The Road to DEMOCRACY in South Africa

Volume 3, International Solidarity

PART 1 & 2

South African Democracy Education Trust
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30 Jahre
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Background

The third volume in the Road to Democracy in South Africa Series examines the role of anti-apartheid movements around the world. The global anti-apartheid movement was very successful in creating awareness of the liberation struggle in South Africa, and in contributing to the downfall of the apartheid government.

This volume’s strength is that it brings together analyses which in the main are written by activist scholars with deep roots in the movements and organisations they are writing about. This is a major resource for historians, scholars and anyone interested in the history of South Africa, and will be valued by future generations for its sensitive collection of highly significant historical material.

*A forthcoming volume will focus on the contribution of anti-apartheid movements on the African continent.*

Where it all started: The South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET)

The South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) was established as a project Trust after President Thabo Mbeki indicated his concern about the paucity of historical material on the arduous road to South Africa’s peaceful political settlement after decades of violent conflict. Core funding for SADET was provided by MTN as leading sponsor; Nedbank, the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund and the Department of Arts and Culture.

SADET’s activities are overseen by a Trust Board, chaired by the Minister in the Presidency, Dr Essop Pahad. The project management and research team consists of Dr Gregory Houston (Executive Director), Prof Bernard Magubane (Editor-in-Chief), Dr Sifiso Ndlovu (Director of Research) and Mrs Elsa Kruger (Project Administrator).

Focus of the Road to Democracy Project

The Road to Democracy Project is about events leading to the negotiated settlement and democracy in South Africa with a focus on:

- the events leading to the banning of the liberation movements;
- the various strategies and tactics adopted in pursuit of the democratic struggle;
- the events leading to the advent of democracy; and
- the dynamics underpinning the negotiation process between 1990 and 1994.
Poster of the Radio Freedom campaign, designed by Opland (Photograph provided by Sietse Bosgra)
This current volume is the first of SADET’s second main series of publications which focuses on International Solidarity with the liberation struggle.

The series covers the contribution of various international organisations, governments and their peoples, and solidarity organisations, to the liberation struggle in South Africa.

In the upcoming second volume the focus will be on African solidarity, with an emphasis on the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and its Liberation Committee; various countries in the southern African region, including the role that Tanzania and Zambia played; as well as countries in west, east and north Africa.

The Road to Democracy project is a chronological analysis of four decades: 1960-1970; 1970-1980; 1980-1990; 1990-1994; bearing in mind the four areas of focus above with the following themes for each decade:

- **Political context**: the political dynamics of each decade, such as the banning of the liberation movements, the formation of insurgency structures, exile and the containment of resistance in the 1960s.

- **Key organisations and individuals**: the formation, policies and objectives, membership and activities of the major organisations during each decade; and the role of key historical, as well as lesser-known but significant actors.

- **Strategy and tactics**: the evolution of the strategy and tactics of key organisations, including debates around changing strategies and the impact of adopted strategies and tactics on revolutionary developments.

- **Regime response**: the response of the apartheid regime to the activities of the liberation movements, including changes in the nature of the apartheid state, the evolution of policies to contain resistance, and repression and counter-revolutionary strategy.

- **International context**: the role of the international community in the liberation of South Africa and international events and processes that impacted on the liberation struggle.

- **Regional context**: regional events and processes that had an impact on the liberation struggle and the decision to adopt a negotiation strategy; and studies of provincial and local involvement in the liberation struggle.

