and radicalised consciousness. Their critiques regarding British state accountability, self-determining autonomy and the conduct of the Anti-apartheid Movement were shaped by an understanding of Britain's relations with South Africa and the conduct of the liberation struggle in South Africa.

Notes

- 1 C. Grant, *Negro With a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (London: Vintage, 2009).
- 2 H. Adi & M. Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited: With Colonial And ... Coloured Unity: The Report of the 5th Pan-African Congress* (London: New Beacon Books, 1995).
- 3 C. Gurney, "A great cause": The origins of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959–March 1960', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 1 (March 2000), 123–144.
D. Killingray, 'Rights, land, and labour: Black British critics of South African policies before 1948', *The Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2 (2009), 375–398.
E. Williams, "'We shall not be free until South Africa is free!": The anti-apartheid activity of black Britons', PhD, University of London, 2009.
- 4 The West Indian Standing Conference still exists under the directorship of Mr William Trant and is based in London on Westminster Bridge Road.
- 5 WISC pamphlet, 'The social, economic and political issues which gave rise to WISC', n.d. Folder C, West Indian Standing Conference Papers, London.

- 6 Order of the British Empire (OBE), Member of the British Empire (MBE); these are honours granted by the British Monarch to nominated individuals on the advice of the current government.
- 7 T. Wade, *How They Made a Million: The Dyke and Dryden Story* (London: Hansib Publications, 2001).
- 8 H. Goulbourne, 'The contribution of West Indian groups to British politics', in *Black Politics in Britain* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1990), 95–114.
- 9 E. Cashmore & McLaughlin (eds). *Out of Order? Policing Black People* (London: Routledge, 1991); S. Hall (ed.). *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1978); S. Small, *Police and People in London*, Vol. 2 (London: Policy Studies, Institute, 1983).
- 10 WISC/Southern Africa Activities; Folder A, 'South Africa House Vigil and Demonstrations—1. Saturday 26 June 1976'. 'Report of the Incident/Statement of Mrs R. Singh'.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 'WISC Southern Africa Activities Folder A', 'J.A. Hunte Welfare Officer of WISC to Hon Roy Jenkins at the Home Office, 1 July 1976'.
- 15 Police records of the details of internal discussions with the three police officers remain closed. In 1976 a police officer was disciplined for improper remarks during the WISC vigil outside South Africa House. No letter of apology was sent by the officers in question.
- 16 'WISC Southern Africa Activities Folder A', 'J.A. Hunte to Roy Jenkins, 1 July 1976'.
- 17 The current Director of WISC, William Trant, does not recall an official apology being made.
- 18 Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol. 865, 6 December 1973, (London, HMSO).
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 There is a regrettable history of disproportionate deaths in custody of black people in British prisons, in their own homes and elsewhere at the hands of serving police officers. The 1980s, 'rebellions' in the cities of London, Birmingham and Liverpool were the result of these unexplained deaths, among other grievances. The march of 20 000 mostly black people from across the country to the Prime Minister's residence in the aftermath of the New Cross arson attack, which killed 14 black teenagers after a spate of racist attacks in South East London, again reflected frustration at the apathy of police and government reaction to the tragedy. See K. Aspden, *Nationality: Wog: The Hounding of David Oluwale* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007); Film: K. Fero, Dir. *Injustice* (London: Migrant Media, 2001). This is an account of the relentless struggles of a group of families as they try to

find out how their loved ones lost their lives while being held in police custody. The film details the many cases of deaths in custody of members of the black community.

- 21 Bod.MSS.AAM 790, Home Office, 1973–1992.
- 22 Interview with William Trant, London, 11 May 2005.
- 23 'WISC Southern Africa Activities Folder A', 'Flyers/Posters/information sheets'.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Interview with William Trant, London, 11 May 2005.
- 27 WISC Southern Africa Activities Folder B, 'Friday 1st Jun 1984–Vigil; Sat 2nd Jun 1984–Demonstrations'. Interview with William Trant, London, 11 May 2005.
- 28 'WISC Southern Africa Activities Folder A & B', 'Flyers/Posters/information sheets'. A much used slogan read, 'WISC says "No to Botha! No to Apartheid!"'
- 29 This press release statement put out by WISC, under the heading 'WISC says "No to Botha! No to Apartheid!"'. Underlining of words present in the original. See, 'WISC Folder B'.
- 30 'WISC Folder B'. 'Press release/Statements'. WISC distributed this statement to many of its affiliated groups and sent them out to those on its mailing list. There was a tear-off slip encouraging recipients to sign and send as a protest to the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing Street. Unfortunately, the organisation did not keep a record of the numbers distributed.
- 31 It was the substantial presence of black protestors, largely due to WISC's mobilisation of the community to attend the massive anti-Botha march and demonstration organised by the AAM, that demonstrated to the AAM the large reservoir of potential black support.
- 32 Editorial, *Caribbean Times*, 18 May 1984.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 *The Guardian*, 'West Indians protest at Botha visit,' writes Colin Brown, 12 May 1984.
- 35 'WISC Folder B'. Official from FCO Southern African Department, David Carter, writing to the Secretary of WISC, 2 July 1984.
- 36 *The Times*, 29 May 1985. The advert cost £3 000. In WISC's papers, no details remain of the donations or financial contribution the organisation gave to southern African causes. There remains, however, a letter dated 17 May 1985 from the chairperson of a Namibia support committee asking for a financial contribution.
- 37 Although the number of affiliated groups and committees suggests a significant number of members, minutes of the meetings suggests that no more than 25 attended monthly meetings. The headquarters were in London but there was an office in Manchester and plans for branches in other areas of concentrated

black communities, but regional branches never came to fruition in any significant way.

- 38 T. Sewell, *Black Tribunes* (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1992).
- 39 'Azania' was proposed as a replacement name for South Africa at the All African People's Conference in Accra in 1958. Usage of the name among Pan-Africanists and revolutionary black radicals in the diaspora became popular in the late 1970s and began to appear in the names of groups, such as the Azania People's Organisation and the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania. Pan-Africanist groups in Britain appropriated the term to counter the Europeanisation of South Africa.
- 40 Bod.MSS.AAM 856, *The Black Agenda*, 1988, 39.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid., 40.
- 43 Interview with Lela Kogbara, London, 27 March 2002; Interview with Marc Wadsworth, London, 7 October 2003.
- 44 Box 14, 'Labour Party Black Sections paper on South Africa/Azania', 40.
- 45 Interview with Neil Kinnock, London, 5 January 2005.
- 46 Interview with Marc Wadsworth, London, 7 October 2003.
- 47 Black organisations that formed BALSAs were failed advocates of Labour Party Black Sections, Africa Liberation Committee, African Dawn, African Families Resident in Camden, All Africa People's Revolutionary Party, Haringey Black Arts Forum, Black Consciousness Movement of Azania, Black People's Campaign for Justice, Ghana People's Solidarity Organisation, OBAALA, Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania. Box 35, 'PAC London: Topical—Black action for the liberation of South Africa', Box 38, 'PAC London, Topical—Grassroots groups, 1982–90', 'Proposal for a Declaration for BALSAs put forward by Black Sections—Labour Party'.
- 48 Bod.MSS.AAM 856, 'Background information on the Labour Party and southern Africa, 1970s–90s', See, Press cuttings 'Black Section Support for BALSAs', *The Labour Party Newsletter*, Autumn 1987, 14.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Box 38, 'PAC London: Topical—Grassroots groups', 'Proposal for a Declaration for BALSAs put forward by Black Sections—Labour Party'.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Former members seem not to be able to provide clarification on this point, and no details exist in the archives.

