

The Road To Democracy In South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity

SADET drew together scholars from a variety of countries, with an emphasis on nationals from the countries under study, and/or major actors in international organisations, governmental agencies or solidarity movements being reviewed here. The authors left no stone unturned; their research methods included interviewing a range of solidarity activists, and consulting archival material relevant to the South African liberation struggle, in repositories in various home countries.

In this volume, international solidarity activities are defined as the various activities and campaigns of organisations, governments and peoples in solidarity with the people of South Africa's struggle for liberation and the support they gave directly to the liberation movements and other anti-apartheid organisations within the country for the conduct of the struggle. The origins of international solidarity can perhaps be traced back to the 1890s – the protests by the Indian National Congress against discrimination against Indians in South Africa, and the Pan African Congress of 1900.

The Introduction, written by Gregory Houston, looks at the origins of international solidarity with the South African liberation struggle, the nature of solidarity activities, the main forces involved in international solidarity, the role of the national liberation movements, and the various campaigns in solidarity with the liberation struggle. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the impact of international solidarity.

In **chapter 2**, E.S. Reddy reviews the contribution of the United Nations and its agencies in promoting worldwide solidarity with the struggle for liberation in South Africa, acting as an invaluable instrument to promote concerted international action.

The crisis in South Africa in the mid 1980s, particularly following the first state of emergency for the decade, and the pressure of public opinion persuaded the major Western powers to apply certain sanctions, while international financial institutions stopped loans to South Africa and hundreds of corporations withdrew investments.

The advance of the liberation struggle and actions by external governments and the public obliged the South African government to end repression and begin negotiations with genuine representatives of the people. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of the UN's role in helping South Africans to pave the way towards free and fair elections in April 1994.

The years 1956 to 1991 saw an attempt by the apartheid regime to crush the liberation movements through court action. This strategy was an attempt to criminalise the struggle and its leaders, and to neutralise anti-apartheid activists by detaining and imprisoning them.

In **chapter 3**, Al Cook tells the story of IDAF which helped ensure that neither of these objectives was realised. IDAF developed out of a fund to defend the accused in the Treason Trial of 1956-61. It also provided assistance to sustain the families of those detained, imprisoned, and in some cases hanged. It paid for inquests like those of Looksmart Ngudle, Steve Biko and Neil Aggett, and produced factual information that it distributed internationally to publicise what was happening under apartheid and prod the conscience of the world into action. IDAF was banned in South Africa in 1966, but continued its work clandestinely from London until it closed its doors at the end of 1991, transferring its work to South African organisations.

In **chapter 4**, Christabel Gurney describes how the British Anti-Apartheid Movement grew from a group founded by South African exiles in 1959 into a British mass movement which united key constituencies in the trade unions, churches, universities, political parties and local authorities to take anti-apartheid action in the 1980s. The Boycott Movement was formed in Britain to internationalise the call by the South African Congress Alliance for a boycott within South Africa of goods produced by firms which supported the National Party. After the banning of the ANC and PAC in 1960, the British movement was transformed into the AAM, which took up the more radical call of the ANC's underground emergency committee for UN sanctions and the total isolation of South Africa.

The AAM challenged economic interests and racial assumptions which permeated British society - while it also campaigned against repression and for freedom for South African political prisoners. In the 1980s, the underlying situation was transformed by Britain's economic reorientation towards the European Community; a change in 'racial norms'; South Africa's isolation within the southern African region and above all by the explosion of opposition to apartheid within South Africa. The AAM won



mass support within Britain for sanctions and economic disengagement from South Africa, and played a leading part in the world campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela and all other South African political prisoners.

Chapter 5 is a study of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Ireland, which had little trade with South Africa and was not in a position to exert a material influence when it came to sanctions. Louise Asmal, Kader Asmal and Thomas Alberts show that the determined stand of Irish people against apartheid in sport, manifested when all-white sports teams toured the country in the 1960s, made a considerable impact. The Irish AAM's greatest support came from the trade unions, and it was their refusal to provide the necessary services to South African sportspersons that brought about the cancellation of a number of sporting events and conferences where South Africa was represented. The Irish government, though agreeing early on to put South Africa on the UN agenda, was not overly keen to take concrete steps to end apartheid. It took 10 young women shop-workers' – who went on strike for three and a half years from 1984 because they refused to handle South African fruit – to finally persuade the Irish government to ban the import of fruit and vegetables from South Africa.