- **Outcome**: the major outcomes at the end of each decade.
Anti-apartheid poster: Forward to Freedom in SA (Mayibuye Centre, UWC: artist unknown)
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 Fueras Armadas Revolucionaries (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:...
In the early 1960s, France played an important role as a supplier of arms to apartheid South Africa, while Italy was not only an important arms exporter to South Africa, but was also involved in the large scale importation of South African gold. West Germany was at the forefront of the anti-communist struggle, which was a significant impediment as far as anti-apartheid campaigns in that country were concerned. Belgium, increasingly split up into French and Flemish sections, had two distinct sets of relationships with apartheid South Africa and separate anti-apartheid movements. In the Flemish half of the country, feelings of kinship with the Afrikaners had an influence on anti-apartheid activities. The linkages Austria and Switzerland had with the apartheid state were less obvious – and therefore often overlooked – and were a persistent obstacle for anti-apartheid movements. Portugal, Spain and Greece had limited relations with South Africa, and here the anti-apartheid movements were less developed.

During the apartheid period a growing number of West European countries became members of the EC, and more and more powers were transferred from national governments to the EC. The West European anti-apartheid movements agreed that they should coordinate their activities at the EC level. The chapter concludes with a study of two movements formed as a consequence of this decision: the Liaison Group of Anti-Apartheid Movements in the EC, and the Association of West European Parliamentarians for Action against Apartheid (AWEPAA).

In chapter 9, William Minter and Sylvia Hill trace the long history of ties between opponents of racism in the United States and South Africa, and the stages by which anti-apartheid organisations and political sentiment became strong enough in the 1980s to shift public opinion and government policy even in the conservative Reagan era. They survey the contradictory contexts of American government and business complicity with the white minority regime and the evolution of the civil rights, Black Power, and anti-war movements, essential historical contexts within which African solidarity and anti-apartheid groups evolved. The story includes not only a range of national Africa-focused organisations, but also a host of local groups as well as sector-specific or shorter-lived groups that collectively reached almost every sector of American society with the anti-apartheid message.
While this diverse movement, in a racially and socially divided and geographically vast country, at no stage ever featured an organisationally-unified national coalition, it successfully mobilised around the twin themes of support for African liberation and opposition to the complicity of American business and government with apartheid. The movement involved not only African Americans but also white Americans, Africans from other countries, and those of other minority racial groups. Throughout this history, South African visitors and exiles played catalytic roles in the organisation of the movement in the United States, from early ANC leaders such as A.B. Xuma and Z.K. Matthews, to later activist exiles such as Miriam Makeba, Dennis Brutus, and Dumisani Khumalo.

In chapter 10, Joan Fairweather demonstrates how, as a predominantly ‘white’ middle power, Canada’s contribution to South Africa’s liberation struggle was somewhat ambiguous. While the Canadian government was openly critical of apartheid policies, it was often reluctant to transform its abhorrence into meaningful action. Throughout the period under review, Canadian foreign policy relating to southern Africa was heavily influenced by its relationships with Britain and the United States, its closest allies and trading partners. However, thanks to public pressure and the tireless efforts exerted by Canadian churches, trade unions, and development organisations, Canada gradually developed other allegiances – the most important being with newly-independent African states and fellow-members of the Commonwealth. Canada’s friendship was recognised by many African leaders and laid the groundwork for a more significant role in South Africa’s liberation struggle. While no single, cohesive anti-apartheid organisation emerged in Canada, the public sector drew inspiration
and direction from a wide range of partner organisations in South Africa and became the backbone of Canada’s solidarity movement.

In **chapter 11**, Peter Limb presents the history of the anti-apartheid movement in Australia and New Zealand. The nature of this movement is explained, its history in both countries and their interactions detailed, and the movement’s significance and lessons are discussed. The anti-apartheid movement(s) in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia represents the history of multi-faceted solidarity action with strong international but also regional and historical dimensions that gave it specific features, most notably the important role of sports sanctions and the relationship of indigenous peoples’ struggles to the AAM. The internal history of the AAM in these countries, pertaining to its origins, divisions, effectiveness and triumphs is unearthed. It traces the early history of ties between these countries and South Africa; the first protests against South African racially-selected sporting teams; and the emergence of the AAM from the 1960s. The struggle over sanctions is another major theme; this and the little-known history of the activities of the liberation movements in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia, form a key focal point of the chapter.