- 57 Box 35, 'PAC London: Topical—Black action for the liberation of South Africa'.
- 58 Box 38, 'BALSA Minutes, 9 February 1987'.
- 59 The event was held on 20 June 1987 at Lambeth Town Hall.
- 60 Box 38, 'BALSA Minutes, 29 April 1987'.
- 61 Ibid., '28 October 1987'.
- 62 Ibid., '29 April 1987'.
- 63 Ibid., '28 November 1987'.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid., 'BALSA Minutes, 12 October 1988'.
- 66 K. Shukra, *The Changing Pattern of Black Politics in Britain* (London: Pluto, 1998).
- 67 Interview with Mike Terry, London, 18 December 2000; Interview with Ethel de Keyser, London, 3 March 2001. However, there was a precedent in the organisation with other specialist committees within the AAM serving different constituencies, all focused on fighting against apartheid under the broad umbrella of the wider AAM.
- 68 In the British context this was nothing new between white and black individuals working towards the removal of racial discrimination. Bush examines the misunderstandings and tensions between these parties at the turn of the twentieth century, in B. Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919–1945* (London: Routledge, 1999).
- 69 Individuals such as Sybil Phoenix, Ros Howells, John la Rose, Darcus Howe and Russell Profitt came to public prominence through their work supporting the community at this time.
- 70 H. Goulbourne, 'Africa and the Caribbean in Caribbean consciousness and action in Britain', *The David Nicholls Memorial Lectures*, No. 2 (Oxford, The David Nicholls Memorial Trust, 2000), 1–53.
- 71 Interview with Mike Terry, London, 18 December 2000.
- 72 Interview with Russell Profitt, London, 18 November 2003.
- 73 Interview with Christabel Gurney, London, 30 April 2002.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Bod.MSS.AAM 108, 'Black Solidarity Committee leaflets, 1988–92'.
- 76 Such as Russell Profitt in the London borough of Lewisham, and Ben Bousquet in the London boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea. See AAM references to these zones in, Bod.MSS.AAM 13, Annual Report, October 1982–September 1983, 23.
- 77 Bod.MSS.AAM 13, Annual Report, October 1979–September 1980, 20.
- 78 Ibid., October 1982–September 1983, 23.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 The Executive Committee was elected by the National Committee of the AAM to carry out the work of the AAM and met on a monthly basis. The National

Committee was the policy-making branch of the AAM. The decision was taken at its AGM, 10–11 January 1987, and then the National Committee at its February meeting formally established the working party. The subsequent report was presented in October 1987.

81 Bod.MSS.AAM 13, Annual Report, 1986/87, 33.

82 Bod.MSS.AAM 107, 'General Correspondence 1988–93', 'Report of the Working Party on the Black and Ethnic Minority Communities'. Dan Thea, October 1987.

CHAPTER 12

ACTIVISM IN BRITAIN FOR NAMIBIAN INDEPENDENCE: THE NAMIBIA SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Chris Saunders

Although the world-wide Anti-apartheid Movement has begun to receive the attention of historians in recent years, that attention has focused on solidarity with the struggle against apartheid in South Africa itself. This chapter is concerned with British solidarity work exclusively concerned with Namibia in the years before that country gained independence in 1990. While there were those in other countries who campaigned for Namibian independence, the most active non-governmental campaign was that in Britain. While in Namibia itself emphasis is now placed on the armed struggle, commemorated in grotesque form at Heroes' Acre outside Windhoek, diplomacy played at least an equal part in the achievement of Namibia's independence in 1990, and Namibian diplomacy was aided by solidarity work in Britain and elsewhere.¹

Origins

British solidarity work on behalf of the people of what was then called South West Africa was begun by Michael Scott, an Anglican priest, in the late 1940s. One of the arguments he made was that Britain had a special responsibility to Namibia, derived in part from history. Britain was the first colonial power to rule any of what is now Namibia. In 1878 it annexed the enclave of Walvis Bay, which it transferred to the Cape Colony six years later. Britain encouraged the Union of South Africa to seize German South West Africa in the First World War. South Africa hoped to incorporate the territory as a fifth province at the end of the war, but that was not to be. The new League of Nations made the territory a mandate, allowing South

Africa to continue to rule the territory but not annex it. The mandate granted by the League in 1920 was issued in the name of His Britannic Majesty, as South Africa did not yet have control over its external relations. At the meetings of the Council of the League in Geneva in the 1920s and 1930s, Britain failed to criticise South Africa's oppressive rule of the territory, and, during the Second World War, Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, is said to have suggested to his very close ally, Jan Smuts, the South African Prime Minister, that he should annex the territory unilaterally.² Smuts preferred to take the matter of incorporating South West Africa into South Africa to the newly established United Nations (UN), and in 1946 the world body voted against permitting South Africa to take over the territory. Then the long campaign to get South Africa to withdraw from South West Africa began. For a long time Britain, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, took the lead in resisting such efforts, not wanting to alienate South Africa, a major trading partner and home to many British settlers. Indeed, Britain was never to agree to effective measures being taken by the UN against South Africa for its continued occupation of Namibia.

Although Scott played no direct role in the 1946 UN decision not to permit South Africa to take over the territory, he did more than anyone else to ensure that the issue of the territory's status remained on the international agenda in the following years. This was crucial for Namibia's future, for it was the international status of the territory, as a UN responsibility, that enabled the Namibia Support Committee (NSC), the subject of this chapter, to argue that the territory should receive special attention, and its international status gave the NSC special links to the UN and its agencies.³ Scott was the first to bring the brutalities of South African rule in Namibia directly to the notice of the British public, and he wrote extensively about South West Africa, addressed numerous public meetings on the issue and consulted British lawyers for advice on how best to try to end South African rule. His main focus was the UN, however, where, after the establishment of the South West Africa National Union (SWANU) in 1959 and then the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) the following year, he was somewhat marginalised. His involvement on Namibia also lessened after, in part as a result of his campaigning, South Africa's rule of South West Africa was challenged by Ethiopia and Liberia at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague in 1960.⁴

From 1963 others began to join Scott in raising the Namibia issue in Britain. In that year, the first popular book on the country was published there, a paperback entitled *South West Africa* by the radical South African journalist Ruth First. Together with the publisher Ronald Segal, First then organised

a conference on Namibia in Britain, the forerunner of a series of international conferences held on that country in the 1970s and 1980s. Co-sponsored by the Anti-apartheid Movement (AAM) and Scott's Africa Bureau, and held at the Oxford Union in March 1966, three months before the ICJ finally delivered its judgment, the conference led to the publication of a collection of papers, including several authored by Namibians, entitled *South West Africa: Travesty of Trust*, edited by First and Segal.

