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Unions and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa
1973-87

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Deutsches Abstract

Laut Quellen des Norwegischen Gewerkschaftsbundes (*Landsorganisajonen i Norge*, LO) war die Arbeiterbewegung einer der wichtigsten Kräfte in der norwegischen Solidarität mit der schwarzen Bevölkerung in Südafrika, und einen bedeutenden Beitragsleister im Kampf gegen das Apartheidsystem in der letzten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Gleichzeitig scheint diese Geschichte außerhalb von Norwegen vergessen zu sein, und der Forschungsstand dazu besteht aus einer Handvoll älteren norwegischen Quellen. Diese Masterarbeit erläutert die Position der Gewerkschaften in der norwegischen Solidaritätsbewegung und versucht zu antworten, *wie* und *warum* LO die südafrikanische Arbeiterbewegung im Kampf gegen das Apartheidsystem unterstützte. Die Arbeit basiert auf historischer Literatur und Primärquellen aus dem Archiv der norwegischen Arbeiterbewegung, und mit Ausgangspunkt in der Globalgeschichte stellt sie klar, dass es tiefe Verbindungen zwischen der norwegischen und der südafrikanischen Arbeiterbewegungen gab, aber dass der Einfluss LOs einem größeren Kontext von kleinerer Bedeutung war. Die Beziehung war ständig von ideologischen Konflikten geprägt, und die Unterstützung LOs wurde nicht nur moralisch motiviert, denn Südafrika hatte seinen Platz in der politischen und organisatorischen Hierarchie des norwegischen Gewerkschaftsbundes. Die Arbeit bietet auch eine komparative Analyse der gesamt-nordischen Solidaritätsbewegung an, und zeigt, inwiefern der Beitrag von LO ein Ergebnis einer spezifisch nordischen Art von Solidarität sei.

English abstract

According to sources commissioned by the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (*Landsorganisasjonen i Norge*, LO), the labour movement was an integral part of the anti-apartheid movement in Norway and offered significant support to the liberation struggle in South Africa in the latter half of the 20th century. At the same time, this part of history seems to be all but forgotten and is limited to a handful of Norwegian sources. This thesis seeks to uncover the extent of the labour movement's involvement and aims at answering the questions of *why* and *how* LO supported the South African labour movement in the struggle against Apartheid. Based on an extensive review of historical literature and primary sources from the archives of the Norwegian labour movement, the thesis takes a global historical approach and shows that there were extensive connections between the labour movements in Norway and South Africa, but that the impact of LO was marginal in a bigger picture. The relationship was also subject to ideological clinches, and LO's involvement in South Africa was driven not only by morality but had its own position in a hierarchy of political and organisational priorities. The thesis also offers a comparative analysis of Norway's position in the greater Nordic solidarity movement and seeks to understand to which degree LO's actions were the result of a Nordic brand of solidarity.

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List of abbreviations

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement (UK)
AFL	Arbeidernes Faglige Landsorganisasjon / Workers' National Trade Union (NO)
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations
AFTU	African Federation of Trade Unions (ZA)
AGS	Africa Groups of Sweden / Afrikagrupperna i Sverige
AKT	Auto Ja- Kuljetusalan Työntekijäliitto / Finnish Transport Workers' Union
AIS	Arbeidernes Internasjonale Støttekomité / International Solidarity Committee of the Norwegian Labour Movement
ANC	African National Congress (ZA)
APO	African People's Organisation
AU	African Union
AOF	Arbeidernes opplysningsforbund / Workers' Educational Association (NO)
ARBARK	Arbeidernes bibliotek og arkiv / The Labour Movement's Archive and Library (NO)
AUF	Arbeidernes ungdomsfylking / Workers' Youth League (NO)
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation (ZA)
AZACTU	Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions (ZA)
BAWU	Black Allied Workers Union (ZA)
BFTU	Botswana Federation of Trade Unions
BOSS	Bureau of State Security (ZA)
CC	Consultative Committee (ZA)

CEIR	Council on Ecumenical and International Relations / Mellomkirkelig råd (NO)
CIWA	Council of Industrial Workers of Witwatersrand (ZA)
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CNETU	Council of Non-European Trade Unions
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CUSA	Council of Unions of South Africa
DA	Democratic Alliance (ZA)
DGB	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund / German Confederation of Trade Unions
DKK	Danish Kroner
DKP	Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti / Danish Communist Party
DNA	Det Norske Arbeiderparti / The Norwegian Labour Party
DRC	Danish Refugee Council / Dansk Flyktningehjælp
EC	European Communities
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FCWU	Food and Canning Workers' Union (ZA)
FFI	Frie Faglige Internasjonale / International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
FH	Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation / Danish Trade Union Confederation
FNETU	South African Federation of Non-European Trade Unions

FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola / National Front for the Liberation of Angola
FNV	Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging / Netherlands Trade Union Confederation
FOFATUSA	Federation of Free African Trade Unions of South Africa
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
FRP	Fremskrittspartiet / The Progress Party (NO)
FTF	Funktionærenes og Tjenestemændenes Fellesråd / Confederation of Professionals (DK)
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique / Mozambique Liberation Front
IAS	Industrial Aid Society (ZA)
ICAWU	Industrial and Commercial Amalgamated Workmen's Union (ZA)
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICL	International Socialist League
ICWU	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ZA)
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party / IQembu leNkatha yeNkululeko (ZA)
IIE	Institute for Industrial Education (ZA)
IISG	Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiednis / International Institute of Social History (NL)
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISC	International Student Conference
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
IUS	International Union of Students
ISAK	Isolera Sydliga Afrika Komittéet / Committee on Isolation of Southern Africa

JCI	Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company
KRF	Kristelig Folkeparti / Christian Democratic Party (NO)
LO	Landsorganisationen i Danmark / Danish Trade Union Confederation
LO	Landsorganisasjonen i Norge / Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions
LO	Landsorganisationen i Sverige / Swedish Federation of Trade Unions
LSA	Landkomitéen Sydafrika-Aktion / National Committee South Africa Action (SE)
MFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Det kongelige norske utenriksdepartement
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe (ZA)
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola / People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MUN	Mineworkers' Union of Namibia
MWASA	Media Workers' Association of South Africa
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions (ZA)
NAI	Nordic Africa Institute / Nordiska Afrikainstitutet
NAMA	Norsk Aksjon mot Apartheid / Norwegian Action against Apartheid
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NFS	Nordens Fackliga Samorganisation / Pohjolan Ammatillinen Yhteisjärjestö / Nordens Faglige Samorganisasjon / Council of Nordic Trade Unions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIS	Norsk Internasjonalt Skipsfartsregister / Norwegian International Ship Registry

NKIF	Norsk Kjemisk Industriarbeiderforbund / Norwegian Union of Chemical Industry Workers
NKL	Norske Kokkers Landsforening / Association of Norwegian Cooks
NKP	Norges Kommunistiske Parti / Communist Party of Norway
NLSA	National Library of South Africa
NOCOSA	Norwegian Council for Southern Africa / Fellesrådet for det sørlige Afrika
NOK	Norwegian Kroner
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation / Direktoratet for utviklingssamarbeid
NORDEM	Norsk ressursbank for demokrati og menneskerettigheter / Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights
NRC	Flyktninghjelpen / Norwegian Refugee Council
NRK	Norsk Rikskringkasting / Norwegian Broadcasting Company
NSA	Norwegian Shipowners' Association / Norges Rederiforbund
NSZZ	Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy „Solidarność” / Independent Self-Governing Trade Union „Solidarity” (PL)
NTB	Norsk Telegrambyrå / Norwegian News Agency
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers (ZA)
NUMARWOSA	National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa
NUNW	National Union of Namibian Workers
NUPI	Norsk utenrikspolitisk institutt / Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students

OATUU	Organisation of African Trade Union Unity
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAC	Pan African Congress (ZA)
PAIGCC	Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde / African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde
PET	Politiets Etterretningstjeneste / Police Intelligence Service (DK)
PGFTU	Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo / Institutt for fredsforskning
PTUF	Palestinian Trade Union Federation
SAAWU	South African Allied Workers' Union
SACCAWU	South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Worker's Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SAIH	Studentenes og Akademikernes Internasjonale Støttefond / Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (NO)
SAK	Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö / Finlands Fackförbunds Centralorganisation / Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions
SANNC	South African Native National Congress
SAP	Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti / Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party
SAS	Scandinavian Airlines

SASK	Suomen Ammattiliittojen Solidaarisuuskeskus / Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland
SATUCC	Southern African Trade Union Co-ordination Council
SEK	Swedish Kronor
SF	Sosialistisk Folkeparti / Socialist People's Party (NO)
SFS	Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer / Swedish National Union of Students
SOMAFCO	Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College
SRB	Shipping Research Bureau (NL)
SSAK	Svenska Sydafrikakommittén / Swedish South Africa Committee
SUL	Sveriges Ungdomsorganisationers Landsråd / National Council of Swedish Youth
SV	Sosialistisk Venstreparti / Socialist Left Party (NO)
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization (NA)
TCO	Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation / Central Organization of Salaried Employees (SE)
TFTU	Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions (ZA)
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union (ZA)
TMA	Transvaal Miners' Association (ZA)
TUACC	Trade Union Advisory and Coordinating Council (ZA)
TUC	Trade Union Congress (UK)
TUCSA	Trade Union Council of South Africa
UDF	United Democratic Front (ZA)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNISA	University of South Africa

UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola / National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNSA	Finnish Students' United Nations Association / Suomen Opiskelijoiden YK-liike
UNTA	União Nacional de Trabalhadores Angolanos / National Union of Angolan Workers
USD	US Dollars
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWUSA	United Workers' Union of South Africa
WAY	World Assembly of Youth
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
YS	Yrkesorganisasjonenes Sentralforbund / Confederation of Vocational Unions (NO)
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union

1. Introduction

In 1998, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (*Landsorganisasjonen i Norge*, LO) published the monograph *Frihet for Sør-Afrika: LO og kampen mot apartheid*, written by Vesla Vetlesen.¹ The intention was to highlight the extent and importance of LO's involvement in the Norwegian and international anti-apartheid movement, and it remains one of the few sources on the topic. A couple of years ago, I read Vetlesen's monograph during the writing of a seminar paper focusing on Norwegian and Swedish support to the South African liberation struggle, given the Nordic countries' perceived status as "forerunners" in the global movement against apartheid in the West. What occurred to me was that the monograph painted an overly positive picture of LO's involvement and deemed the role of trade unions to be of upmost importance for Norwegian contributions to the struggle against apartheid. At the same time, this part of history seems to be all but forgotten outside of Norway, more than 25 years after its release. In this thesis, I aim to understand the role and impact the labour movement had on the Norwegian struggle against apartheid, and by extension its impact on a global scale.

The main research question of this thesis is "*Why and how* did the Norwegian labour movement support the liberation struggle in South Africa?" I firstly want to understand what moved LO and the Norwegian labour movement to show solidarity at the time that it did. During the period of research, South Africa was arguably the most important geographical focus area of the Norwegian labour movement's international solidarity work, and I seek to understand why this came to be. Was there a special type of solidarity felt to the South African working class? Was it a product of political trends? Or was it rather a question of timing at a time in which LO started looking beyond the Norwegian borders? Kaare Sandegren provides a possible explanation for increased internationalism in the monograph *Fagbevegelsens*

¹ Vesla Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika: LO Og Kampen Mot Apartheid* (Tiden Forlag, 1998). The title translates to "Freedom for South Africa: LO and the Battle against Apartheid".

internasjonale engasjement, published during LO's first campaign for Southern Africa in 1977. He attributes the labour movement's international priorities mostly to increased globalisation, while describing the struggle for equality and democracy as a part of the foundational values of the labour movement.² This proposes a moral aspect to the motivation for solidarity.

The second part of the research question aims at understanding through which means a trade union from a small country on the "other side of the world" supported the South African liberation effort. The "how?" has been discussed in sources by Vetlesen, as well as in some theses, but one must mainly resort to primary sources. The two main types of support which LO was able to provide was financial and intellectual. This means funding unions and liberation organisations within South Africa or in exile and providing know-how to the South African labour movement based on its own experiences. There is no evidence that LO provided other types of support, i.e. by actively taking part in the fight within South Africa or in the frontline states.

The means of support were determined by available funding and the degree of contact between LO and the individual organisations in South Africa. In this regard, political affiliation also plays a role, since organisations which aligned more with moral and political priorities were easier to support. This can be illustrated by looking at the different relations LO had to the *Congress of South African Trade Unions* (COSATU) from 1985 in contrast to the more radical *South African Congress of Trade Unions* (SACTU) in the period prior.

When using the term "labour movement" in the Norwegian context, I refer to a sphere of cooperation centred around LO and The Norwegian Labour Party (*Det norske arbeiderparti*, DNA) and affiliated institutions. LO was founded by DNA in 1899, and to this day remains closely affiliated with what has been the largest political party in Norway since the Second World War. In the case of South Africa and Norwegian solidarity in the late 20th century, the

² Kaare Sandegren, *Fagbevegelsens internasjonale engasjement* (Tiden Norsk Forlag, 1977), 15–21.

International Solidarity Committee of the Norwegian Labour Movement (*Arbeidernes Internasjonale Støttekomité*, AIS), a joint effort ran by LO and the Norwegian People's Aid (*Norsk Folkehjelp*, NPA) was the main organ responsible for organizing the solidarity effort. The main actor of this thesis however remains LO. While one could have chosen to study a greater Norwegian labour movement, since LO today is only the largest of four labour confederations in Norway, the other major organisations did not have any involvement in the solidarity movement for South Africa, or anywhere else for that matter until later.³

It is important to understand LO's connection to DNA with regards to the question of "why?". While the two entities were in cooperation with one another, LO was not directly controlled by the party. I argue that LO in addition to a feeling of solidarity and obligation to its members was moved by the need to legitimize a political party working for its interests, which meant that the interests of the party in all realms of the unions had to be taken into account. This also worked the other way to a limited degree, since there are instances in which LO pushed for a more radical approach to South Africa than what was fronted by the party. This is why the first major campaigns for Southern Africa waited until Government, led by DNA, chose to support the liberation organisations in the region.

The research period starts in 1973, the year in which both LO and Norwegian politics properly moved attention to South Africa. Though South Africa was excluded from the official Norwegian Southern Africa strategy in the same year, contact was established, and by extension the move towards solidarity campaigns by the Norwegian labour movement. Additionally, following the Durban strikes the previous year, this was also a period in which the South African work force took a more radical turn, and birthed a "democratic non-racial trade union movement" which became part of the larger liberation struggle.⁴ The following year, AIS

³ The second largest organisation, the Confederation of Vocational Workers (*Yrkersorganisasjonenes Sentralforbund*, YS) only established its international department in 1996.

⁴ Z. Pallo Jordan, 'Foreword', in *International Brigade Against Apartheid: Secrets of the People's War That Liberated South Africa*, ed. Ronnie Kasrils (Jacana Media, 2021), 12.

established a “working group on South Africa” which led to the first campaigns only a few years later. 1987 marks the end point of the research period, with the passing of a full boycott law on South African goods and shipping, though with flaws. After this period, opposition to apartheid had become such an entrenched part of Norwegian and global society that the campaigning work of the labour movement slowed down, even though financial and other support continued over the next years, also past the end of apartheid.

I take a global historical approach to the study of labour and social movements, with a focus on different levels of actors from the nation state to the individual. The main actors are trade unions, solidarity groups, and liberation organisations. While the object of study is social movements rather than the nature of work itself, “transcontinental connections” beyond the movement of commodities are a part of the emerging global history of labour.⁵ A single agreed upon definition of a trade union does not exist, but protection of the labourers’ interests is the common denominator.⁶ Still, trade unions are more than an interest organisation working for collective rights within a local or national context. In modern South African history, class struggle and racial struggle are intertwined, which is part of the reason why the trade unions became such an important part of the liberation struggle.

The two main approaches synonymous with global history are connections and comparisons. The connections between the Norwegian and South African labour movements, as well as those between the Nordic countries and across Southern Africa, are the main object of study. The thesis also takes a comparative approach to different aspects of Norwegian

⁵ Karin Hofmeester and Marcel van der Linden, ‘1. Introduction’, in *Handbook Global History of Work*, ed. Karin Hofmeester and Marcel van der Linden (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017), 9, <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110424584-001/html>.

⁶ Marcel Van der Linden, ‘8.4. Trade Unions’, in *Handbook Global History of Work*, ed. Karin Hofmeester and Marcel Van der Linden (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017), <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110424584-028/html>.

solidarity and South African liberation organisations but does not focus on comparing the Norwegian and South African labour movements as a whole.⁷

While I consider this work a global historical project, the study of trade unions and their role in solidarity movements are often considered an *international* topic. Håkon Thörn categorizes the work of both nation states and national trade unions within the frame of international processes when discussing the different dimensions of the study of political activity and solidarity.⁸ I consider the subject to have more layers than this, since the cooperation between the trade unions took place on several levels.

Even though this thesis offers a brief recount of modern South African and Norwegian history, this thesis does not aim at telling the entire story of South African liberation. The text does not elaborate on the political institutionalization of apartheid or the armed struggle in South Africa, but rather focus on the role of the labour movement. In the case of Norway, I seek to highlight the history of solidarity with South Africa. Elaborations or detours on other areas or aspects are only done when deemed relevant to the subject matter.

The thesis is divided into chronologically determined chapters, and thematic sub-chapters. It starts out by giving an overview of the methodological process of the writing and the sources used. First, I introduce the main literary body, highlighting important authors and works. These include researchers, but also secondary sources by individuals and organisations active in the liberation struggle or anti-apartheid movement at any level. In several cases, these sources double as primary sources. In the next sub-chapter, I present the main archives and libraries I have used. In addition to literature, I have relied heavily on primary sources,

⁷ The interesting part is the South African labour movement's role as a liberation movement. Except for being part of a larger resistance during the German occupation 1940-45, LO's role in Norwegian society and history has been a different one.

⁸ Håkon Thörn, 'Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society', in *Documenting Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa. Select Papers from the Nordic Africa Institute Documentation Project Workshop 26-27 November 2009*, ed. Chris Saunders (Nordic Africa Institute, 2010), 13.

admittedly more than I was expecting to in the beginning. Some of the secondary literature will be discussed in this subchapter, as it was published by the Nordic Africa Institute. I will also touch upon limitations and dead ends.

Starting with the analysis, chapter 3 lays out the history of labour in Norway and South Africa leading up to main research period, including the rise of the political work force in South Africa and Norway's move towards opening the eye to the region in the early 1970's. I start in the early 20th century to give a historical background of the political role labour had from the beginning of racial conflict in South Africa. The chapter ends in 1973, when a wave of strikes hit South Africa and Norway passed its first policies on Southern Africa, but left South Africa out of the equation. The end of the chapter introduces the main Norwegian actors within the labour- and solidarity movements.

Chapter 4 looks at the establishment of contact between the South African liberation movement and LO/AIS, as well as the Norwegian Government. I highlight the main roots of the tense relationship between LO and SACTU, which was then the most important labour organisation in the South African liberation movement. The chapter ends with the launch of the first campaign by AIS. I evaluate the road towards the launch, complications, and evaluate the results and impact it had.

Chapter 5 moves into the 1980's, which was both a time for progress and decline in Norwegian support. The decade starts out with the second campaign by AIS, which was quickly "sidetracked" by other events going on in the world. As examples I look at the "workers' crisis" in Poland and the political reorientation on Palestine and Israel in Norwegian politics and the labour movement. The national political situation also changed, and with the introduction of a conservative government LO had to reorient. The same period saw big changes in the organisation of workers in South Africa, mostly following the establishment of the COSATU in 1985. I also touch upon the formation of the Southern African Trade Union Co-ordination

Council (SATUCC), a process in which LO played a significant role. Around the mid-1980's the contact with South Africa increases, and LO initiates its most successful campaign. Also in the 1980's, the Norwegian oil industry comes under scrutiny, and when the greater anti-apartheid movement calls for an oil embargo on South Africa, LO gets caught in the crossfire and starts working against a one-sided boycott to protect members which might be affected. The chapter ends with the passing of a Norwegian boycott law in 1987.

Chapter 6 is a short epilogue rounding off the history of LO's solidarity and looking at the last years of apartheid past the end point of the thesis' main research focus. I examine how contact with COSATU diminished after 1987, the disbandment of AIS, the (failed) last South Africa campaign, and the first free elections in South Africa in 1994.

To better understand the nature of Norwegian solidarity, the final chapter 7 is an excursion into the greater Nordic solidarity movement. I here give a brief overview of the history of solidarity and support in Sweden, Denmark and Finland, with regards to Government, trade unions, civil society and the respective geopolitical situations. The Nordic context is important to understand the Norwegian case, since the neighbouring countries supported and inspired one another, but had different actors leading the cause and different impacts. I thereafter take a critical look at Nordic exceptionalism and image building, seeking to explain if the Nordic approach to Southern Africa, as well as solidarity and humanitarianism as a whole, is something unique.

In the conclusion I look back at the topics discussed in the previous chapters and answers the initial research questions as well as highlighting limitations and discoveries which came out of the research.

2. Methodology

2.1. Literature and state of research

Generally, literature on Norwegian involvement in the international solidarity movement is limited to a handful of Norwegian authors, and the extent of it is small in comparison to literature on South Africa or solidarity movements in other countries, like Sweden. Likewise, the study of Nordic solidarity is mainly done within the Nordic region, and centred around the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, Sweden. I have therefore relied much on primary sources.

The literature is a combination of secondary and primary sources. While most of the material consists of research articles, monographs, etc., some of these are historical recounts by individuals and organisations active in the movements discussed. This includes mostly Vetlesen, but also Sandegren, Kasrils, Gudim, and partly Eriksen, which read as secondary or primary sources depending on the purpose. This has been important to verify statements from Norwegian sources, as several of the authors have ties to LO or other parts of the labour movement, and the monographs by Vetlesen and Sandegren were commissioned by the organisation itself. When it came to sources on South(ern) Africa, the issue was rather limiting the scope.

Tore Linné Eriksen is a former Professor of History and Development Studies at Oslo Metropolitan University, as well as researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute (*Nordiska Afrikainstitutet*, NAI) and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (*Norsk utenrikspolitisk institutt*, NUPI). Eriksen held positions in the Norwegian anti-EU movement, The Norwegian Council for Southern Africa (*Fellesrådet for det sørlige Afrika*, NOCOSA), and has written for both the DNA-affiliated newspaper *Arbeiderbladet* and the socialist *Klassekampen*.⁹ Some articles by Eriksen from *Arbeiderbladet* in the 1980's, in which he

⁹ 'Om Tore', *ToreLinneEriksen.No*, n.d., accessed 5 May 2025, <https://torelinneeriksen.no/om-tore/>. Eriksen left SV due to the party's handling of the Norwegian participation in the bombing of Libya to join the more left leaning and outspokenly anti-NATO party Rødt.

attacks Government and LO, occur in this thesis. In the context of this thesis, Eriksen most notably edited the volume *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, likely the most substantial collection of literature on Norway's involvement in the liberation struggles in South Africa and its neighbouring countries in the 20th century.¹⁰ Eriksen authored the first chapter on Norway's relation to Southern Africa before the 1970's, the concluding remarks, and co-authored the chapter on Norwegian oil shipments to South Africa with Anna Kristensen Krokan.¹¹ The volume was published as a part of a project by the Nordic Africa Institute (*Nordiska Afrikainstitutet*, NAI), which will be explained in chapter 2.2.4. In addition to editing *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, Eriksen has authored several monographs on African and global history, in addition to numerous articles in international journals and Norwegian newspapers. His monograph *Sør-Afrikas historie: Førkoloniale samfunn, apartheid og frigjøring* is a comprehensive overview of the "entire" history of the region which today is the country of South Africa, from pre-historic time until the post-apartheid era.¹² I have used this for referencing general historical currents in South Africa during the period of research.

Vesla Vetlesen was a politician for DNA and worked in the international department of LO from 1980 to 1994. This position was only interrupted by her two-year period as Norwegian Minister for Development Aid 1986-88, a position she was the first to hold.¹³ Based on these experiences, she wrote the monograph *Frihet for Sør-Afrika: LO og kampen mot apartheid* in

¹⁰ Tore Linné Eriksen, *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000), <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:nai:diva-228>.

¹¹ Tore Linné Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship: Norway and Southern Africa 1960 –1975', in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, ed. Tore Linné Eriksen (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000); Tore Linné Eriksen, 'An Ambiguous Champion: Some Concluding Remarks', in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, ed. Tore Linné Eriksen (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000); Tore Linné Eriksen and Anita Kristensen Krokan, "'Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine': A Case Study of Shipowners, Sanctions and Solidarity Movements", in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, ed. Tore Linné Eriksen (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000).

¹² Tore Linné Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie - Førkoloniale samfunn, apartheid og frigjøring* (Portal forlag, 2016).

¹³ Gunnar Zachrisen, 'En av bistandshistoriens første statsråder er død', 3 September 2024, <https://www.panoramanyheter.no/arbeiderpartiet-bistandsbransjen/en-av-bistandshistoriens-forste-statsrader-er-dod/371446>.

1998, documenting the confederation's solidarity work and its cooperation with Norwegian and South African organizations.¹⁴ The book was commissioned by LO and is based on Vetlesen's own experiences. While it to a degree retells the story and could be considered a secondary source, it also serves as a primary source for the version of the story a functionary from said organisation would present, and for how her experiences shaped her understanding of it. Vetlesen also offers a denser version in English in the chapter "Trade Union Support to the struggle against Apartheid: The Role of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions" in the volume edited by Eriksen.¹⁵ Given Vetlesen's position in the Norwegian labour movement, I sometimes use statement from the monograph to pinpoint LO/AIS' standpoints and version of the story, before analysing it with regard to other sources. In addition to these two texts, Vetlesen is also the author of several of the primary sources, including letters, drafts, contracts, and newspaper articles.

In addition to the chapters by Eriksen and Vetlesen, Eva Helene Østbye has written two chapters on the official Norwegian policy towards Namibia and South Africa, focusing on the establishment of relations to the liberation movements.¹⁶ She also wrote a chapter about the Namibia Association of Norway.¹⁷ Nina Drolsum wrote the chapter on NOCOSA, whose role in the Norwegian solidarity movement was of importance.¹⁸ The remaining chapters were not relevant in the writing of this thesis.

¹⁴ Vesla Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika: LO og kampen mot apartheid* (Oslo: Tiden Forlag, 1998).

¹⁵ Vesla Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid: The Role of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions', in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, ed. Tore Linné Eriksen (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000).

¹⁶ Eva Helene Østbye, "The South African Liberation Struggle: Official Norwegian Support," in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, ed. Tore Linné-Eriksen (Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2000), 134–80; Eva Helene Østbye, "The Namibian Liberation Struggle: Direct Norwegian Support to SWAPO," in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, ed. Tore Linné Eriksen (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000), 90–133.

¹⁷ Eva Helene Østbye, 'Pioneering Local Activism: The Namibia Association of Norway', in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, ed. Tore Linné Eriksen (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000).

¹⁸ Nina Drolsum, 'The Norwegian Council for Southern Africa (NOCOSA): A Study in Solidarity and Activism', in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, ed. Tore Linné Eriksen (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000).

The monograph *Fagbevegelsens internasjonale engasjement* by Kaare Sandegren, published in 1977, is an account of the history and contemporary international relations of LO.¹⁹ Sandegren was the first international secretary of LO and is credited as an important actor when it came to building up LO's relations to the Nordic, European and international labour movement and organisations.²⁰ The monograph explains in great detail how and why LO build up their international profile over the decade leading up to the release, which Sandegren mostly credits a more globally entangled economy, decolonization, and a belief that workers around the world share a responsibility towards each other. Having been published by LO, a natural bias has to be accounted for, but exactly this bias helps to understand how LO understood its mission in the early days of the anti-apartheid campaigns.

A few master's theses on related topics have been written at Norwegian universities. Hoda Imad's thesis *Arbeidsfolk, slå lag! Landsorganisasjonens boikottkampanje av apartheidregimet i Sør-Afrika, 1976-1987* is about the LO campaigns during the period from the launch of the first campaign until the introduction of sanctions.²¹ Her work places much focus on the latter period, being the road to sanctions and the implications of this on LO and the Norwegian work force, which made it a useful secondary source for chapter 5.4. Vidar Apalset has written the thesis *LOs støtte til den sørafrikanske fagforeningen COSATU 1986-1997*, in which he examines LO's support to COSATU from its launch to the first years after democracy.²² I have used Apalset's text to learn about the LO's work in South Africa in the period after apartheid, since there is little source material to be found elsewhere, but as this is

¹⁹ Sandegren, *Fagbevegelsens internasjonale engasjement*. The title translates to "The international involvement of the labour movement". The monograph also holds a foreword by the then leader of LO Tor Halvorsen, and an afterword by previous leader Tor Aspengren.

²⁰ Jan Balstad et al., 'Han bygget opp LOs internasjonale avdeling fra grunnen av', *FriFagbevegelse*, 3 August 2021, <https://frifagbevegelse.no/folk/han-bygget-opp-los-internasjonale-avdeling-fra-grunnen-av-6.158.808110.e0b6429fe2>.

²¹ Hoda Imad, 'Arbeidsfolk, slå lag! Landsorganisasjonens boikottkampanje av apartheidregimet i Sør-Afrika, 1976-1987' (Master thesis, University of Oslo, 2022), <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/95148>.

²² Vidar Apalset, 'LOs støtte til den sørafrikanske fagorganisasjonen COSATU 1986-1997' (Master thesis, University of Oslo, 2012), <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/34552>.

outside of the research period, I only touch upon this in chapter 6. Vilde Opdan Yttereng wrote a thesis on the creation of AIS at the University of Oslo. She published her findings in the article “Opprettelsen av Arbeiderbevegelsens internasjonale støttekomité: Internasjonalt engasjement på 1960-tallet” in 2022.²³

The doctoral dissertation *Amandla. Ngawethu? The Trade Union Movement in South Africa and Political Change* by Liv Tørres from 2000, written at FAFO and the University of Oslo, is an extensive study of the role of South African trade unions in the struggle against apartheid.²⁴ I have used the dissertation to supplement broader sources on South African history in the writing on the pre-COSATU unions, and to understand the political power and theories behind. Tørres is the current International Secretary of LO, and previous Secretary General of the NPA and Director of the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo.²⁵

For a detailed account of the modern history of South Africa, I have relied much on the monograph *A History of South Africa: 1902 to the Present* by South African historian Thula Simpson.²⁶ The book goes into great depth on matters relating to workers’ rights, the history of different civil society organisations and the political transformations of South Africa. Simpson writes in detail about every aspect of modern South African history, including strikes and the formation of unions. Simpson is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Pretoria, and has previously written the monograph *Umkhonto we Sizwe: The ANC’s Armed Struggle* and edited the volume *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: Essential Writings*.²⁷ I first became familiar with Simpson’s work when attending a lecture at the *Politforum* in Bern where

²³ Vilde Opdan Yttereng, ‘Opprettelsen av Arbeiderbevegelsens internasjonale støttekomité. Internasjonalt engasjement på 1960-tallet’, *Arbeiderhistorie* 36, no. 1 (2022): 127–41, <https://doi.org/10.18261/arbeiderhistorie.36.1.8>.

²⁴ Liv Tørres, *Amandla. Ngawethu? The Trade Union Movement in South Africa and Political Change (Doctoral Dissertation)*, Fafo-Report 328 (Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science, 2000).

²⁵ ‘Liv Tørres’, *Agenda Magasin*, 31 January 2025, <https://agendamagasin.no/forfatter/livt/>.

²⁶ Thula Simpson, *A History of South Africa. 1902 to the Present* (Hurst & Company, 2022).

²⁷ Thula Simpson, ‘After the End of History Comes More History’, *The Republic*, 17 November 2023, <https://rpublic.com/october-november-2023/first-draft-thula-simpson/>.

he spoke about the political situation in South Africa leading up to the parliamentary elections of 2024.²⁸

International Brigade Against: Secrets of the People's War that Liberated South Africa is a collection of stories by external actors who participated in the struggle against Apartheid in different ways, edited by Ronnie Kasrils together with Muff Anderson and Oscar Marleyn.²⁹ Magnus Walan, a Swedish journalist who was an active member of both AGS and ISAK, has authored a chapter about Sweden's involvement in the liberation struggle, and is the only representation of the Nordics in the volume.³⁰ Some other chapters however mention work done by Nordic individuals, NGOs and governments, and I have relied on a handful of additional chapters to highlight other aspects throughout the thesis.

Sakhela Buhlungu has written extensively on the nature of South African trade unionism after the strikes in Durban in 1973. I have read articles of his concerning the “rise and fall” of democratic traditions in South African trade unions, and the surprising role of white officers in the black trade unions.

Sunniva Engh is a Professor of Modern History at the University of Oslo, specialising in the history of humanitarianism and development aid in the Nordic countries, the Nordic model and global health.³¹ Engh has written several articles on Nordic development aid cooperation, and the history of a specific Nordic type of humanitarianism. Additional literature on the other Nordic countries' part in the in the liberation struggles in Southern Africa is highlighted in chapter 2.2.4.

²⁸ ‘South African elections with Thulasizwe Simpson’, *Polit-Forum Bern*, n.d., accessed 26 August 2025, <https://www.polit-forum-bern.ch/veranstaltung/south-african-elections-with-thulasizwe-simpson/>.

²⁹ Ronnie Kasrils et al., eds, *International Brigade Against Apartheid: Secrets of the People's War That Liberated South Africa* (Jacana Media, 2021).

³⁰ Magnus Walan, ‘Sweden and Olof Palme to the Fore’, in *International Brigade Against Apartheid: Secrets of the People's War That Liberated South Africa*, ed. Ronnie Kasrils et al. (Jacana Media, 2021).

³¹ ‘Sunniva Engh’, University of Oslo, accessed 2 December 2025, <https://www.hf.uio.no/iakh/english/people/aca/history/tenured/sunnien/index.html>.

A new monograph on Norwegian oil shipments in the 1980's titled *Oljefrakten: Da norske redere brøt boikotten av Sør-Afrika* written by journalist Tarjei Leer-Salvesen was published in November 2025, but I did not read it in the process of this thesis I already had enough source material, including primary sources.³²

Several of the authors were themselves actors in the events discussed in the thesis, and have written monographs, volume chapter and articles about their experiences. In some cases, these works do not only serve as a secondary recollection of events but also serves as a primary source for how different actors remember the events themselves. Especially the works by Vetlesen and Sandegren, which showcase the inner workings of the institutionalized labour movement. The monograph by Vetlesen is arguably the most important and most cited secondary source in this thesis and was the first piece of literature I read on the topic.

2.2. Archives and libraries

2.2.1. The Labour Movement's Archive and Library (ARBARK), Oslo

Arbeidernes bibliotek og arkiv (ARBARK) is the largest archive holding material by and about the Norwegian labour movement. Housed in the headquarters of LO at Youngstorget in Oslo, it holds the entire archives of LO, DNA and NPA as well as other associated organisations.³³

I visited the archive on 11 April 2025. As this was still early in the process of researching for this thesis, I did not have an exact expectation of what I was looking for, but instead went through the entire collections of AIS, as well as material from LO's international department regarding Southern Africa from the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's. The collections mostly consisted of correspondence within the organisation, with the Norwegian

³² Jan-Erik Østlie, 'Da norske redere brøt boikotten av Sør-Afrika', LO-Aktuelt, *FriFagbevegelse*, 21 November 2025, <https://frifagbevegelse.no/loaktuelt/da-norske-redere-brot-boikotten-av-sorafrika-6.158.1177064.3e4c860d9c>.

³³ 'Arbark - Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv Og Bibliotek', accessed 24 January 2025, <https://www.arbark.no/>.

government, and organisations in Southern Africa. Several reports and manuscripts are available too, but often as attachments in letters. I also found quite a few financial statements, including requests and receipts. These were mostly attributed to a handful of events and actors, like the Southern African Trade Union Co-ordination Council (SATUCC) and the LO campaign starting in 1981. Manuscripts for campaign material were also found, and it had been difficult to verify to which degree these match up with the published products.

The archives have only been partly digitalized, except for a handful of collections from LO and DNA.³⁴ Amongst these are minutes from the yearly LO congress (“Kongressprotokoller”) and annual reports (“Beretninger”). The reports give an overview of all the activities of the confederation in the previous year and are an accessible source for following LO’s involvement in the solidarity movement, as well as measuring general political opinion on the matter in Norway from year to year.

The annual reports hold minutes from meetings in the international trade union and labour organisations like the *International Labour Organization* (ILO) and the *International Confederation of Free Trade Unions* (ICFTU), where the situation in South Africa was frequently discussed from the 1970’s onwards. There are also accounts of financial support to the different trade unions and liberation organisations in Southern Africa, and summations of visits to and from South Africa. The reports are detailed, and due to the frequency, they were useful for measuring change over time. The minutes from the congresses have been used to reference concrete policies, as structural reorganisations are usually presented at the congress.

I went through every annual report from 1960 until 1995 to map the occurrence of South Africa as a topic, by searching for the word “Sør-Afrika” and counting the number of mentions. This alone does not say much about the history of the Norwegian anti-apartheid movement, but the occurrence of South Africa in the annual reports aligns with historical recollections of the

³⁴ ‘Digitale Dokumenter’, accessed 4 April 2025, https://www.arbark.no/Digitale_Dokumenter.htm.

events. South Africa is rarely mentioned in the immediate aftermath of the introduction of apartheid, but then gets some traction in the late 1950's and up until the mid-1960's. During the 1960's most mentions of South Africa are in reports from the annual ILO congress. The region becomes relevant again in 1973, though curiously with a dip around the preparations for the first boycott campaign by AIS in 1976. In the 1980's, following greater international attention to the South African issue, and increased focus in Norwegian politics, South Africa occurs many times in every consequential report, with a decline after 1994 (Attachment I).

Whilst going through the annual reports, I distilled a list of combined funding to different parts of the South African liberation movement in the period 1973-87 in Norwegian Kroner (NOK) and created the attached graph (Attachment II). The first recorded instance of financial support occurred in 1975 (see chapter 4.3.1.), and as of 1988, numbers are no longer accounted for. The degree of detail on financial statements varies throughout the reports, and there is a chance that there are donations not accounted for. I do not differentiate between donations to the trade unions or the liberation organisations but have ruled out donations to organisations in frontline states not affiliated with South Africa.

2.2.2. The Norwegian National Library (NB), Oslo

Nasjonalbiblioteket is the largest institutionalized collection of Norwegian literature and media.³⁵ A large portion of the collection has been digitized, which includes books, magazines, photographs, newspapers, film and more. There are different restrictions on the digital material available outside of Norway. Open-source material is accessible everywhere, while most has to be viewed with a Norwegian IP address, and material with limited access is only available to students at Norwegian universities or employees of certain institutions. Monographs, as well as some of the most popular newspapers, are limited by this. I therefore did not have access to

³⁵ 'Nasjonalbiblioteket', accessed 9 September 2025, <https://www.nb.no/>.

papers like *Aftenposten* and *Klassekampen*, or the more tabloid *VG* and *Dagbladet*. Also, the monographs by Sandegren and Vetlesen have been digitized for *Nasjonalbiblioteket*, but I had to resort to finding exemplars in Norway. I was able to buy both through the website *Antikvariat.net*, which works as a web shop for antique stores across Scandinavia.³⁶

However, the entire collection of *Arbeiderbladet* is available digitally. *Arbeiderbladet*, was the labour movement's official daily newspaper from 1887. The paper was owned by the party until 1991, and up until 1975 the editor was selected at the annual conference of DNA. In the 1990's it was sold to save it from bankruptcy and has had the name *Dagsavisen* and no affiliation to DNA since 1997.³⁷ *Arbeiderbladet* mainly spoke of DNA, LO and AUF favourably, but with internal conflict within the party and increased independence, the paper would occasionally publish more "honest" takes on party affairs. I have relied heavily on *Arbeiderbladet* as a primary source in this thesis, due to its availability and close covering of LO activities. Other papers, like the NKP-affiliated *Friheten* and the Centre Party-affiliated *Nationen* are also open to read for non-Norwegian IP-addresses. They offer a working-class perspective while being more critical of DNA and LO but are not as relevant to the topic as *Arbeiderbladet*.

2.2.3. The International Institute of Social History (IISG), Amsterdam

The International Institute of Social History (*Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, IISG), is a research institute and archive in Amsterdam whose main focus is on global and Dutch labour history. The institute holds a vast archive of material related to labour and social history from all over the world.³⁸ Notably, the IISG contains the main archives of the ICFTU/ITUC and the *World Federation of Trade Unions* (WFTU), as well as parts of the ILO

³⁶ 'Home', Antikvariat.Net, accessed 2 November 2025, <https://www.antikvariat.net/en/>.

³⁷ Einar A. Terjesen et al., 'Dagsavisen', in *Store norske leksikon*, 20 March 2025, <https://snl.no/Dagsavisen>.

³⁸ 'IISG | International Institute of Social History', accessed 19 October 2025, <https://iisg.amsterdam/en>.

archive, which has its own archive in Geneva. The ICFTU/ITUC collection has restricted access, as is the case with collections less than 30 years old.

I visited the IISG on 3 November 2025. Given that at this point I had written most of the thesis, as well as found the most important sources in other archives, I was mostly looking for supplementary sources but was open to surprises. I looked through the collections *Norway Social and Political Developments Collection*, *Sweden Social and Political Developments Collection*, as well as the following parts of the *Collection African Labour History*: “Various documents relating to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) (183)”, “Publications by the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) (185)”, “Publications by the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) (186)” and “Documents relating to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) (189)”.³⁹

All collections held several brochures and a large amount of publicity material. In the case of COSATU I stumbled upon meeting minutes and statutes. The collection holds some exemplars of the newspaper *COSATU News*, both English and Afrikaans versions. An exemplar of the COSATU constitution is also present, but there is no indication of which year it is from. The constitution has been rewritten several times, most recently in 2022, and is renegotiated at the national congress taking place every four years.⁴⁰

The number of documents was varied, and mostly not too relevant for the research. Any additional material that I found was considered a bonus. Seeing the archives was still an interesting experience, and there is seemingly much material available for similar future studies.

³⁹ ‘Norway Social and Political Developments Collection’, IISG | International Institute of Social History, <https://hdl.handle.net/10622/COLL00256>; ‘Sweden Social and Political Developments Collection’, IISG | International Institute of Social History, <https://hdl.handle.net/10622/COLL00271>; ‘Collection African Labour History’, IISG | International Institute of Social History, <https://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH02615>.

⁴⁰ ‘COSATU Constitution’, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), August 2022, 10.

2.2.4. The Nordic Africa Institute (NAI), Uppsala

The Nordic Africa Institute (*Nordiska Afrikainstitutet*, NAI) is located in Uppsala, Sweden, and has done a great deal of research and holds a great collection of source material regarding the Nordic countries' involvement in the liberation struggles in southern Africa.⁴¹ This collection was put together during the project "Liberation Africa", which ran from 2003 to 2009, and aimed at expanding on the history of the liberation of African countries by highlighting sources in the Nordic countries.⁴² The project collected interviews, visual and audio material, stories from those involved in the Nordic solidarity movements, and extensive lists of archives relating to themes and organizations. When looking at the publications by the NAI, compared to the rest of the Nordics there is an abundance of sources on the Swedish role in the Southern African liberation struggles. Sweden has a special place when it comes to Western engagement in the global battle against apartheid, given its early and intensive engagement with the matter, but also because Sweden is the main funder of the institute.

Between 1999 and 2003, the institute ran a project called "National Liberation in Southern Africa: The Role of the Nordic Countries", led by Swedish political scientist Tor Sellström.⁴³ The project resulted in six volumes examining the Nordic countries' role in the different liberation struggles in Southern Africa. Sellström himself wrote the monographs *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa* parts 1 and 2, which is an extensive examination of the Swedish support, in addition to editing two further volumes.⁴⁴ The

⁴¹ 'The Nordic Africa Institute - Nordiska Afrikainstitutet', text, accessed 26 March 2025, <https://nai.uu.se>.

⁴² 'About the Project and the Documentation - The Nordic Africa Institute', text, accessed 26 March 2025, <https://nai.uu.se/library/resources/liberation-africa/about-the-project-and-the-documentation.html>. Initially, the project focused solely on South Africa and Namibia, but ended up branching out to regard Nordic involvement in the liberation struggles in Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Zimbabwe as well.

⁴³ Nordic Africa Institute, 'Publications - Liberation Africa', text, accessed 27 March 2025, <https://nai.uu.se/library/resources/liberation-africa/publications.html>.

⁴⁴ Tor Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa. Vol. 1: Formation of a Popular Opinion (1950-1970)* (Nordic Africa Institute (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet ; Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1999); Tor Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa. Vol. 2: Solidarity and Assistance 1970-1994* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002), <https://nai.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A241772&dswid=3287>.

monographs *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa* by Christopher Morgenstjerne and *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa* by Iina Soiri and Pekka Peltola, as well as the previously mentioned volume *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa* edited by Eriksen, also sprung out of this project.⁴⁵

In 2002, the NAI initiated a book project to commemorate the institute's 40th anniversary, and tasked a number of Nordic researchers and politicians to write short chapters about their respective home countries' relations to the African continent throughout history.⁴⁶ The result was the compact volume *The Nordic Countries and Africa – Old and New Relations*, edited by Swedish researcher and then director of the NAI, Lennart Wohlgemuth.⁴⁷ The volume contains short chapters of policy on Africa from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and even Iceland. The chapter on Finland by Hanna Heinonen and Juhani Koponen was especially insightful, as there are only marginal sources on Finland and Southern Africa available in English.⁴⁸

2.2.5. The National Library of South Africa (NLSA), Pretoria/Cape Town

The *National Library of South Africa* also holds a limited digital collection of newspaper's dating back to the mid 19th century.⁴⁹ The digital interface is not as easy to use as that of the Norwegian National Library but is still good for finding articles. My main objective was to find South African primary sources relating to events being discussed in the papers. Examples

⁴⁵ Christopher Munthe Morgenstjerne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa: A Flexible Response* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2003), <https://nai.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A241390&dswid=6926>; Iina Soiri and Pekka Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999), <https://nai.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A272620&dswid=-4174>.

⁴⁶ Karl Eric Ericson, 'Preface', in *The Nordic Countries and Africa - Old and New Relations*, ed. Lennart Wohlgemuth (Nordic Africa Institute, 2002), 4.

⁴⁷ Lennart Wohlgemuth, ed., *The Nordic Countries and Africa - Old and New Relations* (Nordic Africa Institute, 2002), <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:241759/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Juhani Koponen and Hanna Heinonen, 'Africa in Finnish Policy - Deepening Involvement', in *The Nordic Countries and Africa - Old and New Relations*, ed. Lennart Wohlgemuth (Nordic Africa Institute, 2002).

⁴⁹ 'Our Rich History', National Library of South Africa (NLSA), accessed 16 October 2025, <https://www.nlsa.ac.za/>.

of this are how newspapers and organisations in South Africa reacted to Norwegian and Nordic solidarity. I also found it useful to see how SACTU reported on its relation to the West and the ICFTU and not only see this from LO's perspective.

The NLSA holds the digitalized collection of the SACTU-affiliated newspaper *Worker's Unity*, which existed between 1953 and 1963.⁵⁰ While there are marginal sources on the topic of this thesis, there are some mentions of LO, Norway and Scandinavia. Also, some articles have been referenced by Vetlesen and others, and through the NLSA I have been able to access the primary source. An issue of the short-lived independent socialist newspaper *Spark* mentions early solidarity actions in Scandinavia.⁵¹

2.3. On abbreviations

As is typical of research on labour history, this thesis deals with numerous organisations, including trade unions, political parties, NGO's, international organisations, confederations and more, most of which will be referred to by abbreviations. I have collected all of these at the beginning, with English titles as well as any other official titles.

Where an English name and abbreviation exist, I have mainly used this for consistency. When uncertain, I refer to the most used names in the literature. An example of this is the Norwegian Labour Party (*Det Norske Arbeiderparti*, DNA). The abbreviation DNA however has not been used commonly in Norway for several decades, and when shortened, the abbreviations "Ap" or simply "A" (*Arbeiderpartiet*) is more common. The literature by Eriksen and Vetlesen consequently use the abbreviation DNA, as do many of the primary sources, so I

⁵⁰ 'Workers' Unity - Digital Collections', National Library of South Africa (NLSA), accessed 2 December 2025, <https://cdm21048.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p21048coll107>. "Founded in October 1953 [...] and dissolved in 1963. It was originally an organ of the African Textile Workers' Industrial Union, and later became associated with [SACTU], hence the name Workers' Unity 1958-1962. It re-emerged in 1977 as the official newspaper of SACTU."

⁵¹ 'Spark - Digital Collections', National Library of South Africa (NLSA), accessed 2 December 2025, <https://cdm21048.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p21048coll38>.

made the decision to opt for this abbreviation for more consistency between the text and source material. In some cases, the sources use different abbreviations due to being written in different languages. A recurring example is the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which in Norwegian sources (Vetlesen, Sandegren, etc.) is referred to as FFI (*Frie Faglige Internasjonale*). I have stuck to the English name throughout the thesis, but the Norwegian name occurs in some footnotes.

There are also a few examples of organisations which due to having several official languages have more than one official name which is not in English. An example of this is the Council of Nordic Trade Unions, which has official names in Swedish (*Nordens Fackliga Samorganisation*), Finnish (*Pohjolan Ammatillinen Yhteisjärjestö*) and Norwegian (*Nordens Faglige Samorganisasjon*). I consequently use the abbreviation NFS, derived from the Swedish and Norwegian names, as this is the overall most commonly used, and how the organisation is referred to in most sources I have used. Finnish organisations may have both Finnish and Swedish names, like the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (*Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö / Finlands Fackförbunds Centralorganisation*), for which I use the abbreviation SAK, as the Finnish name is the most commonly used. The International Institute of Social History has the official English abbreviation IISH, but since all sources use the Dutch name IISG, I have chosen to use this version throughout the thesis.

When it comes to the numerous South African trade unions, I suggest consulting the list of abbreviations, since the names are easily interchangeable. Examples are the *South African Congress of Trade Unions* (SACTU), *Congress of South African Trade Unions* (COSATU), the *Federation of South African Trade Unions* (FOSATU) and the *Federation of Free African Trade Unions of South Africa* (FOFATUSA). Some of these organisations also only existed for short bit but need to be mentioned as they still played an important part in the development of modern South Africa.

3. Historical background pre-1973

3.1. Workers' rights in South Africa

3.1.1. The first half of the 20th century

The history of workers' rights and racial segregation in South Africa are inherently intertwined. The initial Dutch colonial rule, established in the Cape Colony in 1652, was rooted in slave trade, and the British rulers which followed would not abandon slavery until 1834.⁵² The control of the British was further institutionalized in 1841 with the "Master and Servants Act" which was aimed at "minimizing" the effects of the slavery abolishment.⁵³ Since the discovery of gold in 1867 in Griqualand West, and at the end of the 19th century in the Witwatersrand, the majority of those employed in the new mining industry were black.

At the outbreak of the second Anglo-Boer War in 1899, around 96 000 black workers were employed in the mining industry.⁵⁴ The war however caused a decline in the Transvaal mining industry, and in 1900 it was decided to reduce the minimum wages of black workers significantly, which led to a large number of black workers leaving for more profitable opportunities.⁵⁵ Though they were not happy with making less money for the same work as the white minority, there were two further concerns from the white population which would affect racial tensions after the end of the war in 1902. On the one hand, the white population was eager to install its own workers and pay them higher wages than the black population. But at the same time, hiring black workers was financially viable, in addition to the fact that safety constraints were less rigid than for white workers. In order to make an increased white work force profitable, there were two options: decrease wages, or increase productivity.⁵⁶

⁵² Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie*, 36. Britain had seized slave trade in 1808, but the use of slaves in South Africa and other parts of the empire would continue for a few more decades.

⁵³ Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie*, 37.

⁵⁴ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 7.

⁵⁵ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 7. The hourly wages went down from 50 to 30-35 shillings. The only industries which paid less were domestic services and agriculture.

⁵⁶ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 8.

Frederic Creswell, an engineer and vocal proponent for white labour in the Transvaal, compared the black majority in the colony to the indigenous populations in Canada and Australia. He argued that the white population was “blessed” with cheap and able workers at their hand but warned that one must not become dependent on their labour.⁵⁷ At the so-called Inter-Colonial Conference in Bloemfontein in 1903, importing work forces from Asia was proposed as a solution to the labour deficit the mining industry in the Transvaal was experiencing. However, due to tensions between white workers and the imported Chinese workforce, the so-called experiment was short-lived.⁵⁸

Several strikes would occur during the beginning of the 20th century, and the first South African trade union established was the *Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions* (TFTU) in 1911. The TFTU was aimed at organizing white workers in the Witwatersrand, and would for example protest the employers’ right to define working terms on their, following a reorganization of the work week for white employees at the New Kleinfontein mine in 1913.⁵⁹ Black workers and organizations working for the rights of non-whites would initiate further strikes and protest movements in the 1910’s, prompted by the *South African Native National Congress* (SANNC) and the *International Socialist League* (ICL). The first trade union for Africans was established in 1919 on the initiative of Clements Kadalie.⁶⁰ On 17 January,

⁵⁷ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 8. “The main obstacle to [a ‘colony of free and self-reliant Englishmen’], [Creswell] argued, was that, unlike Australia and Canada, ‘We have here a native population that was made to work for us. These have been a great help in developing the country, but the danger is that we will depend on them.’” Creswell had become unpopular after demanding increased productivity from his white workers at the Village Main gold mine, asking them to supervise three rock drills a person rather than two, and by extension reducing the number of positions reserved for white workers.

⁵⁸ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 9. The idea was that importing Chinese labourers would both fill in the gaps in the workforce and make black workers willing to work for lower wages. After some legal battles with London, Chinese workers started working in the South African mines in 1904. Even though they were paid less than black workers and were able to match the productivity rate, rising tensions between Chinese and white workers resulted in physical altercations, which prompted the Transvaal Miners’ Association (TMA) to lobby for a cease on the import of Chinese workforces.

⁵⁹ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 33. A strike and eventual fights followed, but the TFTU had to give up in January 1914 without having had their demands met.

⁶⁰ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 67. Kadalie was from Nyasaland, present day Malawi, and had come to Cape Town the previous year to look for work. After harsh treatment following a run-in with the police, Kadalie claimed that he got the urge to engage with social issues politically.

Kadalie called a meeting in Cape Town which was attended by a handful Africans who decided to establish the *Industrial and Commercial Union* (ICU) with Kadalie as Secretary General. One year later, Kadalie and H. Selby Msimang, a Bloemfontein based labour leader and newspaper editor, initiated a conference in Bloemfontein with the goal of establishing the first joint union for Africans and Indians in South Africa. However, the attendees were not pleased with the idea of Kadalie as the leader of a new joint union. The outcome was that Kadalie continued to lead the ICU, whilst a new union, the *Industrial and Commercial Amalgamated Workmen's Union* (ICAWU) was founded at the conference with Msimang as their secretary general.⁶¹

ICAWU would run into issues already in the same year, due to disputes between the different regional branches on whether the union could afford to have its members go on strike following a call for increased wages by the leader of the Port Elizabeth branch. ICU on the other hand would continue to grow, and became the largest trade union not only in South Africa, but on the entire continent during the 1920s.⁶² The organisation also established ties to the *African National Congress* (ANC), the successor of SANNC, in 1923.⁶³ Due to government crackdowns the ICU would disappear by the end of the decade, but it had made an impact as a social movement. Both the *South African Federation of Non-European Trade Unions* (FNETU) and the *African Federation of Trade Unions* (AFTU) which followed were inspired by the ICU but dissolved only a few years later.⁶⁴

3.1.2. Crackdown and unionizing attempts in the 1950-60s

The Second World War led to an increase in non-white unionism, as the workforce had to be reorganised due to the white workforce leaving to fight in the war. This led to the establishment

⁶¹ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 68. The main issue was that Kadalie did not speak any of the local languages, which led the participants to favour the leadership of Msimang.

⁶² Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie*, 90.

⁶³ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 81.

⁶⁴ Tørrer, *Amandla. Ngawethu?*, 234.

of the fairly successful *Council of Non-European Trade Unions* (CNETU), which at its height counted 158 000 members.⁶⁵ The council was subjected to a lot of pressure from the state after the war, and lacked the manpower to fight back. When the *National Party* (NP) won the national elections in 1948, this marked the beginning of the apartheid system, in which the existing racial segregation was properly implemented, and CNETU was dissolved. Society was divided into groups with different rights, and this would influence the labour market as well. While the political victory institutionalized systemic racism as “apartheid”, meaning “separateness”, the system was a mere continuation of previous segregation in the labour market and society overall dating back to the earliest settler periods.⁶⁶

In 1953 a law forbidding black workers from striking was introduced, and later another law was passed which prohibited different racial groups from being parts of the same unions.⁶⁷ This led to a reorganizing of the national trade union structure. A new trade union conglomeration, the *Trade Union Confederation of South Africa* (TUCSA) was founded in October 1953 after 61 unions came together. The unions were racially segregated, following national regulations. Black workers were not allowed to unionize at all but were allowed to members of so-called parallel unions which lacked bargaining rights.⁶⁸ Since black workers were not able to register in any way, the exclusion led to TUCSA being a union solely for skilled workers. The segregation within TUCSA would come under scrutiny during the late 1960’s. The secretary general of the council in 1968 stated that the “penetration” of black workers into the South African industry was compromising the bargaining rights of other workers.⁶⁹ This caused the council to admit Africans in April the same year, but it withdrew

⁶⁵ Tørrer, *Amandla. Ngawethu?*, 235.

⁶⁶ Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, ‘Chapter 11. South African Apartheid and Resistance: A Global History’, in *Africa in Global History: A Handbook*, ed. Toyin Falola and Mohammed Bashir Salau (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021), 204, <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110678017-012/html>.

⁶⁷ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 48.

⁶⁸ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 48.

⁶⁹ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 247.

this policy the following year after white workers started leaving the unions and left TUCSA on the brink of financial ruin.

As a reaction to the segregated nature of TUCSA, more progressive workers from several racial rights groups came together to form the *South African Congress of Trade Unions* (SACTU) in 1955, consisting of member of the previous CNETU and unions unwilling to join TUCSA.⁷⁰ SACTU became a political force in addition to a trade union conglomeration because of this, although its formation was illegal. An alliance with the ANC was established from the beginning. SACTU became a member of the *World Federation of Trade Unions* (WFTU), an international labour organisation based in the socialist world, which would affect the confederation's relationship to trade unions in other countries for the remainder of its existing period. This includes LO, which was a member of the Western oriented *International Confederation of Free Trade Unions* (ICFTU).

The bitter relationship between SACTU and the ICFTU can be traced back to the formation of the short-lived *Federation of Free African Trade Unions of South Africa* (FOFATUSA) in 1959, which was affiliated with the *Pan Africanist Congress of Azania* (PAC).⁷¹ The PAC broke away from the ANC in 1959, as a competing liberation organisation and more radical alternative.⁷² Vetlesen states that given the bipolar world order of the Cold War, the ICFTU deemed it necessary to have a member organisation in South Africa as a counterpart to the WFTU-affiliated SACTU, which in return accused the ICFTU of attempting to split the black labour movements in South Africa.⁷³ SACTU had great difficulties continuing its work due to the regulations on black unionizing. While the organisation was never banned, like the ANC and the PAC would be in 1965, the daily operations were not possible within South Africa, and the SACTU leadership went into exile. By 1969, only 14 000 black workers

⁷⁰ Tørrer, *Amandla. Ngawethu?*, 236–37.

⁷¹ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 161.

⁷² Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie*, 111.

⁷³ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 49. FOFATUSA was disbanded in 1966.

were still unionized in 14 independent unions.⁷⁴ Buhlungu describes the period from 1965 to 1973 as one “quiescence” following the banning of the liberation organisations, which resulted in the lack of “permanent union organization capable of negotiating binding agreements with employers” to be formed.⁷⁵ This would start to change in the following decade.

3.2. The beginning of solidarity in Norway

3.2.1. The silent 1950s

When it comes to literature on early Norwegian action on Southern Africa, there are hardly any sources except Eriksen’s chapter in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa* available. Vetlesen touches upon the period, and some theses, but otherwise the period is discussed only marginally. Primary sources from the period are also scarce.

Eriksen describes the 1950s as a “silent” decade, in which Norway hardly touched the issue of apartheid and only looked at the topic when considering on how to vote in the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Norwegian *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (MFA) did not prioritize issues “outside of the main Cold War arena”.⁷⁶ The MFA’s reports from the general consulate in Pretoria during this decade mainly reflected the point of view from the white minority, and, according to a master’s thesis referenced by Eriksen, “tended to gloss over the racial issue” and promote a moderation of the system rather than abolishing it.⁷⁷

The first time racial issues in South Africa came up in the UN was already in 1946, when the treatment of the Indian minority was discussed in the General Assembly. In this

⁷⁴ Vetlesen, ‘Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid’, 330.

⁷⁵ Sakhela Buhlungu, ‘Rebels without a Cause of Their Own?’, *Current Sociology* 54, no. 3 (2006): 429, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392106063191>.

⁷⁶ Tore Linné Eriksen, “The Origins of a Special Relationship: Norway and Southern Africa 1960 –1975,” in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, ed. Tore Linné Eriksen (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000), 10.

⁷⁷ Eriksen, ‘The Origins of a Special Relationship’, 10–11. Eriksen paraphrases a section from page 19 of the master thesis *Norge og raseproblemene i Sør-Afrika, 1945-1961* (“Norway and the racial issues in South Africa, 1945-1961”) by Ole Kristian Eivindson from 1997, written at the University of Oslo. Eivindson did a thorough read-through of the consulate’s reports from the 1950’s. The thesis itself is not available outside of Norway.

instance, Norway's representatives voted against the decision of the MFA and supported a resolution deeming South Africa to be in violation of the UN charter.⁷⁸ Norway had according to Eriksen "always agreed to put the South Africa issue on the agenda in the United Nations", which to large degree played out, and in the beginning was even supported by the United States and other Western giants who would often determine where allied states would place their votes.⁷⁹ Norway however lacked more direct involvement and voices criticising the South African regime outside of the UN. In Sweden, critical voices against the racial segregation would out themselves already in the early 1950's like Gunnar Nylander and Sara Lidman.

Outside of the political and governmental arenas, increased action was taken by young activists. In 1953, when racial discrimination was reinforced in the South African higher education system, the Norwegian National Union of Students chose to include students from South Africa in their exchange programmes. The programmes included a three-month scholarship which was mainly funded by the MFA and was praised by the International Student Conference. The programme was extended to three years in 1959, up until which point only two South African students had taken part in the programme.⁸⁰ The aim was to give students the opportunity to study their whole degree in Norway. The Norwegian National Union of Students invited students through the *National Union of South African Students* (NUSAS).

The first student to be invited was the 22-year-old Namibian law student Hans Beukes. He was however turned away by South African authorities upon entering a ship to Norway, and his passport was confiscated due to rumours of Beukes being politically active and scheduled to appear before a UN committee.⁸¹ The MFA acted passively to the South African decision,

⁷⁸ Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 11. This was not the only time that the Norwegian representatives in the General Assembly would vote against the Ministry's decisions during the 1940's, as they would pull a similar move during the vote over the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

⁷⁹ Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 11.

⁸⁰ Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 13. One of the students was not even from South Africa, but from Lesotho. Eriksen states that in general, "the impact of the programme should [...] not be exaggerated".

⁸¹ Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 14. Beukes had been involved with the establishment of SWAPO in Namibia.

which led to great attention within the Norwegian academic community.⁸² Beukes made it out of South Africa eventually and came to Norway in 1959, where he spoke at the Norwegian Student Society in Oslo, before heading to New York to hold a testimony in front of the UN South West Africa Committee, just like the South African authorities had suspected.⁸³ The Beukes case led to increased awareness of the Southern African liberation struggles in Norway, and altered the way its representatives acted in the UN.

In the autumn of 1959, a Norwegian South Africa Committee was established by the Norwegian Students Society. The establishment of the Committee, as well as resolution condemning the apartheid policy, got support from political parties along the entire political axis in the Norwegian Parliament, and the committee board consisted of notable representatives from politics and academia.⁸⁴

3.2.2. Increased awareness and boycotts in the 1960s

Upon entering the 1960s, with increased decolonization in Africa and international isolation of South Africa, the apartheid question would get more attention in the Norwegian public. The Sharpeville massacre in 1960, which shocked the entire world and for the first time united the UN Security Council in condemning Pretoria, also left its mark in Norway. LO named the day a national day of mourning, and the MFA once again made a half-hearted attempt at criticizing the regime. In 1961, Albert Luthuli, the then leader of the ANC, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, a decision which was met with overall positive reactions in Norway and

⁸² Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 14. "In the light of the reasons stated by the South African authorities, the [MFA] saw no legal basis for seeking to influence the South African Government to reconsider its decision. The Consulate General in Cape Town was, however, instructed to inform the South African Ministry of Foreign Affairs verbally about the publicity which the incident had caused in Norway, which 'has made an extremely negative impression on public opinion in Norway, with a damaging effect on the understanding of the problems facing South Africa'."