**Chapter 12**, written by Vladimir Shubin, focuses on the support that the Soviet Union/Russia gave to the liberation struggle during three decades that followed the banning of the liberation movements in 1960. In part, the background to this support is the relationship between the government and ruling party in the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), on the one hand, and the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP), on the other. An interesting part of this chapter is the discussion of the various meetings between representatives of the government and ruling party of the Soviet Union and the South African representatives and leaders of the liberation movement. This provides important new insight into the underlying nature of the relationship between these groups. The extent of the considerable material and other support the Soviet Union gave to the ANC for its armed struggle is outlined in detail. In the same chapter, Bulgaria’s role in South Africa’s liberation struggle is outlined.
Hans-Georg Schleicher argues in chapter 13 that the German Democratic Republic (GDR) proclaimed anti-imperialist solidarity a basic foreign policy principle and based its relationship with the South African liberation movement – the ANC – on common ideological and political values. Mutual interests between the GDR and the liberation movements were to some extent conditioned by the Cold War. In the GDR, the Solidarity Committee was the major instrument for mobilising, organising and implementing solidarity, coordinating the efforts of political parties, trade unions and other mass organisations. It was embedded in the political structures of the GDR under the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED), while church-related anti-apartheid groups acted outside the official solidarity movement. There was a broad sense of solidarity among the wider population to draw upon but the centralised manner in which solidarity was organised in the GDR imposed constraints on initiatives from below, and was undoubtedly a weakness of GDR solidarity. The chapter mainly focuses on solidarity campaigns and practical support for the struggle during the period from the early 1960s through to 1989/1990.

From the very start, after the triumph of the January 1959 revolution, Cuba supported the anti-apartheid struggle. That support increased steadily, and is the subject of chapter 14, written by Hedelberto Lopez Blanch. Cuban troops, sometimes numbering as many as 50 000, fought together with local Angolan forces against South Africa’s invading army, an army that until the late 1980s was described as ‘invincible’. Intense military battles took place from 1975 to 1988, culminating in disaster for the South African forces at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. This chapter covers many events that
Anti-apartheid demonstrators fill the streets of New York City, 13 August 1985 (David Vita)
have never been reported on before in such detail, largely because of access to recently declassified documents. The training of ANC guerrillas in Cuba and Africa; the battles with South African forces in Angola; tripartite talks between Cuba, the ANC and the Soviet Union; the Seventh Congress of the SACP in Cuba; and the discussions that opened the way to Namibia’s independence and, subsequently, the first free elections in South Africa; as well as comments about Cuba’s support of the liberation struggle by leaders of the ANC, are the main themes in this chapter.

In chapter 15, Zhong Weiyun and Xu Sujiang begin with a brief introduction of the Peoples Republic of China’s policy towards Africa and its evolution and changes in the decades after the 1949 revolution. This is coupled with a study of the development and changes in the Communist Party of China’s relationship with the ANC, Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and SACP. A considerable part of the chapter focuses on the political, moral and material support that China rendered to these organisations. The concluding section deals with China’s trade and economic sanctions against South Africa.

Vijay Gupta documents in detail the solidarity and support the Indian government, solidarity movements and the people gave to the struggle in South Africa in chapter 16. A year before achieving formal independence on 15 August 1947, India took a major step in the international arena when it drew attention to South Africa’s racial policies at the UN. India’s complaint internationalised the racial issue in South Africa. In addition, during the last 50 years of the liberation struggle in South Africa, a strong solidarity movement was built among non-governmental organisations within the country. No separate anti-apartheid movement was formed in India because the government, various political parties and the wider public supported the struggle of the South African people in a variety of ways. India’s role in solidarity is shown to have a longer history than that of any other nation; few countries equalled India in consistent diplomatic, political, economic and other support to the cause of liberation in South Africa for well over half a century. India took up the issue of apartheid not only in the UN and in the Commonwealth, but in many other forums such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and other international sports bodies.