One of those who attended the Oxford conference was Randolph Vigne, who had fled from South Africa in 1964 when the police learned of his involvement in the underground African Resistance Movement (ARM), which had engaged in sabotage in an attempt to topple the apartheid government. After meeting Andimba Toivo ya Toivo and other Namibians in Cape Town in the late 1950s, Vigne, then a leading member of the Liberal Party of South Africa, had travelled to Namibia in 1961 to make contact with leading political figures. After the Oxford conference, he met Sam Nujoma, SWAPO's founder and leader, in London, and then visited the party's headquarters in Dar es Salaam. In London, Vigne set up meetings for Nujoma and other Namibians when they visited Britain. One of these, Andreas Shipanga, whom Vigne had known in Cape Town, suggested the establishment of a group to support the Namibian struggle for freedom from South African occupation. Nujoma supported the idea, as did the young Peter Katjavivi, who was sent by SWAPO to open an office in London in 1968.

The day after the ICJ dismissed the case against South Africa in July 1966 it was the AAM that held a press conference in the House of Commons that called for action by the international community to 'rescue the inhabitants of South West Africa from the ravages of apartheid'.⁵ The following month, on the day that armed struggle was launched in Namibia, AAM organised a vigil outside South Africa House in Trafalgar Square and called on the British government to support the struggle for Namibia's freedom. But when the UN General Assembly voted to terminate South Africa's mandate and then to set up a Council for Namibia, the British government refused to go along with these decisions, showing what was to be revealed even more strikingly in further years: its reluctance to take a stand in support of Namibian independence because of the many ties, trade and other, that existed between Britain and South Africa. In Britain some South African exiles thought that the Namibian issue should be separated from the anti-apartheid one, and it was the trial in Pretoria of Elias Tuhadeleni and other Namibians for terrorism in 1967–1968 that led directly to the formation of a 'Friends of Namibia' (FoN) support group. As in the Rivonia Trial of the leaders of the South African armed struggle in 1964, there was real fear that the Namibians,

on trial for supporting the armed struggle, might be given the death sentence. A South African exile, Diana Russell, on a visit to London from the United States, urged the formation of an organisation in Britain to lobby on the Pretoria trial and other Namibian issues. The idea of an organisation separate from AAM to lobby on Namibia appealed to Vigne and his close associate Neville Rubin, who had also been active in the Liberal Party in South Africa and the ARM before moving to London. Vigne had worked closely with members of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the rival to the African National Congress (ANC), in South Africa, in part because of the PAC's opposition to communism. In Britain Vigne and Rubin disliked the strong influence that members of the South African Communist Party had in the AAM and with the ANC in exile. Though prepared to work with the AAM, they saw little opportunity for liberal non-communists to take leading roles in it.⁶

Motivations

They and others who became active in Namibian solidarity work did so because they believed that South African occupation of Namibia should end, and that Namibians should govern themselves. Members of FoN argued that, although Namibia was under South African occupation, it was a separate country, recognised as such in international law, with its own history. There was consequently a strong moral case for it to be treated in its own right and not to be regarded as a mere appendage to South Africa. For the AAM, by contrast, Namibia was usually seen as part of the broad issue of apartheid, and not primarily as a case of illegal occupation. Although from a global perspective the South African issue was clearly more important than the Namibian one, this could too easily lead to the view that it was necessary to prioritise the South African struggle, to bring an end to apartheid there, after which, in the fullness of time, Namibia would become independent. Those in FoN believed that, because of its international status, it was likely that Namibia would become independent before the end of apartheid in South Africa. They argued that Namibia was the Achilles' heel of South Africa, the weakest link in the apartheid chain, and that the chain was only as strong as its weakest link. They thought that the international community was more likely to put pressure on South Africa to withdraw from Namibia than to end apartheid, and that although the independence of Namibia would be likely to have significant implications for South Africa, it was a separate issue, and should therefore not be subsumed in a general campaign against apartheid.

Other South African exiles in Britain opposed the idea of setting up an organisation specifically concerned with Namibia, as Namibia was occupied by

South Africa and apartheid was applied in both countries. Having a separate organisation would, they believed, dilute the movement against apartheid and distract attention from the central goal of overturning the apartheid system. That the Namibians accused of 'terrorism' were tried in Pretoria and not Windhoek reflected how the two struggles were intertwined. Yet in his much publicised speech to the court in that case, Toivo ya Toivo made it clear that the people of Namibia were firmly of the view that theirs was a separate country. He and his fellow Namibians rejected any South African authority over them. Whereas, at least until 1976, the armed struggle in South Africa appeared to be going nowhere, SWAPO's armed struggle grew more effective, especially after the independence of Angola in 1975. If South Africa could be ejected from Namibia, those in FoN believed, apartheid in South Africa itself would be dealt a severe, perhaps even a deadly, blow. And such arguments grew even more persuasive over time. Repression in northern Namibia was always more intense than in South Africa, and in the 1980s Namibia became highly militarised, more than South Africa itself. The Namibian struggle was to lead apartheid South Africa into its largest war by far, and the war it fought in southern Angola was to contribute substantially to the collapse of apartheid.

As we shall see, FoN was able to continue working alongside AAM on Namibian issues, though some in the AAM were somewhat dismissive of those who campaigned separately on Namibia, arguing that the Namibian issue was not a major priority, that Namibia was a much less important country, with a minute population compared with that of South Africa (less than that of greater Cape Town), and that SWAPO, which had not been founded until 1960, was relatively insignificant compared with the ANC, with its long history of struggle dating back to 1912. SWAPO officials in London, on the other hand, while appreciating AAM's work, were somewhat sceptical of the ANC, seeing it as dominated by non-African communists in exile, whom they saw as tools of Soviet foreign policy, and from SWAPO's perspective the ANC was not waging a serious armed struggle. The SWAPO leadership was pleased that a separate organisation was helping to bring the Namibian issue before a British public that hardly knew where Namibia was, let alone anything of its long, separate history of struggle against colonialism and apartheid.