For nearly 30 years the AAM in Ireland publicised events in South Africa, relying heavily on material from IDAF, with which it had a close relationship, as well as on the UN Centre against Apartheid. Ultimately, the influence of Irish history, the inclusive spirit of the Freedom Charter of the ANC, and the example set by members of the liberation movement, who upheld their principles of non-racism in the face of appalling racist oppression, came together powerfully. This combination brought a high level of awareness and support for the liberation struggle in Ireland.

From left to right: Fidel Castro and Oliver Tambo during Tambo's visit to Cuba in 1978 (Centro De Informacion De Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (CIFAR)). Demonstration outside Dunnes Store, Ireland (Mayibuye Centre, UWC: photographer Stephen Crowley). Walking from Glasgow to London to call for the release of Nelson Mandela, as part of the AAM's 'Freedom at Seventy' campaign in July 1988. Nelson Mandela with the leadership of the Irish AAM (Mayibuye Centre, UWC: photographer unknown).



During the Cold War, the southern African liberation movements were generally shunned by the Western world. Guided by the UN General Assembly, as early as in 1969, however, the Swedish parliament voted to assist them with official humanitarian assistance, breaking the mould which reduced the liberation struggles to a battlefield between the contending superpowers, as well as paving the way for a unique and expanding involvement by the Nordic countries in practically all fields – barring the supply of arms.

In **chapter 6**, Tor Sellström paints a background to the Nordic position; he outlines the policies adopted by Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden; discusses how the ANC was regarded as a South African ‘government-in-waiting’; and gives an account of the assistance provided. The issue of economic sanctions is also covered. While the Nordic anti-apartheid movements played a decisive advocacy role, Sellström discusses how a close partnership developed between the ANC and the Nordic governments, with particular focus on Sweden, who was the prime financial supporter of the ANC. The chapter ends with a note on the Swedish prime minister, the late Olof Palme, outlining his contribution towards a principled, non-aligned stance in favour of liberation, non-racialism and majority-rule.

The early Dutch colonisation of South Africa, the traditional religious connections, links with the Afrikaner language, and the relatively large number of Dutch emigrants in South Africa all contributed to the keen interest in South African affairs, including the anti-apartheid struggle, in Dutch society.

They explain the extensive media coverage and the emergence of strong anti-apartheid movements in the Netherlands, which is the subject of **chapter 7**, by Sietse Bosgra. The issue of apartheid led to frequent and heated confrontations between a majority in parliament and many sectors of civil society on the one hand, and the government on the other, about sanctions against South Africa. While Protestant churches supported sanctions and assistance to the ANC, trade unions and development NGOs played an important role in anti-apartheid campaigns. Local authorities often found themselves in conflict with the Dutch government as they introduced their own economic



sanctions against South Africa. In the 1970s and 1980s these contradictions became increasingly evident. The motor of this development was the Dutch AAMs.

The AAMs managed to mobilise public opinion and, in large part, determine the agenda of political discussions in the press, in parliament and in the government. Issues raised were the oil embargo, loans by Dutch banks to the apartheid state and its organs, the import of coal, the sale of Krugerrands, and the sale of South African products in major retail stores. In some respects they were able to influence government action, for instance, when they forced the government to introduce some non-economic sanctions, such as denouncing the cultural agreement with South Africa, the introduction of visa requirements, and blocking the entry into the Netherlands of officials of the South African government and the 'independent homelands'.

In **chapter 8**, the role of nine other West European countries and the work of their anti-apartheid movements are discussed by various authors. After the introduction of apartheid in South Africa, the West European countries maintained their close and friendly relations with white South Africa. This was based largely on economic interests and feelings of kinship. Moreover, during the Cold War era, South Africa was considered part of the 'free world' of anti-communist states. But as international opposition to apartheid grew, national anti-apartheid organisations emerged in the different European countries under study. Although the development of anti-apartheid movements was to a large extent similar, each country had its own particularities.

From left to right: Mary Manning, a Dunnes Stores striker, addressing a rally at the GPO in Dublin, 30 November 1985 (Mayibuye Centre: photographer Derek Speir). Demonstration held in Vienna, 1984, against P.W. Botha's European tour (Southern Africa Documentation and Cooperation Centre (SADOCC), Vienna, Austria). Nelson Mandela's visit to Dublin; scene outside Mansion House, 1-2 July 1990 (Mayibuye Centre, UWC: photographer Derek Speirs). IDAFSA (Canada), board and staff members. From left to right: Keith Rimstad (education officer), Jenny Bean (information officer), Paula Kingston (board member), Ian Fairweather (supporter), David Matas (board member), Joan Fairweather (vice-president), Anne Mitchell (executive officer), Barbara Evans (accountant), Bruce Archer (board member), George Tillman (board member) and Terry Padgham (board member) (Private collection:

