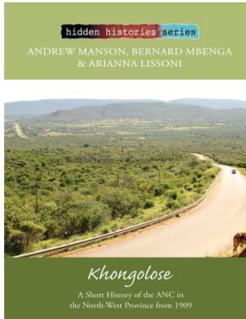


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## BOOK REVIEW / BOEKBESPREKING

Andrew Manson, Bernard Mbenga and Arianna Lissoni, *Khongolose: A short history of the ANC in the North West Province from 1909*. Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-86888-807-8-7-9, Printed book, 159 pages.



This book provides an important contribution to the liberation struggle historiography. More interestingly, it highlights the activities of the African National Congress (ANC) and those aligned to it in the struggle for liberation, particularly in the North West Province, South Africa (SA). It came about as a result of the ANC's centenary in 2012. In the foreword of the book, Supra Mahumapelo, Premier of the North West Province, stated, "The aim of this centenary book was to record the history of the ANC, how communities in the region responded to the call to engage in the struggle and how they shaped, and were themselves shaped by, the movement" (p. xi). This is an indication of the seriousness of his government to record and preserve the history of the province which, in one way or another, had been neglected. The authors of the book were specific in highlighting their intentions about this publication when they argued that, "The book is intended for the general reader wanting to gain information about a less well-known terrain of ANC activity". The book is divided into three parts, namely, Part 1: The early years, 1910-1965; Part 2: The underground, the armed struggle and resistance to Bophuthatswana, 1965-1994; and Part 3: The ANC in power, 1994-2013.

In Part One, "The early years", the authors explore the resistance, dispossession and discrimination that took place in SA, with specific reference to the North West Province. This section of the book describes how the people of this province showed a keen interest in the ANC and its affiliated structures. Personalities who played a significant role in this region are highlighted. Individuals, such as Silas Thelesho Molema, who established the first school in the Mafikeng region, are hailed as the pioneers for progressive politics in the area. Molema was also instrumental in providing financial support for Sol Plaatje's launch of the first independent Setswana-language

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newspaper, *Koranta ea Bechoana*, in April 1902. The authors elaborated on how Plaatje found himself in debt while trying to save the *Tsala ea Bechoana* newspaper whilst he was in Kimberley. On page 13, it is indicated that, to a certain extent, he received financial assistance from, “a syndicate of men of wealth and standing” in Thaba Nchu. However, it is not clear who these people were. The fact that they are referred to as the “syndicate” might be an explanation as to why they are not named in the book. Another influential personality in the politics of the region was Modiri Molema. He became increasingly involved in politics from 1936, after the passing of the Hertzog Bills.

The role of the traditional leaders (*dikgosi*) is also highlighted. They were considered to be an important cornerstone for spreading the influence of the ANC. Traditional leaders assisted in the establishment of ANC branches in the rural districts. They were also granted symbolic importance in the ANC through representation in a Council of Chiefs. The establishment of the ANC in the urban areas is also discussed. The authors indicated that between 1919 and 1920 the ANC had a branch in Ventersdorp. Although the real activities of this branch are difficult to assess, at some point it passed a number of unsigned resolutions that were forwarded to the magistrate of the town. Interestingly, the resolutions called for the Department of Education to establish, “free and compulsory education for African children” in Ventersdorp, along the same lines as the Klipspruit government school. Generally, few books address the rise and fall of the Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (ICU) and the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), particularly at regional level. However, in this book these aspects of history had been adequately covered.

In this part of the book, a section is also dedicated to the ANC’s underground activities and to *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK)’s in the aftermath of the Zeerust revolt. This revolt was led by the ANC, especially through migrant workers and their associations, such as the Bahurutshe Association. This provided Kgosi Abraham Ramotshere Moiloa and the chieftaincy with a powerful base for political mobilisation against the implementation of the Bantu Authorities. Although the government succeeded in suppressing overt resistance, the struggle continued. The Bahurutshe not only provided assistance in finding escape routes on the South African side, but the Bahurutshe refugee community in present day Botswana also offered initial shelter to those who had just crossed the border. Therefore, Botswana remained the most important channel in and out of SA; thousands of political activists and freedom fighters, prominent or not, as well as arms and military equipment, travelled via this route (p. 39).