In 1978, the year in which the UN Security Council passed Resolution 435, providing for a transition to independence based on a UN presence in the territory, it seemed that Namibia would indeed become independent long before apartheid ended in South Africa. Once Namibia had become independent, it was expected that the attention of the international community would then turn to South Africa. But as Namibian independence was delayed in the 1980s, and the struggle in South Africa took on a new intensity, it became less clear

that Namibian independence would pave the way for the end of apartheid in South Africa. In 1986 a member of NSC proposed that its constitution be amended to say that:

*while recognising that the overthrow of apartheid is essential for a free and liberated Namibia, as well as for the countries of southern Africa in general, the NSC supports SWAPO's position of the legitimacy of the independent struggle of the Namibian people in its own right, which is not conditional on, or subordinate to, the overthrow of apartheid inside South Africa.*⁷

In a rare case of disagreement over the NSC's exclusive focus on Namibia, an NSC member was to resign in 1985 because he thought the NSC was not giving sufficient support to the ANC and its struggle against apartheid, despite the fraternal links that were supposed to exist between that organisation and SWAPO.⁸

From Friends of Namibia to the Namibia Support Committee

The inaugural meeting of FoN took place in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, on 17 July 1969, the year after the UN General Assembly had proclaimed that 'in accordance with the desires of its people, South West Africa shall henceforth be known as "Namibia"'. Vigne, the main organiser of the meeting, became FoN's president. Though Moses Garoeb, Secretary-General of SWAPO, whom Vigne had met in Dar es Salaam, was the guest speaker, FoN did not support SWAPO exclusively.⁹ To some extent FoN worked alongside the very much larger and much better resourced AAM, lobbying MPs, suggesting questions to be asked in Parliament, interviewing relevant ministers, holding seminars and hosting Namibians visiting England. On one such visit, Nujoma urged FoN to try to put pressure on British companies to stop doing business in Namibia, and FoN members began to picket the sale of Namibian karakul pelts in London. FoN's main aim, however, was to publicise the issue of Namibia's struggle for freedom in Britain. It published Toivo ya Toivo's moving speech in the Pretoria trial, in which he said that the Namibians believed that South Africa had robbed them of their country. In 1971, when the Advisory Opinion at the ICJ on Namibia went against South Africa, and South African rule of Namibia was declared illegal, AAM and FoN together organised a large meeting in the Central Hall, Westminster, at which Katjavivi and Trevor Huddleston of AAM were the main speakers. The following year, FoN and AAM both helped SWAPO organise an international conference on Namibia in Brussels, at which a number of members of FoN delivered papers.¹⁰

In 1973, SWAPO was recognised by the General Assembly of the UN as the sole representative of the Namibian people, following such recognition given it by the Organisation of African Unity. The British government never accepted this, and although the Labour Party was persuaded in 1974 to say that a Labour government would 'seek to end the unlawful South African occupation of Namibia', the Labour government would not recognise SWAPO as representative of the Namibian people or accept the authority of the UN Council for Namibia, and it continued to import uranium from Namibia despite earlier pledges that it would cease to do so.

Ethel de Keyser of AAM, who was sympathetic to those campaigning on Namibia, suggested in 1973 that FoN become a formal solidarity organisation, which would then be able to get funds from the UN Council for Namibia and might carry more weight in representations to the British government. SWANU was by then in disarray, and members of FoN had close relations with the SWAPO office in London, headed by the congenial Katjavivi. Jo Morris, who had been working with SWAPO, helped persuade Vigne that FoN should change its name to Namibia Support Committee and give full support to SWAPO as the only organisation working actively to end South African rule of Namibia.

With the formation of NSC in 1974, Morris became its executive secretary and Vigne its president (some years later, after he had expressed his dissatisfaction with that title, he became known as 'honorary secretary'). Vigne would remain a key figure in the organisation until Namibian independence, in effect the organisation's elder statesman, not only available for advice but also extremely active in the day-to-day work of the organisation. As the membership became more diverse, and included younger people, reflecting the increasingly left-wing politics of the generation of 1968, Vigne added *gravitas* to the organisation—the only NSC member with a suit, it was said—while his connections to establishment figures in Britain enabled him to interact effectively with MPs and officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), with whom the NSC met regularly. In July 1977, for example, Vigne and two others met the new Labour Foreign Secretary, David Owen, who was 'extremely ignorant about Namibia, but full of the confidence which this engenders ... his style is his own (sanctimonious doctor who knows what's best for his patient), his information is pure British Foreign Office—thus, rather limited'.¹¹

By 1978 much of the work of NSC was being done by sub-groups, some virtually autonomous of the parent body. While this allowed those who worked in the sub-group to follow their own interests, it meant that the work of NSC was increasingly fragmented. The NSC hoped that sub-groups would forge links with other organisations, thus spreading the NSC's reach and effectiveness. Until the mid-1980s, the NSC remained an entirely London-based

organisation, which did not have local branches or seek a mass membership, but was a small lobby group of activists.¹² Among these, ideological and generational differences were largely put aside in the interests of working for Namibia's freedom. After hopes for early independence were dashed, there was enormous frustration, for the goal seemed as far away as ever, but those active in NSC remember the camaraderie and sense of purpose they had in working together for a cause in which they believed so passionately. From the mid-1980s, local branches were established throughout the country, and by the late 1980s, five full-time staff members were working at NSC headquarters.¹³

Campaigns

Much of what those involved in solidarity work in Britain did was publicity-related, to persuade people ranging from AAM members to people living in remote corners of the country that the Namibian issue was significant and was separate from that of apartheid South Africa. The NSC considered one of its main functions to be to spread information about Namibia, and so innumerable letters were written by its members to newspapers and many public meetings were held. A publication, *Action on Namibia (AON)*, appeared sometimes quarterly, sometimes bi-monthly, from 1979 until Namibia's independence. *AON* advertised the activities of NSC and provided information on Namibian affairs and analyses of the negotiations process. NSC made a special effort to publicise the South African Defence Force raids against SWAPO in Angola, the Cassinga massacre of May 1978 and other atrocities perpetrated by South Africa in Namibia. Another NSC publication, *International Newsbriefing on Namibia*, reached a circulation of 4 000 in the late 1980s. A joint NSC/War on Want project sent educational books to the schools of the SWAPO settlements in Angola, funded by the European Economic Community (EC), between 1982 and 1987, while in the late 1980s the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation funded a series of Namibia-related publications put out by NSC.