⁸³ Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 14. The Norwegian National Union of Students put pressure on the MFA to bring the Beukes case in front of the General Assembly.

⁸⁴ Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 15. Some of the board members would go on to become mayor of Oslo (Albert Nordengen), director of the Nobel Institute (Jacob Sverdrup) and director-general of the NRK (Hans Jacob Hustvedt).

elsewhere. The South African reactions were naturally more hostile, accusing the *Nobel Committee* of promoting “hostility over peace”.⁸⁵

The first Norwegian boycott initiatives were put forth during a rally held by LO’s women’s branch in January of 1960.⁸⁶ The boycott was proposed by MP Aase Lionæs from the Norwegian Labour Party (*Det Norske Arbeiderparti*, DNA), who spoke at the rally in addition to Beukes. The trade union boycott was coordinated by LO’s affiliated organisations in the other Nordic countries in the summer the same year.⁸⁷ However, the governing DNA was hesitant to support the campaign, describing it as a “private action” outside of government influence towards the South African regime. Still, a common declaration from LO and DNA supporting a boycott limited to four months was issued on 1 May 1960.⁸⁸ Fruit imports from South Africa dropped by 95% but were back to the figures from 1959 after the end of the campaign.⁸⁹ While the question on excluding South Africa from the *International Labour Organization* (ILO) following the Sharpeville massacre came up in the organisation’s annual congress in 1961, the annual report from LO does not mention how the Norwegian confederation voted on the matter.⁹⁰

A new boycott campaign was put forth by political youth parties in 1963, following proposals from a council meeting of the *World Assembly of Youth* (WAY) in 1962. Similar boycotts actions took place in Sweden and Denmark. The Scandinavian youth boycotts made the news in South Africa, with a notice in the socialist newspaper *Spark* in March 1963.⁹¹ The

⁸⁵ Eriksen, ‘The Origins of a Special Relationship’, 18. This was the reaction from media outlets supporting the regime. Voices in support of the ANC naturally praised the decision.

⁸⁶ Eriksen, ‘The Origins of a Special Relationship’, 23. This was after the ICFTU, of which LO was a member, had supported a boycott by its member states in the previous month.

⁸⁷ *Beretning 1960*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1961), 27, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

⁸⁸ *Beretning 1960*, 38.

⁸⁹ Eriksen, ‘The Origins of a Special Relationship’, 24. More left-leaning voices, like the socialist newspaper “Orientering”, criticized the declaration for being purely symbolic due to its limited scope.

⁹⁰ *Beretning 1961*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1962), 127, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

⁹¹ ‘Scandinavian Youth Organise Boycott of South African Goods’, *Spark* (Johannesburg), 21 March 1963, National Library of South Africa (NLSA).

effort resulted in the formation of the committee *Norsk Aksjon mot Apartheid* (NAMA), and quite some debate in Parliament. The more left leaning Socialist People's Party (SF) criticized the DNA led government for not doing enough and demanded that state-owned companies like *Vinmonopolet* were to withdraw its import from South Africa.⁹² Representatives from DNA and the Christian People's Party (*Kristelig Folkeparti*, KRF) proposed that Norway take a greater stance towards implementing international sanctions on the international scene, and use its position in the Security Council in the UN to propose an arms embargo. The idea of setting a Norwegian example got little support, and implementation of proper sanctions would wait until 1987.

DNA's position on the liberation of African countries would change in the mid-1960s, which coincides with the end of a 20-year period of being the sole governmental party.⁹³ This "move to the left" has been attributed to a wish by the party to appeal to younger, more radical voters during the opposition period from 1965 to 1971. By asserting a stronger position against the colonial rules in Southern Africa and the Portuguese colonies, Norway would put itself at odds with its close allies the United Kingdom and the United States, and most of all its NATO- and EFTA-partner Portugal.

In 1962, Oslo hosted an *Afro-Scandinavian Youth Congress*, where over one hundred students from across Africa met with over two hundred students from the Nordic countries during the course of three weeks. Eriksen describes this as one of few occasions in which student organisations usually divided by their affiliations to either the *International Union of*

⁹² Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 26. Vinmonopolet (the "Wine Monopoly") is the sole proprietor of liquor in Norway, given strict regulations concerning the sale of alcohol. Labour Party MP's argued the fact that Norwegian trade with South Africa only amounted to 0,2% of the country's trade revenues, and that it would hardly make a difference if Norway chose to implement a boycott.

⁹³ Knut Are Tvedt et al., 'Arbeiderpartiet', in *Store norske leksikon*, 5 May 2025, <https://snl.no/Arbeiderpartiet>. With the exception of a short period in 1963, DNA had been the sole party in Government since the end of the second world war, mostly under the leadership of Einar Gerhardsen.

Students (IUS) or the *International Student Conference* (ISC) came together.⁹⁴ Among the speakers was Oliver Tambo, who urged the students put pressure on their government to initiate economic sanctions on the South African regime. After the congress, Tambo was received by the Prime Minister of Norway Einar Gerhardsen from DNA and proceeded to visit the other Scandinavian heads of state in Stockholm and Copenhagen.⁹⁵ The African students challenged the positions of conservative Nordic students, who assumed that the congress was merely a platform for discussion. The students pushed for the passing of a resolution condemning the lack of sanctions and support from the West, which was adopted for with an overwhelming majority. The main resolution on South Africa stated that

“[...] the Scandinavian Governments [should] support the struggle for freedom and basic human rights in South Africa by [...] breaking off diplomatic relations with the Union of South Africa, [and by] asking the United Nations to organise world-wide economic sanctions against South Africa. [I further called for] the abolition of all the oppressive laws designed against the Africans, [...] the immediate granting of democratic rights and release of all political prisoners, [...] the imposition of total economic, diplomatic and cultural sanctions as called for by the African people in the UN, [...] and an unreserved material and moral support for the liberation movements in South Africa.”⁹⁶

Another milestone in Norway-Africa relation of the period was the UN/OAU conference held in Oslo in April of 1973. The MFA received a request from the *Organisation for African Unity* (OAU) in the summer of 1971 through its delegation to the UN in New York to host a “World Conference for Support of Victims of Apartheid and Colonialism in Southern Africa”, rooted in “appreciation for Norwegian support on issues related to decolonisation and apartheid in the

⁹⁴ Eriksen, ‘The Origins of a Special Relationship’, 20–21. Many Western student organisations had withdrawn from the IUS in previous years due to its positive stance towards communism and had established the ISC as a reaction.

⁹⁵ Eriksen, ‘The Origins of a Special Relationship’, 21. “In the major Western countries – USA and the United Kingdom – Oliver Tambo was not received at Government level until 25 years later.”

⁹⁶ Eriksen, ‘The Origins of a Special Relationship’, 22.

UN.”⁹⁷ However, Sweden had seemingly been the first choice, and Norway considered the second best fit after it was announced that Sweden would not be able to host the conference.⁹⁸ Given that Norway had not taken a firm position regarding support to the Southern African liberation movements, the decision on whether to host the conference was not immediate, and became subject to consultations with the other Nordic countries.⁹⁹

After the decision to host the conference was made, the planning was carried out by Norway and the OAU, with differing ideas about funding, intended outcome, and which states/organisations to invite. In the end, it was decided that the focus should lie on discussing diplomatic and humanitarian assistance and leave the decision of military support up to the individual participating states. Several UN organisations and committees, the *World Council of Churches*, the British *Anti-Apartheid Movement* (AAM), and nine African liberation organisations were among the invitees. Notably, an invitation was extended to every member of the UN Security Council, but was turned down by the US, the UK and France. The conference eventually turned into a joint effort by Norway, the OAU and the UN, and was opened on 9 April 1973.

The conference was held at the Trade Union Hall in Oslo, which shares a building with the headquarters of LO, and it gained a great deal of attention in Oslo. A solidarity week was organized by the Norwegian Council for Southern Africa (*Fellesrådet for det sørlige Afrika*, NOCOSA) (see chapter 3.3.4.), consisting of seminars and rallies, addressed by representatives from the Mozambique Liberation Front (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, FRELIMO) and the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (*Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde*, PAIGCC). Among the points raised was protest

⁹⁷ Eriksen, ‘The Origins of a Special Relationship’, 56–57.

⁹⁸ Eriksen, ‘The Origins of a Special Relationship’, 57. Sweden was to host the United Nations Environmental Conference in 1972.

⁹⁹ Eriksen, ‘The Origins of a Special Relationship’, 58. Except for Sweden there was not much enthusiasm towards the idea of the conference from the other Nordic countries. Denmark and Finland even declined to take part at first, fearing that militant liberation organisations would take over the conference.

against Norway's support to the Southern African governments through its shipping industries and NATO membership. Norwegian media also covered the conference and the liberation movements in a more positive style than previously and provided extensive coverage due to it being the first UN conference held in Oslo.¹⁰⁰

The conference helped gain recognition to the liberation movements as alternative actors to the racist regimes in the country, especially the liberation movements outside of the Portuguese colonies.¹⁰¹ It was decided that the conference was not going to adopt any resolutions, but rather a programme of action with concrete recommendations which was to be presented at the UN General Assembly. The main points of the programme were to urge the West to recognize the legitimacy of and give support to the liberation movements, and to isolate the oppressing regimes internationally and introduce sanctions.¹⁰² The conference was praised at a later OAU conference for its focus on realism over propaganda, resulting in a more concrete outcome.

The increased global and transnational dimension of the liberation movements in the entirety of Southern Africa led to an increased focus on the matter in part of the world far away from the main arena of the struggle. Thörn attributes this partly to a revolution of media and mobility in the 1960s. "Visual transnational media" brought the struggle to the masses in the West, and the rise in commercial travel enabled more personal contact between the liberation organisations and those supporting them, "giving 'the other' a public face".¹⁰³ South African activists pushed into exile were a notable example of the latter, and this is partly how LO established contact with the activist trade unions in the years to come.

¹⁰⁰ Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 69. More conservative news outlets like *Morgenbladet* and *Aftenposten* were less enthusiastic, accusing it of slandering NATO.

¹⁰¹ Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 64–65. Some speakers, including Oliver Tambo, stated the importance of not waiting for the surrounding colonies to fall before focusing on South Africa, since this time was being used by the regime to consolidate its power.

¹⁰² Eriksen, 'The Origins of a Special Relationship', 66–67.

¹⁰³ Thörn, 'Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society', 17.

3.3. Norwegian trade unions and solidarity organisations

3.3.1. The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO)

The Norwegian Workers' National Trade Union (*Arbeidernes Faglige Landsorganisasjon*, AFL) was founded in April 1899 after a worker's congress held in Stockholm. It was suggested that the new confederation was to have close ties to DNA, which was initially dropped since many of the workers were members of the Norwegian Liberal Party (*Venstre*). The cooperation between AFL and DNA would still be implemented at the founding congress, since several of the founding trade unions were affiliated with the party.¹⁰⁴ Over the next few decades membership numbers would rise, and by the 1910's, LO had become a force which the government needed to consider when forming social policies.

In 1916, LO and DNA wrote their first common programme of action, and when DNA first went into government, two representatives from LO would serve in ministerial positions. During the next decades, the cooperation between these two bodies would become increasingly important, following some ill-fated strike attempts. The close ties to DNA have been there since the beginning, and while there is still a close connection between the trade union confederation and the party, LO has also contributed financially to other parties like SV, the Red Party (*Rødt*) and the Centre Party (*Senterpartiet*).¹⁰⁵

Sandegren states that LO needs to be consulted in political decisions, as LO's responsibility is "more than just salaries", and plays an active role in all parts of society.¹⁰⁶ Norway's relation to "developing countries", the impact of global financial crises,

¹⁰⁴ Jon Gisle, 'LO – Landsorganisasjonen i Norge', in *Store norske leksikon*, 8 June 2025, https://snl.no/LO_-_Landsorganisasjonen_i_Norge.

¹⁰⁵ Håvard Nyhus, 'Ny rekord: Så mykje har partia fått i valkampstøtte', NRK, 28 August 2025, https://www.nrk.no/vestland/ny-rekord_-sa-mykje-har-partia-fatt-i-valkampstotte-1.17539371. LO still favours DNA, and donated NOK 20 million in the lead up to the parliamentary elections of 2025, but additionally donated NOK 6 million each to SV and the Centre Party, and NOK 1,5 million to the Red Party. The latter is the most left-leaning party in Parliament, outspokenly against the EU and NATO, and with a communist past. The Centre Party's main causes are the rights of the agricultural sector and the population in the countryside.

¹⁰⁶ Sandegren, *Fagbevegelsens internasjonale engasjement*, 35.

memberships in international organizations, and responses to war and conflict are areas highlighted by Sandegren in which it is important to include LO. He also states that negotiations with the government “are easier when DNA holds the steering wheel”, but that “a conservative government should also be interested in co-operating with LO, and the labour movement has an obvious interest in having a working relationship with the Norwegian government, no matter the party colours.” Additionally, as of 1977, “there [was] a good relation between the political leadership of the MFA and LO” during a period in which DNA was the sole governmental party.¹⁰⁷ According to Sandegren, there exists “a firmly grounded conviction within the Norwegian and Nordic labour movement that a cooperation between the trade unions and the democratic labour parties yields great results for the larger groups.”¹⁰⁸ Today LO is the largest of the four major trade union confederations in Norway, counting around one million members in country of 5.5 million inhabitants.

3.3.2. The Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA)

The Norwegian People’s Aid (*Norsk Folkehjelp*, NPA) describes itself as “the Norwegian labour movement’s humanitarian organisation”.¹⁰⁹ The organisation was founded in 1939 when doctor Karl Evang proposed the establishment of an organisation which was to “work with medicinal aid in Norway and be at disposal when the people of Norway or abroad [were] in need” to LO. The establishment happened after the end of the Spanish civil war, and the founding of NPA was an extension of the Norwegian “Spanish Aid” (*Spaniahjelpen*), of which

¹⁰⁷ Sandegren, *Fagbevegelsens internasjonale engasjement*, 37–38. “Det nære forholdet mellom Regjeringen og LO fungerer naturligvis lettest når Det norske Arbeiderparti sitter ved roret. [...] Men også en borgerlig regjering vil ha interesse av et godt forhold til [LO] i utenrikssaker. Fagbevegelsen på sin side har åpenbar interesse av å påvirke utviklingen uansett Regjeringens politiske farge.”

¹⁰⁸ Sandegren, *Fagbevegelsens internasjonale engasjement*, 102. “Det er en grunnfestet erfaring i norsk og nordisk arbeiderbevegelse at samarbeid mellom fagbevegelsen og de demokratisk arbeiderpartier gir gode resultater for de store grupper.”

¹⁰⁹ Marit Kirkevold and Olav Garvik, ‘Norsk Folkehjelp’, in *Store norske leksikon*, 5 May 2025, https://snl.no/Norsk_Folkehjelp.

Evang was a member.¹¹⁰ The organisation's first mission was to send aid to Finland immediately during the Winter War. The NPA establishes the Europe Aid (*Europahjelpen*) in the wake of the Second World War to aid in the rebuilding of the continent.

The Europe Aid was shut down in 1952, and the NPA established the Norwegian Refugee Council (*Flyktningehjelpen*, NRC) together with the Norwegian branches of Save the Children and the Red Cross. In 1975, the NPA helped raise NOK 7 million for humanitarian efforts in Vietnam, which caused the organisation to focus increasingly on global issues. The organisation has also put in an especially noticed effort into mine sweeping in previous civil wars, especially in Syria and Yemen, and is currently active in 35 countries across the world.

The NPA also puts an emphasis on health and sanitation, and it was within these fields that the organisation first started working with the ANC directly. They sent a proposal to the ANC in June 1978 about the possibility of training health workers in the organisation's refugee camps across Africa. This was met with hesitation, as the ANC was used to working with Soviet and Eastern organisations within their own premises, but had no experience allowing Western actors in. The compromise became that South African refugees were sent to Norway to be trained by the NPA in 1979. At first the refugees who came from the "Soweto generation" were hesitant to be trained by what could be considered the enemy.¹¹¹ After some time, the cooperation became easier, and the programme became a success. So much so that it was repeated in 1982, and as a joint effort between the NPA, the Danish Refugee Council (*Dansk Flyktningehjælp*, DRC), the ANC and the Namibian liberation organisation *South West African People's Organisation* (SWAPO).¹¹²

¹¹⁰ 'Vår historie', Norsk Folkehjelp, accessed 7 June 2025, <https://folkehjelp.no/om-norsk-folkehjelp/vår-historie>. "Etter den spanske borgerkrigen er avsluttet tar Karl Evang på vegne av Spaniahjelpen et initiativ overfor LO for å etablere en organisasjon 'som skal jobbe med helsearbeid i Norge og kunne tre inn når befolkningen i Norge eller andre land er truet av nød'. Sekretariatet i LO vedtar opprettelsen av Norsk Folkehjelp høsten 1939."

¹¹¹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 88. The ANC feared that the programme would be infiltrated by BOSS.

¹¹² Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 90. I turned into a six month programme where refugees from ANC and SWAPO received training in Norway, Denmark, Tanzania and Angola.

3.3.3. The International Solidarity Committee of the Norwegian Labour

Movement (AIS)

The International Solidarity Committee of the Norwegian Labour Movement (*Arbeidernes Internasjonale Støttekomité*, AIS), was established in 1969 as an effort to coordinate the solidarity work of the collected Norwegian labour movement, which was experiencing political fracture at the time. This was partly a result of disagreements and inefficiency of the committee which had been put down to work out Norwegian assistance in the wake of the coup in Greece in 1967.¹¹³ The main conflict was between DNA and SF with the Norwegian Communist Party (*Norges Kommunistiske Parti*, NKP), which had both been founded by previous DNA fractions leaning further to the left than the direction the party was headed.¹¹⁴ This caused DNA and LO to consider creating a solidarity committee of their own, and an unanimous vote at the national congresses of both entities in 1969 sealed the deal.¹¹⁵

The first paragraph of the proposed guidelines for the establishment of this committee presented at the next LO congress stated the following:

“§ 1. Purpose: The International Solidarity Committee of the Labour Movement has been established by the Norwegian Labour Party and the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions. The purpose of the committee is to coordinate the collected labour movement’s support to national and social liberation movements and its support to organisations and individuals which work for the right to unionize and other democratic rights in countries where these rights have been violated. Support may also be given to individuals who have gotten in trouble because of these circumstances in their home country.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Vilde Opdan Yttereng, “Opprettelsen av Arbeiderbevegelsens internasjonale støttekomité. Internasjonalt engasjement på 1960-tallet,” *Arbeiderhistorie* 36, no. 1 (2022): 131.

¹¹⁴ Tvedt et al., ‘Arbeiderpartiet’; Knut Are Tvedt, ‘Sosialistisk Folkeparti’, in *Store norske leksikon*, 21 February 2025, https://snl.no/Sosialistisk_Folkeparti. NKP was formed in 1923 when DNA left the Comintern. SF was founded in 1961 as a reaction to a more NATO-friendly turn at national congress of DNA, and their mission was to oppose both sides in the Cold War.

¹¹⁵ Yttereng, ‘Opprettelsen av Arbeiderbevegelsens internasjonale støttekomité’, 132.

¹¹⁶ Finn Bratskar and Sten Hansen, *Protokoll over Forhandlingene Ved 22. Ordinære Kongress* (Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO), 1969), 262. “§ 1. Formål. Arbeiderbevegelsens Internasjonale Støttekomité

Though this paragraph does not give specific reference to which causes are to be subject to support from the committee, South Africa is mentioned as an example of issues previously on the table, together with Vietnam, Czechoslovakia and Greece.¹¹⁷ According to Yttereng, the statements from the 22nd LO congress illustrated three points which would determine the future of AIS. First, solidarity was not limited to receivers associated with the labour movement or social democracy. Second, there was no geographic limit determining who was qualified for support from AIS, and third, there was no intention of limiting the work within the borders of the Cold War.¹¹⁸

AIS was to replace previous solidarity committees which cut across political boundaries, ensuring efficiency in the organisation of the solidarity work by DNA, LO and later DNA's youth organisation, the Worker's Youth League (*Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking*, AUF). Previous experiences from the solidarity work with the Vietnam war had caused a committee which essentially wanted the same to split in two, given the ideological differences between DNA and LO on one side and SF and NKP on the other.

Yttereng makes the claim that AIS in addition to serving an organisational purpose also had an ideological function. Supporting democracy and liberation movements "reflected both idealism and self-interest" in the sense that there was a genuine belief in the importance of solidarity coexisting with the fact that supporting social democratic values abroad would gain the party in the long run.¹¹⁹ This factor is not to be underestimated, given that the party was in opposition and 1969 was a parliamentary election year, at the end of a decade marked by internal fracture. This turn towards global issues was especially aimed at a younger

er opprettet av Det norske Arbeiderparti og Landsorganisasjonen i Norge. Komitéens formål er å ta initiativ til å samordne arbeiderbevegelsens støtte til nasjonale og sosiale frihetsbevegelser og støtte til organisasjoner og enkeltpersoner som arbeider for å få gjennomført organisasjonsfrihet og andre demokratiske rettigheter i land der slike rettigheter blir krenket. Støtte kan også gis personer som er kommet i vanskeligheter på grunn av slike forhold i hjemlandet."

¹¹⁷ Bratskar and Hansen, *Protokoll over Forhandlingene Ved 22. Ordinære Kongress*, 263.

¹¹⁸ Yttereng, 'Opprettelsen av Arbeiderbevegelsens internasjonale støttekomité', 133.

¹¹⁹ Yttereng, 'Opprettelsen av Arbeiderbevegelsens internasjonale støttekomité', 134. "Den ideologiske dimensjonen ved AIS reflekterer både en idealisme og en egeninteresse hos den norske arbeiderbevegelsen."

demographic with a greater interest in protesting apartheid and the Vietnam war, which DNA risked losing to parties further on the left. The question of alignment was therefore undergoing changes as well, and relation to NATO was open for discussion.¹²⁰ When looking at LO, the establishment of AIS can also be seen as a result of a reorganisation of the confederation which took place in 1969. The most important factors of these changes were a greater emphasis on international issues and closer ties to the party.¹²¹

AIS was a cooperation entity between LO and DNA but was run by already existing departments and individuals. AIS's secretariat was given to the newly established international department of LO. However, the role of Secretary of the committee was moving between individuals from other departments at LO, given the international department's small staff, which at the time consisted of LO's international secretary, and office clerk, and a translator.¹²² The structure of AIS was reorganised in 1975, when the NPA established an international department of their own. Vesla Vetlesen was hired by the NPA in 1976 to oversee this coordination.¹²³

3.3.4. The Norwegian Council for Southern Africa (NOCOSA)

The Norwegian Council for Southern Africa (*Fellesrådet for det Sørlige Afrika*, NOCOSA) was established through a merger of NAMA and the Crisis Fund for South Africa in 1967 as an ideal organisation working for the liberation of the Southern African colonies.¹²⁴ Especially trade unions and student organisations joined the council of over time. NOCOSA's main

¹²⁰ Terje Halvorsen and Hallvard Notaker, 'AUF', in *Store norske leksikon*, 5 May 2025, <https://snl.no/AUF>. DNA would choose a more NATO friendly line, but the membership in the military alliance would be a subject for debate for decades to come. The possibility of quitting the alliance never became a serious topic within the party leadership, but AUF had a clear anti-NATO stance, causing conflict with the mother party for the next decades. AUF would however also change their position towards NATO in 1987 after a series of internal reorientation led on by the then leader Jens Stoltenberg. Stoltenberg would even go on to become Secretary General of NATO from 2014 to 2024, after serving as Prime Minister of Norway.

¹²¹ Yttereng, 'Opprettelsen av Arbeiderbevegelsens internasjonale støttekomité', 137.

¹²² Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 15.

¹²³ Norsk Folkehjelp, 'Vår historie'.

¹²⁴ Drolsum, 'The Norwegian Council for Southern Africa', 214.

objective remained to spread awareness, keep up contact with the liberation struggles in Africa, and attempt to influence political decision. Early actions included lobbying for Norway to recognize the independence of Guinea-Bissau and opposing NATO's involvement in the colonial wars in Angola and Mozambique.¹²⁵ The organisation was not affiliated with any political party but aligned mostly with the Left in the Norwegian political landscape, as well as the Christian democrats. Since the fall of apartheid in 1994, NOCOSA changed its name to *Fellesrådet for Afrika*, and expanded its focus to entire continent of Africa.¹²⁶

I choose to focus on NOCOSA not because it is regarded as a part of the Norwegian labour movement and its solidarity efforts, but because the interaction with NOCOSA influenced the actions of AIS and the national public debate. As later chapters will show, NOCOSA was often the driving force when it came to measures against South Africa, and usually more radical than the labour movement.¹²⁷ A possible explanation is that NOCOSA's main objective was to support the Southern African liberation struggles, and while this was deemed important by LO and other trade unions, this was only secondary to the unions' main mission of supporting its own members on the national level. In some cases, these considerations would be at odds with one another. One example is when NOCOSA first initiated a nation-wide boycott of South Africa on the municipal level in 1978. When LO was asked to sign on to the petition, which was supported by several political parties, Sandegren declared that "LO [ran] its own solidarity efforts through [AIS and had] no intention of changing this practice."¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Drolsum, 'The Norwegian Council for Southern Africa', 220–21.

¹²⁶ 'Historien om Fellesrådet', Fellesrådet for Afrika, accessed 17 November 2025, <https://fellesraadet.no/om-oss/historie>. "The Common Council for Africa".

¹²⁷ Drolsum, 'The Norwegian Council for Southern Africa', 219.

¹²⁸ Drolsum, 'The Norwegian Council for Southern Africa', 245.

4. Political reorientation and labour solidarity 1973-80

4.1. South African resistance

4.1.1. Strikes and new unions in the 1970s

The early 1970s saw a wave of strikes initiated by unions without any bargaining rights, but still gave results based on local and informal agreements. Major strikes broke out in Durban in 1973, which led to a shift in the organisation of South African trade unions.¹²⁹ The National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW), established in the same year, was able the first non-segregated union able to sign a collective agreement in 1974 with the UK-based company *Smith & Nephew*. The employer refused to sign the agreement again in 1977, but further pressure from British and international trade unions caused the company to renew the agreement the following year.¹³⁰

Non-white workers had to come up with alternative solutions to working around the frames set by the apartheid laws, which led to the establishment of “workers’ institutes”. During the period 1971-76 seven institutes opened in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Witwatersrand, with the aim of teaching about labour rights and finding ways to influence the situation of non-white workers. The institutes hired experts on labour law and assisted with legal aid which could not be provided by unions.¹³¹ During 1973-74, the *Metal and Allied Workers’ Union* (MAWU), the *Chemical Workers’ Industrial Unions* (CWIU) and the *Transport and General Workers’ Union* (TGWU) were all established in Durban and partly co-organised through the *Trade Union Advisory Co-ordinating Council* (TUACC).¹³²

The government put a lot of faith into foreign contract workers, which helped keep the salaries of non-white workers down. In 1970, black workers in the mining industry made 5.1%

¹²⁹ Sakhela Buhlungu, ‘The Building of the Democratic Tradition in South Africa’s Trade Unions after 1973’, *Democratization* 11, no. 3 (2004): 134, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1351034042000238202>.

¹³⁰ Vetlesen, ‘Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid’, 330.

¹³¹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 50.

¹³² Tørrer, *Amandla. Ngawethu?*, 239–40.

of the salary a white worker in the same position.¹³³ Qualified work and high paying jobs were set aside for white workers, but with an increase in foreign investments and industrialization during the 1960s-70s, the white minority was not able to fill the positions needed. This, combined with displeasure from a national majority, led to the conclusion that the national labour laws needed a revitalization.

In March 1977 Government granted black workers limited bargaining rights but still refused to acknowledge non-white unions. The South African Ministry of Labour called on Professor of Labour Relations at the University of South Africa Nic Wiehahn to make an assessment of the situation, which prompted the formation of the “Wiehahn Commission”.¹³⁴ According to Vetlesen, this was merely a publicity stunt. The Wiehahn Commission presented its conclusion to Parliament in 1979, leading to the introduction of the “Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act” the same year. This did admit black workers the right to unionise, but increased power to white unions and prohibited unionising for migrant workers as well as the formation of mixed unions.¹³⁵ The bill was met with outrage, and TUCSA described it as a “recipe for industrial chaos”.¹³⁶ The new regulations determined that leadership positions were still exclusively reserved for white workers, but that there would be an opening for black workers to apply for qualified work. Black workers were also given the right to strike, but under strict regulations.

New trade union conglomerations would appear in the late 1970s. In 1979, the *Federation of South African Trade Unions* (FOSATU) was formed out of the remnants of TUACC, and the *National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa* (NUMARWOSA) as an alternative for non-white workers.¹³⁷ FOSATU was established only a

¹³³ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 51.

¹³⁴ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 246.

¹³⁵ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 248.

¹³⁶ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 52.

¹³⁷ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 247. NUMARWOSA had been a member of TUCSA since the late 1960's, but left in 1976 to pursue the organising of black workers

month before the Wiehahn commission presented its findings, and condemned the outcome.¹³⁸ However, FOSATU decided that it wanted to work openly and use the new regulations to its advantage. According to Tørres, the federation decided that if it was to stay relevant “it had to rely more upon workers' demands than political struggles.”¹³⁹ FOSATU remained an outlier whilst a new union tradition sprung up.

In the following year, the alternative *Council of Unions of South Africa* (CUSA) was formed. The main differences between CUSA and FOSATU was that FOSATU was “overall non-racist”, but CUSA set aside all leadership positions for non-whites. CUSA became a member of the ICFTU, whilst FOSATU never joined any international labour organisation but cooperated with the ICFTU.¹⁴⁰ CUSA affiliated with a more radical group of unions that labelled themselves “community unions”, which considered labour and political rights as inherently linked and were backed by the exiled SACTU.¹⁴¹

Buhlungu speaks of a specific South African tradition of democratic trade unionism which grew out of the “post-1973” period. This tradition came to be as a combination of the “lived experiences” of the working class and solidarity from a range of intellectuals, resulting in an egalitarian power structure in which decisions were made “on the shop floor” and power was moved away from the top.¹⁴² These lived experiences included a sense of community through religion, school struggles, political movements and previous union experiences, including those from SACTU.¹⁴³ Most notably, the experience of living under the apartheid regime led to a call for democratic rule within unions for workers who were denied democratic

¹³⁸ Vesla Vetlesen, ‘Utkast til brev fra LO til forbundene’, Letter draft, Oslo, 19 November 1979, 812-842-SA, p. 4, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

¹³⁹ Tørres, *Amandla. Ngawethu?*, 241.

¹⁴⁰ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 54.

¹⁴¹ Tørres, *Amandla. Ngawethu?*, 241.

¹⁴² Buhlungu, ‘The Building of the Democratic Tradition in South Africa’s Trade Unions after 1973’, 134.

¹⁴³ Buhlungu, ‘The Building of the Democratic Tradition in South Africa’s Trade Unions after 1973’, 136–43.

rights elsewhere.¹⁴⁴ The other aspect was the input from trained intellectuals who sought to organise and administrate the unions, as well as build an ideology out of the lived experiences and demands for change. This group has previously been deemed a predominantly white intelligentsia who through analytical skills were able to “‘theorize’ about the suffering of black workers.”¹⁴⁵ South African intellectuals were mostly white, given the segregated society, but Buhlungu emphasizes the crucial role of black intellectuals like Ramaphosa that both contributed their own know-how and aided white officials in getting recognition from a highly distrustful working class. Another reason for the democratic structuring of the unions was that following the banning of the ANC and the PAC, unionists figured that organisations that relied less on “charismatic leaders” were not as vulnerable to government crackdowns.¹⁴⁶

4.1.2. LO and the relation to SACTU

While several new trade unions sprung up in South Africa throughout the 1970s SACTU was still the largest, and a force LO and other trade unions abroad had to relate to. The cooperation was however difficult, for three reasons mainly. First, it was considered a problem that SACTU was in exile. LO’s intention was to support the working class within South Africa, and there was impression that this was challenging for an exiled organisation. The second, and arguably more potent reason, was SACTU’s ideological clinch with the ICFTU and the West in general, rooted in the ICFTU’s initial support to FOFATUSA. And lastly, SACTU demanded that all support to the South African labour movement was to be channelled directly through itself.