Part Two, “The underground, the armed struggle and resistance to Bophuthatswana”, shows that, after the banning of the ANC in 1960, there was a decline in the underground presence of the organisation in the area. Through contact with the exiled liberation movements and internal operatives, the underground political activity was revived. It is interesting to note that the

first ANC conference after its banning in 1960, was held in Botswana, Lobatse in October 1962. The role played by Fish Keitseng and Mpho Motsamai in masterminding the exit mission through Botswana into exile is acknowledged in this part of the book. Both men were active in Botswana politics through the Botswana Independent Party. In early 1965, Mike Dingake was called to Lobatse by the ANC in Lusaka to help rebuild the underground network.

The authors discuss the question of repression and resistance in Bophuthatswana through the role played by the National Seoposengwe Party (NSP). It was formed by *Kgosi* Tidimane Pilane of the Bakgatla ba Kgafela to challenge Mangope's Bophuthatswana National Party (BNP) in the 1972 election. It differed from the BNP because it stood for the unity of the Africans, as opposed to Tswana unity. According to the authors, a meeting held in November 1983 in Lehurutshe between the ANC and NSP activists was an indication of the infiltration of the area by the ANC. This led to, what became known as the Lehurutshe recruits, who went for military training in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) where they were mentored by MK leader Cassius Maake.

As in the first part of the book, the second part also highlights the role played by individuals in the underground structures of the ANC. Such individuals included the likes of Zachariah Pitso Tolo. He was recruited into the underground cell of the ANC by his college lecturer, George Mashamba. In 1975 this cell established contact with the ANC in Botswana through people, such as Snuki Zikalala and Keith Mokoape in Gaborone. According to the authors, this was the beginning of the possible mobilisation and resistance that the Bophuthatswana Government had to face. The MK operations in the 1970s and 1980s are also discussed. In this section of part two, the relevance and significance of safe houses are discussed. These houses were, in most cases, along the route into exile. After receiving training in exile, the MK cadres infiltrated the Western Transvaal Command region for operations. Familiarity with the area of operation was an important factor in ensuring that MK cadres remained undetected. On 13 October 1978, a "gun battle" took place between the South African Police (SAP) and MK insurgents near Derdepoort, close to the Botswana border, and in October 1978, a "major clash" occurred between MK cadres and the Bophuthatswana security forces between Vryburg and Mafikeng (p. 61). The rural areas also constituted part of the liberation struggle, since the people in these areas were against incorporation into Bophuthatswana. The authors also succeeded in highlighting the role of student activists in the struggle for liberation. Student activists' role, such as that of Onkgopotse Abram Tiro, is scrutinised. In addition, it is clear from the book that the United Democratic Front (UDF) played a significant role in mobilising the masses. The 1988 *coup* is also discussed, as well as the much talked about *coup* of 10-11 March 1994.

Part 3, "The ANC in power, 1994-2012", deals with the envisaged evolution of the ANC from being a liberation movement into a ruling party. This section

acknowledges that this was a difficult transition. To date, one still battles with the question as to whether the ANC has succeeded in transforming itself. The North West Province, as it is known today, inherited the former Bophuthatswana homeland after the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP) gained five seats in the new provincial legislature. After the April 1994 general elections, this former homeland party had to transfer the governance powers to the ANC; something that was not easy to do. The authors in this book succeeded in explaining the joint administration that was headed by Job Mokgoro and Tjaart van der Walt. The successes and challenges experienced by the joint leadership are extensively discussed in this part of the book. Of academic interest is the constitution of the first provincial government under the premiership of Popo Molefe. The first tasks that the ANC-led government had to tackle were: who should sit in its decision-making bodies and who should head up the key positions in the civil service. The book highlights the following challenges experienced by the ANC-led government in the province, as with many other ANC-led provincial governments across the country: personalised and elite politics; problems of corruption; and the politics of factionalism.

Although this is a short history about the North West Province, the authors successfully engaged with primary and secondary sources in order to come up with convincing findings on the important and somewhat hidden history of the province. Through reading and analysis of the contents of this book, individuals and groups can directly or indirectly associate themselves with the significant historical events of the North West Province. One of the strong characteristics of this book is that it dispels the notion that the liberation struggle was waged only in the urban areas and that little, if any, struggle took place in the rural regions. The rural communities played a significant role in their stance in the formation of resistance groups and with the mobilisation and encouraging of African organisational politics.