The NSC also arranged conferences, organised demonstrations and lobbied MPs. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Britain repeatedly had to take a position on issues relating to Namibia. Successive British governments refused to recognise the validity of the actions of the UN Council for Namibia, claiming that the UN General Assembly had acted beyond its powers by creating this council. Britain also refused to accept as binding the 1971 advisory opinion of the ICJ, which declared South Africa's rule of Namibia illegal. In meeting after meeting with British officials, the NSC challenged the British government's unwillingness to do more to further the cause of Namibian independence. In 1977–1978, pressure

mounted for further action against apartheid South Africa (especially after the imposition by the UN of a mandatory arms embargo in November 1977), but Britain and the US again argued against such action, on the grounds that it might jeopardise progress on the Namibian and Rhodesian issues.

It was Rubin who had come up with the idea that the UN Council for Namibia should issue a decree to protect the natural resources of the country, which it did in September 1974. The UN Commissioner for Namibia, Sean MacBride, who in 1974 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for mobilising 'the conscience of the world in the fight against injustice', then worked to get governments to agree to impound any shipments from Namibia, in terms of Decree no. 1. Roger Murray of the NSC, an economic analyst and journalist, tried to trace shipments from Namibia in order to try to stop countries importing those resources. One of the NSC's highest-profile campaigns concerned the supply of Namibian uranium from the Rössing mine to Britain. The Campaign Against Namibian Uranium Contracts (CANUC) was run initially by members of the NSC, together with the AAM and the Haslemere Group, a Third World research/action group that soon dissolved. CANUC's main targets were British Nuclear Fuels Limited (BNFL) and Rio-Tinto Zinc (RTZ). In March 1984, 21 women occupied the BNFL plant at Capenhurst in north-west England, claiming that the plant processed and enriched illegally mined Namibian uranium supplied to it by Rössing Uranium, a subsidiary of RTZ. In November 1984 several of the women were fined for causing 'criminal damage' to the plant.¹⁴ In the mid-1980s, activists in NSC worked with the French Anti-apartheid Movement to try to intercept the arrival of Namibian uranium by air in Paris, but their plans were foiled when they were revealed to the French authorities. In the late 1980s, uranium imports were blocked by Liverpool dock workers on a number of occasions, before Namibia began moving towards independence.¹⁵

In 1984 NSC started Release All Political Prisoners (RAPP) as a result of a request from SWAPO's new secretary-general, Toivo ya Toivo, who after his release from Robben Island urged the NSC to launch a new campaign in support of political prisoners, particularly those still on the island. NSC employed a new member of staff to develop this aspect of the committee's work. With the transfer of the remaining SWAPO prisoners from Robben Island to Pretoria a few years later, prior to their release, this campaign lost momentum, and a parallel organisation to NSC, Church Action on Namibia (CAN), along with South Africa: The Imprisoned Society (SATIS), largely took over the prisoner campaign.

The single most important event organised by the NSC was the conference entitled 'Namibia 1884–1984: 100 Years of Foreign Occupation, 100 Years of

Struggle', held at City University in London in September 1984. Many SWAPO officials attended, including the recently released Toivo. The conference was followed immediately by a 'Namibia: Independence now!' campaign, which began in October 1984 and was extended into 1985. Eventually the conference proceedings and related material were brought together in a major publication edited by Brian Wood.¹⁶

In the mid-1980s, the township revolt in South Africa drew major attention in Britain to that country. Although the cause of Namibian independence seemed further away than ever, given the Reagan administration's support of Pretoria and the idea of linking Cuban troops withdrawal from Angola with Namibian independence, the NSC stepped up its campaign for the imposition of mandatory sanctions on South Africa, the withdrawal of British companies from Namibia and the implementation of Decree no. 1. Although not successful in any of these endeavours, it kept up pressure on the British government, forcing it to justify its position, and did much to increase the knowledge of Namibia in the general British public.

NSC and SWAPO

The NSC's decision to support SWAPO 'as the sole inheritor of political power' in Namibia worried Gwendolen Carter, then perhaps the leading American political scientist writing on Africa, who told Vigne in February 1975 that although SWAPO was undeniably the best organised liberation group of Namibians:

it is not a FRELIMO, either as far as military successes are concerned or, I fear, in the far-sightedness of its leaders ... I think they would be much better advised to make it clear to the Hereros and other ethnic groups that it is an all-African effort.

She wrote of 'serious problems, not to be swept under the rug with passionate affirmations of international support for SWAPO, much as it deserves a lot of (but not unquestioning) support'.¹⁷

When Vigne heard in May 1977 of Shipanga's arrest in Zambia and detention in Tanzania, he wrote to ask Nujoma 'what to say against this mounting tide of questioning and criticism' of SWAPO, adding:

I find it hard enough, as a lifelong liberal, to persuade myself of the justification of keeping people in detention without trial. It is much harder when this is being done by SWAPO, whose historical importance I rate so highly, and when the detainees include one of my oldest friends, Andreas.

He asked the president of SWAPO to:

intervene before serious damage is done to SWAPO, through the use of these detentions to smear its hard-won reputation and thereby to delay the process of liberation.

The following month, he told Nujoma that David Owen, the new Labour Foreign Secretary, had asked him why SWAPO dissidents were in prison in Tanzania. He had had to say that he did not know, and feared the matter would be used by SWAPO's enemies.¹⁸ Whether Vigne's entreaties had any effect in securing Shipanga's release we do not know. In the NSC there was little sympathy for Shipanga when, after his release, he formed SWAPO-Democrats as a rival to SWAPO and then returned to Namibia, wrongly believing that independence was imminent. When the South African administration in Namibia held an internal election and introduced minor reforms to apartheid, as a sop to international pressure and as a kind of experiment to see what impact they would have, the NSC spent much time making the argument that such changes were not significant, and that South African rule remained as brutal and undemocratic as ever.

With adverse publicity arising from the crisis in SWAPO and the detention of SWAPO members, Shapua Kaukungua, who had taken over from Katjavivi as SWAPO representative in Britain, was told in July 1978 that the NSC thought it should not be seen as a SWAPO mouthpiece, but rather 'as a British support group promoting SWAPO policies from a fully independent position'.¹⁹ The NSC also decided no longer to share offices with SWAPO. SWAPO officials regularly continued to brief NSC meetings, however. In the 1980s, the person who did this most often was Peter Manning, a South African who had worked for SWAPO in Namibia before being imprisoned there in 1978. After being allowed to leave, Manning applied for political asylum in Britain and became SWAPO's information officer in London.

