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ANC ARCHIVES

**ANC Italian Mission -
Rome Office
RECORDS
(1982-1994)
5 Boxes, 70 folders**

ACQUISITION: ANC Archive Committee

ACCESS: Open for research

PHOTOGRAPHS: In Box 1, Folder 7 and Box 4

VISUAL MATERIAL: Videos on shelves, Posters and Art Work in Box 4

AUDIO MATERIAL: On the shelf

PRINTED MATERIAL: Box 3

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PROCESSED BY: Sadie Forman, October 1998. Partially reorganized and reboxed by Sibongile Simelane and Khanyisa Bottoman, June 2003. Additional material processed by Malefyane Mogale, June 2003.

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History

Introduction

When the Nationalist Government banned the African National Congress (ANC) on 8 April 1960, the ANC began operating underground in South Africa. Outside the country the ANC started to establish itself as the official voice of South Africa's voteless masses. By the 1970s recognition of the ANC's legitimacy was growing, not only amongst the multiplicity of non-governmental anti-apartheid organizations, but also among foreign governments.

The first missions were opened in London, Accra, Cairo, and Dar-es-Salaam. By 1980, the ANC had offices and representatives in 32 countries. The external missions worked to win support for the overthrow of apartheid by promoting the cause of the ANC and urging international economic pressure against the South African government. The missions also provided assistance to South African exiles. Following the banning of the organisation, Oliver Tambo, President General of the ANC left South Africa to head of the ANC's external operations.

On 2 February 1990 the bans on the ANC and other political organisations were lifted. A process of negotiations between the unbanned organisations and the South African government ensued. In 1992 the ANC instructed its missions to collate and box their records for shipment to South Africa. These records were to form the basis of the official archives of the ANC, from which a true history of the ANC's role in the struggle against apartheid could be written.

History of the Italian Mission.

The early history of the Italian Mission, from 1972 to the mid-eighties, is taken from the O.R.Tambo record files of Correspondence and those of the Department of International Affairs. A reply from Max Sisulu to Antonio Calo in Rome, dated 20 November 1972, indicates that an Italian connection with the ANC was established early on.

In 1982, Thami Sindelo wrote a report on her appointment in June 1978 as an ANC representative to Italy. From the start the Municipality of Reggio Emilia supported the organisation and its presence there. Sindelo writes of the First National Conference of Solidarity held in Reggio Emilio in November 1978. An Italian 'Ship of Solidarity' had been donated and Sindelo told that it had docked in Luanda and Maputo with necessities of food, clothing, medicines, ambulances, prefab schools, tractors and more.

The Second Conference of Solidarity with South Africa and Namibia was held in Rome in a parliamentary building attended by representatives from the Front-Line States, the UN, EEC and European Parliament **inter alia** Decisions included sending a second Solidarity Ship "Amandla" and the formation of an Italo-Southern African Association. Nelson Mandela was given the citizenship of the City of Rome.

The political situation in Italy in 1982 was unstable, with economic and criminal scandals involving the Mafia, Masonic Lodges and Right-Wing groupings. The government collapsed repeatedly after short terms. Nevertheless the decisions of the Solidarity Conference and the ANC office were sustained.

Thami had useful contact with the Italian Foreign Ministry which resulted in important contributions, but despite denials, the government continued to sell arms to South Africa. A successful programme with high schools, showing films of the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College and talking to students was regularly conducted and the office was able to publish 'Sechaba' in Italian with a circulation of 4,000. They printed 23,000 diaries for sale together with Isitwalandwe gold medals.

Although all the political parties declared their support for the ANC only the Communist Party gave them practical and necessary assistance. They had good relations with other liberation organisations such as Polisario, El Salvador and Uruguay and with other African Diplomatic Missions. Their closest connections were with the embassies of Lesotho, Algeria and Zambia. However the office struggled to keep going financially for the promised donations from Italian parties did not materialise. A major problem arose when visitors would arrive at the airport without a visa. Thami sent a strong plea for visas to be obtained prior to travelling.

At a meeting of ANC representatives Thami related that organisations worked well for South Africa but "they are not conscious of the person on the spot...what you eat, where you sleep or how you go about your medical care...." And she suggested that representatives have regular medical check-ups, rest and regular get-togethers.

There is a gap in the records after 1982 until 1985 when letters and reports from Ugo Benassi of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia were written to O. R. Tambo. The letters express a concern about the Natal violence and murder of Victoria Mxenge. Tambo was greatly loved in this part of Italy and established close relationships in the area. In 1987 he was given the Freedom of the Comune di Reggio nell'Emilia. Albertina Sisulu had Honorary Citizenship conferred on her and two streets in Reggio Emilia were renamed **via Albert Lutuli** and **via Martiri di Soweto**. In addition they organised demonstrations and collected donations for Somafo and for the Lusaka farm.

By 1987 Henry Benny Nato de Bruyn had been appointed Chief Representative in the Rome office and the volume of records kept by the mission began to grow. He set up links with municipalities throughout the country and made close friends with people in local government, the trade unions and solidarity organisations. Particular friends to the ANC were Giuseppe Soncini and his wife Bruna. Tambo was himself ill when Soncini died in April 1991, but he sent in a shaking hand, a condolence note to Bruna who replied with deep affection saying 'the struggles of your people have enriched our life.' The address at the funeral was delivered by Marcellino dos Santos, as Benny Nato informed Tambo by fax on April 8 1991.