Vetlesen describes the relation between LO and SACTU as being “full of mistrust from the beginning to the end.”¹⁴⁷ This does not mean that there was not extensive contact between

¹⁴⁴ Sakhela Buhlungu, ‘The Rise and Decline of the Democratic Organizational Culture in the South African Labor Movement, 1973 to 2000’, *Labor Studies Journal* 34, no. 1 (2009): 97, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160449X07308522>.

¹⁴⁵ Buhlungu, ‘The Building of the Democratic Tradition in South Africa’s Trade Unions after 1973’, 144.

¹⁴⁶ Buhlungu, ‘The Rise and Decline of the Democratic Organizational Culture in the South African Labor Movement, 1973 to 2000’, 95.

¹⁴⁷ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 81.

the organisations. Vetlesen also speaks of a comradery in the tone between LO and SACTU and claims that the ideological differences did not stop LO from supporting the organisation's cause.¹⁴⁸ In addition to meeting at the annual ILO conferences in Geneva, SACTU leaders visited Oslo, and LO would visit the exiled leadership in Zambia and Tanzania. The meetings in Oslo were however never initiated by LO, but arranged by NOCOSA, which had an easier relationship to SACTU. One such example is the so-called "South Africa hearing" that took place in Oslo in October 1977 and was attended by representatives from the liberation movements in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe.¹⁴⁹

With regards to the demand for direct funding, SACTU argued that the organisation was "active in all parts of the South African labour movement" and that funding through the ICFTU was inefficient, and not to mention supported by imperialists. LO found it hard to believe that SACTU was well connected, since it had "difficulties" providing details on the internal situation in South Africa, which did not do much for LO's trust in the organisation. Another possibility is that SACTU had an equally low trust in LO, making the organisation unwilling to share its information.¹⁵⁰ This differed from the ANC, which experienced that cooperating with Western organisations was mostly beneficial, while at the same time cooperating with the USSR and not considering the Cold War as relevant to the South African liberation struggle.¹⁵¹

Vetlesen refers to several articles from *Workers' Unity*, among them "Direct-links stinks!" from the April 1984 issue.¹⁵² The article criticizes the Western trade unions' urge to solely finance organisations within South Africa, and in that way dictate who is suitable for foreign support, by "bypassing" the "real revolutionary organisations", meaning SACTU and

¹⁴⁸ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 81–82.

¹⁴⁹ Egil Haakseth, 'Sør-Afrika-høringen sterk solidaritets-mønstring: Bare Vestens støtte holder apartheid oppe', *Friheten* (Oslo), 18 October 1977, 10, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

¹⁵⁰ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 82.

¹⁵¹ Ndlovu, 'South African Apartheid and Resistance', 209.

¹⁵² "Direct-Links" Stinks!', *Workers' Unity* (London), April 1982, National Library of South Africa (NLSA).

the ANC. “What can [American trade unions] teach us about revolution?” the article asks and follows up with the statement that SACTU did not need “lessons in class collaboration”.¹⁵³ The article sums up its argument like this:

“Direct links are nothing more nor less than a new form of colonialism in which the far Left joins the far Right in opposing the Congress movement in South Africa.”¹⁵⁴

The tone from *Workers' Unity* was not always as critical of the West. An article from the February issue of 1982 titled “Workers off all countries unite!” praises the fact that organisations “all over the world” are supporting the “black militant” resistance and cooperating with SACTU.¹⁵⁵ Much of the article speaks of the importance of SACTU “speaking tours” and mentions a three-week tour of Norway and Denmark. The seeming souring of relations leading up to the mid-1980s can in part be explained by the lead up to the formation of COSATU (see chapter 5.3.2.).

The relation between LO and SACTU hit rock bottom during a meeting in Oslo in 1987. LO argued that SACTU’s membership in the WFTU was the reason why they were excluded from Norwegian funding, while SACTU reiterated that LO contributed to division within the liberation struggle by its support through the ICFTU. SACTU also claimed to align fully with COSATU in the meeting but accused the *National Council of Trade Unions* (NACTU) (see chapter 5.3.2.) of collaborating with the apartheid regime. The meeting had to be cut short, as tension was rising and no possibility of reconciliation seemed to be within reach.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ *Workers' Unity*, “‘Direct-Links’ Stinks!” “But what can we learn [in the US or the UK]? What can the AFL-CIO teach us about revolution? We don’t need lessons in class collaboration!”

¹⁵⁴ *Workers' Unity*, “‘Direct-Links’ Stinks!”

¹⁵⁵ ‘Workers of All Countries Unite!’, *Workers' Unity* (London), February 1982, National Library of South Africa (NLSA). “The militant black struggle of the black workers is supported by people the world over. Workers have pledged their support for the brave men and women who have risen against their racist oppressors, shouting: Freedom is our goal! We cannot fail!”

¹⁵⁶ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 84–85. The meeting notes were not to be found in ARBARK.

SACTU also sought to maintain relations with NORAD's representations in Africa and submitted formal requests for funding of a "trade union institute" in Dar-es-Salaam. Two such requests were made in 1981 and 1984.¹⁵⁷ Both were turned down after recommendation from LO, who NORAD consulted in questions regarding trade unions. The correspondence chain between SACTU, NORAD, and LO from 1984 is available at ARBARK. The initial request was sent to the Norwegian General Consul in Lusaka, Arnfinn Sørensen, on 31 January 1984, and was signed by SACTU's General Secretary John Kkadineng and National Treasurer Kay Moonsamy.¹⁵⁸ The request letter refers to "previous discussions regarding financial and material assistance" and promises that support from Norway would contribute to the organisation's "struggle for total emancipation".¹⁵⁹ Several months later, on 6 June, NORAD in Oslo forwarded the request from SACTU to Vetlesen at LO for review. The letter states that the agency was not eligible to review the request as SACTU was not a private Zambian organisation but asked LO to have a look as NORAD still found it "interesting".¹⁶⁰ The letter also suggested that if LO was not willing to fund the project itself, it should present it to the MFA. The reply from LO, dated 18 September, explains that the confederation did not wish to engage in financial support to SACTU, due to the ideological differences and the principle of supporting organisations within South Africa.¹⁶¹

Towards the end of SACTU's existence, the relationship never improved. The organisation opened an office in Copenhagen in 1988 to liaison with the Nordic countries. After

¹⁵⁷ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 85.

¹⁵⁸ Kay Moonsamy and John K. Nkadineng, 'Re: Financial and Material Assistance for the South African Congress of Trade Unions', Request for funding to Arnfinn Sørensen, 31 January 1984, 884/SA/4, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

¹⁵⁹ Moonsamy and Nkadineng, 'Re: Financial and Material Assistance for the South African Congress of Trade Unions'. "We are confident that with the active support of the international community including your country, we shall make tremendous strides in our struggle for total emancipation."

¹⁶⁰ Bjørn Johannesen, 'Vedr.: South African Congress of Trade Unions - Søknad om støtte.', Request for funding to Vesla Vetlesen, with Ingunn Sauvik, 6 June 1984, 884/SA/4, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

¹⁶¹ Svein-Erik Oxholm 'Vedr. South African Congress of Trade Unions - Søknad om støtte', to NORAD, with Eidar Trulsen, 18 September 1984, 884/SA/4 ET/ml, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). Whether or not the request was reviewed by Vetlesen herself is not clear.

a few “curtesy visits” the last confrontation occurred.¹⁶² SACTU sent out a letter to several South African trade unions in 1989, denouncing the ICFTU and other international unions. LO asked SACTU’s representative in Copenhagen to pull the letter, but the union refused. The Norwegian trade union *Fellesforbundet*, the second largest union within LO, asked LO to translate and distribute the letter from SACTU, to inform the Norwegian unions about SACTU’s activities. But as Vetlesen puts, “this was not necessary, as SACTU was dissolved only a few months later” and the remaining structure was incorporated into COSATU.¹⁶³

4.2. Changes in official Norwegian policy in the 1970s

4.2.1. South(ern) Africa in Norwegian politics

Politically, the 1970s were again dominated by DNA, which throughout the decade was marked by internal power struggles and standing at a political crossroads. This was notable during the periods of both Prime Minister Trygve Bratteli (1971-72 and 1972-76), and his successor Odvar Nordli (1976-81).¹⁶⁴ This still made it easier for LO to gain influence towards the government when voicing its concern for the position of the working class in South Africa, and by extension led DNA to support LO’s first major campaign against the apartheid regime in 1976. Eva Helene Østbye, who has a background from the MFA and NORAD, has written about the official Norwegian support to the South African liberation movement during the period 1973-94 in the chapter “The South African Liberation Struggle: Official Norwegian Support” in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 85.

¹⁶³ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 86.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Søk i regjeringer siden 1814’, Regjeringen.no, 7 November 2017, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/om-regjeringa/tidligere-regjeringer-og-historie/sok-i-regjeringer-siden-1814/id2578015/>. Bratteli’s first period was cut short as he was forced to resign after the national vote Norwegian membership in the EC, for which he and DNA had been advocates. He was replaced with a centre-conservative coalition under Prime Minister Lars Korvald from the Christian Conservative Party (*Kristelig Folkeparti*, KrF).

¹⁶⁵ Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’. The results are based on findings from the archives of the MFA.

When the Swedish government started funding the ANC in 1973, a request to the Norwegian government was made by the organisation. But when the Norwegian Parliament declared that they were going to fund Southern African liberation movements the same year, the ANC and PAC were purposefully excluded. According to Østbye, there were two main obstacles. There was first a real fear imbedded in the MFA that supporting the liberation organisations would be at odds with international law, and given Norway's perceived image as a humanitarian powerhouse, it was important that any support was only to be given to humanitarian efforts and preferably work supporting South African refugees. But by the early 1970s, relatively few South African refugees had escaped to neighbouring countries. In comparison, the number of refugees and need for assistance was more pressing in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe.¹⁶⁶ Secondly, the Norwegian government had made the decision to follow up the OAU's strategy for the liberation of Southern Africa, which did not require immediate action towards South Africa. The OAU's proposal prioritized the liberation of Angola and Mozambique, before moving on to Zimbabwe, Namibia and lastly South Africa. The decision was rooted in a type of domino theory, assuming that the liberation of one country would cause a ripple effect in the region, and the Portuguese colonies were considered the "weakest links".¹⁶⁷

Also, in the 1970s, only little was known about the liberation organisations in South Africa in Norway. When the ANC was granted Swedish support, the organisation was still essentially unknown to the Norwegian public. Following the organisation's request for assistance, the MFA reached out to its diplomatic missions around the world with any insights into the ANC's operations. The Norwegian embassy in London was familiar with the

¹⁶⁶ Østbye, 'Official Norwegian Support', 132.

¹⁶⁷ Østbye, 'Official Norwegian Support', 135.

organisation, because of its activities in the United Kingdom. The embassy described the ANC as “somewhat obscure” but deemed it unlikely to have ties to military activities.¹⁶⁸

At the same time, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (*Direktoratet for utviklingssamarbeid*, NORAD), an institution under the MFA, had local offices in Lusaka and Gaborone. NORAD was tasked with investigating the ANC’s activities in Zambia, and the director of the Lusaka offices, Ola Dørum, met with the ANC’s chief representative in Lusaka, Thomas Nkobi. He reported back to the MFA that the organisation was taking care of approximately 80 refugees in Zambia, in addition to 200 further refugees in Tanzania. This number was confirmed by the Norwegian General Consulate in Dar Es Salaam. Dørum’s recommendation was that the MFA should at least offer a symbolic gesture to the ANC, due to the fact that the organisation did not receive any funding from the *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (UNHCR), since it was labelled a liberation organisation, or “freedom fighters”.¹⁶⁹ However, at this point it was too late, as Parliament had made its decision. This, combined with the shared scepticism from the OAU and UNHCR caused the ANC to not be included in the parliamentary statement of 1973. At the same time, South Africa had gotten the attention of Norwegian politicians.

Apartheid was less present in Norwegian politics until the Soweto massacre in 1976, which caught the attention of the entire world. When the South African regime chose to introduce Afrikaans as a mandatory language in South African schools, it was met with large protests across the country. On 16 June 1976, in the township of Soweto outside Johannesburg, 15 000-20 000 youth marched in the streets to protest the government’s decision, demanding that “If [they] had to learn Afrikaans, the Prime Minister should have to learn Zulu.”¹⁷⁰ The retaliation from the government was brutal, and the police met the protest with tear gas and

¹⁶⁸ Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’, 136.

¹⁶⁹ Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’, 136.

¹⁷⁰ Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie*, 120.

shot into the masses. Hundreds of civilians were killed in the first few days. During the rest of the year, thousands more were killed, wounded and imprisoned. Strikes increased, and the number of people fleeing the country rose.¹⁷¹

The UN reacted strongly, and in 1977 it imposed sanctions on a member state for the first time. This gave a boost to an already existing sympathy for the South African cause in Norwegian politics. Norway joined the sanctions and voice its critique in the UN General Assembly, but direct contributions from the Norwegian state were still missing. International attention was not the only push towards supporting the liberation movements, and arguably the pressure from within Norway was more important. Civil society, notable represented by NOCOSA and SAIH, came together to put pressure on the MFA and political parties.

The Norwegian government was concerned that the South Africa issue could evolve into an East-West conflict, as there was hesitance among Western actors and states to support liberation movements being backed by communist countries. Prime Minister Nordli stated that emphasis should be on the reality of the African people, not on ideological divides created outside of the continent, and it was up to the West to make sure that communist forces did not get a monopoly to support the liberation movements.¹⁷² Nordli also spoke about the importance of liberating South Africa by peaceful means and on the conditions of the oppressed in a speech given at the World Conference against Apartheid in Lagos in 1977. He stated that “It [was his] inner conviction that no efforts must be spared to make sure that the liberation of the people of South Africa will happen without armed combat and great loss of human life. If one does not succeed, it will be a great loss for the cause of humanity.”¹⁷³ Nordli was questioned on the lack

¹⁷¹ Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie*, 121.

¹⁷² Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’, 139.

¹⁷³ Odvar Nordli, ‘Statsminister Nordlis tale til Verdenskonferansen mot apartheid, Lagos, 23.august 1977’, Speech, World Conference for Action Against Apartheid, 23 August 1977, https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/smk/vedlegg/taler-og-artikler-av-tidligere-statsministre/odvar-nordli/1977/tale_til_verdenskonferansen_mot_apartheid.pdf. “Det er min overbevisning at ingen anstrengelser må spares for at frigjøringen for folket i Sør-Afrika skal kunne skje uten omfattende væpnet kamp og enorme menneskelige lidelser. Om en taper her, er det et nytt nederlag for humanismens sak.”

of specific measurements besides funding the liberation organisations, and during the following press conference, a reporter challenged him on the presence of Norwegian oil tankers in South Africa (see chapter 5.5.). Nordli was unable to provide satisfying answers and admitted later that he and the Government he led had not been prepared for this.¹⁷⁴

According to Engh, the support to South Africa was part of an “eagerness for development aid” which started in the 1960s and grew in the following decade. By the late 1960s, Government aimed at spending 1% of GDP on humanitarian and development aid.¹⁷⁵ Throughout the 1970s the Norwegian development aid budget tripled.¹⁷⁶ This optimism would be challenged by new political currents in 1980s (see chapter 5.). Additionally, during the 1970s, supporting the Southern African liberation struggles was made difficult due to Norway’s membership in NATO. On one side Portugal was not happy about other Western countries supporting the resistance in the colonies, and at the same time South Africa was backed by the United States and the United Kingdom. Because of this, the latter had a tense relation to Norway and the other Scandinavian countries during the 1970s, and at the end of the decade British officials even proposed sanctioning Norway and Sweden because of their policies on South Africa.¹⁷⁷

4.2.2. Norwegian support to the liberation organisations

With the colonial liberation of Angola and Mozambique, there was an increase in the budgetary and administrative capacity of the MFA, and the ANC once again became a candidate for support. The ANC’s representative to the Scandinavian countries, Sobizana Mngqikana, visited Oslo in November 1976 to ask Norway to co-fund a project with Sweden, aimed at aiding with

¹⁷⁴ Imad, ‘Arbeidsfolk, slå lag!’, 47.

¹⁷⁵ Sunniva Engh, ‘Norsk utviklingshjelp 1945–1970’, *Norgeshistorie.no*, 25 November 2015, <https://www.norgeshistorie.no/velferdsstat-og-vestvending/1856-norsk-utviklingshjelp-1945-1970.html>.

¹⁷⁶ Sunniva Engh and Hanne Hagtvedt Vik, ‘Norsk utviklingshjelp etter 1970’, *Norgeshistorie.no*, 25 November 2015, <https://www.norgeshistorie.no/oljealder-og-overflod/1952-norsk-utviklingshjelp-etter-1970.html>.

¹⁷⁷ Hallvard Kvale Svenbalrud, ‘Apartheid and NATO: Britain, Scandinavia, and the Southern Africa Question in the 1970s’, *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23, no. 4 (2012): 747, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2012.706538>.

housing and education for the increasing number of refugees coming to the ANC's camps in Tanzania after Soweto. The answer given was that such funding would have to await parliamentary decision, and Mngqikana was clearly frustrated with the Norwegian response. After all, this was the same answer given to Tambo in 1973, which eventually resulted in nothing. But this time around, the situation was deemed more dire, and the MFA quickly supported the proposition. It also helped that Sweden, which had more experience with the ANC, supported Norwegian involvement in the project. A delegation from the MFA travelled to the ANC offices in Lusaka in May 1977 for a briefing and presented its recommendation to the Government later.¹⁷⁸

The MFA's approval led to Government proposing the issue of supporting the South African liberation organisations to Parliament in January 1977. When the Foreign Affairs committee in Parliament was presented with the proposal, it voted in favour of supporting the ANC. The representatives from the Conservative Party (*Høyre*) were more hesitant to support potentially violent liberation movements and made sure to include a clause stating that all funding was earmarked for humanitarian actions, to which the other parties in the committee agreed.¹⁷⁹ The proposition was adopted by a united Parliament in June, and gave the guidelines for the MFA's mandate to support the organisations.

Given that it had been established that Norwegian funding was to be used only for work on refugees, financial assistance was mainly divided between procurements of daily needs for refugees housed by the ANC, and the construction of two refugee camps in Tanzania. The project that Mngqikana had asked Norway to co-fund with Sweden was the building of the *Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College* (SOMAFCO) in Mazimbu, Tanzania. The objective of the college, which started in 1977, was to provide schooling for South African refugees while

¹⁷⁸ Østbye, 'Official Norwegian Support', 141.

¹⁷⁹ Østbye, 'Official Norwegian Support', 136, 139. The two representatives from SF had tried to put pressure on the Government in the period after 1973 to issue support to South Africa.

awaiting the return to their home country.¹⁸⁰ SOMAFCO was not only funded, but also mainly planned and led by Norwegian companies, which was reassuring for voices worried about misuse of the funding. SOMAFCO received praise but was also criticised by some for being too isolated from Tanzanian society. Critical voices stated that living in this kind of “bubble” could lead the students to not be properly prepared for life outside of the camp.¹⁸¹ In 1982, the need for additional space led to the establishment of a “development centre” in 1982 in Dakawa, about 60km away from Mazimbu. Dakawa was to become a smaller centre, and a place to stay for pupils awaiting enrolment in classes at SOMAFCO. Out of the NOK 400 million allocated to the ANC during the period 1977-95, most of the funds went to Mazimbu and Dakawa.¹⁸²

The ANC was the main recipient of Norwegian support, but some assistance was routed to the PAC as well. While the ANC was seen as “somewhat obscure” even less was known about the PAC, as stated by NORAD officials in 1975.¹⁸³ Norwegian support to the PAC was granted in 1978, after the PAC made a request for funding to the MFA in 1977 (one month before the parliamentary decision to support the ANC). The money was to go to the establishment of a “transportation and rehabilitation centre” in Tanzania. The MFA reached out to the UNHCR, the OAU Liberation Committee, the Tanzanian Government and the Swedish Embassy in Dar es Salaam for more information on the organization, all of which provided positive reports about the PAC.¹⁸⁴ The same year, it was decided that the MFA would support the PAC’s work with refugees in Tanzania as well.

¹⁸⁰ Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’, 149.

¹⁸¹ Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’, 151. “The resident representative of the Norwegian Refugee Council in Nairobi, Thor Stegne, raised the question of whether it was wise to isolate the ANC refugees in a model town removed from the realities in the host country. [...] In Mazimbu, the ANC refugees had a higher standard of living than the Tanzanians, and this led to conflicts, Stegne argued. This was especially critical in a country where equality was a leading political objective.”

¹⁸² Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’, 147. This equals to about EUR 334 000.

¹⁸³ Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’, 155. “NORAD [stated]: “We know less about the other large resistance movement in South Africa, Pan Africanist Movement (sic.)” - proving its point by exposing that it was not even quite sure about the name of the organisation.”

¹⁸⁴ Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’, 156.

The main project to receive Norwegian support during the period was the building of a road to Ruwu in Kitonga, Tanzania, where the PAC established a refugee camp. However, there were issues affecting the cooperation with the PAC. The main problem was the organisation's internal conflicts in the late 1970s, which led to poor communication and accusations of the misuse of funds, had caused NORAD to implement increased control of the use of money. This led to the relationship of the MFA and the PAC to sour in its first years, but the funding would continue until 1992, when Norway chose to pull out when members of the PAC attacked a golf course in King Williamstown.¹⁸⁵

While the support for the liberation movements would continue into the 1980s, this did not constitute a one-sided policy from Norway. The support was only to be given to the organisations' work outside of South Africa, as any illegal activities were excluded from funding. The liberation movement and organisations within Norway still called for a full boycott, but Norwegian companies were not banned from working with and in South Africa, and a full condemnation of the apartheid regime would have to wait another decade.

4.3. The first AIS campaign “Solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika” 1976

4.3.1. Planning and launch

AIS's interest in South Africa started after the political discussions in 1973, and a “South Africa committee” was appointed within AIS in January 1974. The “intention to consider the possibility of support to the black workers of South Africa” was made a priority, and deputy leader of LO, Odd Højdahl visited South Africa to “study the situation”.¹⁸⁶ AIS donated NOK

¹⁸⁵ Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’, 167–68.

¹⁸⁶ *Beretning 1974*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1975), 118, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

50 000 to the *Institute of Industrial Education* (IIE) in Durban in 1975.¹⁸⁷ The donation was repeated the following year through the ICFTU.¹⁸⁸

The proper launch of AIS's work for South Africa was the campaign "Solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika", which officially lasted from the autumn of 1976 until the spring of 1977.¹⁸⁹ Its main purpose was to spread awareness of the struggle of the labour movement in South Africa and other victims of Apartheid, as well as raising money to fund further projects and the liberation organisations. The focus was on the entirety of unliberated Southern Africa, but the main attention was on South Africa. The campaign was a relative success as it made South Africa a hot topic across Norway, especially on the political Left.

The idea for the campaign was officially inceptioned in a meeting of the NPA's international committee on 13 May 1976. The minutes from the meeting stated that

"The committee recommends the preparation of a broad campaign aimed at raising awareness about the conditions in Southern Africa and further collect funds for the labour movement. [This] must be done in close cooperation with AUF, the labour movement and [the Workers' Educational Association (*Arbeidernes Opplysningsforbund*, AOF)]."¹⁹⁰

Notably, the campaign was planned shortly before the Soweto massacre, and after 16 June, the campaign got a sudden burst of relevance. AIS considered pushing the launch of the campaign forward, but according to Vetlesen, "One came to the conclusion that it would be more fruitful to prepare the campaign properly and launch in the autumn."¹⁹¹ While the campaign was still being prepared, the political reactions were immediate. On 21 June 1976 LO, DNA and AUF

¹⁸⁷ *Beretning 1975*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1976), 124, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

¹⁸⁸ *Beretning 1976*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1977), 112, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

¹⁸⁹ The name translates to "Solidarity with Southern Africa".

¹⁹⁰ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 15. "Utvalget anbefaler at det forberedes en bred opplysningskampanje om forholdene i det sørlige Afrika og at dette kombineres med en innsamling til støtte for frigjøringsbevegelsene. Arbeidet må skje i nært samarbeid med AUF, fagbevegelsen og AOF."

¹⁹¹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 16.

released a common statement as “the Norwegian labour movement” denouncing the South African regime and pleading the government (led by DNA) to take action internationally.¹⁹² The statement was signed by LO’s leader Tor Aspengren, DNA’s chairman Reiulf Steen and AUF’s leader Sissel Rønbeck. In the statement, they asked the government to

“[...] use its influence in international organisations and address the South African regime [...].

The attitude of great Western democracies is now especially important. The labour movement

asks that the Government make sure these countries made a clear stance.”¹⁹³

The statement was forwarded by Aspengren in a letter to the government under Nordli with a copy to Minister of Foreign Affairs Knut Frydenlund two days later. In the letter, he requested that the government should consider the concerns raised by the three organisations.¹⁹⁴

The final decision to launch the campaign was formalized by the DNA-LO Cooperation Committee on 4 October later that year. As the number one priority of the campaign was to raise awareness, advertisement material (brochures, posters, etc.) went into print immediately. Demand exceeded expectations, and after only two months a reprint was issued. On 8 December *Arbeiderbladet* dedicated its middle page extra number to the campaign, and printed articles about apartheid, the campaign, the role of the international labour movement, and statements from Nordli, Aspengren, Steen, Frydenlund and Rønbeck.¹⁹⁵ Nordli reinstated the plea from LO to put pressure on the West in his statement. Rønbeck on the other hand, representing the more radical AUF, pointed out that Norwegian trade with South Africa had

¹⁹² Tor Aspengren et al., ‘Uttalelse om Sør-Afrika’, LO, DNA & AUF, 21 June 1976, 844. KS/so, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

¹⁹³ Aspengren et al., ‘Uttalelse om Sør-Afrika’. “Vi ber den norske Regjering gjøre sin innflytelse gjeldende i de internasjonale organer og henvende seg til Sør-Afrikas Regjering [...]. Spesielt viktig er nå de store vestlige demokratiets holdning. Arbeiderbevegelsen ber Regjeringen utvirke at disse land inntar en klar holdning.”

¹⁹⁴ Tor Aspengren, ‘Sør-Afrika’, Collective statement from LO, DNA and AUF to The royal Norwegian Government t/o Prime Minister Odvar Nordli and Minister of Foreign Affairs Knut Frydenlund, 23 June 1976, 822. KS/so, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

¹⁹⁵ Johan Thorud, ‘Vis solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika’, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 8 December 1976, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

increased over the last years and made the country Norway's number one trade partner on the African continent.¹⁹⁶

4.3.2. Boycotts and funding

Vetlesen explained in an interview in the same issue of *Arbeiderbladet* that the campaign had been granted NOK 370 000 up until that point, consisting of funding from AIS and local trade unions, as well as many individual donations.¹⁹⁷ By the end of the year this number had risen to NOK 450 000.¹⁹⁸ Though a substantial amount of money was collected, and the promotional material was popular, Vetlesen argues that it was first and foremost a success within the labour movement, and that there was frustration with a lack of interest from the media, especially the state owned Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (*Norsk rikskringkasting*, NRK).

However, a successful part of the campaign was the demand for a boycott of South African goods. LO urged Norwegian consumers and importers to specifically avoid Outspan oranges, grapes from the Cape, and Granny Smith apples. The Norwegian Consumers' Cooperative (*Norges Kooperative Landsforening*, NKL), which included a significant number of Norwegian supermarkets, halted all imports effective 1 September 1976 for a year. A similar effort from the National Union of Fruit Importers was less successful.¹⁹⁹ LO was aware that there was a chance that boycotts, and other initiatives could have negative effects on parts of the Norwegian labour force, which was to become a matter of concern for future campaigns as well. To minimize potential consequences, AIS met with Government in November 1976 and received confirmation that affected workers would be compensated.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Thorud, 'Vis solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika', 22.

¹⁹⁷ Thorud, 'Vis solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika', 19. Around EUR 32 000 in 2025.

¹⁹⁸ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 18.

¹⁹⁹ Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid', 327; Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 19.

²⁰⁰ *Beretning 1976*, 112. "Et møte mellom AIS og representanter for Regjeringen i november 1976 førte til forsikring om at Regjeringen ville støtte norske arbeidstakere som eventuelt rammes ved AIS's tiltak i forbindelse med Sør-Afrika."

The next target was the Norwegian Wine Monopoly (*Vinmonopolet*), a state-owned company which to this day has the sole right of selling wine and spirits in Norway, and at the time had a monopoly on imports as well. Unionized workers within the company joined in on LO's demand and denied handling South African goods. Union members in the service industry refused to serve South African wines and liquors as well. On 22 December 1976, AIS sent a letter to the South African export company *Ko-operative Wijnbrowsers Verenigen van Zuid-Afrika* and informed them of the intended boycott, which was scheduled to launch on 5 January the following year. In the letter, AIS stated that due to the South African regime "neglecting the most basic human rights and workers' rights" they would support a boycott of their products "according to Norwegian law" and with the intent of "using any lawful means to uphold this."²⁰¹ The Wine Monopoly accepted the boycott, and no South African goods would enter their shelves until 1994.²⁰²

4.3.3. Evaluating results

As "Solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika" first came to an end in the spring of 1977, the first plans for a continuation of the campaign were laid. Further information material was ordered and additional boycotts were initiated but saw less success. LO supported the boycott of South African teams and athletes in sports tournaments, which had been going on since the 1960s in different forms. LO's annual report from 1977 stated that NOK 551 000 had been collected from donations, and the campaign additionally received NOK 1 250 000 from "public funding", while NOK 250 000 was allocated by AIS directly.²⁰³ The funds were earmarked for different projects in South Africa and Botswana, and were to be distributed accordingly:

²⁰¹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 20. "Myndighetene i Sør-Afrika har brutt de mest elementære menneskerettigheter og faglige rettigheter[...]. [...] Dette varsel er i overensstemmelse med norsk lov, og vi vil for øvrig bruke alle lovlige midler for å gjøre boikotten effektiv."

²⁰² Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid', 328.

²⁰³ *Beretning 1977*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1978), 136, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). Equals to roughly EUR 45 000, EUR 105 000 and EUR 22 000 respectively.

- NOK 108 000 to a sanitation facility for Rhodesian refugees in Francistown, Botswana.
- NOK 100 000 to refugees from South Africa administered by the ANC.
- NOK 1 400 000 to humanitarian aid and support to trade unions in South Africa.
- NOK 100 000 to education in trade unionism in Botswana.²⁰⁴

The distribution was done in cooperation with the ICFTU. In the previous annual report, it was announced that a request for NOK 3 000 000 was had been sent to the government, which likely makes up most of the “public funding” post.²⁰⁵ The same report confirms that AIS’s main points of contact were the ICFTU, UNHCR, the *Black Allied Workers’ Union* (BAWU) and the ANC.²⁰⁶ By the summer of 1978, a total of NOK 943 759 had been collected. Around 70% of this came from organisations within LO.²⁰⁷ While Vetlesen’s monograph states that the campaign lasted through the winter of 1976-77, records from ARBARK show continued reporting of the campaign throughout 1980. This could be understood as the awareness spreading mission and active printing of information material went on throughout this period, but that later records attribute any solidarity work aimed at Southern Africa to the campaign, or a continuation of this. The report from the 24th LO congress, held in May 1977, states that the campaign should continue, while encouraging increased focus on and solidarity with the oppressed in South Africa in the time to come.²⁰⁸

Fagbevegelsens internasjonale engasjement was released in the midst of the official campaign, and Sandegren highlights it in the section about South Africa in the chapter

²⁰⁴ *Beretning 1977*, 137.

²⁰⁵ *Beretning 1976*, 111–12.

²⁰⁶ *Beretning 1976*, 112.” AIS/NF og LOs kontakter i disse spørsmål er FFI, FN’s flyktningekommissær, Black Allied Workers’ Union og African National Congress, Sør-Afrika.” NF (*Norsk Folkehjelp*) refers to the NPA, FFI (*Frie Faglige Internasjonale*) to the ICFTU.

²⁰⁷ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 21. Roughly EUR 80 000 by today’s rate.

²⁰⁸ *Protokoll fra den 24. ordinære kongress 1977* (Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO), 1977), 123, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). “Kampanjen «Solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika» i Norge bør gå videre. Vi oppfordrer til økt internasjonal faglig opptreden i Sør-Afrika-saken, til økt finansiell og politisk støtte til motstandere av regimet, og vi krever av de nordiske regjeringer at de på ny tar initiativ til en internasjonalt politisk og økonomisk politisk boikott av regimet.”