In the early 1980s, the NSC found itself working in an atmosphere of increasing concern about security, and it faced an increasingly sophisticated campaign by the South African government and its London-based clients to support the internal parties in Namibia. From 1981 *Namibia in Focus* was brought out by one of these groups, the Namibia Information Service (NIS), almost certainly to present a direct counter to NSC's *AON*. *Namibia in Focus* was a glossy magazine designed to promote the internal parties and criticise the 'communist' and 'terrorist' SWAPO. There were also, at this time, new concerns in the NSC about infiltration. SWAPO had for a time shared its London office with the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF) and, in January 1980, the Deputy Director of IUEF was revealed to be a

South African police spy. The SWAPO offices in London were broken into by South African agents in 1982 and documents were removed. When an NSC member was detained in Namibia in 1984, he was shown photographs of NSC officials in London and given information that made it clear that NSC minutes were known to the police in Windhoek. After that, those who compiled NSC minutes had to bear in mind that they might be read by 'the enemy'. Ruth First, who had been a founding patron of FoN and who often visited NSC when she was in London, was assassinated in Maputo in 1982. Even some members of the small NSC executive began to be suspected by others on the executive of being spies for the South African authorities.²⁰

The NSC continued its active support of SWAPO, for example, selling a mug with the inscription 'Victory to SWAPO!'. Then, in a context of growing suspicions and paranoia, news reached the NSC in 1985 that members of SWAPO were being detained by the organisation in Angola, allegedly for being spies, and that horrific torture was being used to extract 'confessions' from them. Erica Beukes and other relatives of those detained wrote to the NSC and other organisations, asking for pressure to be put on SWAPO to halt further maltreatment of those detained.²¹ The relatives, attempting to make their campaign as public as possible, made the mistake of linking it to South African government-supported endeavours, especially the so-called International Society for Human Rights based in Frankfurt. At this time, the South African administration in Namibia was building up the internal parties in Namibia prior to forming a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGNU) as an alternative to SWAPO. Not surprisingly, the revelations of what was happening in Angola seemed to many in the NSC to be part of a campaign to discredit SWAPO. The South African government was known to be adept at concocting lies about its enemies, and it was known that funds were being used from the defence budget to discredit SWAPO, with the hope that it would lose international recognition as the main movement fighting for Namibia's liberation.

In those years, the NSC campaigned against an attempt to set up a Namibia Liaison Office in London in support of the TGNU. There were fears that the SWAPO office in the city would be closed on the grounds that an organisation involved in the armed struggle was *ipso facto* a terrorist organisation.²² Although it was difficult to challenge SWAPO on the detainee issue, because of the need to work closely with the organisation in pursuit of the goal of Namibia's independence, members of the NSC did make attempts to find out what was going on, by, for example, questioning Kaukungua in private. Whether such representations had any effect is not known. SWAPO itself acknowledged holding 100 'spies' in February 1986 and, at a closed meeting

in London, Theo-Ben Gurirab, SWAPO's chief diplomat at the UN, spoke of how confessions had been obtained from those in the spy ring. While some in the NSC accepted that in war against a brutal aggressor there was little room for human rights, others were very disturbed by the news that dribbled out. Brian Wood remembers arguing that solidarity should not be uncritical and that the NSC should be concerned with helping in the building of a democratic and human rights culture in the Namibia-to-be.²³ He and others now worked closely with trade union activists in the National Union of Namibian Workers, most notably Ben Ulenga, whom NSC hosted in England on more than one visit, and students and other grassroots activists from Namibia. In July 1989, former SWAPO detainees who had returned to Windhoek went public about SWAPO's treatment of them. It was not until October that year that an internal NSC briefing finally tackled the 'spy' issue, saying that the way the detainees had been treated must be condemned, but that it would be 'a grave mistake to allow South Africa and its allies to use the issue as a smokescreen to hide their far more hideous crimes', and that 'all human rights issues must be dealt with openly by Namibian people themselves.'²⁴ Even then, after others in Britain had publicised SWAPO's atrocities, the NSC did not go public on the issue.²⁵

With the advent of independence there was much soul-searching within the NSC about its future role. Publication of *International Newsbriefing on Namibia* was suspended due to lack of funds. At the first meeting of the NSC's steering committee after independence, Kaukungua acknowledged that his country had become a sovereign state 'with help from our friends', and said that SWAPO hoped that the NSC would continue to disseminate information about Namibia. But there was now considerable disillusionment in the NSC with SWAPO, for some because of the detainee issue, for others because it was becoming clear that in the post-Cold War era of the Washington consensus, an independent Namibia was not going to adopt socialist policies. Some NSC members wanted the organisation to focus entirely on development, while others began drifting away. A planning workshop was held in December 1992, where there was talk of the NSC working to support the emerging civil society in Namibia and community-based organisations, as well as acting as an information resource and promoting a positive profile for the country. But none of this happened. Instead, in February 1993 the organisation was wound up.²⁶

Conclusion

Although the NSC was not the only Namibian solidarity organisation in Britain in these years,²⁷ it was the most important. It is not easy to argue that it helped to bring Namibian independence closer, or influenced the process leading to the

independence in any significant way. While NSC members who met with FCO officials were usually extremely knowledgeable and well-briefed, and helped force the officials to do their homework, British policy remained largely unsympathetic to what the NSC wanted. While Scandinavian governments gave support and funding to those working for Namibian independence, the British government seemed, to those in Britain campaigning for Namibian independence, to be acting to delay such independence. However, the British government did not, as some right-wingers hoped it would, recognise the internal government set up by the South Africans in the 1980s, nor did it abandon its commitment to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435. The work of the NSC helped to ensure that in the end Britain did help to implement that resolution in 1989. By then the Namibian issue had a considerable profile in Britain, thanks to the work of the solidarity organisations and to those of its members who so often wrote to the press protesting at what they saw to be biased media reporting or a failure to cover significant stories. It was a tribute to the success of the NSC in influencing British public opinion that the South African authorities produced the counter-propaganda they did in the 1980s. The value of the NSC's work was recognised by those in SWAPO engaged in diplomatic work before independence, one of whom recently called the NSC 'our brains trust'.²⁸ The credibility of SWAPO in the West, derived partly from its Christian connections, was boosted by the support given to it by non-communists in the NSC.²⁹

As with other solidarity work, however, it is difficult to pinpoint the precise impact of much of what was done. The medical kits and educational materials that NSC sent to SWAPO's Angolan camps helped to improve life there, even if only in a marginal way. The NSC hosted many Namibians on visits to Britain, which established links, some of which remained after independence. So the NSC helped to prepare the way for the relationship between Britain and Namibia that followed independence, when Namibia became a member of the Commonwealth. But solidarity work was often uncritical, and inevitably propagandistic. The NSC faced a major dilemma over the SWAPO 'spy scandal': had it openly criticised SWAPO its influence would probably have declined dramatically. Those involved in the NSC put achieving their goal—Namibia's independence—before anything else. Once it was achieved, their work tended to be forgotten and ignored. It deserves to be remembered.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is a much revised, and shorter, version of C. Saunders, 'Namibian solidarity: British support for Namibian independence', *Journal of Southern African Studies* (June 2009), where fuller references, inter alia to the NSC Papers in the

- Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the Randolph Vigne Papers in the National Archives of Namibia, can be found.
- 2 D.B. Sole, "'This above all': Reminiscences of a South African diplomat', unpublished, National Library, Cape Town.
 - 3 There was no equivalent for South Africa of the UN's Council for Namibia or Commissioner for Namibia. AAM's ties with the UN were mainly through the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid.
 - 4 Scott, who did not easily work with others, was to distance himself from FoN. He tried to bring a case to the ICJ against Rio-Tinto Zinc (RTZ) for its exploitation of uranium in the Rössing mine, and continued his lobbying on Namibia until shortly before his death in 1982, remaining closer to the Herero-based SWANU than to SWAPO. Cf. C. Saunders, 'Michael Scott and Namibia', *African Historical Review* (December 2007).
 - 5 Bodleian Library, Oxford: Anti-apartheid Movement Papers, AAM Annual Report, 1965–66, 1.
 - 6 See further Roger Fieldhouse, *Anti-apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain* (London: Merlin Press, 2004).
 - 7 NSC Papers, Box 5/5: Minutes of meeting, 16 July 1986.
 - 8 Ibid., Box 5/3: Minutes of meeting, 18 August 1985.
 - 9 When the legendary Hosea Kutako of the Herero Chief's Council died in 1970, FoN organised the memorial service held at St Martin in the Fields in central London, and when Kutako's successor, Clemens Kapuuu, visited London, Katjavivi asked FoN to help arrange his visit.
 - 10 FoN brought together people who became increasingly knowledgeable about Namibia. Vigne wrote the first brief popular history of Namibia, commissioned by IDAF and published in 1973 under the title *A Dwelling Place of Our Own*. Rubin, the treasurer, wrote on Namibian labour issues. Rubin, Roger Murray, the FoN secretary in 1974, and Jo Morris published on the role of foreign companies in Namibia.
 - 11 Vigne Papers, Box 1: Report on meeting, 18 July 1977.
 - 12 When Brian Wood joined the NSC as administrative secretary in 1978, its first full-time paid worker, he found that its minute office contained little more than one old typewriter. He remained a key figure in the organisation for over a decade.
 - 13 Local groups were established at Warwick University and in Oxford, Sheffield, Sussex, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Norwich, South London, North London, Manchester, Hull, Tyneside and Leeds.
 - 14 See esp. NSC Papers, Box 11/1.
 - 15 NSC Papers, Boxes 11/3 and 12/2–12/5.
 - 16 B. Wood (ed.), *Namibia 1884–1984: Readings on Namibia's History and Society* (London: Namibia Support Committee, 1988).

- 17 Vigne Papers, Box 1: Carter to Vigne, 9 February 1975.
- 18 Ibid., Minutes of NSC meeting, 25 May 1978, and letter to Kaukungwa, 6 July 1978.
- 19 Vigne Papers, Box 1: NSC meeting, 25 May 1978 and Vigne to Kaukungwa, 6 July 1978.
- 20 Author's interview with Brian Wood, London, 2007.
- 21 NSC Papers, Box 23/3: Beukes et al., 9 July 1985.
- 22 See NSC Papers, Box 5/4.
- 23 Author's interview with Brian Wood, London, 2007.
- 24 NSC Papers, Box 23/3: Internal briefing, 17 October 1989.
- 25 It was only when the man nicknamed 'Butcher of Lubango' was appointed head of the army that NSC and CAN wrote to SWAPO to protest: J. Saul & C. Leys, 'Lubango and after: "Forgotten history" as politics in contemporary Namibia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 2 (June 2003).
- 26 NSC Papers, Box 7/1.
- 27 Others included the Namibia and Southern Africa Refugee Project, later the Namibia Refugee Project (NRP), which helped to provide training and education in SWAPO settlement camps in Angola and Zambia (see Namibian National Archives, A.555, Archives of the NRP), and CAN. The charismatic Anglican priest Colin Winter, who settled in England, after being deported from Namibia in March 1972, opened a Namibia Peace Centre at the abbey at Sutton Courtney in Oxfordshire, where he lived, and spoke about Namibia in Britain and at the UN and elsewhere. In 1977, he moved his Peace Centre to London, where it continued to attract visiting Namibians and others from southern Africa until it was closed in 1982 after his sudden death from a heart attack.
- 28 Theo-Ben Gurirab, in conversation with the author, University of Cape Town, October 2007.
- 29 I thank Randolph Vigne for emphasising this point. Like the ANC, SWAPO had close ties to the Soviet Union.

IN CONCLUSION

Chris Saunders and Hilary Sapire

The Introduction to this volume ended by noting that in a changing political context a new generation of scholars had begun to generate fresh questions about liberation struggles in southern Africa. The chapters in this book were chosen to illustrate something of the range of recent new perspectives on that struggle. The authors have considered different forms of struggle, from diplomacy to armed resistance, and the links between them, analysed in particular by Janet Cherry. The roles of different actors in these struggles have been explored. At the organisational level these included the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, both within South Africa and in exile, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) and the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). Within these organisations, different views and factions often vied for supremacy. The chapters in this volume have ranged over the region, from the activities of an exile organisation headquartered in Zambia to camps housing soldiers in Angola, and from the role of Muslims in northern Mozambique to the ways in which exiled organisations operated in Swaziland and Lesotho, while also considering anti-apartheid activities in Britain. Our authors have also touched on the sometimes tetchy relationships between liberation movements and the governments of the various southern African states which hosted armies and exiles.¹ New sources have been drawn upon, including interviews, some with people who have since passed away, as well as documentary material from the ANC records, now housed at Fort Hare, and official and private papers in Britain.

Many other studies that present new perspectives could have been included here had space permitted. It is hoped that this selection will lead readers to sample work published elsewhere. Some of the chapters included here represent studies that will, in time, be set into wider contexts and form part

of other work. To the extent that these chapters focus, as some have, on explicating a previously unrecorded and untold story of what happened, they will help to enable others in future to probe the deeper questions of ‘why?’ and ‘with what result?’ For, without a doubt, different interpretations of the significance of these struggles will be advanced in future. History, as the eminent Dutch historian Pieter Geyl once wrote, is, and should always be, ‘an argument without end’.

Much remains to be done. These chapters have said little about the connections between the late twentieth-century struggles and earlier ones, although we know that such connections were often important and should be teased out. Equally, the ways in which the heritage and memory of previous phases of resistance have influenced liberation movements of the more recent past call for further scrutiny. We need to know much more about the connections between the actors within a particular country and those in exile. Racial, ethnic and regional loyalties and identities deserve closer scrutiny than they have been given here. And while a number of the chapters in this collection have concerned international solidarity work, the connections between that work and what happened in the region itself deserves much more attention, as do such major themes as the role of the Cold War and the way it helped shape the nature and forms of the southern African liberation struggles.

