

refuted were he still alive and able to speak for himself. The lines between the ANC and the SACP were blurred in the illegal underground in the early 1960s – there were no party cards or party lists, and few meetings of more than a handful of people, and it is possible that Mandela attended one or two meetings of the central committee in 1961–62 in his capacity as commander of MK. He may have been briefly co-opted to the central committee, but that does not mean that he was a member of the party. There is no compelling reason to doubt the word of one of the world's most respected people.

The book has a new emphasis on factionalism and the criminal connections of the ANC and the apartheid government. The end result is a book that equates the apartheid government's murderous 'third force' with the ANC's Operation Vula and comes close to equating the ANC and the apartheid state. The ANC in exile is given little credit for the end of apartheid, which is attributed to internal and international pressures and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The weaknesses of the ANC in government are attributed to the 'culture of exile' and not to nearly twenty years in power with minimal opposition.

The book contains many errors of fact – too many to list here – but it is the errors of interpretation that are the most disturbing. To suggest that the main activity of the leaders of the ANC in Lusaka was 'factional manoeuvre' (p. 104) is absurd, just as it is to suggest that Oliver Tambo was 'the perfect front-man, since he was not a communist, his manner was disarmingly mild and he could generally be relied upon to deliver whatever speech was put in front of him by his aides' (p. 219). Errors of judgement of this kind occur throughout the book. It should be read with caution.

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AUTHOR'S RESPONSE

'The historian is engaged on a continuous process of moulding his facts to his interpretation and his interpretation to his facts,' according to E. H. Carr in his classic *What Is History?* – written, clearly, in the days when it was casually assumed that historians were men.

This being so, it is misleading for Hugh Macmillan to suggest that the interpretation of the ANC's period in exile contained in my book *External Mission* is backed up by evidence that has been 'carefully selected'. Of course it is: every historian selects evidence to support his or her interpretation. By the same token, good historians should be prepared to review their interpretation in the light of the evidence as it becomes available.

Like many British people three or four decades ago, when I first became conscious of the ANC, I considered it to be an essentially moderate opponent of the apartheid system in South Africa. I thought that allegations of communist influence were propaganda and lies. Only over a period of years, especially as a result of interviews with rank-and-file activists in exile, did I come to the

conclusion that the SACP had acquired strategic control of the ANC's apparatus in exile, in the Leninist tradition of providing vanguard leadership to a revolutionary struggle. Hugh Macmillan's great knowledge of ANC history was acquired not least through the personal friendships he had with senior ANC and SACP officials during the years he lived in Lusaka, the ANC headquarters for most of the period of exile. He takes a similar position in relation to the SACP as did, in regard to the Soviet Union during Stalin's time, the fellow-travellers whom the legendary Comintern agent Willi Münzenberg used to call 'the Innocents'. No doubt our differing experiences have contributed to the gulf between our perspectives on the historical relationship between the ANC and its Siamese twin, the SACP.

It is mischievous to describe my charting of the SACP's vanguard role in the ANC as a 'conspiracy theory'. Like most serious historians, I do not subscribe to the notion that vast historical movements are the work of secretive plotters. This sense of proportion, however, should not deter us from describing and analysing the many unpublicized arrangements and networks that exist for the purpose of allowing small groups of people to impose their will on the course of events. Such conspiracies really exist. The US president Richard Nixon once conspired with his aides to cover up a burglary at the Watergate building. More recently, a clique of international bankers was found to have rigged the key inter-bank lending rate known as LIBOR in their own favour. In similar vein, the SACP, until the 1990s, stood in a Leninist tradition that prized secrecy and manipulation as necessary instruments to achieve its revolutionary goal. As the senior South African communist Ronnie Kasrils wrote in his memoirs, 'ideological development in our Party marked time at 1917, and then at 1945 ... Even the exposure of Stalin's crimes by Khrushchev in 1956 failed to shake the basic ideological position of the old guard.'

There is plenty of documentary evidence to demonstrate the extent of the SACP's influence in the ANC during the struggle years. In November 1961, the SACP's general secretary informed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that in three of the organizations constituting the Congress Alliance (which included the ANC), 'Party members are in the majority in the top leadership'. In regard to the guerrilla army Umkhonto we Sizwe, officially an ANC/SACP collaboration, another leading party official wrote that 'by virtue of the close fraternal links that exist between these organisations, and also by virtue of the positions of influence and leadership which individual Party members have won for themselves in the ANC', only one of Umkhonto we Sizwe's top officers was not a party member, and that single exception was 'on the verge of Party membership'. Concerning Umkhonto we Sizwe's regional commands, the same writer continued, 'in all cases, the effective control is in the hands of members of the Party'. As a 1978 SACP document put it: 'The Party can effectively exercise its leadership role by giving correct guidance to the revolution by strengthening, supporting and collaborating with bodies like the ANC.' The Russian historians Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson, drawing on Soviet archives, have shown how close the relationship was between the ANC and the Soviet Union and how vital the SACP's role was in this regard. It would be wrong to suppose that the SACP played by the rules of liberal democracy.

When it comes to writing about Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, since they are historical figures, we must use the normal standards for weighing historical

evidence in matters that concern them. Mandela always denied being a party member, although he certainly attended top party meetings from 1960 to 1962. Not only the SACP but also the ANC has stated that he was a member of the Communist Party. Many senior communists thought that he was a member, or that he had been ‘recruited’, as one former member of the SACP central committee wrote many years later.

Where, then, is objectivity? E. H. Carr, again, states that an objective historian is one who ‘chooses the right facts, or, in other words ... applies the right standard of significance’ in developing an interpretation that has an enduring power to convince. This requires a capacity to rise above the limited vision of one’s own situation in society and in history. Objectivity requires an ability both to see things as historical actors saw them in times past and to envision a larger narrative that links past and present. Appreciating the SACP’s role as a vanguard party, and its role in securing superpower support for the ANC during the Cold War, has considerable explanatory power up to today.

Finally, Hugh Macmillan suggests that my book contains errors of fact, but he does not say what they are. Alas, most historians seem to make errors. I found a few in Macmillan’s own book *The Lusaka Years*, such as his statement that General Van der Westhuizen was head of South African military intelligence in 1974–75 (p. 117). It was in fact Lieutenant-General Hein du Toit.

Note: all quotations from unpublished documents are drawn from collections of private papers deposited in public repositories by Ronnie Kasrils and Jack Simons.

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HUGH MACMILLAN, *The Lusaka Years: the ANC in exile in Zambia, 1963 to 1994*. Auckland Park: Jacana Media (pb £18.95 – 978 1 4314 0821 4). 2014, 357 pp.

Hugh Macmillan’s *The Lusaka Years* is the first serious study of the ANC in exile in what was possibly its most important host country over a period of more than thirty years: Zambia. It was in Lusaka that the headquarters of the external mission of the ANC were located for most of the exile years and it was to the Zambian capital that a succession of delegations from South Africa travelled to speak to the ANC in the second half of the 1980s – a sign of its by then de facto recognition as the legitimate representative of the majority of South Africans both internally and internationally. Based on extensive research in South African and Zambian archives as well as interviews with key participants and the author’s personal knowledge of the ANC in Zambia and Swaziland, where he lived, this book is also one of the most comprehensive scholarly accounts of the history of the ANC in this period in general.

Its publication comes at a time of growing disaffection with the ruling party, when the ‘malign influence of exile’ (p. 11) is sometimes too easily invoked to explain the ANC’s shortcomings in the present – a tendency that Macmillan