

Book Review - The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia, 1963 to 1994, by Hugh MacMillan

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Recommended Citation

Hinfelaar, Marja (2016) "Book Review - The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia, 1963 to 1994, by Hugh MacMillan," *Zambia Social Science Journal*: Vol. 6 : No. 1 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/zssj/vol6/iss1/7>

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Book Review

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The Lusaka Years; The ANC in Exile in Zambia, 1963 to 1994. By Hugh MacMillan. (Johannesburg: Jacana Media (Pty), 2013), 357 pp.

Hugh MacMillan's comprehensive study of the African National Congress' (ANC) time in exile in Zambia fills a much-needed gap in the region's historiography of liberation movements. It also complements the author's previous work on the ANC's presence at the University of Zambia.*

The book starts with a detailed account of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns of the 1960s, which aimed at establishing a corridor for freedom fighters to smuggle weapons to establish Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) units in South Africa. Their failure, the author argues, influenced Kaunda's policies towards liberation movements based in Zambia. He saw a danger in having armed and rival liberation movements in one place. The account further shows how the ANC's activities were influenced, and sometimes limited, by Zambia's domestic politics. Kaunda needed to juggle and prioritise multiple liberation struggles, the wars in Rhodesia and Mozambique being the first priority. Zambia's position as a frontline state created security and economic risks which were used to justify the introduction of a one-party state in 1972. The book details the period of the détente between 1974 and 1976, when Kaunda was in low-key talks with Prime Minister Vorster of South Africa. The policy of détente created uncertainty and restrictions on the ANC's activities in Zambia. South Africa's policy of détente and its illusion of progress ended with the Soweto Rising in 1976 which led to a new generation of South African political refugees entering Zambia. The ANC exile population peaked at 4,000 in 1990. It is clear that until 1980, the year of Zimbabwe's Independence, Zambia's main focus was on the Rhodesian war, which was fought right on its doorstep.

The book shows how Kaunda became much closer to the ANC after the mid-1980s. At a personal level, Kaunda's friendship with Oliver Tambo strengthened. In the face of security threats and ill-health, Tambo was invited to live in State House. A large regional conference of the ANC, held in Kabwe in 1985, was protected by the Zambian army. The conference led to a number of important reforms within the ANC. In the meeting a new National Executive Committee was selected, as well as a new constitution for the organisation, with a code of conduct to confront the occurrence of torture within ANC ranks. It led to appointments to a constitutional committee of the ANC in Lusaka, for a liberated,

non-racial and democratic constitution. Members included legal experts like Albie Sachs and Kader Kasim. While it was confirmed that no negotiations would be held with the South African government unless Mandela was released unconditionally, unofficially, the conference recognized that informal meetings were already being held, with Kaunda playing a mediating role.

Following the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, Lusaka was Mandela's first port of call. He visited Lusaka just two weeks after his release. This moment coincided with the end of one-party rule in Zambia resulting in multi-party elections in July 1991. The ANC now had to repatriate people back to South Africa, a process that took a couple of years. Some of the returnees continued their administrative work at ANC headquarters in Johannesburg, others struggled to reintegrate into South African society. Despite the suspension of the armed struggle, arms were being carried into South Africa from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana until 1993. When the ANC headquarters moved to South Africa it left a degree of disorder behind, leading to increased criminal activity. ANC members were involved in fatal incidents, one being the murders of John and Lorna Harvey in 1992, daughter and son in law of Gore Brown, an ally and friend of Kaunda. The ANC's presence was officially closed in 1994 and this marked the end of the ANC in exile.

The book dedicates space to the realities of day to day life for those living in exile, painting a picture of the exiles' housing, education, health, religion, racial relations, food and entertainment. MacMillan, who was an eye witness to these events being based in Lusaka and a friend to many ANC cadres during those years, wants to show that life in exile was not as 'cushy' as it often portrayed in South African media and literature. He argues that there is no single culture of exile either, as the ANC in Lusaka was a mixed community in terms of race and class, resulting in varying living conditions and experiences.

In conclusion, this book is an impressively detailed and nuanced document on the ANC's years in Lusaka, the first of its kind. It derives its nuance from examining historical phases within this struggle as opposed to trying to reduce it to a single and simplistic account.

* Hugh Macmillan (2014). 'The University of Zambia and the Liberation of Southern Africa, 1966-90'. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40:5, 943-959, DOI: 10.1080/03057070.2014.946216