Future work will treat the region as a whole and acknowledge the extent to which liberation struggles across the subcontinent were intertwined with one another in complicated, and at times ambiguous, ways. Those who struggled for liberation in southern Africa were well aware of other contemporaneous struggles, whether in the Middle East or Latin America or elsewhere, and drew inspiration from them. Historians will in future draw out more ambitious comparative insights by contrasting the struggles in southern Africa with those in other parts of the world, some of which served as preferred theoretical models and offered strategic guidance to the struggles in southern Africa.

While the authors in this volume provide glimpses into the grassroots meanings of, and motivations for, solidarity activism and the racial, ethnic, political, gender, ideological, cultural and class tensions within them, many questions remain. The politics of gender, and the gendered character of resistance and solidarity politics, are still undeveloped themes. So, too, are issues of age and generation, which clearly had a profound shaping effect on both liberation and solidarity organisations. The effects of solidarity and emotional engagements with the struggles of southern Africans in the countries in which there were solidarity movements call for further examination and comparison.² For example, Tom Lodge has suggested that Ireland’s deep engagement with South Africa’s anti-apartheid struggle encouraged official perceptions of

Ireland's diplomatic role as a 'mediator between Europe and the developing world' and animated republican traditions of anti-colonial solidarity. More profoundly, Lodge argues that anti-apartheid solidarity contributed to the shaping of Irish social identity by more inclusive and egalitarian notions of a citizenship based on civic rights rather than ethnic essentialism.³ Whereas the sympathies of disaffected Portuguese officers fighting African guerrillas contributed to the revolutionary impetus in Portugal in 1974,⁴ in the United Kingdom the political and cultural impact of the liberation struggles in southern Africa was far more diffuse. Alongside the 'progressive' and anti-establishment political cultures that supported those struggles in Britain were antithetical ones, including the Conservative Party's right-wing Monday Club, the Friends of the Springbok, the Anglo-Rhodesian Society and the 'Rhodesian Lobby'.⁵ The success of the Anti-apartheid Movement in galvanising popular support for its cause in the face of these entrenched interests and attitudes renders its achievement all the more impressive. There is surely scope too for comparative studies of the diverse meanings of 'solidarity' in different national settings, as there is of the changing meanings of 'liberation' in the region. Is it the case, as John Saul has suggested, that conceptions of 'liberation' narrowed after democratic transitions? The fate of liberation movements and their ideologies, and the states and societies over which they came to preside, is a topic that will continue to attract scholarly attention for many years to come.

If any were to say that because these events took place a long time ago—it is now almost two decades from the transfer of power in South Africa in 1994—they have little bearing on the present-day problems of the region, they would, of course, be quite wrong. Not only do the late twentieth-century struggles have their own enduring intrinsic importance but they are generally recognised by historians as one of the most important world historical events of the late twentieth century and they continue to resonate in and define the twenty-first century life of the region. Interpretations of the liberation struggles are used to both contest and legitimise contemporary social and political relations. Thus, for example, a dominant Namibian narrative of nationalism has been deployed by ex-combatants to make preferential claims on the state at the expense of wider societal reconciliation, while contentious memories have been downplayed and marginalised.⁶ In 2011, AfriForum went to court to prevent the singing of a certain liberation song in South Africa and when the judgement was that it should not be sung, Julius Malema and others retorted that the judge, who happened to be white, was trying to write the history of the South African liberation struggle.⁷ Others believe the roots of South Africa's present problems lie in the way the country's Constitution was drawn up in the 1990s, claiming that it was the result of the balance of forces at the time, rather than being based on universal principles

supported by the ANC. In the year in which the ANC celebrated its centenary, there were innumerable references to the liberation struggle. In 2012, liberation parties remain in government in most of the states of the region. Whether or not they remain in power in the future, there is little doubt that these struggles will have an enduring significance for the region.

We need many more new perspectives. Some of the authors represented in this collection were themselves activists in the struggles they record, which gives their writing an immediacy it would otherwise not have had, but activists will not always be with us to write from their own experiences. Other voices are needed, especially black African ones and those of non-English speakers. In time greater distance will grow between those who write on these struggles and the struggles themselves, even if, as has already been suggested, they continue to have contemporary relevance. Although in future there may be fewer direct connections between writers and these struggles, they will hopefully have greater access to a wider range of sources. Much material have been digitised already, which greatly assists access, and this process is likely to continue. Digital sources, like any other, should of course be used critically and with due respect for historical method. In Zimbabwe especially, but also in Namibia and South Africa, there are many examples of what Terence Ranger has called ‘patriotic history’⁸—at best a partial view of the past based on a highly selective use of historical sources. One of the tasks of history-writing is to puncture myths, and the importance of scholarly voices of the kind represented in this collection cannot be emphasised enough, to counter polemical interpretations and dominant nationalist narratives.

After the great expectations aroused by liberation, it was inevitable that disillusionment would set in. But such disillusionment should not be allowed to blind us to what these liberation struggles achieved. While scholarly work is not the place for hagiography or hero worship, let alone for triumphalist interpretations, this should of course not mean that scholarly work cannot recognise achievement and the role that remarkable men and women, along with mass participation, played in these struggles. We hope that this book will serve as a spur to research that will further enrich our understanding of the immensely rich and historic, global struggle for the liberation of southern Africa.

Notes

- 1 For a recent discussion of such ‘dilemmas of liberation’, see W.G. Morapedi ‘The dilemmas of liberation in southern Africa: The case of Zimbabwean

- Liberation Movements and Botswana', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 38, 1 (2012), 73–90.
- 2 For the historiography of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and its cultural significance, see, for example, C.M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
 - 3 Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville. An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 273–275.
 - 4 See, for example, T. Henriksen, 'Some notes on the national liberation wars in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau', *Military Affairs*, 41, 1 (February 1977), 30–37; T. Henriksen, 'People's war in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14, 3 (1976), 377–99; L. Cliffe, 'B. Davidson. The Portuguese revolution and Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, 29, 91 (2002), 117–119.
 - 5 Their antipathy reflected anxieties about the loss of empire and its associated influence and prestige. Cf. B. Schwarz, 'Empire: For or against', *Twentieth Century British History*, 6, 3 (1995), 359–368; C. Watts, 'Killing kith and kin: The viability of British military intervention in Rhodesia, 1964–65', *Twentieth-Century British History*, 16, 4 (2005), 382–415.
 - 6 Cf. L. Metsola, 'The struggle continues? The spectre of liberation, memory politics and "War Veterans" in Namibia', *Development and Change*, 41, 4, 589–613.
 - 7 For example, 'ANC's youth leader found guilty of hate speech for "Shoot the Boer" song', *The Guardian*, 12 September 2011.
 - 8 Terence Ranger, 'Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: the Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 2, 215–234; Blessing-Miles Tendi, *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe: Politics, Intellectuals and the Media* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

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