“Solidarity work”. He states that “The increase in support for liberation in Southern Africa and a democratic majority rule in South Africa and Zimbabwe [was] a natural continuation of previous work.”²⁰⁹ One could argue that Sandegren gives too much credit to LO’s previous engagement with the struggle. When considering the timeline, the campaign was rather a significant resurgence of LO’s interest in Southern Africa. While admittedly being a part of Norwegian support to the liberation struggles since the 1960s, LO was rather a small part of a bigger movement which at the time was led on by student organisations rather than the labour movement. With “Solidaritet til det sørlige Afrika”, LO took on a leading role in the national support and would continue to gain influence over the coming years.

²⁰⁹ Sandegren, *Fagbevegelsens internasjonale engasjement*, 66. “Denne opptrapping av arbeidet for frigjøring i det sørlige Afrika og for et demokratisk flertallsregime i Sør-Afrika og Zimbabwe er en naturlig fortsettelse av et arbeid som går langt tilbake i tid.”

5. A shifting political climate 1981-87

5.1. The second AIS campaign “Frihet til det sørlige Afrika” 1981

5.1.1. Renewing solidarity

LO's annual report from 1980 states that the previous campaign had slowed down, but that a revamp was planned for the following year.²¹⁰ The launch of the campaign was announced at an international “trade union course” held by LO just outside of Oslo, with participants from across Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.²¹¹ From the planning phase, little was different from the first AIS campaign. The main focus was still on spreading awareness, in addition to some direct funding for different ANC projects. The production of merchandise started immediately, and the increased focus on information dissemination was the key difference from the previous campaign. This meant not only raising awareness of the fact apartheid was a system exploiting the rights of black workers, but to show how this was being done and what the Norwegian public could do to help.

I found two documents in the AIS collection at ARBARK which lay out the intention and assumed impact of the campaign. The first one is a two-page document labelled “Solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika” just like the campaign of 1976, but dated 20 July 1981.²¹² The document states that “AIS will see through a support campaign for southern Africa in the autumn and winter of 1981.”²¹³ This could be interpreted as being an early draft which was written before the name of the new campaign had been decided on, and the reference “VV/IL” likely means that it was written by Vetlesen. The second and third paragraphs in the text emphasize the effects of solidarity, with certain paragraphs underlined.

²¹⁰ *Beretning 1980*, Beretninger Fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1981), 177, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²¹¹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 23.

²¹² Vesla Vetlesen, ‘Solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika’, Draft of campaign description, Oslo, 20 July 1981, VV/IL 20/7-1981, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²¹³ Vetlesen, ‘Solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika’, 1.

“Does it matter? What can we do when the UN cannot solve the problem and the superpowers will not [increase the pressure] on the apartheid regime? Does our solidarity matter?

Yes. It works and it matters.”²¹⁴

The rest of the document summarizes the current situation of the South African and Namibian labour movements as seen from Norway and calls for keeping up contact with oppressed workers “on the march”.²¹⁵

The other document, labelled “Frihet til det sørlige Afrika”, dated 13 October 1981, is less rhetorical and more descriptive about the content of the campaign.²¹⁶ The origin is unknown, but it likely originates from the NPA, as the document focuses mostly on the organisation’s part in the campaign and previous work with the ANC and SWAPO. In the opening paragraph “Background” the document states that the campaign had two main objectives: to *inform* about the conditions in which the black populations in South Africa and Namibia were living under, and to *collect donations* for ongoing projects.²¹⁷ This reiterates the impression that the campaign from 1976 never actually stopped, and that the relaunch was rather a reprofiling of existing work. As a part of the increased awareness spreading mission, several cultural events were held around Norway, often with artists or activists from South Africa exhibited or present.

Three larger brochures were printed as a part of the campaign. One of these was *Sør-afrikanske arbeidere i kamp for faglige rettigheter* a 15-page booklet authored by Vetlesen, with a foreword by Halvorsen. The booklet thoroughly explains the history and the then current

²¹⁴ Vetlesen, ‘Solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika’, 1. “Nytter det? Hva kan vi gjøre når ikke FN kan løse problemet og når stormaktene ikke vil sette tommeskrua på apartheidregimet? Har vårt solidaritetsarbeid noen betydning? Ja. Det nytter og det har betydning.” Vetlesen uses a metaphor in which the superpowers were not willing to “tighten the screw” on Pretoria.

²¹⁵ Vetlesen, ‘Solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika’, 1. “Sør-Afrikas arbeidere er på marsj. Det er viktig for oss og dem at vi holder kontakten underveis.”

²¹⁶ ‘Frihet til det sørlige Afrika’, Draft of campaign description, Oslo, 13 October 1981, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). The title translates to “Freedom for Southern Africa”.

²¹⁷ ‘Frihet til det sørlige Afrika’. “Denne kampanjen [...] har to hovedformål: For det første: informere om forholdene den svarte befolkningen i Sør-Afrika og Namibia lever under, og for det andre: samle inn penger til formål og prosjekter som allerede er i gang.”

situation of the labour movement in South Africa, its political role, and what AIS and its international partners were doing and could to aid.²¹⁸ The brochure focuses solely on South Africa, not Namibia. The two other brochures were not to be found at ARBARK.

5.1.2. Goals and outcome

The annual LO report from 1981 highlights the following as a part of the campaign's goals with regards to political impact: an international boycott, establishing alternative trade relations, stop the transfer of oil, and support the neighbouring states.²¹⁹ This time around, DNA and AUF had not officially signed on to the campaign, but AIS acted as an extension of the party's interests. Worth noting is that DNA was out of government for the first time since the early 1970s. Gro Harlem Brundtland was Prime Minister after Nordli's resignation earlier the same year up until the elections in September, but by the time the campaign was launched in October, a government under Prime Minister Kåre Willoch from the Conservative Party was running the country.²²⁰ This meant that while LO and AIS had been pushing Government for action previously, the organisations had no one representing them in the Ministries anymore.

Vetlesen only briefly touches upon the second campaign in her monograph, and there is not a substantial number of sources available on this in ARBARK, except the drafts mentioned above. The importance of the campaign should not be neglected, as the material did offer a new depth and made the situation of black workers in South Africa available to the Norwegian public for the first time. In the greater scheme of it all, "Frihet for det sørlige Afrika" did not stick out as a benchmark but rather showed that Southern Africa was an important concern to the labour movement.

²¹⁸ Vesla Vetlesen, *Sør-Afrikanske Arbeidere i Kamp for Faglige Rettigheter* (Arbeidernes Internasjonale Støttekomité (AIS), Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) & Norsk Folkehjelp, 1981), Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). The title translates to "South African Workers Fighting for Organizational Rights".

²¹⁹ *Beretning 1981*, Beretninger Fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1982), 220–21, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²²⁰ Olav Garvik and Harald Kjølås, 'Odvar Nordli', in *Store norske leksikon*, 25 August 2025, https://snl.no/Odvar_Nordli. Nordli resigned due to medical issues in February 1981.

The idea that it was a continuation of a campaign started in 1976 which never truly ended is supported by Vetlesen in her chapter in *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*. When discussing the launch of “Solidaritet med det sørlige Afrika” she states that “It was evident from the start that the campaign would have to be a long term one, and with varying levels of intensity it went on for nearly twenty years.”²²¹ Vetlesen does not elaborate on why it was “evident”. This could refer to a sense of importance, or even pessimism.

By the end of 1981, AIS had transferred NOK 1.1 million to the “non-racist labour movement in South Africa” through the ICFTU.²²² Further allocations were made to fundraising events in Norway, and the aforementioned first aid course in cooperation with the NPA and the DRC. NOK 50 000 was donated to SWAPO in 1981 as well, and the same report states that AIS had been “increasingly invested” in the liberation of Namibia in the last years.²²³ Over the next few years, the focus on Southern Africa would hone in on South Africa specifically, and Namibia would be considered a secondary priority. The annual report from 1982 states that a total of NOK 1 million was directed to South Africa through the ICFTU.²²⁴

5.2. Shifting focus in the early 1980s

5.2.1. The Polish workers’ crisis

The NPA, which held the secretariat of AIS in the early 1980s, were sidetracked in December 1981 due to its involvement with the ongoing “workers’ crisis” in Poland, referring to the introduction of martial law to tie down the labour movement’s uprising.²²⁵ Protests from the working class had been sweeping Poland already in the 1970s, because of high inflation rates,

²²¹ Vetlesen, ‘Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid’, 327.

²²² *Beretning 1981*, 200.

²²³ *Beretning 1981*, 201.

²²⁴ *Beretning 1982*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1983), 114, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²²⁵ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 24.

and a rise in “scepticism” towards the communist regime.²²⁶ In August 1980 the workers of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk went on strike and occupied the shipyard under the leadership of Lech Walesa. At first, the workers demanded pay raises and improved working conditions, but as more factories joined in on the protests, the demand came to include freedom of speech and organizing, and the release of political prisoners. The weakened regime met some of the demands since they had little choice.

After a few weeks the first free trade union, the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union Solidarity” (*Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy „Solidarność”*, NZSS) saw the light of day.²²⁷ Over the next year *Solidarity* gained ten million members and kept challenging the position of the regime. This eventually led to the USSR and other allied countries demanding Warsaw to take action. At the same time, the economic situation did not improve, and food became scarce, leading to rationing. In the end, the pressure to deal with the opposition resulted in the declaration of martial law on 13 December 1981. Five thousand leaders were arrested.²²⁸ As martial law struck Poland, Vetlesen was in Brussels taking part in a meeting of the ICFTU Coordinating Committee on South Africa, from 14 to 15 December, as per her report from the meeting from 4 January 1982.²²⁹

The NPA had been working with *Solidarity* during the food shortage, and aided with sending food to the hungry population, as a part of the campaign *Polen trenger ikke medlidenhet – Polen trenger mat*.²³⁰ With the introduction of martial law, the contact with

²²⁶ Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (Penguin Books, 2017), 510. The regime tried to work its way out of the financial crisis through loans from the West, but due to low possibilities to pay these back, all borrowing possibilities were shut down by 1977. The following year, the first Polish pope, John Paul II, was elected and visited his home country in 1979, which stirred up emotion in the highly catholic working class.

²²⁷ Westad, *The Cold War*, 511.

²²⁸ Hella Pick, ‘Poland Imposes Martial Law “to Avert Anarchy”’, World News, *The Guardian*, 14 December 1981.

²²⁹ Vesla Vetlesen, *Rapport Fra Møte i FFIs Koordinasjonskomité for Sør-Afrika, Brussel, 14.-15./12/81*, Report from meeting in the ICFTU Coordinating Committee on South Africa (Landsorganisasjonen i Norge - Internasjonal avdeling, 1982), KS/855, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²³⁰ “Poland does not need pity – Poland needs food”.

Solidarity was severed. NPA started working with the Catholic Church in Poland to help bring food in and started cooperating with LO and NKL in Norway.²³¹

By looking at Norwegian newspapers from December 1981, it is evident that the NPA was quick to reorganize its work in Poland. A few days before 13 December, the NPA had sent a truck with food which was reported to have arrived despite the ongoing situation. In an interview with *Nationen* from the following day, project leader at the NPA, Trond Larsen, stated that the aid to Poland was to continue exactly as before, but that one had to adapt to the new situation.²³² The cooperation with NKL had already been announced at that point. A joint statement by LO and DNA was published in the same issue of *Nationen*, in which LO condemns the situation, and expresses its support to the Polish labour movement.²³³

Shortly after, *Arbeidebladet* started publishing articles and advertisement calling for financial support to Poland and the fact that this happened in the weeks leading up to Christmas helped create a certain pathos. “Cut down on gifts and spend your money helping the Polish people!” read an article from 18 December.²³⁴ This was part of a campaign where Norwegians could purchase a gift card worth either NOK 50 or 100, which amounted to one “present” to a Polish family.²³⁵ The NPA also accepted direct monetary contributions, as announced in an ad in *Arbeiderbladet* from 22 December.²³⁶ By the end of the year, the NPA had collected donations amounting to NOK 2 million, of which a quarter had already been sent to Poland as food and medicine.²³⁷

²³¹ Norsk Folkehjelp, ‘Vår historie’.

²³² ‘Norsk Folkehjelps trailere vel framme’, Krisen i Polen, *Nationen* (Oslo), 15 December 1981, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

²³³ ‘LO Om Polen: -Løslat de Organiserte’, Krisen i Polen, *Nationen* (Oslo), 15 December 1981, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

²³⁴ ‘Du kan hjelpe et polsk barn’, Utenriks - Det Polske Drama, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 18 December 1981, Nasjonalbiblioteket. “Skjær ned på julegavene. Bruk heller pengene til å hjelpe folket i Polen!”

²³⁵ *Arbeiderbladet*, ‘Du kan hjelpe et polsk barn’. These presents, or packages, consisted of things like rice, flour, soap, vitamins, dry milk, etc. The words for “package” and “present”, in the context of Christmas, are the same in Norwegian (“pakke”).

²³⁶ ‘Norsk Folkehjelp Hjelper Polen’, Nytt, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 22 December 1981, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

²³⁷ ‘2 mill. til Polen’, Nytt, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 31 December 1981, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

Vetlesen does not emphasize whether LO was also involved with the new labour movement's development in Poland from 1980. A delegation from *Solidarity* visited LO in Norway in August 1981, and LO representatives took part in the *Solidarity* congress in Gdansk in October, only two months before martial law was implemented.²³⁸ The two organisations signed an agreement the same month, which included promises of the exchange of know-how and aid from the NPA. The NPA even visited Poland in December 1981.²³⁹ The coordination of aid was done by NPA, with support from LO.

It goes to show that the Norwegian labour movements eye on South Africa was also open for distraction, and one could argue that the fact that the Polish crisis was a “closer” one affected this. This assumption is in line with relevant discussions about Europeans taking crises on their own continent more seriously, since they are more relatable than events occurring “far away”. These accusations have even been made by the NPA themselves following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In an article published on the websites of the NPA, social anthropologist Heidi Mogstad pointed out the European hypocrisy of “welcoming Ukrainian refugees with open arms” but not seeming to care about African and Middle Eastern refugees.²⁴⁰ On the other side, statements like these can also be labelled as somewhat cynical, and the urgency of the developments in Poland in December 1981 must be taken into account. This is further backed by the fact the NPA was active in Poland before martial law and had to reorganize existing work.

Except for newspaper articles from the time available in the digital archive of *Nasjonalbiblioteket*, there are only marginal sources available on the NPA's work in Poland. Vetlesen only mentions this situation in a paragraph in her monograph, and on the NPA's

²³⁸ *Beretning 1981*, 216.

²³⁹ *Beretning 1981*, 216–17. The agreement consisted of nine points.

²⁴⁰ Heidi Mogstad, ‘I skyggen av Ukraina: Flyktningene vi ikke beskytter eller sørger over’, Norsk Folkehjelp, 28 August 2022, <https://folkehjelp.no/nyheter/i-skyggen-av-ukraina-flyktningene-vi-ikke-beskytter-eller-sorger-over>.

websites and encyclopaedia entries about the organisation the amount of information is equivalent.²⁴¹ There might be more material available in ARBARK, but I did not consult this as it was of lesser significance to the research. Regarding the role of LO, the annual report from 1981 is the only worthwhile source, which confirms that the organisation's part was secondary to that of the NPA.²⁴²

The annual report from 1982 illustrates that the attention Poland got affected the South Africa campaign, as alluded to by Vetlesen. In the chapter about AIS, the report states that the committee had "varying luck" when it came to the collection of donations to Southern Africa in the year. It even states that the fundraising activities for Poland were the most successful, while the Southern Africa campaign collected the least amount of money.²⁴³ The same paragraph also iterated that this is was not to be taken as a sign of the relevance of the different focus areas, and that every campaign had been successful in its own way.

5.2.2. Reorientation on Palestine

Around the same time as the Polish workers' crisis, LO experienced a turning point in the organisation's relation to the so-called Israel-Palestine conflict. This is a fitting illustration of the relation between LO and DNA on international matters, as the shift happened in coordination with the party's shift from a long-time supporter of the Israeli regime.

The party and the labour movement as whole had previously been critical of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine and considered "European assimilation" the most viable solution to the "Jewish problem" in Europe after the Second World War, but this attitude changed following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Worth pointing out is that Norway ended up voting in favour of the establishment of a parted Jewish and Arab country in

²⁴¹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 24; Kirkevold and Garvik, 'Norsk Folkehjelp'; Norsk Folkehjelp, 'Vår historie'.

²⁴² *Beretning 1981*, 217.

²⁴³ *Beretning 1982*, 91.

Palestine at the UN, in contrast to then the current political opinion of DNA.²⁴⁴ The general view that rose immediately after, across the political spectre and civil society, was one of support to Israel, though with conflicts on the issues within the Government and the MFA.²⁴⁵ While Christian and conservative groups saw the newly founded Jewish state as the fulfilment of Biblical prophecies, the labour movement witnessed the beginning of a “social democratic paradise” in Israel.²⁴⁶

A delegation of DNA politicians and LO representatives visited Israel in 1956 in preparation of a support campaign.²⁴⁷ The delegation’s statement after the visit reiterated the labour movement’s position in support of a promising social democracy “under existential threat”.²⁴⁸ The following campaign “La Israel leve!” was the first example of “mass mobilization campaign on an international issue not [directly affecting Norwegians]” in Norwegian history, according to historian Hilde Henriksen Waage.²⁴⁹ This was possible due to the party’s close relation both with the Israeli Labour Party and the Embassy in Oslo, whose lobbying attempts were more successful in Norway than in other Western European countries. Despite tensions between party leadership and forces within the MFA, the one-sided Middle Eastern policy would stay in place for the next two decades.

A gradual shift to a more critical stance on Israel started with the Six-Day-War in 1967, which prompted the political Left to reconsider who was the weak party in the conflict. AUF

²⁴⁴ Hilde Henriksen Waage, ‘How Norway Became One of Israel’s Best Friends’, *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 2 (2000): 190, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343300037002005>. For more on this, read other works by Waage. Waage is a Professor of History at the University of Oslo and Senior Researcher at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). She has researched Norway’s relation to Israel and Palestine for decades and written several critical monographs and articles on the creation of Israel and the Oslo accords

²⁴⁵ Waage, ‘How Norway Became One of Israel’s Best Friends’, 192–93.

²⁴⁶ Waage, ‘How Norway Became One of Israel’s Best Friends’, 199. “Just as in Norway, a social democratic party was in power in Israel. Even more so than in Norway, the trade unions had a dominant position and were in charge of a cooperative system which formed the basis for commercial life.”

²⁴⁷ ‘Norsk delegasjon til Israel’, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 21 February 1956, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

²⁴⁸ ‘La Israel leve!’, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 17 March 1956, Nasjonalbiblioteket, <https://www.nb.no/items/371af07319b9cdc011d91525734c526e?page=5&searchText=israel>.

²⁴⁹ Waage, ‘How Norway Became One of Israel’s Best Friends’, 204. The campaign title translates to “Let Israel Live!”

decided on resolutions in favour of the Palestinians in 1970, while the mother party remained in its previous position.²⁵⁰ The general public view on the conflict gradually changed over the next years, and a drastic political turn followed as well. In 1977 the Committee on Foreign Affairs at the Norwegian Parliament travelled to the Middle East, which made a lasting impact on the members. Especially the visit to a refugee camp outside Amman has been described as an eyeopener on the situation of the Palestinians.²⁵¹ Following other social democratic parties throughout Europe, notably in Sweden and Austria, DNA sought to consider the agency of Palestinians and establish connections to the Palestinian authorities. The intent to establish contact with the *Palestine Liberation Organization* (PLO) was confirmed at the annual national convention of DNA in 1981.²⁵²

As a reaction, LO also increased its activity in the region. In 1981, AIS donated NOK 25 000 to a refugee centre co-run by the PLO and the Red Crescent in southern Lebanon.²⁵³ Palestine also became more frequently discussed in the ICFTU and ILO after this point.²⁵⁴ LO established contact with the *Palestinian Trade Union Federation* (PTUF), which sent a delegation to Norway in March 1985.²⁵⁵ At the same time LO tried to maintain a relation to the Israeli trade union federation *Histadrut*, which was represented at the annual LO congress the same year.²⁵⁶ Activity concerning the Middle East does not frequent the annual reports much for the next years. The report from 1988 states that contact with the PTUF has increased, and

²⁵⁰ Hilde Henriksen Waage, 'Fra Israels til palestinernes beste venn?', *Internasjonal Politikk* 82, no. 2 (2024): 181, <https://doi.org/10.23865/intpol.v82.6474>.

²⁵¹ Waage, 'Fra Israels til palestinernes beste venn?', 182. The delegation included future conservative Prime Minister Kåre Willoch, who after his political career became an advocate for Palestinian rights.

²⁵² Waage, 'Fra Israels til palestinernes beste venn?', 184.

²⁵³ *Beretning 1981*, 220.

²⁵⁴ *Beretning 1982*, 127; *Beretning 1983*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1984), 80, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²⁵⁵ The PTUF is the forerunner to the modern day *Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions* (PGFTU).

²⁵⁶ *Beretning 1985*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1986), 57–58, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

that LO is working on efforts of trilateral negotiations with the PFTU and *Histasdrut*.²⁵⁷ AIS also upped its campaign work for workers on the West Bank.

While DNA started reorienting itself on the matter, the Conservative Party was split, and only few years later it went into Government with more Israel-friendly parties. In the early 1980s, Norway was one of the last European countries to recognize the PLO, and after a long process a PLO office was opened in Oslo in 1986.²⁵⁸ The eventually close relation between DNA and PLO was arguably the main reason for the back channel which was established in the run-up to the Oslo accords in the 1990s. Due to the war in Gaza following the attack 7 October 2023, Norway under DNA and Centre Party leadership recognized Palestinian statehood 28 May 2024.²⁵⁹

Norwegian policies regarding Palestine do not explicitly say anything about the labour movement's South Africa policy but shows how DNA could shift the union's priorities. Additionally, the solidarity with the Palestinians led to an increased complexity when it came to the administration of AIS's and LO's funding and campaigning activities. The Palestinian cause took up a larger part of the budget than South Africa towards the end of the campaigns, especially as the power of the apartheid regime dwindled. Also, Palestine continued to be a concern for LO beyond the end of apartheid and the closure of AIS up to the present day. When going through the annual reports, Palestine became an increased priority *after* the fall of apartheid and around the time of the Oslo Accords. In the 21st century Palestine remains one of the most important international issues of LO concern. An article published by the conservative Norwegian think tank *Civita* in 2025 describes the period after the Oslo Accords as one in

²⁵⁷ *Beretning 1988*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1989), 73, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²⁵⁸ Waage, 'Fra Israels til palestinerne beste venn?', 183–84.

²⁵⁹ Office of the Prime Minister, 'Norway Recognises Palestine as a State', Pressemelding, Government.No, regjeringen.no, 22 May 2024, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/whats-new/norway-recognises-palestine-as-a-state/id3040194/>.

which the “extreme Left” infiltrated the political decision making of LO.²⁶⁰ Rather than ideological radicalization, the reason is the continued need for solidarity in the Palestinian Territories, in contrast to South Africa which got its perceived “happy ending” in 1994. LO decided on a full boycott of Israel in at the annual congress in May 2017 and have continued to be vocal in its support following the war in Gaza.²⁶¹

Considering how social movements and solidarity actors relate to both South Africa and Palestine is interesting, given the historical ties of solidarity. According to Palestinian journalist Ramzy Baroud, “The Pro-Palestine movement in South Africa is one of the strongest and most vibrant in the world.”²⁶² Even the notion of apartheid has been attributed to Israel by a number of human rights organisations due to its actions towards the Palestinians, as the UN’s definition of apartheid is an “inhuman act committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group over another racial group and of systematically oppressing them.”²⁶³ In 2009, COSATU called Israel an apartheid state, and emphasised that the organisation had some authority on the matter.²⁶⁴

There is no source material suggesting that increased focus on Palestine in any way deviated LO from its South Africa focus. Rather, the early 1980s seem to be a period in which the political mission of the union was under pressure, and that the significant changes within DNA had an effect on LO. While in the case of South Africa, one can argue that LO was one

²⁶⁰ Torkel Brekke, ‘LOs og norsk Midtøsten-politikk’, *Civita*, 24 January 2025, <https://civita.no/notat/los-og-norsk-midtosten-politikk/>.

²⁶¹ Yngvild Mortensen, ‘Her er historien om sist gang LO ville boikotte et annet land’, *Nyheter, FriFagbevegelse*, 16 May 2017, <https://frifagbevegelse.no/nyheter/her-er-historien-om-sist-gang-lo-ville-boikotte-et-annet-land-6.158.466553.3c215e7267>.

²⁶² Ramzy Baroud, ‘Palestinian and South African Solidarity’, in *International Brigade Against Apartheid: Secrets of the People’s War That Liberated South Africa*, ed. Ronnie Kasrils (Jacana Media, 2021), 322.

²⁶³ Birgit Englert, ‘How Black–Palestinian Solidarity Challenges Discourses on Decolonisation and Why This Should Matter in Anti-Racism Debates in Austria’, *Stichproben - Wiener Zeitschrift Für Kritische Afrikastudien / Vienna Journal of African Studies* 22, no. 43 (2022): 97, https://doi.org/10.25365/phaidra.367_06. While the wording apartheid is still mainly associated with South Africa, the “crime of apartheid” was adopted by the UN in 1973.

²⁶⁴ Zwellinzima Vavi, ‘COSATU Leader Zwellinzima Vavi: Sanction and Boycott Apartheid Israel!’, *Links*, 2 January 2009, <https://links.org.au/node/856>.

of the forces moving DNA towards a more prone anti-apartheid position, LO's turn to supporting Palestine was rather a reaction to the party leadership's change of heart. It is also important to point out that Norway's significant shipping interests were a leading factor in staying in good relations with Israel in the post-war period, an issue which would resurface in relation to South Africa in the 1980s.²⁶⁵ There is some discussion as to whether LO was a trendsetter for a more Palestine friendly policy, or if this shift came about as part of a bigger movement. Overall, the policies of LO reflected those of the party, and there is no evidence suggesting that LO had noteworthy impact on the decision making of DNA in this matter.

5.3. The South(ern) African work force becomes political

5.3.1. Southern African Trade Union Coordination Council (SATUCC)

In addition to South Africa, LO had varying degrees of cooperation channels with the other liberation movements and unions in Southern Africa, though South Africa took up most of the attention. Norwegian engagement with the Portuguese colonies came to a halt when these gained independence in 1975. Botswana gained independence from British rule already in 1966, which is part of the reason why the country became a hub for the liberation movement in the neighbouring countries.

LO were somewhat involved in the liberation struggle in Southern Rhodesia, later Zimbabwe. The opposition led by Bishop Muzorewa was especially active in Scandinavia, and he even visited the LO headquarters in Oslo, though no official support was given to his movement. AIS however supported the two other liberation organisations, the *Zimbabwe African National Union* (ZANU) and the *Zimbabwe African People's Unions* (ZAPU). When

²⁶⁵ Waage, 'How Norway Became One of Israel's Best Friends', 193–94.

Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, LO engaged in a cooperation with the newly established *Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions* (ZCTU).²⁶⁶

LO and AIS supported SWAPO in Namibia as a part of the Southern Africa campaigns from the late 1970s until the mid-1980s. The relation to the affiliated *National Union of Namibian Workers* (NUNW) was comparable of that to SACTU, since the exiled union was a member of the WFTU and refused funding through the ICFTU. There was however less confrontation, and LO and NUNW maintained good relations until Namibia's independence in 1990, including support during the 1989 elections. Smaller unions which were part of NUNW did receive funding from LO from 1986, especially the *Mineworkers' Union of Namibia* (MUN).²⁶⁷ The Namibia Association of Norway (*Namibiaforeningen*) had their first base at LO's headquarters in Elverum and were active in providing medical aid to Namibian workers.²⁶⁸

On 1 April 1980, representatives from Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe came together in Lusaka to sign the *Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference* (SADCC) memorandum. This was a declaration of a common economic development between the Southern African states with a majority rule, which led to South Africa and Namibia being left out. Another aspect was the wish to counter South African financial dominance in the region. The organization was reorganized into the *Southern African Development Community* (SADC) in 1992, which is still active today.²⁶⁹

In 1982 ZCTU declared that the Southern African labour movement should form a cooperation union to gain influence in the region. Their colleagues in the neighbouring

²⁶⁶ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 105. Vetlesen does not go into much more detail about the nature of cooperation. Surely there are sources to back this up at ARBARK, but I was not looking for this at the time.

²⁶⁷ Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid', 349–50.

²⁶⁸ Østbye, 'Pioneering Local Activism', 363. The association still exists and still has its headquarters in Elverum.

²⁶⁹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 107.

countries agreed, and it was decided that a common secretariat for the labour movement in the nine SADCC countries was to be established in Zambia in 1982. This was supported by the ILO and the *Organisation of African Trade Union Unity* (OATUU). The formation did however not go fully to plan, as the OATUU declared at the annual ILO conference in Geneva 1982 that the founding conference should take place in Botswana, which led to heated discussions and the formation of the new organisation to be postponed.²⁷⁰

LO was tasked with gaining recognition for the new transnational trade union confederation from the ICFTU, whose member organisations were not immediately positive. The leadership argued that the Southern African trade union conglomerate could come to be dominated by the WFTU-affiliated National Union of Angolan Workers (*União Nacional de Trabalhadores Angolanos*, UNTA) and the “centralized” unions in Mozambique and Tanzania.²⁷¹ Norwegian LO received limited support in this matter from the Swedish Federation of Trade Unions (*Landsorganisaitonen i Sverige*, LO) the Danish Trade Union Confederation (*Landsorganisationen i Danmark*, LO) and the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (*Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging*, FNV), in addition to the American trade union conglomeration AFL-CIO (*American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations*).

After some complications, the founding congress of the *Southern African Trade Union Co-ordination Council* (SATUCC) took place in Gaborone in March 1983. It was financed by ILO, with some funding coming from LO. Malawian Chakuwfa Chihana, who had spent time in Norway, was elected “executive secretary”. SACTU and NUNW were granted observer status while their national liberation struggles were still ongoing. SATUCC was to be affiliated

²⁷⁰ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 108.

²⁷¹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 109. Only Botswana, Lesotho and Malawi had unions which were members of the ICFTU. The unions in Eswatini, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe were not affiliated with any international federation, while UNTA is still a member of the WFTU.

with the OATUU, even after the debacle at the ILO.²⁷² While the secretariat was first established in Gaborone, the headquarters would move to Lilongwe when Chihana was expelled from Botswana for having “too much of a political profile”.²⁷³ Chihana would go on to become second Vice President and later Minister of Agriculture in Malawi.²⁷⁴

The co-operation between LO and SATUCC was formalized in 1985. Discussions on this started already in 1983, during a visit by Vetlesen to Lusaka as LO’s representation to the SATUCC Committee meeting. In January 1984, Sandegren sent a letter to SATUCC, addressed to the *Botswana Federation of Trade Unions* (BFTU), declaring LO’s position on five items which had discussed in these previous meetings.²⁷⁵ First, the letter states that Sandegren would provide SATUCC with a document explaining the inner workings of the Council of Nordic Trade Unions (*Nordens Fackliga Samorganisations*, NFS) in detail, so the new organisation could learn from LO’s experience with transnational union cooperation.²⁷⁶ Second, it confirmed the intent to offer financial support to upcoming SATUCC conferences, but clarified in the third point that LO was not able to aid in the establishment of a secretariat in Gaborone. Fourth, Sandegren states that the organisation might be able to fund “expert assistance”, awaiting a more precise request. And lastly, the letter informs of the fact that Chihana had been granted a scholarship by LO to study “trade union cooperation in Southern Africa”.²⁷⁷

Shortly after, LO applied to NORAD for funding of SATUCC. The budget for SATUCC in the application was NOK 1 422 000, of which “expert economist” took up NOK 474 000 and “1 year of operation costs” NOK 947 000. LO requested a total NOK 1 129 000 from

²⁷² Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 109. ZCTU had to fight to get their will when it came to the choice of Secretary General. The result was well received by LO.

²⁷³ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 110.

²⁷⁴ Shola Adenekan, ‘Chakufwa Chihana’, News, *The Guardian*, 12 July 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/jul/13/guardianobituaries.mainsection>.

²⁷⁵ Kaare Sandegren, ‘Cooperation between SATUCC and LO-Norway’, Letter to Botswana Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU), with Vesla Vetlesen, 4 January 1984, 884/SATUCC VV/so, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). A similar letter was sent to an “A. Lungu” in Kitwe, Zambia.

²⁷⁶ Sandegren, ‘Cooperation between SATUCC and LO-Norway’. Vetlesen also confirms this in the monograph.

²⁷⁷ Sandegren, ‘Cooperation between SATUCC and LO-Norway’.