A letter from Martello Bucci of Pistoia dated 24 June 1991 to Benny Nato expresses regret that Benny is leaving Italy but pleased that he is returning to South Africa. It would appear that Pandula Steve Gawe left the UK to replace Benny around July or August of 1991. The task of informing solidarity groups about the negotiations for a new dispensation and later of the arrangements for democratic elections now fell to Gawe, as did the closing down of the Mission in 1994

Scope and Content Note

The Italian Mission Papers of the African National Congress are stored in 11 boxes, 10 individually numbered collections of memorabilia and a box of posters.

The papers are divided into 5 series: **Subject Files, Correspondence, Periodicals, Memorabilia and Posters.**

The **Subject Files Series I** is held in Boxes 1 – 4 and consists of 35 folders. Subject files consist of ANC generated documents, records of conferences, policy documents and statements, education, the economy, health and Human Rights, land, MK, Mandela, Missions and NGO's. Folder 27 in Box 3 contains newspaper clippings followed by plays and poetry, reports, Joe Slovo, SOMAFECO, the SA Institute of Race Relations and United Nations documents.

The **Correspondence Series II** is in Box 5, folders 1 – 10. The bulk of the correspondence consists of faxes from folders 3 – 10 while letters are in folders 1-2.

The **Periodicals Series III** is in Box 8. General ANC periodicals and publications, and material not generated by the Italian Mission office were removed. See ANC Special Collections for a list of this. Publications kept include those of solidarity organisations, and a biography of OR Tambo **inter alia**. Within each folder in this series only, every item is recorded.

The **Memorabilia Series IV** is in Box 9, separately numbered from 1 to 10. Items include poster photographs, art works, Mandela awards, a medal for Dr. Agostinho Neto and a Mandela poster on cloth.

The **Poster Series V** is a collection of miscellaneous posters and these are held in Box 10.

The **Additions** is material that was found subsequently at the ANC Headquarters and processed. This includes correspondence, discussion documents, speeches and statements.

Series I – Subject Files

1. ANC Conferences/Anniversary/Workshops, 1985, 1988
2. ANC Memos and Circulars, n.d., 1988, 1990 – 1993
3. ANC Development Centre/Dakawa, 1990
4. ANC Policy/Discussion Documents, 1988-1993
5. ANC Statements/Declarations, 1990-1991
6. Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1988-1993
7. Cards/Photographs
8. Children, n.d.
9. Commonwealth, 1993

Box 2

10. Community Development – Kagiso Trust, 1986
11. Conferences, 1990
12. Conferences , 1991 – 1993
13. Directory, 1989-1992
14. Economy, n.d., 1990, 1992
15. Education, n.d., 1989
16. Embassies, 1993-1994
17. German Foundation for International Development, 1980-1993
18. Hani Chris,[1993]
19. Health, n.d.

Box 3

20. Human Rights, 1989-1992
21. Invitations, 1988-1989, 1991, 1993
22. Land, n.d, 1991
23. MK, 1961
24. Mandela Nelson, 1990
25. Missions, 1987
26. NGO's, n.d, 1991, 1994
27. Newspaper clippings, 1987-1994
28. Papers, n.d, 1988-1992

Box 4

29. Plays / poetry, n.d, 1989
30. Periodicals, 1990, 1993
31. Reports, n.d, 1987 – 1988, 1992 – 1994 (photo copy)
32. Slovo Joe, n.d
33. SOMAFCO, 1989
34. South African Institute of Race Relations, 1992
35. United Nations, 1984-1993

Box 5

Series II – Correspondence

1. Correspondence/Postcards
2. Correspondence (letters), 1987-1994
3. Faxes Dispatched (i), 1989 – 1994
4. Faxes Dispatched (ii), 1993 -1994

Box 6

5. Faxes Received (i) (Organisations), 1987-1994
6. Faxes Received (ii), 1988 – 1992
7. Faxes Received (ii), 1992 – 1994

8. Organisations, 1987-1994 (photo copy)
9. Telex Messages (i), 1987 – 1989
10. Telex Messages (ii), 1987-1989

Box 8

Series III – Periodicals

1. ASSAFRICA
2. AWEPPA
3. Afrika
4. Afrika Aktuell
5. IL Passaggio, 1993
6. Mensile Anti – Apartheid
7. Nigrizia
8. Sud Afrika, 1987
9. Sud – Sud, 1992
10. Tambo, O.R (Biography), n.d
11. UNICEF
12. Update, 1989

Box 9

Series IV – Memorabilia

1. Poster Photographs
2. Art Works
3. Post Card
4. Torbole Monument
5. Election Campaign
6. Mandela Awards
7. ANC Flag Cover
8. Italian Flags
9. Medal for Dr Agostinho Neto
10. Poster – Mandela on Cloth

Box 10

Series V – Posters

ADDITIONS

Box 11

Documents in the English language

1. Correspondence – General, 1990 – 1993
2. Correspondence from the Chief Rep's Office
3. Correspondence re ANCWL
4. Correspondence re Treasurer General, 1984,1988
5. Correspondence re Universities Act, 1987
6. Discussion Documents
7. Minutes of meetings.
8. Notes and diary of Benny Nato Bruyn (Chief Rep)
9. Proposals, 1990
10. Reports – General
11. Speeches and addresses, 1991
12. Statements, 1990