

Università degli studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”
Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo

collana
Il porto delle idee



Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"
Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo

The ANC between Home and Exile

**Reflections on the Anti-Apartheid Struggle
in Italy and Southern Africa**

edited by
Arianna Lissoni and Antonio Pezzano

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Direttore: Silvana De Maio

Comitato editoriale: Maria Cristina Ercolessi, Noemi Lanna, Lea Nocera, Paola Paderni,
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Preface

The publication of this book coincides with twenty-one years of democracy in South Africa since the end of apartheid and the first democratic elections of 1994. Three years earlier, another anniversary, the centenary of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), the oldest African nationalist movement on the continent and, since 1994, South Africa's ruling party, prompted the calling of a conference in Naples, Italy, where this book has its origins.

The ANC centenary was marked by a year-long series of celebrations that kicked off on 8 January 2012 in Mangaung (Bloemfontein), where the ANC had been founded a hundred years earlier. While the majority of these events took place in South Africa, the centenary was also observed in many other countries across the world. These worldwide commemorations are, in part, a trace of what had once been the global anti-apartheid movement: possibly the largest and most successful international solidarity movement of all times.

Understandably, most of the initiatives around the ANC centenary were of a celebratory nature. But the occasion also provided a moment for more critical reflection on the ANC's historical trajectory over the last one hundred years. In particular, the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), the University of Johannesburg and South African History Online organised a conference in Johannesburg in September 2011 with a view to framing some of the debates around the centenary.¹ Moved by a similar objective, in November 2012, the Centro Studi sull'Africa Contemporanea (CeSAC) at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" (UNO) and the Wits History Workshop² organised a joint international conference

¹ See the publication that this conference produced: A. Lissoni, J. Soske, N. Erlank, N. Nieftagodien and O. Badsha (eds). *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today*. Johannesburg: Wits Press and SAHO, 2012.

² The conference was organised under the auspices of a Memorandum of Understanding between University of the Witwatersrand and University of Naples "L'Orientale" to develop

titled “The African National Congress between Home and Exile”, from which this publication takes its name. The conference was held in Naples on 19 and 20 November, and brought into close dialogue the Anglophone scholarship on the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa with Italian research as well as activists from both countries. One of its aims was to create intellectual synergy between the two contexts that are usually separated by language.

This volume draws directly on the panels and papers that were presented by the group of scholars and activists who participated in the Naples conference in 2012. Like the conference that gave rise to it, one of the aims of the book is to reflect historically on the different experiences of the ANC and the struggle against apartheid both in South Africa and in exile, particularly in the Italian context. Since the end of apartheid there has been a significant growth of the literature on the histories of liberation struggles in southern Africa. But, while the international solidarity movement in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States and the Nordic countries has received a fair amount of scholarly attention, the development of solidarity networks and movements in other countries has so far been under-represented in the historiography.³ This imbalance projects the erroneous impression that a country like Italy played only a marginal role in supporting the peoples of southern Africa in their connected struggles against colonialism, white minority rule and apartheid oppression and exploitation. Therefore, a second aim of this publication is to give a more central place to Italy, both as a site from where the ANC operated in exile, and as a key

areas of cooperation between the two institutions. See <http://www.unior.it/ateneo/3628/1/accordi-internazionali.html>, accessed 3 November 2014.

³ For example, see C. Gurney. “‘A Great Cause’: The Origins of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959 - March 1960”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 1, 2000, pp. 123-144; R. Fieldhouse. *Anti-Apartheid: The History of a Movement in Britain: A Study in Pressure Group Politics*. London: Merlin, 2005; D. Herbstein. *White Lies: Canon John Collins and the Secret War against Apartheid*. Oxford: James Currey, 2004; T. Sellström. *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, Vols 1 & 2. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999 and 2002; D.R. Culverson. *Contesting Apartheid: US Activism, 1960-1987*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999; F.N. Nesbitt. *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946-1994*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) (eds). *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Vol. 3: International Solidarity*, parts 1 & 2. Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008, contains historical surveys of anti-apartheid movements in countries throughout the world, including Italy (see the chapter by C. Fiamingo, “Italy, ‘Beneficiary’ of the Apartheid Regime, and its Internal Opposition”).

centre of international solidarity. The internal resistance and exile movements have also been treated as discrete experiences in much of the literature on the South African liberation struggle. A third aim of this anthology is thus to bring these different contexts into conversation by viewing them as part of the same continuum.