NORAD.²⁷⁸ How much of this was granted for 1984 is not clear, as there were no sources on this at ARBARK. However, two contracts regarding funding of SATUCC were found. The first contract is between LO and the Norwegian Ministry of Development Aid, signed by Halvorsen and Lasse Aasland, from 27 June 1985.²⁷⁹ The signed contract was sent from LO to the Ministry on 15 August 1985.²⁸⁰ A contract to SATUCC was sent out on the same day, and a copy of the unsigned contract is located in ARBARK. The first point of the contract states the general purpose, which includes “trustful cooperation” and “enabl[ing] SATUCC to fulfil its aims expressed in the SATUCC policy documents as known to LO.”²⁸¹ The remaining eleven points are detailed statements about transactions to SATUCC and demands for financial statements in return.²⁸²

As a part of his research, Chihana produced a report on a field trip through Southern Africa in the early autumn of 1984.²⁸³ In the report, he writes about Vetlesen’s visit to Maseru, Lesotho and the SATUCC conference in August. Chihana states that she was “well received”, and that she “add[ed] a new dimension to the conference”.²⁸⁴ Vetlesen also describes the meeting as successful in her own report from her extended visit to Southern Africa. She shared some of LO’s experience from working within the NFS, which was deemed useful in the

²⁷⁸ ‘Søknad om driftstøtte til SATUCC, regional faglig samorganisasjon for det sørlige Afrika’, Application for funding funding of SATUCC from LO to NORAD, 29 January 1984, 884/SATUCC, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²⁷⁹ Lasse Aasland and Tor Halvorsen, ‘Kontrakt mellom Departementet for utviklingshjelp og Landsorganisasjonen i Norge’, 27 June 1985, 884/SATUCC 1/1, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²⁸⁰ Kaare Sandegren, ‘Kontrakt om støtte til SATUCC’, Letter with signed contract from LO to Direktoratet for Utviklingshjelp, 15 August 1985, 884/SATUCC, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²⁸¹ Vesla Vetlesen, ‘Contract between Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions (LO-Norway) and Southern African Trade Union Coordinating Council (SATUCC)’, 15 August 1985, KS/855, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). The document was likely written by Vetlesen. The contract was to be signed by Halvorsen from LO, but there is no name stated as to who was supposed to sign the contract on behalf of SATUCC, only the title “president”.

²⁸² Vetlesen, ‘Contract between LO and SATUCC’. LO asked for financial statements to be handed over four times a year. They were also going to hire an economist for a two year period to assist the new organization.

²⁸³ Chakufwa Chihana, *Southern African Trade Union Field Report* (Botswana Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU), 1984), Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

²⁸⁴ Chihana, *Southern African Trade Union Field Report*, 3.

following discussions concerning increased independence from the OATUU.²⁸⁵ In his report, Chihana also expresses the wish to visit Norway, after being elected Executive Secretary at the next conference in October the same year.²⁸⁶ There are no records of a visit ever taking place.

Vetlesen states that LO remained the main financier of SATUCC with funding from NORAD, at least up until 1998 when the monograph was published. The state of the organisation was at that time one of chaos, due to several relocations and a decrease in political activity. According to later LO annual reports, especially after the end of apartheid, SATUCC would continue to have operational issues for at least another decade. The last mention of SATUCC in an annual report is from 1995, which states that “Continued support from LO will depend on whether the organisation is able to adequately handle its own finances.”²⁸⁷

5.3.2. Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)

The nature and impact of strikes in South Africa changed in the early 1980s. From 1973 to 1980 the annual number of striking workers was around 100 000, but whereas the strikes at first were generated by general issues and happened sporadically, the more concrete and political nature which characterized COSATU would emerge at the beginning of the 1980s. Strikes were tied to concrete demands and were used where negotiations did not have the desired effect.²⁸⁸

This shift was noticed by the regime, which was having an increasingly harder time to control the opposition and consolidate its power. In an attempt to calm the pressure, a new constitution was passed in 1983 in which coloured and Indian citizens were granted limited

²⁸⁵ Vesla Vetlesen, *Rapport fra besøk i Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe 22/8-7/9/84*, 884 VV/ml (Landsorganisasjonen i Norge - Internasjonal avdeling, 1984), 3, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK) (884 VV/ml). Vetlesen also attended a seminar in Zimbabwe and followed up a project in cooperation with the BFTU in Botswana during her trip.

²⁸⁶ Chihana, *Southern African Trade Union Field Report*, 5.

²⁸⁷ *Beretning 1995*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1996), 57, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). “En fortsatt støtte fra LO til [SATUCC] vil derfor være avhengig av hvorvidt organisasjonen kan vise til tilfredsstillende økonomistyring.”

²⁸⁸ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 57. Vetlesen speaks of a “new union discipline”.

democratic rights. This was still not the case for the black majority, so it was hardly a political reform.²⁸⁹ The attempt was met with mass protests, and the parliamentary elections of 1984 were boycotted by newly eligible voters. The following retaliation received significant attention in the media across the world and was such a disaster that the regime reached out to the imprisoned Nelson Mandela to negotiate.²⁹⁰ The *United Democratic Front* (UDF) was founded in 1983 as a reaction to the flawed constitution. This was a conglomeration of student organisations, Christian groups, local interest organisations, and a handful of unions. The UDF would closely align with the ANC, and work as its “right hand” in the coming years.²⁹¹

A call for union leadership to explicitly represent the black majority of the work force (and general population) had been made with the formation of CUSA, and FOSATU was now forced to consider this. Both organisations convened at a conference in Langa, Cape Town in August 1982. The objective was to work out a united response to the Wiehahn Commission. The conference in itself did not accomplish that much but set the tone for politicising the black work force of South Africa.²⁹² Around the same time, CUSA became a member of the ICFTU.

CUSA established the first new union for workers in the significant mining industry since 1946, the *National Union of Mineworkers* (NUM) in 1982. A young legal adviser at CUSA named Cyril Ramaphosa, who would go on to become secretary general of the ANC and eventually President of South Africa, was appointed leader of the new union.²⁹³ NUM became highly influential as big part of a bigger labour movement. During its first year the union counted 20 000 members, which rose to 110 000 already the following year.²⁹⁴ Vetlesen points out that when CUSA addressed the ICFTU for funding of NUM, this was “oddly enough” met with scepticism, and that the only member organisations showing support were

²⁸⁹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 57–58.

²⁹⁰ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 58.

²⁹¹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 58.

²⁹² Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 291.

²⁹³ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 291–92.

²⁹⁴ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 57.

LO and its Danish counterpart. Norwegian LO ended up being the sole provider of financial aid to the newly established union and transferred NOK 100 000 in 1983. This enabled CUSA to fund Ramaphosa's position, according to Vetlesen.²⁹⁵

On 29 November 1985, Ramaphosa opened a congress at the University of Natal in Durban to 760 representatives from 33 unions.²⁹⁶ This congress led to the establishment of the *Congress of South African Trade Unions* (COSATU) on 1 December 1985. In his speech, Ramaphosa spoke of the fact that South African workers and trade unions for many years had assumed that their main arena was "the shop floor," but that now, they had realized that "industrial issues are political issues" as well.²⁹⁷

The congress chose Elijah Barayi as their leader. Barayi was a founding member of SACTU in the 1950s, and had been the first president of the organisation, as well as vice president of NUM. He spoke of taking the highly political trade union congress in a socialist direction, vowing to nationalize the mining industry. The first vice president of COSATU was ex-president of FOSATU Chris Diamini, and second vice president was the president of the *South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union* (SACCAWU), Makhulu Ledwaba.²⁹⁸ 450 000 members who joined the congress during the first year.²⁹⁹

Besides NUM, the biggest trade union to initially join COSATU was FOSATU with its roughly 100 000 members. CUSA did not join COSATU, since its main difference from FOSATU, the requirement for exclusively black leadership, was not up for negotiation, and COSATU as well opted for a "non-racial ideology".³⁰⁰ Around half of the membership was from unions affiliated with the UDF. In March 1986 COSATU met with SACTU and the ANC

²⁹⁵ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 57.

²⁹⁶ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 292.

²⁹⁷ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 292.

²⁹⁸ 'A New Political Force', Labour, *Financial Mail* (Johannesburg), 6 December 1985, 41.

²⁹⁹ Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie*, 123.

³⁰⁰ *Financial Mail*, 'A New Political Force', 41.

in Lusaka, which resulted in a joint communique announcing that the organisations were in cooperation with each other.³⁰¹

CUSA had previously established an alliance with the likeminded *Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions* (AZACTU) which had been formed the previous year. An article titled “A new political force” in the *Financial Mail* on 6 December describes this as an “black consciousness alliance”.³⁰² This is because AZACTU was loosely affiliated with the *Azanian People’s Organisation* (AZAPO), which had been formed in 1978 to “revive the Black Consciousness movement” and around the mid 1980s was on bad terms with the UDF and the ANC.³⁰³ This likely affected CUSA’s decision to opt out of COSATU membership, with CUSA and AZACTU forming the *National Council of Trade Unions* (NACTU) the following year. The union had a relation to the PAC, but never any official ties to a political party. At its height in 1988, NACTU counted around 250 000 members.³⁰⁴

The assumed consequences of the formation of COSATU, as laid out in article in the *Financial Mail*, in a large sense came true. The first major strength demonstration came about in 1986. On 1 May over 1.5 million workers went on strike across the country.³⁰⁵ This was only the beginning, as South Africa would experience a total of 1148 “labour actions” in the following year.³⁰⁶ COSATU today makes the claim that the organisation was responsible for introducing May Day to South Africa a century after its inception in the US, and making it a public holiday.³⁰⁷

1986 was when NUM would attempt to show its strength in numbers, when it launched a strike on 9 August demanding a 30% pay raise for its workers, given that their wages had not

³⁰¹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 63.

³⁰² *Financial Mail*, ‘A New Political Force’, 41.

³⁰³ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 270. Desmond Tutu had arranged a peace agreement between the UDF and AZAPO in May 1985, but there was naturally still some tension.

³⁰⁴ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 63.

³⁰⁵ Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie*, 125.

³⁰⁶ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 292.

³⁰⁷ ‘Formation of COSATU’, COSATU, accessed 3 October 2025, <https://mediadon.co.za/formation-of-cosatu/>.

increased sufficiently relative to the consumer price index in the last decade.³⁰⁸ However, a total of over 50 000 miners would be fired over the course of three weeks after failing to meet their employers' counteroffers. NUM settled on 28 August by accepting the Chamber of Mines' original offer, but added better holiday and death benefits, and most of the fired workers would return to their jobs. NUM argued for the settlement by stating that it was more important to preserve the union's structure than to "have the entire membership fired".³⁰⁹ There was a great deal of animosity towards workers who had not joined in on the strikes, and they would get targeted by returning strikers. According to the *Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company* (JCI), at least 33 miners had been killed because of the resentment since the settlement.³¹⁰ The strike led to some improvements, but the cost of it can hardly be labelled a success and marked a decline in labour actions within the mining industry for the next years. In February 1988, the South African government-imposed restrictions on organizational rights, which affected 18 organizations, including COSATU. This included limitations on participation in public events and the allowance to conduct interviews.³¹¹

LO was quick to congratulate the newly emerged union. A telegram was addressed to Ramaphosa under the address "Congress convenor, Inaugural congress, c/o/ NUM, Lekton House, 5 Wanderers Street, Johannesburg 2001, South Africa" on 26 November 1985, in which Vetlesen and Halvorsen extended their congratulations on the inauguration congress of COSATU. The letter reads:

"Dear friends,

³⁰⁸ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 292. "The union's argument was that while the minimum wage had risen from R 57,20 to R 228 between 1975 and October 1986, the consumer price index had risen from 56,6 to 228,4, meaning that there had been no increase in real terms. The inflation rate in 1987 was 17 %. During the 1987 wage negotiations, the Chamber of Mines had offered rises ranging from 15 to 23,4 %."

³⁰⁹ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 292–93.

³¹⁰ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 293.

³¹¹ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 309.

The Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions extends warmest greetings to the inauguration congress of the new national trade union center to be formed.

We see your congress as a great step forward in uniting the labour movement in South-Africa.

We assure you of our continuing support in your efforts to improve the workers['] conditions and beating apartheid.”³¹²

The stamp on the exemplar at ARBARK says “Outgoing Telex”, but the word “telex” has been crossed out and replaced with “telegram”. There are also several scribbles on it, including “Blue. Copy: V. V.” and “Øyvind Hansen, statement!”, the latter signed with “VV 2/12/85”.³¹³ This presumably means that Vetlesen either deemed the text fit for a statement release or wished Hansen to prepare one related to the congress.

It is noteworthy that the letter from LO was sent out three days before the congress started, and that the scribbles on the document suggest the preparation of a statement on 2 December, meaning, that LO was aware of the formation of COSATU already the following day. LO participated in a coordination meeting at the ICFTU in Brussels on 7 November 1985, shortly before the congress, in which the reorganisation of the South African labour movement was discussed. The leaders of NUM, CUSA, FOSATU and the *Media Workers' Association of South Africa* (MWASA) were all present at the meeting.³¹⁴ The notes from LO's representative at the congress sums up the most important information, like the fact that the congress was to be held 29 November to 2 December, that they expected a member count of 400 000, that many unions were affiliated with the UDF, and that CUSA would not join the union.³¹⁵ With regards to the relationship between COSATU and CUSA, the notes state that there did not seem to be any major points of conflict between the two unions, that they “vaguely stick to the different

³¹² Tor Halvorsen and Vesla Vetlesen, Telegram to Cyril Ramaphosa, 26 November 1985, VV/2/12, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

³¹³ Halvorsen and Vetlesen, Telegram to Ramaphosa, 26 November 1985. “Blå. Kopi: V. V.”, “Øyvind Hansen, pressemelding!”. VV refers to Vetlesen. It is not clarified who Øyvind Hansen is.

³¹⁴ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 59.

³¹⁵ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 59–60. Vetlesen does not mention who the LO delegate to the meeting was.

political paths as laid out by the ANC and the PAC”, and that all organisations had seemingly moved in a more political direction.³¹⁶

The news of the newly established trade union confederation quickly spread to Norwegian officials as well. On 6 December 1985, the Norwegian General Consulate in Cape Town sent a report titled “Sør-Afrika. Opprettelsen av den nye fagorganisasjonen Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)” to the MFA in Oslo.³¹⁷ It was written by functioning General Consul, Odd Gunnar Skagestad. The report notably referred to two articles attached and was not based on meetings between diplomatic representatives and the South African labour movement. The report informed about the formation and the expected impact of COSATU in South African society:

“It seems obvious that COSATU’s ambition in a sense is to take the lead in the country’s ‘black’ political opposition, most of all in the battle against the apartheid system. This could assumingly lead to a more disciplined – but not likely more compromise-willing – policy than what has been on display in the black ‘townships’ during the turmoil of the last 15 months.”³¹⁸

The main objective of the report, being directed to the political leadership in Oslo, was to convey the impact COSATU might have on South African politics and bilateral relations. These points are primarily based on one of the attached articles, the article in the *Financial Mail*.³¹⁹ It describes the inauguration as a success, but lays out some potential challenges to come, like ideological differences between the major unions within COSATU. The article deemed that a successful COSATU could change the “future of militant black politics as a whole” and that

³¹⁶ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 60.

³¹⁷ Odd Gunnar Skagestad, *Sør-Afrika. Opprettelsen av den nye fagorganisasjonen Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)*, Report from the Royal Norwegian Consulate General in Cape Town to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Cape Town, 1985), 228 GK 4.12.85., Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). Translates to “South Africa. Founding of the new labour organisation [COSATU]”.

³¹⁸ Skagestad, *Opprettelsen av COSATU*, 1. “Det synes klart at COSATU's ambisjoner i så måte er å ta ledelsen i landets ‘sorte’ opposisjonspolitik, herunder fremfor alt motstandskampen mot apartheidsystemet. Dette antas i så fall å kunne medføre en mer disiplinert- men neppe mer kompromissvillig - politikk enn den som i de siste 15 måneder er kommet til uttrykk i de vedvarende uroligheter i Sør-Afrikas sorte ‘townships’.”

³¹⁹ *Financial Mail*, ‘A New Political Force’.

unionizing might make the movement more organized and focused, and by extension successful.³²⁰ For this goal to be reached, the article argues, the leadership would have to focus its ideological standpoint and come up with serious economic prospects and programmes, which some deemed to be lacking in the affiliated UDF.

The other article included was “Super-fed” from the newspaper *The Citizen*, published 4 December. Skagestad described the article as being more regime friendly.³²¹ It does not directly criticize the formation of COSATU, but expresses concerns regarding the congress’ attitude towards the established regime and a wish that the congress will not “come into open confrontation with the state”.³²² The article quotes Barayi saying that COSATU will fill the vacuum left by the banning of the ANC, which the author deems “a clear indication of where his sympathies lie.”³²³ The article attempts not to show any opposition to the formation of a black trade union congress, rather emphasizing several times over that it would be “nice” if COSATU rather concentrated on the improvement of the work and general life of its members, ignoring that this was a necessarily political problem due to the racial dimension of the South African labour market.³²⁴

The ideology of COSATU was not only at odds with CUSA, but also more aggressively left leaning than that of FOSATU, which was dissolved into COSATU. From the get-go, COSATU was calling for foreign disinvestment in South Africa.³²⁵ This would noticeably play out with regards to the organisation’s relation to the ICFTU. The international organisation did not have a clear ideology, but was dominated by Western unions, whose interests aligned with

³²⁰ *Financial Mail*, ‘A New Political Force’, 41–42.

³²¹ Skagestad, *Opprettelsen av COSATU*, 2.

³²² ‘Super-Fed’, Comment, *The Citizen* (Johannesburg), 4 December 1985, 6, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

³²³ *The Citizen*, ‘Super-Fed’, 6.

³²⁴ *The Citizen*, ‘Super-Fed’, 6. “It would be nice to think that [COSATU] will make the protection of the interests of the workers its chief concern [...]” “The sooner the issue of Black involvement in the decision-making process is resolved, the better it will be for everyone, especially the Black workers whose priority should be jobs, better pay and an all-round improvement of their quality of life.”

³²⁵ *Financial Mail*, ‘A New Political Force’, 42.

their respective home countries. While the South African regime was supported by the West, the black opposition was not aligned within the East-West dimension of the Cold War, and there was therefore no obvious reason to cooperate with the ICFTU over the WFTU. This had been an issue when it came to Western support to SACTU in the past, and friendly unions like LO were eager to use the ICFTU as a platform for support.

Skagestad summed up expectations towards the relations between COSATU and the ICFTU in the report from December 1985.

“Among the more controversial points which COSATU’s leadership still needs to make a decision on, the question regarding connections to the international labour movement remains one of the most potent. One of COSATU’s largest member organisations, the *South African Allied Workers’ Union* (SAAWU) has proposed that COSATU needs to distance itself (and refuse funding from) [the ICFTU], which is being accused of ‘undermining’ and ‘imperialism’.”³²⁶

This differs from LO’s report from the ICFTU meeting in November, in which the delegate noted that there were no reasons to believe that COSATU would not maintain good relations with the ICFTU.³²⁷ The allegations from COSATU towards the ICFTU were baseless, according to Vetlesen, and rooted in an ideological scepticism inherited from previous SACTU members. It is worth noting that in contrast to SACTU, COSATU did not align with the WFTU.³²⁸

The accusations of “undermining and imperialism” were especially rooted in the significant position of the American trade union conglomeration AFL-CIO within the ICFTU,

³²⁶ Skagestad, *Opprettelsen av COSATU*, 1–2. “Blant kontroversielle saker som det gjenstår for COSATU’s ledelse å ta stilling til, nevnes spesielt spørsmålet om forbindelsene med internasjonal fagbevegelse. Det opplyses således at en av COSATU’s største medlemsorganisasjoner, [SAAWU] har fremmet forslag om at COSATU må markere avstand til (og avslå å motta penger fra) [ICFTU], som beskyldes for ‘undergravingsvirksomhet’ og ‘imperialisme’.”

³²⁷ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 60. “Alt tyder på at den nye organisasjonen COSATU vil opprettholde gode samarbeidsforbindelser med FFI.”

³²⁸ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 62.

whose anti-communist ideology was widely known.³²⁹ A further cause for internal strife with the American union was the alleged connection between the CIO and the *Inkhata Freedom Party* (IFP), a Zulu nationalist movement which cooperated with the apartheid regime. The accusations were disputed by AFL-CIO, but there was no denying that the organisation had awarded a price to IFP's leader Mangosuthu Buthe in 1982 and were present at the founding congress of the IFP's own trade union *United Workers' Union of South Africa* (UWUSA) in 1986.³³⁰

After the formation of COSATU, the ICFTU leadership called a meeting of the Coordinating Committee on Southern Africa in March 1986 to discuss the status quo. The meeting was opened by a statement by Secretary General of the ICFTU, Johnny Vanderveken, in which he stated that COSATU was in fact refusing any funding from the organisation. The reason given by COSATU was that they were unwilling to receive money from "bad" organisations within the ICFTU, referring to the AFL-CIO, and only accepted direct funding from unions they could trust. This prompted backlash from the organisation itself, as Vanderveken in his statement told the committee that he refused to let an "outsider" cause division within the ICFTU by deciding which members were "good" or "bad". A representative from the AFL-CIO recommended that COSATU give the decision some time, assuming that the organisation would be in need of funding at some point anyway.³³¹

In the same meeting, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish LO, as well as the FNV, argued that one should respect COSATU's decision and show its support to the organisation. They also iterated that there should be no delaying the financial support should the organisation have a change of heart, since this would only benefit the apartheid regime. Because of this, the

³²⁹ Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid', 337. The two separate American organisations AFL and CIO merged in 1955. AFL-CIO had also recently rejoined the ICFTU, after leaving the organization in the period 1969-82.

³³⁰ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 61. Buthe was awarded the AFL-CIO's "George Meany Human Rights Award".

³³¹ Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid', 337.

Scandinavian and Dutch trade unions initiated direct funding as per COSATU's wish in the week following the meeting, by organising a "donor group" which reported to the Coordinating Committee of the ICFTU.³³² The group was joined by Finland shortly after. The secretariat function was passed around between the members.

The donor group too was met with initial criticism from other national trade unions, including the *Canadian Labour Congress* (CLC), which iterated that a compromise would have been possible if the Scandinavian and Dutch unions had not been so "eager" to accept COSATU's conditions.³³³ The unions affiliated with the donor group were the most significant contributors to the ICFTU's South Africa assistance programme, only surpassed by the *European Communities* (EC). By the mid 1980s, the annual funding from LO was between NOK 15 and 20 million, 12-15% of the total amount.³³⁴ Additional tension within the ICFTU, and by extension with COSATU, arose because of LO's strict reporting regime, which delayed funding, but according to Vetlesen was a necessity due the significant amount of funding and the fact that they came from official sources.³³⁵

Following the South African government's declaration of national emergency in 1986, which was partly a response to the significant protests from the labour movement, Sandegren visited South Africa on behalf of LO in his capacity as international secretary. Sandegren was in South Africa as a part of a bigger delegation from the ICFTU, which is why he was granted access. The purpose of the visit was to convey the ICFTU's opinions on apartheid to the regime, as well as meeting the trade unions present in the country.³³⁶ The delegation met with COSATU and CUSA, as well as NUM and other smaller organisations, Desmond Tutu and Winnie

³³² Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid', 337–38.

³³³ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 61.

³³⁴ Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid', 338. Roughly between EUR 1,3 and 1,7 million by current rates.

³³⁵ Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid', 338.

³³⁶ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 64.

Mandela.³³⁷ Another aspect which affected the possibility of visiting South Africa was that SACTU, whose leadership was in exile, had criticized any attempts of this previously, deeming it equal to legitimizing the regime.³³⁸ This changed with COSATU. Sandegren arguably might have been able to obtain a tourist visa, but according to Vetlesen it was always LO's intention to be open about their work and intentions and not take part in secret activities as Norwegian representatives.³³⁹

While LO might have played with open cards, there were Norwegian citizens more directly involved in the resistance movement in South Africa. One such example is Gunvor Elida Andresen, who was working for NORAD in Botswana, coordinating the activities of the Peace Corps from the Norwegian Embassy in Gaborone. Without South African or Norwegian authorities knowing, she used her house in Gaborone to house the South African opposition, including Chris Hani and Thentjiwe Mtintso. She also took part in smuggling weapons, people and informational materials for the ANC, putting her own career at risk. It took many years before Andresen's work became public knowledge, and she passed away prior to this. Mtintso and James Ngculu mention her in their chapter in *International Brigade Against Apartheid*.³⁴⁰ *Panorama Nyheter*, a Norwegian magazine focusing on humanitarianism and development aid, published an extensive piece on Andresen's story in 2023.³⁴¹

³³⁷ *Beretning 1986*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1987), 60, 74, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). The other unions participating in the delegation were AFL-CIO, the British *Trade Union Congress* (TUC) and the German Trade Union Confederation (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, DGB).

³³⁸ Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid', 333–34.

³³⁹ Vetlesen, 'Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid', 333.

³⁴⁰ Thenjiwe Mtintso and James Ngculu, 'The Botswana Front and Solidarity', in *International Brigade Against Apartheid: Secrets of the People's War That Liberated South Africa*, ed. Ronnie Kasrils (Jacana Media, 2021), 143–44.

³⁴¹ Jan Speed and Kine Kjær, 'Den ukjente historien om en norsk kvinnes bidrag til frihetskampen: – Hun levde farlig. Veldig farlig', *Panorama Nyheter*, 5 October 2023, <https://www.panoramanyheter.no/apartheid-diplomati-sor-afrika/den-ukjente-historien-om-en-norsk-kvinnes-bidrag-til-frihetskampen-hun-levde-farlig-veldig-farlig/343553>. The magazine was formerly known as *Bistandsaktuelt*.

5.4. The third AIS campaign “Frihet for Sør-Afrika” 1985

5.4.1. Relaunch

The campaign was relaunched, or continued, in 1985 under the new parole “Freedom for South Africa”. As the name change suggests, this campaign was specifically focused on South Africa, as the greater liberation struggle for Southern Africa was deemed “over”. The focus was not solely on South Africa, as some of the funding was directed to the Namibian liberation struggle, and AIS was contributing to fund projects in cooperation with SWAPO. The campaign officially lasted from the end of 1985 up until the summer of 1986.

After a dip in involvement and funding for South Africa in 1982, the numbers went up the following year. The annual report from 1983 is less focused on South Africa, and the information about the country’s labour movement is almost identical to that of 1982, with updated numbers. The intention of pressuring the Norwegian government and other UN members for an oil embargo is again emphasized, alluding that little has changed since the previous year.³⁴² NOK 50 000 had been allocated directly to the ANC, and NOK 30 000 to the PAC, while 1 653 000 was “left for the labour movement in South Africa” to be distributed by the ICFTU.³⁴³

These numbers increased further in 1984, but the unequal priorities of the ANC and PAC became evident, with a grant of NOK 100 000 to the former and NOK 25 000 to the latter, in addition to NOK 1.6 million to the trade unions through the ICFTU.³⁴⁴ Generally, South Africa takes up more space in the annual report from 1984. The chapter “South Africa – apartheid” describes the development of the South African labour movement as positive, and that LO had made new efforts to pressure the government towards a trade boycott.³⁴⁵ This

³⁴² *Beretning 1983*, 104–5.

³⁴³ *Beretning 1983*, 114.

³⁴⁴ *Beretning 1984*, *Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO)* (Oslo, 1985), 98–99, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

³⁴⁵ *Beretning 1984*, 105.

increased pressure on its own government can be seen in combination with a similar pressure on the West as whole in the ILO. This is emphasized in a report from the 20th meeting in the ILO's working committee on apartheid, attached in the annual LO report from 1984.³⁴⁶

The decision to launch the new campaign was made in the spring of 1985 and started in December the same year. Close to NOK 400 000 had been collected already before the campaign started.³⁴⁷ A new development was the fact that the secretariat of AIS was moved from the NPA to the international department of LO.³⁴⁸ LO also decided to hire more full time positions to the secretariat, signalling an increased focus on international matters, of which South Africa at this point was the most potent. NORAD provided two officers working on humanitarian matters as part of a new agreement with the agency, and an additional administrative assistant was hired.³⁴⁹ The allocation to the South African labour movement through the ICFTU stayed the same in 1985. LO also donated NOK 100 000 to the ANC, NOK 150 000 to NUM and NOK 50 000 to SATUCC.³⁵⁰ The PAC was no longer object to direct funding from LO.

The formula for the campaign was unchanged in its core. The main objective was still to raise funds and spread information. An increased focus was put on the ANC as a beneficiary, as well as the release of political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, whose cult of personality was turning into a symbol of the liberation struggle. At this point, Mandela had been imprisoned for over 20 years, and as part of the campaign, LO launched the option of sending a personalized post card to Mandela on Robben Island. The post cards read:

“Dear Nelson Mandela. Please accept from a friend in the Norwegian labour movement the best wishes for your future. I want you to know that I work for your immediate release as well as for

³⁴⁶ Karl Nandrup Dahl, *Rapport Fra Arbeidskonferansens Spesielle Komite Vedr. Apartheidpolitikk i Sør-Afrika* (LO, 1984), 126–27, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

³⁴⁷ *Beretning 1985*, 74.

³⁴⁸ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 25.

³⁴⁹ *Beretning 1985*, 153.

³⁵⁰ *Beretning 1985*, 76.

release of all other political and trade union prisoners in South Africa. [...] Best regards [*name of sender*].”³⁵¹

70 000 of these post cards were issued, and the plan was to send these to South Africa already in December 1985. Ironically, the post card stunt had to be postponed, as it coincided with an international post- and telegraph boycott against South Africa. The thousands of cards had to wait at the post office for a few months, before they were sent to Mandela in the early winter of 1986.³⁵²

The printing of informational material started right away, and the usual leaflets and brochures were first distributed in the beginning of 1986.³⁵³ The artist Tonje Strøm was behind the visual profile.³⁵⁴ A special issue of AIS’s own magazine, *AIS-Bulletin*, was dedicated to the campaign, and published in December 1985.³⁵⁵ The front page of the notice was a picture of Nelson Mandela’s wife Winnie raising her fist to the sky. The headline reads “Sør-Afrika – i våre hender”.³⁵⁶ Smaller pictures of protests and police brutality frame the front page. Underneath is a short text, stating that Mandela has become a symbol of the struggle against apartheid, and urges the reader to show their solidarity so the South African population can “raise their fists” (Attachment III).

Two other notable examples of the campaign material are the posters made by Strøm. One of them is on the cover of Vetlesen’s monograph and was a part of the 1986 Oslo Poetry Festival. It is a charcoal drawing of a person on a white background but framed in black. Underneath is a quote by the African-American author and activist James Baldwin, saying: “The people who once walked in darkness are no longer prepared to do so.” Under the quote,

³⁵¹ Vetlesen, ‘Trade Union Support to the Struggle Against Apartheid’, 335.

³⁵² Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 25.

³⁵³ *Beretning 1985*, 74. According to the annual report from 1985 the material had been produced by the end of the year and was ready for distribution in the first week of the following year.

³⁵⁴ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 25.

³⁵⁵ *Beretning 1985*, 77; *Beretning 1986*, 155.

³⁵⁶ ‘Sør-Afrika - i våre hender’, *AIS-Bulletin*, 1985, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). “South Africa – In our hands”.

“Frihet for Sør-Afrika” is written in bold, red letters.³⁵⁷ The poster was printed on the front page of a campaign report by LO’s youth committee, archived at ARBARK (Attachment IV).³⁵⁸ The other poster is a picture of a black man wearing no shirt, with another quote by Baldwin written in white across his chest. The quote reads: “The white man’s sun has set, period.” The man has a shadowy figure standing behind him and a black frame around him. Several scribbles and the words “*apartheid er død*” are written on the frame, with the name of the campaign and the logo for AIS placed underneath (Attachment V).³⁵⁹

The single event of the campaign that drew the most attention was Zenani Dhlamini’s lecture in Oslo on 27 January 1986, arranged by AIS in cooperation with NOCOSA and the Norwegian Churches’ Council for Ecumenical and International Relations (*Mellomkirkelig Råd*, CEIR).³⁶⁰ Dhlamini urged Norwegian politicians to boycott the South African regime already upon arrival at Oslo Airport the day before, where she was received by Sandegren and Deputy Leader of LO Leif Haraldseth in addition to a crowd of reporters.³⁶¹ LO was however not willing to commit to a policy of complete boycott, as per the press conference leading up to the seminar.³⁶² When asked about this, Sandegren stated that LO wanted to initiate a public registry for oil shipments to South Africa, and added that “This is not a full boycott, but it is a step in the right direction.” (see chapter 5.5.)³⁶³ At the same press conference, AAM activist Abdul Minty was asked about the consequences of a full boycott for countries supporting the liberation struggle, upon which he answered that this was indeed a problem, but urged to put

³⁵⁷ Tonje Strøm, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika for Oslo Poesifestival*, 1986, Poster, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK), AAB/ARK-1579/E/Ec/L0015/0009.