Visit our website: www.sadet.co.za or www.unisa.ac.za/press
Muldoon (Tom Scott)
Notes on contributors

Kader Asmal was a founder-member of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement. Louise Asmal, together with her husband, was an active volunteer and office-bearer in the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement. Thomas Alberts is currently working as Kader Asmal’s personal researcher.

Hedelberto López Blanch has written articles, features, interviews and commentaries on his journeys through Nicaragua, Russia, Germany, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Qatar, Libya and the United States, many of which have been published in the Cuban national and international press.

Sietse Bosgra became one of the founders of the Angola Comité in the Netherlands to support the liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. From 1975 he was active in his support for nationalist movements in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa through the Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika.

Al Cook worked for the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF) in London for 18 years, first as a researcher and writer, and later as deputy director.

Jacqueline Derens joined the struggle against apartheid in 1975 as a member of the Association Française d’Amitié et de Solidarité avec les Peuples d’Afrique (AFASPA), an anti-colonialist movement. In 1986, with a number of other activists, she participated in the formation of Rencontre Nationale Contre l’Apartheid (RNCA), dedicated to supporting the struggle of the ANC and SWAPO against the apartheid regime.

Joan Fairweather is a South African archivist, historian and writer living in Ottawa, whose involvement in anti-apartheid work in Canada included serving as vice-president of International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (Canada) and within the United Church of Canada.

Cristiana Fiamingo is a researcher with a keen interest in southern African studies. In the 1990s she initiated a project to collect and preserve the memory and documents on Italian action against the apartheid regime.

Vijay Gupta, a professor of African Studies, vice president of the All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation and editor of AIPSO Journal.
Christabel Gurney was an activist in the British Anti-Apartheid Movement and edited its monthly newspaper *Anti-Apartheid News*. In 1972 she co-authored *The South African Connection* with Ruth First and Jonathan Steele and more recently has contributed articles about the AAM to *History Today*, the *Journal of Southern African Studies* and the *Oxford Companion to Black British History* (to be published by Oxford University Press in 2007).

Sylvia Hill is a member of the board of directors of TransAfrica Forum. She was one of the leaders of the Southern Africa Support Project (SASP) and of the Free South Africa Movement, and an organiser of the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar es Salaam in 1974.

Gregory Houston is SADET’s executive director, and is a chief research specialist at the HSRC.

Peter Leuenberger was active in various solidarity and human rights movements, serving as secretary of the Swiss Anti-Apartheid Movement (German branch, renamed AAB Suedliches Afrika in 1995) from 1993 to 2003.

Peter Limb was prominent in the anti-apartheid movement in Australia from the 1970s, serving as national coordinator in the late 1980s. He is currently writing three books: on ANC history, on Dr A.B. Xuma, and a new biography of Nelson Mandela.

Jacques Marchand was involved in the French Anti-Apartheid Movement from 1975 to 1983.

Paulette Pierson Mathy was a co-founder, in 1969, of the Comité contre le colonialisme et l’apartheid (Committee against Colonialism and Apartheid) and served as its chairperson for many years.

William Minter is editor of *AfricaFocus Bulletin* (www.africafocus.org) and a writer and scholar on African issues. His activist involvements in the United States have included work with the Southern Africa Committee in New York; the Madison Area Committee on Southern Africa in Wisconsin; the Washington Office on Africa; the Africa Policy Information Center; and Africa Action in Washington, DC.

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The Road to DEMOCRACY in South Africa

Volume 3, International Solidarity

PART 1 & 2

This third volume in the series, The Road to Democracy in South Africa, examines International Solidarity with the liberation struggle in South Africa. International organisations, governments and anti-apartheid movements around the world played a significant role in creating awareness of the liberation struggle in South Africa, and in contributing to the downfall of the apartheid government.

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