The book is divided into four parts, reflecting the themes of the panels around which the conference was organised. Part I, which opens with a framing chapter by Antonio Pezzano about the Italian literature on South Africa, considers the Italian context and experience. On the one hand, there is the Italian government's ambivalent relationship with the apartheid state (Maria Cristina Ercolessi's chapter), and on the other hand, the development of a solidarity movement in Italy through direct links with the ANC and other southern African liberation movements, particularly Frelimo (Cristiana Fiamingo's chapter). Cristiana Fiamingo raises the alarm that, with few exceptions, notably Reggio Emilia's Istoreco and the Benny Nato Centre (whose experiences are related in Part IV), the archives of the Italian anti-apartheid movement are under threat of being lost to posterity, and its history therefore under threat of being forgotten.

The chapters in Part II, by South Africa-based historians linked to the Wits History Workshop, span the South African and African contexts. Noor Nieftagodien reflects on the significance of the ANC centenary celebrations in South Africa in terms of the production of history, arguing that the ANC's own narrative of liberation occludes other experiences of resistance and memories. Tshepo Moloi reconsiders the relationship between the ANC in exile and the internal resistance movement, which much of the existing literature views as largely disconnected, claiming that the ANC had little influence on events in South Africa during the 1980s. By focusing on Thembisa as a case study, Moloi shows that the resurgence of confrontational politics in the township was closely linked with the underground network of the ANC and its armed wing (Umkhonto we Sizwe, or MK) in neighbouring Botswana. Arianna Lissoni and Maria Suriano's joint contribution moves further afield, considering the legacies and transformation of the ANC's transnational links with, and presence in, other African countries, specifically Tanzania, in the post-liberation period. Their chapter describes the experiences of the Tanzanian wives of South African exiles repatriated from Morogoro to South Africa, as well as the hardships suffered by Tanzanian women who were "left behind" by their partners.

The relationship between apartheid, exile and artistic creation, is the subject of Part III. Itala Vivan reviews the literary production of South

African writers whose lives were influenced by various forms of exile and displacement as a result of apartheid, from the 1950s onwards. Apartheid's dramas are represented in the art of William Kentridge, in particular in a series of animated short films titled *Drawings for Projection*, which is analysed in Maria De Vivo's chapter. South African writer Makhosazana Xaba, a former MK cadre, speaks of her own exile and involvement in the liberation movement as a woman, in a selection of her poetry accompanied by an introductory note.

The last part of the book bears testimony to the importance of Italian solidarity with South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle and to the continuing friendship between the two countries through two concrete experiences – those of the city of Reggio Emilia and of the Benny Nato Centre. Vincenzo Curatola is the president of the Benny Nato Centre in Rome, which is named after Henry Benny Nato de Bruyn, the ANC chief representative in Italy between 1985 and 1991. His contribution, co-authored by Raffaella Chiodo Karpinsky, is drawn from the catalogue of an exhibition on Italy's contribution to South Africa's liberation and provides an outline and chronology of the Italian anti-apartheid movement. The concluding chapter by Istoreco's former president, Mirco Carrattieri, and Gianluca Grassi bears testimony to the long and ongoing history of friendship between the ANC and the city of Reggio Emilia, whose antifascist tradition and practice of decentralised cooperation placed it at the forefront of Italian anti-colonial and anti-apartheid activism. Knowledge about this rich history has the potential of modelling new future ways of relating based on the principles of collaboration amongst equals and shared values that create possibilities for disrupting patterns where inequalities and oppression are reproduced.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Department of Human and Social Sciences, the PhD programme in African Studies, and the Research and Education Centre "Women's Archives" at the University of Naples "L'Orientale", for their contribution along with CeSAC to the realisation of the conference that gave rise to this edited volume. We are particularly grateful to the Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies which contributed to the realisation of the conference and agreed to publish this book in the new series *Il porto delle idee*, and to the Wits History Workshop for their support in the production of the book.

Arianna Lissoni and Antonio Pezzano