³⁵⁸ Jan Lajord, *Rapport fra aksjon ‘Frihet for Sør-Afrika’ 1986* (LOs ungdomsutvalg, 1986), Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

³⁵⁹ Tonje Strøm, *Apartheid Er Død*, 1985, Poster, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK), AAB/ARK-1579/E/Ec/L0015/0009. “Apartheid is dead.”

³⁶⁰ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 26. Dhlamini is the daughter of Winnie and Nelson Mandela.

³⁶¹ Lone Hansen, ‘Prinsesse Zenani i Norge: -Boikott Sør-Afrika’, Reportasje, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 27 January 1986, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

³⁶² *Foreløpig program ved Zenani Dlamini besøk*, 872.31 VB/ml (Arbeiderbevegelsens Internasjonale Støttekomité (AIS), 1986), 822.2, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). The press conference was held at *Folkets Hus* at 12:00 Monday 27 January, before the seminar at *Arbeidersamfunnet* at 19:30.

³⁶³ ‘-Løslat min far!’, Reportasje, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 28 January 1986, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

an emphasis on the moral aspect.³⁶⁴ While the lecture was the initial reason for the visit to Norway, Dhlamini met with other organisations and high ranking individuals, including Brundtland, Willoch and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sverre Strøm.³⁶⁵ The lecture at Oslo Arbeidersamfunn was attended by over 600 people.³⁶⁶

5.4.2. Success

The annual report from 1986 underlines that South Africa had become a focus area, which was happening in correlation with increased contact between LO and the South African labour movement. In the chapter concerning AIS, the report states that the organisation has “concentrated” its efforts as much as possible to “gain the most out of limited resources.”³⁶⁷ The report also states that the solidarity work of AIS has increased the committee’s political profile, by being in line with the “general politics of the labour movement” and promoting human rights and democracy.³⁶⁸ It is not clear why AIS was supposedly “less political” before the mid 1980s, since it was always made up of organisations belonging to the labour movement and with affiliations to DNA.

Some reorganisations occurred within the international department of LO, which did affect AIS, but mostly with regards to continuity. The annual report from 1986 does allude to the fact that there has been a debate with regards to the organising and extent of solidarity and development aid within the Norwegian labour movement as a whole, which could mean that the South Africa question was to be more closely tied to the politics of DNA.³⁶⁹ Another major

³⁶⁴ Ole Kristian Lunde, ‘Mandelas datter i Norge: -Min far vil snart bli løslatt’, *Nytt, Nationen* (Oslo), 28 January 1986, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

³⁶⁵ Hansen, ‘Prinsesse Zenani i Norge’.

³⁶⁶ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 26.

³⁶⁷ *Beretning 1986*, 84. “AIS har i 1986 fulgt opp prinsippet om å konsentrere innsatsen mest mulig for å få størst mulig effekt av begrensede midler.”

³⁶⁸ *Beretning 1986*, 84. “For AIS har konsekvensen i støttearbeidet bidratt til å skape en politisk profil. Støtten gis i samsvar med arbeiderbevegelsens generelle politikk, og bidrar til å fremme utvikling av demokrati og menneskerettigheter.”

³⁶⁹ *Beretning 1986*, 84. “I 1986 er det blitt innledet en omfattende debatt om hvordan bistands og solidaritetsarbeidet innen arbeiderbevegelsen best kan organiseres.”

change with this campaign was that the secretariat of AIS was moved from the NPA to LO's international department. A full time "campaign secretary", Vidar Bjørnstad, was hired on a project basis for the duration of the campaign.³⁷⁰

A summation of the campaign is also found in the annual report from 1986, which states that "Frihet for Sør-Afrika" could "undoubtedly be described as AIS' most successful campaign" up until then.³⁷¹ In total, the campaign received donations worth NOK 1 272 421, stemming from sale of merchandise as well as individual donations from local trade unions across the country. NOK 50 000 were earmarked to back up AIS's application to the MFA for funding to COSATU, NOK 11 000 to SWAPO and NOK 200 000 to the NPA and projects in cooperation with the ANC. NOK 239 558 was left for "ANC projects", and the remaining funds were set aside for "further funding of the South African labour movement".³⁷² The subchapter dedicated to the campaign refers to a substantial report written by Bjørnstad, but this one was not to be found in ARBARK.³⁷³

Once again, whether *Frihet for Sør-Afrika* should be considered a new campaign or a revamping of a continuous effort can be debated. In any case, it signalled a renewed priority when it came to LO and AIS' international outlook. The reorganisation of the South African labour movement and the attention it got is likely the leading reason for this. The start of the campaign happened around the same time as the launch of COSATU, marking a change in the political purpose of the labour movement.

³⁷⁰ *Beretning 1986*, 86.

³⁷¹ *Beretning 1986*, 86. "Aksjon 'Frihet for Sør-Afrika' kan uten tvil betegnes som den mest vellykkede aksjon AIS har gjennomført."

³⁷² *Beretning 1986*, 86.

³⁷³ *Beretning 1986*, 87.

5.5. Oil and sanctions

5.5.1. Norway fuelling apartheid

The DNA led government imposed different types of sanctions on South Africa up until 1981, in line with the policy partly coordinated with LO. Oil shipments were a matter seemingly more complicated to act on, since a significant part of the Norwegian labour force was working within oil and shipping. According to Arne Tostensen, shipping is one of three main pillars of Norway-Africa relations throughout history, next to whaling and missioning.³⁷⁴ Shipments of oil to South Africa had been “frowned upon” since the 1970s, but no law opposing this had been implemented. Instead, the Nordli Government made a sort of “gentleman’s agreement” with the Norwegian oil companies in 1979, which implied that no Norwegian oil was to be shipped to South Africa.³⁷⁵ At the same time, there was a legal loophole due to the lack of restrictions on the shipment of oil not originating in Norway by Norwegian companies.³⁷⁶

This loophole was exposed in a report by the Amsterdam-based *Shipping Research Bureau* (SRB) in 1980, which had been researching the origins of oil tankers docking in South Africa during 1979 and 1980. The report revealed that the Norwegian ship “Havdrott” had made at least two trips to South Africa during this period, possibly up to twelve, none of which had been registered.³⁷⁷ This was not the first time Norwegian oil shipments to South Africa had been reported, as the SV-affiliated newspaper *Ny Tid* in October 1979 published an article about two Norwegian oil tankers which had delivered crude oil the same summer.³⁷⁸ This time around the issue received public attention.

³⁷⁴ Arne Tostensen, ‘Norway’s Africa Policy’, in *The Nordic Countries and Africa - Old and New Relations*, ed. Lennart Wohlgemuth (Nordic Africa Institute, 2002), 34. All three “pillars” have been especially important when it comes to modern day South Africa. Norway also has a “problematic” history when it comes to whaling.

³⁷⁵ Imad, ‘Arbeidsfolk, slå lag!’, 46.

³⁷⁶ Eriksen and Krokan, ‘Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine’, 194.

³⁷⁷ Eriksen and Krokan, ‘Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine’, 194–95. The report was a special report on Norwegian ships, published 3 December 1980.

³⁷⁸ Øystein Gudim, ‘A Defeat for the Shipping Lobby? The Norwegian Experience’, in *Embargo - Apartheid’s Oil Secrets Revealed*, ed. Richard Hengevold and Jaap Rodenburg (Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 280–81.

Arbeiderbladet reported on the issue in a comment on 3 December 1980, stating that the paper had been informed about a Dutch report which exposed that one third of oil shipments to South Africa were of Norwegian origin, and that the transports were happening in secrecy.³⁷⁹ The comment stated that rumour had it that a report was to be published soon, and it was in fact published the same day. The story officially broke the following day, when it was announced in a press conference by NOCOSA.

The following day *Arbeiderbladet* reported that 32 oil tankers owned by 15 Norwegian companies had docked in Durban and Cape Town.³⁸⁰ The article shared detailed findings from the SRB report about which companies had been involved. Minister of Foreign Affairs Knut Frydenlund denied the previous day that any of the oil transported had been Norwegian and confirmed that Norway was determined to support the proposition for an oil embargo on South Africa, proposed by the Netherlands. While the shipments made by Norwegian vessels did not originate in Norway, there was no guarantee that Norwegian oil did not make it to South Africa through other companies, as controlling this was difficult. The Ministry of Oil and Energy declared in an interview with *Arbeiderbladet* that stricter control of the distribution of Norwegian oil could be necessary, but no significant measures were taken.³⁸¹

While there was no denying the legal loophole, the shipping companies were criticised not only for breaching Norwegian policy but also acting against resolutions made by the UN and the *Organisation for Petroleum Exporting Countries* (OPEC). The condemnation from politics and civil society was rather of a moral nature. Most political parties were highly critical of what had happened. This included DNA, which was seemingly stunned that a scandal of this kind had happened on their watch. The fact that Government seemed unable to make a quick

³⁷⁹ 'Norsk olje til Sør-Afrika', Utenriks, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 3 December 1980, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

³⁸⁰ Roy Helge Simonsen, 'Norge blant de viktigste olje transportørene til Sør-Afrika - 15 rederier innblandet', Reportasje, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 4 December 1980, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

³⁸¹ Per Lunden, 'Norsk oljeskip til Sør-Afrika stoppet: Reglene bør innskjerpes', Nytt, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 19 January 1981, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

decision, and that such a loophole had not been dealt with, led to more criticism from the public in January 1981, as it became known that the Norwegian oil tanker “Jane Stoves” was on its way to South Africa and there was no stopping it. A leader in *Arbeiderbladet* stated that “there seems to be no correlation between law and morals”, pointing out the paper’s objection to Norway “selling oil to racists”.³⁸²

DNA was already going through inner turmoil during this period. Nordli resigned from his post as Prime Minister, and Gro Harlem Brundtland took over the position 4 February 1981. She would only hold this position until September, when DNA lost the election to the Conservative Party (*Høyre*), whose position on South Africa was less aggressive.³⁸³ Even the right-wing populist Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*, FRP) challenged the minority government position in January 1983. This was the same party whose previous leader, Anders Lange, had outspokenly supported the apartheid regime in the 1970s, and allegedly received funding for the party’s first election campaign in 1973 from the South African regime.³⁸⁴ In 1983 the Conservative Government joined forces with the Christian Democrats (*Kristelig Folkeparti*, KRF) which was opposed to the apartheid regime for moral reason, and was set to take over the Ministry of Commerce and Shipping. This was potentially bad news for the Norwegian Shipowners’ Association (*Norges Rederiforbund*, NSA), which was used to lobbying the ministry.³⁸⁵

NOCOSA proposed a call for obligatory registration of Norwegian oil tankers several times in the mid-1980s. All attempts were fought by the NSA, which went to great measures to make sure their interests were not compromised via political decisions, emphasizing negative

³⁸² Per Brunvand and Olav Nilssen, ‘Olje til rasister’, Kommentar, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 24 January 1981, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

³⁸³ Eriksen and Krokan, ‘Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine’, 195. A single party Government followed.

³⁸⁴ Kjetil Nilsen Harstad, ‘Frp og apartheid’, *Nordlys* (Tromsø), 7 September 2007, <https://www.nordlys.no/1-79-2977299>. These allegations are based on allegations from South African Government agent Eschel Rhoodie’s book “The Real Information Scandal” from 1983. FRP are sometimes faced with these accusations, which the party denies. However, it has never been officially debunked.

³⁸⁵ Eriksen and Krokan, ‘Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine’, 196.

“consequences” for the Norwegian economy. Between late 1981 and early 1984, 34 Norwegian tankers had docked in South African ports, according to numbers by the SRB.³⁸⁶ The NSA did not only lobby the government, but also the opposition, at that point led by Brundtland.

5.5.2. LO’s conundrum

LO’s position on the question of a legal oil embargo came under questioning following the report from the SRB. When NOCOSA proposed a one-sided oil embargo in 1982, it did not receive LO’s support, as member unions of LO feared that it would have consequences for Norwegian workers, and claimed that a boycott would not be effective without international cooperation. The confederation was stuck in a limbo, where on one side LO was supporting the liberation struggle in South Africa, whilst at the same time seeking to protect the interests of their own members working in the oil industry.

According to Vetlesen, LO’s priority became to push Government for an *international* boycott, so that Norwegian workers would not have to bear the burden of anti-apartheid measures alone.³⁸⁷ Primary sources from ARBARK paint a picture in which LO supported trade sanctions but wanted to make sure that any political action would not compromise its members. According to Øystein Gudim, the Norwegian Seamen’s Union was “not very supportive” of sanctions, in contrast to other LO member unions.³⁸⁸ The only detailed historical recount from LO’s perspective is the monograph by Vetlesen. She states that the confederation was an early initiator of trade sanctions, and emphasises LO proposing sanctions to the government, as well as within the ICFTU, ILO, and NFS. Still, Vetlesen sums up the trade unions’ handling of the boycott question like this:

³⁸⁶ Eriksen and Krokan, ‘Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine’, 197.

³⁸⁷ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 128.

³⁸⁸ Gudim, ‘A Defeat for the Shipping Lobby?’, 289. “Unlike its British and Danish counterparts, the Norwegian Seamen’s Union had not joined the Maritime Unions Against Apartheid when it was formed in 1983. Generally speaking, it was on the defensive, its main concern being the sharp decline in the number of jobs for Norwegian seamen, caused by shipowners busily flagging out their ships.”

“The labour movement’s attitude towards oil transport was that one had to establish international solutions, preferably through a binding embargo by the UN, or at least by having several Nordic countries come together to ban transports. The reasoning was that measures had to be felt by South Africa, not only by the Norwegian workers and industry if other countries took over the market.”³⁸⁹

The different positions of LO, NOCOSA, the government and civil society can be witnessed in a “newspaper debate” which took place in *Arbeiderbladet* over the course of the late summer of 1983. It started with a comment from Vetlesen published 27 July 1983, in which she criticised what she described as passive action from the conservative Government towards South Africa, after Norway decided to not include the shipping companies in the planned UN conference on oil boycotts of South Africa. She stated that this could lead to the issue “stalling on the international level”. Vetlesen made sure to iterate LO’s initial support to the conference, but some saw this as hypocritical, since other statements from Vetlesen and LO at the time were not in favour of a boycott.

This was addressed by Tore Linné Eriksen in a comment in *Arbeiderbladet* two days later. Eriksen had two main issues. First, he posed the question that if up to 40% of oil shipments to South Africa come from Norwegian ships, was this considered an ideal number, or should the number be higher, “since LO argue[d] that South Africa would be able to just buy its oil elsewhere?”³⁹⁰ Secondly, Eriksen found it hypocritical that LO had been willing to join in on an arms embargo even though Norwegian jobs had likely suffered from this, while oil shipments were taking part in the “apartheid war machine” at the same time.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 123. “Fagbevegelsens holdning når det gjaldt oljetransport, var at det måtte søkes internasjonale løsninger, fortrinnsvis ved en bindende FN-embargo, eller – som et minimum – ved at flere nordiske land gikk sammen om å forby slik transport. Begrunnelsen for dette var at tiltakene måtte være følbare for Sør-Afrika, ikke bare norsk skipsfart og arbeidsplasser om bord når andre nasjoner overtok transporten.”

³⁹⁰ Tore Linné Eriksen, ‘Apartheid, olje og krig’, Kommentar, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 29 July 1983, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

³⁹¹ Eriksen, ‘Apartheid, olje og krig’. “Has LO considered how many jobs have disappeared from Raufoss and Kongsberg [with the arms embargo]? [...] The deciding question is ‘why is oil not considered a weapon?’”

A reply from Vetlesen was published in *Arbeiderbladet* on 2 August. She stated that she understands Eriksen's "impatience" with regards to governmental action towards South Africa, but that she did not believe that a "one-sided" boycott was beneficial if Norway has to stand alone.³⁹² She then referred to motions put forward by LO in cooperation with other countries in the ICFTU and other organisations, and that "There is no contradiction between supporting a joint or sole boycott." One can argue that this comment aims to legitimize LO's policy while leaving the tough decisions up to other entities. Vetlesen does not comment on Eriksen's moral objections, and overall, the tone is more careful than the actual reactions within the LO system.

ARBARK holds a letter draft by Sandegren also dated 2 August 1983 answering Eriksen's comment. Sandegren's unpublished reply is far more aggressive than the one by Vetlesen. He argues that the consequences of a boycott within every aspect of the shipping industry would be more severe for the Norwegian labour force than those of the arms embargo, and that it was up to LO to decide on how to deal with this.³⁹³ Sandegren further reiterated the same points made by Vetlesen about the work LO was doing for the labour movement inside South Africa and within the international organisations, and pointed out that the conservative Government seemed to have "dropped the ball" when it came to the handling of the crisis.³⁹⁴ Sandegren comes off as personally insulted by Eriksen's "harsh" and "unclean" comment and ends the letter with stating that he "hopes there are no political motivations behind this."³⁹⁵

It is possible that political motivations were behind Vetlesen's comments in *Arbeiderbladet*, since she was accused of exactly this by the Government she criticized the following day. Conservative State Secretary in the MFA, Eivinn Berg, stated that he wanted to

³⁹² Vesla Vetlesen, 'LO og oljeboikott av Sør-Afrika', Kommentar, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 2 August 1983, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

³⁹³ Kaare Sandegren, 'Apartheidsaken og olje', Letter, 2 August 1983, AAB/ARK-2591/D/Da/L0077/0005, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

³⁹⁴ Sandegren, 'Apartheidsaken og olje'. The original letter says "I use this opportunity to ask Høyre's policy in this matter: What are you doing about this?". In the exemplar in ARBARK, "I" has been crossed out and exchanged for "Like Vesla Vetlesen, I use this opportunity [...]".

³⁹⁵ Sandegren, 'Apartheidsaken og olje'.

clarify “accusations” by Vetlesen.³⁹⁶ Berg however merely repeats points already made by Vetlesen and Eriksen, by pointing to UN decisions and motions, including Norwegian participation in an expert group on oil shipments to South Africa. Berg also makes the argument that there is little use in Norway boycotting alone, effectively agreeing with Vetlesen. It seems like Government did not want to take responsibility, while the opposition, of which LO was a part, used the opportunity to critique its political opponents. As a member of SV, Eriksen belonged to the political minority with KRF which sought to put moral over economic gains.

The call for sanctions on oil trade increased with the general rise in solidarity activity with South Africa around 1985 and 1986. Up until this point, trade with South Africa had even increased. Requests for Norwegian boycott came from the ANC, UDF, COSATU, SWAPO and even Desmond Tutu, when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in December 1984.³⁹⁷ Tutu’s plea was supported by LO and Haraldseth, with promises of continued support to the South African opposition “not limited by distance, borders and faith.”³⁹⁸

To aid in the decision making, LO ordered a report on the consequences of a one-sided full boycott from the *FAFO Institute for Labour and Social Research* in 1985. The report was published in the following summer, and due to a short time frame the authors made sure to label it a “pre-report”, indicating a follow up.³⁹⁹ The conclusion was dubious, did not provide any recommendation, and emphasised the fact that the report should not be used as a political guideline.⁴⁰⁰ The report estimated the total losses for Norwegian industry from a one-sided

³⁹⁶ Eivinn Berg, ‘Stans i oljeforsyningen’, Debatt, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 3 August 1983, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

³⁹⁷ Eriksen and Krokan, ‘Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine’, 199.

³⁹⁸ ‘LO hedrer Tutu’, Nytt, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 13 December 1984, Nasjonalbiblioteket. Tutu was awarded the “LO Polar Bear” (“LO-isbjørnen”) by Haraldseth, a prize previously only received by Willy Brandt and Kurt Waldheim. The article does not elaborate on the meaning of the award, nor is there any information available online, and it is unclear whether it has been awarded to anyone after Tutu.

³⁹⁹ Inger-Lise Eilertsen and Carl-Erik Schulz, *Økonomiske sanksjoner mot Sør-Afrika*, no. 61, FAFO-rapport (FAFO, 1986), 2, <https://www.fafo.no/zoo-publikasjoner/okonomiske-sanksjoner-mot-sor-afrika>. During the work on the report, the authors had talked to representatives from several LO unions, NOCOSA, and even the AAM and ANC in London.

⁴⁰⁰ Eilertsen and Schulz, *Økonomiske sanksjoner mot Sør-Afrika*, 63.

boycott to be around NOK 300 million per year, and posed a potential threat to up to 1250 jobs, mainly with the manganese enrichment industry.⁴⁰¹

5.5.3. Sanctions, finally

Discussions between the NSA and the Ministry of Commerce and Shipping started in early 1985, following a joint proposal by NOCOSA and AIS to implement mandatory registration of all vessels travelling to South Africa. The Ministry was reluctant to implement the registry, but proposed a ban on direct sales to South Africa, as well as a voluntary registration system. The NSA was also asked to provide quarterly reports on the numbers of Norwegian-registered tankers docking in South Africa, but not their names. According to Eriksen and Krokan, this was likely because the Ministry employed civil servants supported by the NSA.⁴⁰² Parliament was less supportive of the NSA, and following a recommendation from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, it voted in favour of mandatory public registration of Norwegian-owned vessels in June 1985. The registration was to be carried out by the Ministry for Commerce and Shipping, not the NSA. All parties except FRP voted in favour, while SV demanded even stricter regulations.⁴⁰³

The NSA was naturally less than pleased with the parliamentary proposal and put much effort into lobbyism and highlighting expected negative results. It even hired a renowned American consultancy firm to write a report on the consequences, which concluded that the proposed law could lead to a loss of 10-20% of total Norwegian shipping revenues, which the report deemed comparable to a total trade ban.⁴⁰⁴ The lobbying activity throughout the autumn of 1985 was highly successful. When the Ministry of Commerce and Shipping presented its

⁴⁰¹ Eilertsen and Schulz, *Økonomiske sanksjoner mot Sør-Afrika*, 67.

⁴⁰² Eriksen and Krokan, 'Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine', 200.

⁴⁰³ Eriksen and Krokan, 'Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine', 200. "During the plenary debate in Parliament on 7 June 1985, the recommendations made by the Committee on Foreign Affairs were supported by all the parties except for [FRP], which objected to any actions being taken against the South African regime. On the other hand, [SV] favoured a sanctions law banning all trade and shipping links with South Africa."

⁴⁰⁴ Eriksen and Krokan, 'Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine', 201. The firm was the Boston-based *Arthur D. Little Inc.*

part of the Government proposal of “economic actions against apartheid” in December 1985, the demand for registration did not apply to Norwegian-owned ships travelling under different flags, and the NSA was tasked to handle the registration itself. Government announced that they would propose total sanctions on sale of Norwegian crude oil to South Africa, which was rather beside the point.⁴⁰⁵

The Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs was unhappy and expressed confusion as to why Government chose to go against a unanimous decision made earlier in the summer. Government explicitly stated that the decision had been made based on information from the NSA. MP Theo Koritzinsky from SV deemed this equal to degrading Parliament in favour of getting in the wallet of the NSA, and leader of the Committee on Foreign Affairs Liv Aasen from DNA stated that “Given the worsening of the situation in South Africa [Government] should have implemented even stricter regulations.”⁴⁰⁶

A mostly united Parliament together with NOCOSA, the churches, parts of the labour movement and other civil society organisations were up against the NSA and an internally split Government. As a sort of compromise, a new proposal was made in January 1986, in which all Norwegian-owned ships transporting crude oil were asked to register, along with an expectancy that shipping would gradually diminish over time.⁴⁰⁷ Civil action increased in 1986 as a reaction to the watered down proposal, and several organisations intensified their boycott campaigns, including LO and affiliated unions.⁴⁰⁸ These actions made Government seems out of touch with the times and public opinion. The NSA was continuously questioned on the matter

⁴⁰⁵ Eriksen and Krokan, ‘Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine’, 202.

⁴⁰⁶ Grete Berget, ‘Willoch skaper sinne’, Reportasje, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 18 December 1985, Nasjonalbiblioteket. “-Willoch opphører Rederiforbundet til vedtaksorgan og degraderer Stortinget til høringsinstans. Et knefall for pengemakta, sier SVs Theo Koritzinsky til Arbeiderbladet. [...] -Siden innstillingen ble lagt frem i juni, har forholdene i Sør-Afrika forverret seg. Det burde medføre at regjeringen la fram forslag som gikk lenger enn utenrikskomitéen. I stedet opplever vi et svekket forslag, sier Liv Aasen.”

⁴⁰⁷ Eriksen and Krokan, ‘Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine’, 203. While Government had made a decision, KRF was still driven by moral in its politics on apartheid. Minister for Churches and Education, Kjell Magne Bondevik, criticised the NSA openly. Bondevik would go on to become Prime Minister in 1999.

⁴⁰⁸ Imad, ‘Arbeidsfolk, slå lag!’, 55. Additionally, NOCOSA had successfully gotten 336 out of 444 municipalities to implement local sanctions.

but also used the changing political climate to postpone the publication of ship registries, awaiting guidelines.

Things changed abruptly when Norway got a new Government led by Brundtland and DNA in May 1986, which had certain expectations regarding South Africa politics to live up to. This also gave LO increased room for action again, especially since Vetlesen was appointed Minister of Development Aid, and Haraldseth Minister of Labour and Municipalities.⁴⁰⁹ Following the new Government, Parliament passed a law of full sanctions on the sale of crude oil. The proposal was raised by DNA's fraction in the Committee on Foreign Affairs 4 June 1986.⁴¹⁰

A parliamentary debate, commemorating the 10th anniversary of Soweto, followed on 13 June. DNA, KRF and the Centre Party (*Senterpartiet*) argued in favour of the proposal, while the Conservative Party, including Willoch, warned of the financial risk and repeated the concerns raised by the NSA so many times before, and SV once again urged for even stricter measurements.⁴¹¹ The pro-boycott fraction emphasised that Sweden and Denmark had already implemented sanction laws, and similar motions were happening in the Finnish Parliament.⁴¹² During the first day of the debate over 200 representatives from NOCOSA, SAIH, CEIR and other organisations demonstrated outside Parliament, and demanded that Norway should "continue to be a forerunner in the battle against South Africa".⁴¹³ Representatives from LO were present, but the organisation as a whole did not take part in the demonstration.⁴¹⁴ Around this time, SRB published a new report which showed that 51 out of 84 shipments of oil to South

⁴⁰⁹ Imad, 'Arbeidsfolk, slå lag!', 57. Also Minister of Foreign Affairs Thorvald Stoltenberg had been international secretary of LO from 1970 to 1973.

⁴¹⁰ Ester Nordland, 'Flertall for full boikott?', Reportasje, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 4 June 1986, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

⁴¹¹ Grete Berget, '-Boikott-forberedelser i gang', Utenriks, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 14 June 1986, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

⁴¹² Thomas Ølander, 'Felles-nordisk boikott?', Utenriks, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 14 June 1986, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

⁴¹³ 'Kampen mot apartheid: -Norge må gå foran!', Utenriks, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 14 June 1986, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

⁴¹⁴ Imad, 'Arbeidsfolk, slå lag!', 65.

Africa had Norwegian involvement, proving that the existing regulation had little to no effect.⁴¹⁵ The outcome of the parliamentary debate was that the DNA minority Government passed legislation which made the shipping of Norwegian crude oil to South Africa illegal later that month.⁴¹⁶ Government established the Norwegian International Ship Register (*Norsk Internasjonalt Skipsfartsregister*, NIS) as an alternative to having the NSA handle the registration.⁴¹⁷

The newly passed legislation was the first step towards an anticipated complete sanction law on oil trade with South Africa, as per the wish of AIS, NOCOSA, SV and others. The motivations were varying. LO emphasised that the boycott had to be total, to make sure that the shipping industry was not the only affected sector, driven by the Seamen's Union. Other voices emphasised moral obligations and hypocrisy in the Norwegian approach to South Africa. Even though the boycott law was important, the issue with and confusion around ship registration and possibility for circumventing was still felt. The following months continued to be a period of lobbyism for the NSA, which had a modest impact on the new Government. When Government presented its proposal for the sanctions law in November 1986, NOCOSA compared it to a "Swiss cheese" due to the number of loopholes.⁴¹⁸ As per usual, the proposal was supported by DNA, and criticised by the Left and Right for different reasons, however only FRP voted against the proposal in Parliament.⁴¹⁹ After a few more rounds of parliamentary debates, the Norwegian sanction law was finally implemented 20 March 1987.⁴²⁰

The reactions to the law were lukewarm. As expected NOCOSA was outspokenly critical of the watered-down result. LO nationally did not openly say much and even received

⁴¹⁵ Drolsum, 'The Norwegian Council for Southern Africa', 251. "In an interview with [Arbeiderbladet Sandegren] declared the numbers to be shocking."

⁴¹⁶ Eriksen and Krokan, 'Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine', 204–5. The law was first aimed only at the sale of Norwegian crude oil, but came to encompass any refined oil and gas products from Norwegian grounds.

⁴¹⁷ Gudim, 'A Defeat for the Shipping Lobby?', 291.

⁴¹⁸ Gudim, 'A Defeat for the Shipping Lobby?', 292.

⁴¹⁹ Imad, 'Arbeidsfolk, slå lag!', 65–66.

⁴²⁰ Eriksen and Krokan, 'Fuelling the Apartheid War Machine', 208.

some of the blame from NOCOSA. At the same time there was a degree of cooperation between the organisations on the municipal level, and some local LO offices were therefore more critical of the result.⁴²¹ In any case, LO was quick to congratulate the sitting Government with the passing of the law. The confederation and affiliated unions, especially the Norwegian Union of Chemical Industry Workers (*Norges Kjemiske Industriarbeiderforbund*, NKIF), were subjected to harsh criticism from South African unions and liberation organisations following the passing of the sanctions law. NKIF had actively worked against the implementation of one-sided boycotts, which prompted Ramaphosa to call out its leader Arthur Svensson at a meeting with several union leaders during a visit to Oslo and LO in April 1987.⁴²²

There are no mentions of oil sanctions in LO's annual reports from 1986 and 1987. According to Vetlesen, LO used the oil embargo as leverage to push for boycotts in the international organisations.⁴²³ AIS established cooperation with the SRB in 1986, which meant that the Dutch organisation shared information with the committee in return for modest funding.⁴²⁴ In 1989, LO proposed that the embargo should encompass refined oil as well to increase the pressure, but no political changes were made. Literature on the topic does paint a picture in which DNA was the force for good which saw through the boycott, but authors had connections to either DNA or NOCOSA.

How big LO's part in the road to the oil embargo can be discussed. Even though the union was clear in its position against the apartheid regime, LO worked against a one-sided boycott and emphasized that only international actions reducing the harm on Norwegian industry was beneficial. This illustrates how the struggle against apartheid fit into the moral hierarchy of a union whose primary role is to protect its own members.

⁴²¹ Imad, 'Arbeidsfolk, slå lag!', 67–68.

⁴²² Imad, 'Arbeidsfolk, slå lag!', 68–69.

⁴²³ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 139.

⁴²⁴ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 128.

6. After sanctions 1988-94

6.1. Decline in attention

“Frihet for Sør-Afrika” was the last burst of initiative from LO in the solidarity with South Africa. This is not to say that the confederation halted its work, but around the time of the sanction law, the position of South Africa in the Norwegian public was very present, and the need for political and civil campaigning was less pressing. LO and AIS continued to fund the liberation movement and collect donations, but at this point the labour movement disappears from literature on Norwegian solidarity.

1986 saw the beginning of an international boycott of Shell, one of the world’s largest petroleum companies with significant operations in South Africa. AFL-CIO brought the call for boycott to the ICFTU in 1986, after hearing reports of union busting within Shell operations in South Africa. The proposal received some support, but the Nordic countries were reluctant and had previously agreed on not supporting a one-sided boycott of Shell in Europe.⁴²⁵ After internal discussions, LO decided not to support the boycott efforts. But as often before, NOCOSA was of a different opinion and initiated a Norwegian boycott campaign the same year. LO continued to have “discussions” with Shell Norway on how to handle the situation in South Africa, but without breaking contact.⁴²⁶

On 30 June 1986, shortly after the parliamentary debate on sanctions, an article by Sandegren titled “LOs engasjement” was published in *Arbeiderbladet*. The article was an attempt to clarify a “mistake”, following a notice published in the same paper on 20 June.⁴²⁷ A representative from LO’s international department had told the Norwegian News Agency (*Norsk Telegrambyrå*, NTB) that LO was not planning any further campaign activities, in

⁴²⁵ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 144–45.

⁴²⁶ *Beretning 1988*, 76.

⁴²⁷ Kaare Sandegren, ‘LOs engasjement’, Debatt, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 30 June 1986, Nasjonalbiblioteket.

response to a plea by Tambo to the ILO.⁴²⁸ In an effort to “avoid misunderstandings” Sandegren emphasised the many actions by LO which have been discussed in the previous chapters. The article presents vague statements about “continuing efforts”, but it does not state specifically which measures LO sought to see through.⁴²⁹ At this time the last campaign which had started the previous year was still ongoing.

AIS’s work in 1987 and onwards focused mainly on the funding COSATU, which was still being done in cooperation with FNV and the other Nordic members of the ICFTU. LO transferred a total of NOK 1 752 000 to the congress in 1987.⁴³⁰ Donations were also given to NUM and MUN during the mine worker strikes in South Africa and Namibia in the summer of 1987.⁴³¹ A small amount was donated to the ANC to help arrange an event in coordination with NOCOSA in Oslo. The annual report notes that during this period, NKIF donated NOK 250 000 to the ANC, despite being scorned by Tambo during his visit to Oslo in April.⁴³²

This blueprint remained intact in the following years. AIS’s activities continued to be determined mainly by decision made in the ICFTU committee, and COSATU remained the main partner in South Africa. Support was also channelled to NACTU through the ICFTU from 1988 on. SATUCC remained a partner for cooperation with the Southern African countries excluding Namibia and South Africa. As of 1988 South Africa was no longer one of the “main areas” in the chapter on AIS in the annual LO report.⁴³³ The report also says little about specific campaigns or how much was donated, only that AIS saw through “campaigns for funding striking workers on the West Bank, in Jordan, to the South African labour movement and

⁴²⁸ ‘ANC-appell til fagbevegelsen’, Utenriks, *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), 20 June 1986, Nasjonalbiblioteket. NTB is equivalent to a Norwegian version of the Associated Press (AP).

⁴²⁹ Sandegren, ‘LOs engasjement’.

⁴³⁰ *Beretning 1987*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1988), 96–97, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). NOK 50 00 were donations from AIS directly, NOK 300 000 collected from “Frihet for Sør-Afrika”, NOK 230 000 from local unions and NOK 1 170 from the MFA.

⁴³¹ *Beretning 1987*, 92.

⁴³² *Beretning 1987*, 98.

⁴³³ *Beretning 1988*, 91. “In 1988, the main support from AIS has been directed to southern Africa and Central- and South America, but also the Middle East has been focused on.”

Mozambique.”⁴³⁴ No more information was stated in the following annual report, only that LO and AIS had donated NOK 22 million to South Africa since 1985.⁴³⁵ It states that “There are expectations of increased contact between LO/AIS and COSATU.”⁴³⁶

During the late 1980s the dissent towards the apartheid system grew within South Africa, and the voting population started turning their back to the NP. President Botha was replaced with the seemingly more reform friendly Frederic W. de Klerk, who had realized that the system needed to be revamped for the good of South Africa’s economy and international reputation. Sanctions were starting to be felt by the national economy, and the country had amassed a debt of USD 25 billion.⁴³⁷ In February 1990 de Klerk announced that the ANC and PAC were no longer illegal, and that Nelson Mandela was to be released from prison. In the same year, SACTU merged with COSATU, making the cooperation with a joint South African labour movement easier.⁴³⁸ COSATU, the ANC and SACP initiated the Tripartite Alliance, a cooperation agreement aimed at strengthening the ANC for the advance of a greater opposition. The alliance was formalized in the summer of 1990 and held its first meeting on 15 November.⁴³⁹

LO stated in the annual report from 1992 that the ANC was to continue to receive aid and funding until democracy has been restored. LO decided to still consider the ANC a liberation organisation, not a political party, to justify the continued support.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁴ *Beretning 1988*, 92.

⁴³⁵ *Beretning 1989*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1990), 78, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

⁴³⁶ *Beretning 1989*, 80.

⁴³⁷ Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie*, 136.

⁴³⁸ *Beretning 1990*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1991), 88, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

⁴³⁹ *Minutes from the Meeting of the Tripartite Alliance Co-Ordinating Committee Held on 15 November 1990 at the ANC Head Office* (COSATU, 1990), ARCH02615, International Institute of Social History (IISG).

⁴⁴⁰ *Beretning 1992*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1993), 91, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK).

6.2. The fourth AIS campaign “Demokrati for Sør-Afrika” 1993 and the end of apartheid

Following years of negotiations between the South African Government and the ANC with affiliated organisations, the first free elections in South Africa were held on 27 April 1994.⁴⁴¹ The ANC, and by extension COSATU and the SACP, won the elections with an overwhelming 63% of the votes. The NP and IFP became the second and third biggest parties. Mandela was announced President of South Africa, Mbeki Vice President, and de Klerk second Vice President. Two representatives from LO took part in the elections observation missions of the ICFTU and the *Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights* (NORDEM).⁴⁴²

In 1994, AIS in coordination with other organisations initiated its final campaign, *Demokrati for Sør-Afrika*.⁴⁴³ The only mention of this is in the annual report from 1994.⁴⁴⁴ The campaign was started in December 1993, after Mandela and de Klerk jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo for “their work for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa.”⁴⁴⁵ According to the report, the awareness and information dissemination was a success, but only modest donations were collected, a total of just over NOK 300 000.⁴⁴⁶ The true aim of the campaign is not explained in the material, and I did not look for sources on this during my visit to ARBARK, since the research period of this thesis only goes up until 1987. Not even the literature by Vetlesen mentions the campaign. Based on the name, the campaign was likely supposed to aid with the

⁴⁴¹ Simpson, *A History of South Africa*, 354. 27 April had been set as the official election day, but the voting was extended into 29 April. Due to poor administrative planning, the count lasted for several weeks, and de Klerk did not concede until 2 May.

⁴⁴² *Beretning 1994*, Beretninger fra Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO) (Oslo, 1995), 65–66, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek (ARBARK). LO's deputy leader Esther Kostøl joined the ICFTU mission, and head of the judicial department Bjørn Kolby was part of the NORDEM mission. NORDEM was founded in 1993 at the University of Oslo, and is today a part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

⁴⁴³ “Democracy for South Africa”.

⁴⁴⁴ *Beretning 1994*, 66.

⁴⁴⁵ ‘Nobel Peace Prize 1993’, NobelPrize.Org, accessed 22 November 2025, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1993/summary/>.

⁴⁴⁶ *Beretning 1994*, 66.

elections in April 1994, but this would leave little time for action. One sixth of the donations were directed to COSATU's "voter training programme", but no other results are mentioned in the annual report, nor in any later reports.⁴⁴⁷

LO leader Yngve Hågensen and head of the International Department Jon Ivar Nålsund were present at the COSATU congress in Soweto 7-10 September 1994.⁴⁴⁸ According to Vetlesen, COSATU requested that one of the organisation's most important supporters should speak at the congress. Hågensen's speech was apparently more than well received, "constantly being interrupted by applause, song and dance."⁴⁴⁹

AIS determined to refigure the funding for COSATU in 1994, with the intention of moving away from organisational funding to cooperation through projects. LO and COSATU reached an agreement in which the funding was to be minimised stepwise over the course of three years.⁴⁵⁰ The cooperation with SATUCC was deemed important for the future, as South Africa was expected to take up less of the committee's work in the region following the democratic elections.⁴⁵¹ In 1995, South Africa is almost absent from the annual report, which only in passing mentions that the cooperations with COSATU and SATUCC are still considered a priority.⁴⁵² Apalset writes that direct funding for COSATU stopped in 1996, since the two main goals of LO and AIS had been met. Apartheid was history, and COSATU was by 1996 able to finance itself without donations from the ICFTU donor group.⁴⁵³ The need for funding of humanitarian and developmental projects also disappeared after the victory of the ANC, since COSATU was busy with political work on the national level. The cooperation between the organisations would continue to decrease further over the next few years.

⁴⁴⁷ *Beretning 1994*, 66.

⁴⁴⁸ *Beretning 1994*, 82.

⁴⁴⁹ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 149.

⁴⁵⁰ *Beretning 1994*, 66.

⁴⁵¹ *Beretning 1994*, 70.

⁴⁵² *Beretning 1995*, 57.

⁴⁵³ Apalset, 'LOs støtte til den sørafrikanske fagorganisasjonen COSATU 1986-1997', 103.

The need to assess where support is needed was as much a requirement for LO as for humanitarian and solidarity organisations. With the fall of apartheid, the international focus on South Africa faded. This is not to say that the labour movement did not experience hardships after the end of apartheid, as the first years under the ANC Government saw significant social inequality and pressure on COSATU, which are still felt to this day.⁴⁵⁴ After 1995 the cooperation with COSATU and the South African labour movement as a whole disappear from the annual reports, though contact between the two largest labour organisations in Norway and South Africa still exist. LO was present at the last COSATU congress in November 2022.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ Eriksen, *Sør-Afrikas historie*, 144–45.

⁴⁵⁵ ‘Fagbevegelsen i offentlig sektor i Sør-Afrika snur ryggen til ANC’, Internasjonalt, *Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO)*, 28 September 2022, <https://www.lo.no/hva-vi-mener/internasjonalt/nyheter-internasjonalt/fagbevegelsen-i-offentlig-sektor-i-sor-afrika-snur-ryggen-til-anc/>.

7. Nordic perspectives

To understand Norway and the labour movement's role in the support to the liberation movements in Southern Africa, one must also consider its Nordic neighbours and relationship to them. Norway's image and position in international politics has been shaped by its historical place in the Nordic region together with Sweden, Denmark and Finland. I have not included Iceland in this analysis, as their contribution to the liberation struggle was minimal, and I have not been able to find source material on this. The chapter on Iceland's involvement in Africa by Thórdís Sigurdardóttir in the volume edited by Wohlgemuth does not mention South Africa or any other countries in the region.⁴⁵⁶ The Faroe Islands and Greenland, which are independent countries under the Danish Commonwealth, and Åland, which is a part of Finland, do not have a documented history of solidarity movements.

7.1. Sweden

Sweden has been credited as *the* forerunner for Western support to the liberation movement. In the first few decades after the Second World War, the Cold War was the guideline for Swedish foreign policy and international involvement of the labour movement.⁴⁵⁷ This would slowly change in the 1950s-60s. The first Swedish campaign in support for the victims of apartheid was initiated in the 1950s by the Swedish National Union of Students (*Sveriges Förenade Studentkåre*, SFS), which donated blood to raise money for South African students.⁴⁵⁸ In 1961, after a successful boycott campaign following Sharpeville, the Swedish South Africa Committee (*Svenska Sydafrikakomitén*, SSAK) was formed, whose main objective was to see

⁴⁵⁶ Thórdís Sigurdardóttir, 'Iceland's Policy on Africa', in *The Nordic Countries and Africa - Old and New Relations*, ed. Lennart Wohlgemuth (Nordic Africa Institute, 2002).

⁴⁵⁷ Birgitta Silén, *Uppdrag solidaritet* (Williamssons Offsettryckeri AB, 2006), 40–41.

⁴⁵⁸ Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa. Vol. 1*, 86.

through the implementation of further boycotts and pressure the Government to take action.⁴⁵⁹

Another nationwide consumer boycott was put on by the National Council of Swedish Youth (*Sveriges Ungdomsorganisationers Landsråd*, SUL) in 1963.⁴⁶⁰

Several organisations would form later and continue the same work, like the Africa Groups of Sweden (*Afrikagrupperna*, AGS) in 1974, which in turn later led to the formation of the Isolate Southern Africa Committee (*Isolera Sydliga Afrika-Kommittéen*, ISAK) in 1979.⁴⁶¹ While AGS had consisted of student groups across the country, ISAK branched out to sports clubs, women's organisations and trade unions, and at its peak the committee consisted of 70 different organisations and counted over 1.5 million members. ISAK aimed at putting on annual campaigns, established direct links to the ANC, and organised study travels to South Africa and Namibia.⁴⁶²

Political action occurred for the first time in 1964, when the choice to fund legal aid projects in South Africa was made by Government under Prime Minister Tage Erlander from the Social Democratic Party (*Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti*, SAP). SAP already had a relation to the ANC after Oliver Tambo had made a speech at the party's 1 May celebration in 1962.⁴⁶³ Erlander tasked his political advisor Olof Palme with hosting Tambo, which started a long friendship. Palme, who in his student days had been a part of SFS's blood donation campaign, would succeed Erlander as Prime Minister in 1969, and his personal relationship with Tambo has been credited as an important factor shaping the Swedish Government's long support to the liberation struggle. The battle against apartheid remains an

⁴⁵⁹ 'Swedish South Africa Committee, SSAK - The Nordic Africa Institute', text, accessed 25 August 2025, <https://nai.uu.se/library/resources/liberation-africa/list-of-archives/sv/swedish-south-africa-committee-ssak.html>. The organisation was short-lived but made an important impact in the early 1960's.

⁴⁶⁰ Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa. Vol. 1*, 190.

⁴⁶¹ 'Africa Groups of Sweden, AGS 1974-1992', The Nordic Africa Institute, accessed 27 August 2025, <https://nai.uu.se/library/resources/liberation-africa/list-of-archives/sv/africa-groups-of-sweden-ags-1974-1992.html>; 'Isolate South Africa Committee, ISAC', The Nordic Africa Institute, accessed 27 August 2025, <https://nai.uu.se/library/resources/liberation-africa/list-of-archives/sv/isolate-south-africa-committee-isac.html>.

⁴⁶² Walan, 'Sweden and Olof Palme to the Fore', 249.

⁴⁶³ Walan, 'Sweden and Olof Palme to the Fore', 247.

integral part of Palme's legacy, and his last public appearance before he was assassinated in 1986 was at a fundraising event for the victims of apartheid in Stockholm. The event was the "Swedish People's Parliament against Apartheid", attended by well over 1000 delegates from Sweden and abroad, which raised SEK 12 million for the ANC.⁴⁶⁴

SAP have close ties to the Swedish labour movement. Swedish LO, the Swedish Federation of Trade Unions (*Landsorganisationen i Sverige*) was founded by the party in 1898 to gather the growing labour movement and administer cooperation.⁴⁶⁵ It is worth noting that while Swedish support at the state level was started by the social democratic Government in the 1960s, the solidarity aspect had a broad support along party lines and was not only maintained during the conservative Government under Torbjörn Falldin (*Centerpartiet*) in the period 1976-82, but even increased.⁴⁶⁶ The Swedish Government made its decision to support the ANC in 1970, and started funding the organisation in 1973.⁴⁶⁷ Money was smuggled in through frontline states, and over the course of 20 years it amounted to roughly USD 40 million. Similarly to Norway, the prerequisite from the Government was that funding was to not be affiliated with any violent action.⁴⁶⁸

The Swedish labour movement was involved in the shaping of anti-apartheid policy, but decisions from the Government to support the liberation movements were made with less pressure from civil society. The two main trade union conglomerates in Sweden at the time were LO and the Central Organisation of Salaried Employees (*Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation*, TCO), both of which were members of the ICFTU.⁴⁶⁹ The two

⁴⁶⁴ Walan, 'Sweden and Olof Palme to the Fore', 250. Just over EUR 1 million in 2025.

⁴⁶⁵ 'Vår historia', Socialdemokraterna, 30 January 2024, <https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/vart-parti/om-partiet/var-historia>.

⁴⁶⁶ Walan, 'Sweden and Olof Palme to the Fore', 248.

⁴⁶⁷ Anna-Mart van Wyk, 'Sweden Against Apartheid: A Historical Overview', *The Thinker: A Pan-African Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (2023): 21, https://doi.org/10.36615/the_thinker.v94i1.2355.

⁴⁶⁸ van Wyk, 'Sweden Against Apartheid', 22. In 1979 Foreign Minister Hans Blix expressed understanding towards the fact that injustice could lead to a desire to act violently.

⁴⁶⁹ van Wyk, 'Sweden Against Apartheid', 20; 'Trade Unions in Sweden | Nordic Cooperation', accessed 23 August 2025, <https://www.norden.org/en/info-norden/trade-unions-sweden>. These are still the main

organisations had a careful approach towards SACTU, given its links to the WFTU, and differing opinions on how to best handle the funding of the organisation. In the wake of the ILO conference in 1973, the two organisations were hesitant towards cooperation, even though they considered workers' rights a crucial part of national liberation.

If anything, the Swedish trade unions were more reluctant than their Governments in isolating South Africa due to potential consequences for the Swedish labour force and industry. Still, in 1974, LO and TCO decided to send a joint mission to South Africa to investigate the conditions at Swedish owned workplaces themselves.⁴⁷⁰ The visit resulted in a common denouncement of the regime, and the organisations put out a joint statement in which they demanded “regulations on Swedish funding to South Africa so strict that new Swedish investments will be made impossible.”⁴⁷¹ The two organisations would channel close to SEK 200 million to different trade unions in South Africa, mainly to COSATU from the mid 1980s. LO also channelled some direct support to the ANC from the late 1970s.⁴⁷² Additionally, LO worked inside Namibia, attempting to help found trade unions. A representative from LO, Paul Carlsson, travelled to Namibia in 1978 posing as a missionary, while working for the labour movement in Namibia. He was caught and expelled after eight months undercover.⁴⁷³

In the chapter “Sweden and Olof Palme to the Fore” in *International Brigade Against Apartheid*, Magnus Walan makes the claim that Sweden holds much of the responsibility for paving the way for other Western states, but that civil society has not gotten the full credit it

organisations in Sweden, in addition to the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (*Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation*, SACO)

⁴⁷⁰ Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa*. Vol. 2, 442. The study visit was criticized by South African trade unions, the ANC, the ICFTU, and even within LO and TCO's own ranks. It was deemed as possibly supporting the views of the apartheid regime.

⁴⁷¹ Silén, *Uppdrag solidaritet*, 83. “[...] kräver LO och TCO en sådan skärpning av de svenska reglerna för valutautförelse till Sydafrikanska Republiken att nya svenska investeringar i landet omöjliggörs.”

⁴⁷² Walan, ‘Sweden and Olof Palme to the Fore’, 248–49.

⁴⁷³ ‘Fackets kamp mot apartheid’, LO.se, 24 February 2014, https://www.lo.se/start/om_oss/historia/fackets_kamp_mot_apartheid.

deserves.⁴⁷⁴ It is also worth noting that during the 1980s, Sweden was called out for not doing enough to oppose the Apartheid regime. In one instance, Desmond Tutu called the then Swedish PM Ingvar Carlsson a coward. Walan also refers to an interview he conducted with Winnie Mandela for the newspaper *Aftonbladet* in 1986, in which she told the Swedish Government to “take [their] bloody money out of here.”⁴⁷⁵ Following the critique and internal pressure, a broad sanction law was passed in 1987.

Wohlgemuth states that the issue of apartheid was never divisive in Swedish politics, and support was upheld by every Government following Palme until the end of apartheid.⁴⁷⁶ While the internal political unity on the matter may have been stable from the 1960s onwards, history shows that some amount of external pressure was needed for continued action.

7.2. Denmark

Morgenstierne argues that the role of NGOs in Denmark was crucial and differed from the other Nordic countries. This is because in Norway, Sweden and Finland the main (financial) support came from the governments, and national organisations were rather instruments for affecting governmental decisions, while in Denmark NGOs were the channels of funding themselves.⁴⁷⁷ Similar social society movements sprung up in the early 1960s, but “were stronger and took place at an earlier stage in other countries” according to Morgenstierne.⁴⁷⁸ The Danish Trade Union Confederation ((*Landorganisasjonen i Danmark*, LO), initiated a boycott of South

⁴⁷⁴ Walan, ‘Sweden and Olof Palme to the Fore’, 252. “In the history books, politicians in Stockholm do not always recognise the pressure they were under to change their positions. Yet Nelson Mandela recognised this in his 1999 parliamentary speech as he acknowledged the link between popular pressure from NGOs and Government decision.”

⁴⁷⁵ Walan, ‘Sweden and Olof Palme to the Fore’, 251.

⁴⁷⁶ Lennart Wohlgemuth, ‘Swedish Relations and Policies towards Africa’, in *The Nordic Countries and Africa - Old and New Relations*, ed. Lennart Wohlgemuth (Nordic Africa Institute, 2002), 44.

⁴⁷⁷ Morgenstierne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 14. “[...] the Danish organizations distinguish themselves from the role their counterparts played in other Nordic countries, where Government support was applied directly and where the NGO’s role was to debate and comment upon the support.”

⁴⁷⁸ Morgenstierne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 15.

African goods following the decision by the ICFTU and the other Nordic trade union confederations in 1960. The boycott campaign recieved the support of major supermarket chains and political parties, and even though it was short, was considered a success.⁴⁷⁹ The campaign also coincided with Oliver Tambo's visit to Denmark during his tour of Scandinavia.

The Danish Youth Council and other civil society organisations would also initiate boycotts and put pressure on Government to support the liberation movements in 1963. The goal was partly achieved, as Government decided to allocate a small sum to be distributed through NGOs to avoid confrontation with NATO partners. As elsewhere, the funds were earmarked for strictly humanitarian reasons, which according to Hans Erik Stolten was done to appease the political Right, while at the same time assuring the Left that they did support the liberation movements politically.⁴⁸⁰ After this, the level of solidarity remained modest until the world directed its attention to South Africa after Soweto.

The National Committee South Africa Action (*Landskomitéen Sydafrika-Aktion*, LSA) was formed in 1978, consisting of different trade unions and youth organisations, as well as representatives from the greater political Left. Two of the LSA's main projects supported by the LSA was a new transmitter for the ANC's *Radio Freedom* and a printing press for SACTU.⁴⁸¹ The Social Democratic Party (*Socialdemokratiet*) and the affiliated LO would leave LSA in 1979 partly due to conflicts with the Danish Communist Party (*Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti*, DKP) and issues with the ANC's call for armed struggle, but mainly because the LSA demanded immediate economic sanctions.⁴⁸² While trade with South Africa had been modest throughout most of the 1960s and 70s, Danish companies started buying South

⁴⁷⁹ Morgenstierne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 20–21.

⁴⁸⁰ Hans Erik Stolten, 'Nordic Solidarity with South Africa: A Danish Perspective', *South African Historical Journal* 71, no. 1 (2019): 102, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2019.1574885>.

⁴⁸¹ Stolten, 'Nordic Solidarity with South Africa', 103.

⁴⁸² Stolten, 'Nordic Solidarity with South Africa', 102. The party stated that they would only sign off on sanctions issued by the UN Security Council, which they knew would be blocked by the US and the UK.

African coal in 1976.⁴⁸³ This became a point of concern for the LSA in 1979, with protests following and even a statement from Desmond Tutu labelling this as “shameful”. The LSA also demonstrated against direct flights by SAS (*Scandinavian Airlines*) to South Africa in 1982, during which the Danish Police Intelligence Service (*Politiets Efterretningstjeneste*, PET) attempted to infiltrate the organisation.⁴⁸⁴ In addition to the LSA, several religious and political organisations were represented in the Government’s own Apartheid Committee.⁴⁸⁵

Despite the seemingly slower reaction from Danish official positions compared to its Scandinavian neighbours, Denmark would become the first Western country to pass a total ban on South African goods in 1985 and 1986. This came about during a period in which the Social Democratic Party, which had been in power alone since the inception of LSA until 1982, were pushed out by a conservative minority coalition. When in opposition, the Social Democrats took on a more aggressive role and sided with more radical allies in Parliament, which eventually forced a struggling Government to enforce sanctions not necessarily in line with their own policies.⁴⁸⁶ While the passing of the law was a success, the implementation and overseeing of sanctions was not prioritized by Government, which made the LSA take on the role of a watchdog in the final years of apartheid. Stolten highlights that Denmark had a greater possibility of impact compared to the other Nordic countries due to its membership in the *European Economic Community* (EEC). Denmark was the first Nordic (and Western) country to pass a full ban on oil transports to South Africa. Danish LO first brought the topic to the NFS in 1978, though Vetlesen gives the Norwegian counterpart the main credit for pushing the agenda in the years following.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸³ Morgenstierne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 99.

⁴⁸⁴ Stolten, ‘Nordic Solidarity with South Africa’, 103.

⁴⁸⁵ Stolten, ‘Nordic Solidarity with South Africa’, 104–5.

⁴⁸⁶ Stolten, ‘Nordic Solidarity with South Africa’, 105.

⁴⁸⁷ Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika*, 124.

What sets Denmark apart in a Nordic setting is its recent history of colonialism. Denmark colonized Greenland in the 17th century, and did not give up its colonial power until 1956 after pressure from the UN.⁴⁸⁸ This does not mean that Denmark is the only former colonial power in the Nordics, as Sweden was quite expansive in the late Middle Ages, and Norway as a part of the Danish kingdom was actively involved in slave trade and overseas colonies in the 18th century, establishing six “slave forts” on the coast of modern day Ghana.⁴⁸⁹ This collides with an often assumed lack of colonial disposition in the Nordic countries, which according to Engh is a part of their “success”.⁴⁹⁰ In the chapter “Denmark and Africa – Past and Present relations” in the volume edited by Wohlgemuth, Steen Christensen gives a detailed recount of the colonial history of Denmark from the 17th century onwards as a preface to the more contemporary history of relations to the African continent.⁴⁹¹ Arguably, one could even draw parallels to Danish oppression of the Greenlandic population in the 20th century to that of apartheid. The same goes for the history of the Sami people in the Northern regions of Norway, Sweden and Finland. I will leave this up to future research.

With reference to the book title, Morgenstjerne summarizes the Danish anti-apartheid policy as a “flexible response” with both a political and humanitarian dimension.⁴⁹² There was effort to appease both sides, by offering humanitarian support to victims of human rights abuses while at the same time supporting liberation movements that lacked universal backing. This

⁴⁸⁸ Adam Kočí and Vladimír Baar, ‘Greenland and the Faroe Islands: Denmark’s Autonomous Territories from Postcolonial Perspectives’, *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography* 75, no. 4 (2021): 193, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2021.1951837>.

⁴⁸⁹ Tore Linné Eriksen, ‘Danmark-Norges mørke kolonihistorie: Nye bøker gir ny kunnskap’, 11 August 2025, <https://www.panoramanyheter.no/annmeldelser/den-lange-skyggen-av-danmark-norge-som-kolonimakt/397653>. Historian Finn-Einar Eliassen published a book on the history of Norwegian-Danish colonialism in 2025, here reviewed by Eriksen.

⁴⁹⁰ Sunniva Engh, ‘The “Nordic Model” in International Development Aid: Explanation, Experience and Export’, in *The Making and Circulation of Nordic Models, Ideas and Images*, ed. Haldor Byrkjeflot et al. (Routledge, 2021), 128.

⁴⁹¹ Steen Christensen, ‘Denmark and Africa - Past and Present Relations’, in *The Nordic Countries and Africa - Old and New Relations*, ed. Lennart Wohlgemuth (Nordic Africa Institute, 2002), 5–7.

⁴⁹² Morgenstjerne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 123–24.

could also be interpreted as upholding a constant balance in which Denmark attempted to not lose face.

7.3. Finland

The findings in this chapter are mainly based on the secondary sources by the NAI concerning Finnish politics and Southern Africa, namely the volume by Soiri and Peltola, and the chapter by Koponen and Heinonen. In contrast to source material about and from the other three countries discussed, I am unable to read sources in Finnish, which limits the scope.

Finland's international position in the Cold War was characterized by a constant struggle to uphold the country's neutrality. While as a Nordic country arguably belonging to the West, Finland sought to maintain a good relationship to its powerful eastern neighbour, the USSR, and had a firm anti-colonial disposition.⁴⁹³ Finland was more closed off from the rest of the world after the Second World War compared to its Nordic neighbours, and would only start relations to the rest of the West when a new generation, whose collective memory was less shaped by the war and had a different understanding of internationalism and humanitarianism, came of age in the 1960s.⁴⁹⁴

This is not to say that Finland and South Africa did not have connections up until this point, as the countries were engaged in trade already in the 19th century, and Finnish workers even travelled to Gauteng to work in the mines.⁴⁹⁵ When the issue of apartheid came up in the UN in the 1950s, Finland chose to not condemn the regime as they had good relations with South Africa. Maybe more importantly, at the time the Finnish-Soviet relationship was dependent on Finland abstaining from criticising any "moral misbehaviour" from the USSR,

⁴⁹³ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 12.

⁴⁹⁴ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 10.

⁴⁹⁵ Koponen and Heinonen, 'Africa in Finnish Policy', 16. Trade relations continued in the 20th century, at its height making up 1,5% of all Finnish exports.

which in turn meant that Finland was in a poor position to pass moral judgement on other countries.⁴⁹⁶

This political shift in the 1960s brought with it a more radicalized civil society which prompted the founding of student organisations, like the “Committee of 100” and the Finnish Students’ United Nations Association (*Suomen Opiskelijoiden YK-liike*, UNSA) in 1963.⁴⁹⁷ The main topics of concern in the beginning were nuclear disarmament and the Vietnam war. UNSA was founded by social democratic students and inspired by Sweden. The aim was to influence Finland’s position in the UN, which they had joined in 1955. With this, UNSA brought Southern Africa and other issues from the “global South” to the attention of the Finnish public. UNSA criticised Finland for being too reluctant in its approach to national liberation around the world compared to its Nordic neighbours and organised a march under the parole “support to liberation movements in Southern Africa”.⁴⁹⁸

A separate South Africa Committee was formed in 1965, which during its three years of existence established direct contact with organisations in Southern Africa and pressured Government into funding the liberation movements. In 1967, the Government allocated money for support for the first time and spoke out against illegal trials in South Africa. In 1969 the money earned from the Finnish “Operation Day’s Work” was donated to the Mozambique Liberation Front (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, FRELIMO).⁴⁹⁹ Finnish trade unions initiated boycotts in 1963, spearheaded by unions of seafarers and transport workers, finding mild success. The Boycott Committee of Finnish Trade Unions addressed the Government in a letter the following year, calling for increased action. Together with the South Africa

⁴⁹⁶ Koponen and Heinonen, ‘Africa in Finnish Policy’, 17.

⁴⁹⁷ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 19.

⁴⁹⁸ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 24.

⁴⁹⁹ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 39.

Committee, they saw through a more successful boycott of South African goods.⁵⁰⁰ The campaign was short-lived but sent a message still.

When setting up a system for development aid in the 1960s, the internal conflict of whether or not to align with the Eastern or Western bloc once again came up. Due to pressure from politicians and civil society, Government would establish a tendency to support partners who opted for a socialist path of development.⁵⁰¹ When several Southern African liberation organisations increased their presence in northern Europe, and starting talking to the Nordic governments, the Finnish Government was contacted by FRELIMO, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*, MPLA) and SWAPO, in addition to the ANC, ZANU and ZAPU.⁵⁰²

Finland's closer ties to the USSR were beneficial for gaining influence in Finland, but not sufficient in itself to guarantee support, as Finland in contrast to its eastern neighbour put a heavy emphasis on the humanitarian aspect and wished to not upset its Western allies if possible. Due to this, changes were brewing within the Foreign Ministry, something Finnish civil society was starting to notice. This led to a number of NGOs signing a declaration in which they pleaded with Government to start direct support of the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. This in turn would lead to the so-called "decision of principle" in 1973, in which the Government declared its intent of support. FRELIMO, PAIGC, MPLA, FNLA, and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*, UNITA) had the first priority, but the declaration stated that support could be extended to SWAPO, ZANU, ZAPU, and the ANC later on.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰⁰ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 73.

⁵⁰¹ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 81.

⁵⁰² Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 90–91. Nickey Iambo from Namibia had studied political science in Finland and worked to gain support for SWAPO in the country. Because of Operation Day's Work FRELIMO also established a presence in Finland, and the MPLA had an office in Stockholm which liaised with Helsinki as well.

⁵⁰³ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 103–4.

In the following the decade, the focus mainly lay on the neighbouring countries' liberation movements, and South Africa was less of a priority until the 1980s. The Foreign Ministry treaded cautiously so as not to "awaken the sleeping bear", the call for boycotts in Finnish civil society.⁵⁰⁴ Rumours spread that Finland was planning to cut economic ties with South Africa in 1976, but this was quickly debunked by the Foreign Ministry. Any reprimandable actions towards South Africa were to be determined by the UN General Assembly, and preferably the Security Council. Still, there was an increasing willingness to fund the solidarity organisations, and after considering the examples set by Sweden and Norway, Finland started funding the ANC in 1977.⁵⁰⁵ Finland also established requirements regarding the use of funding, and strictly humanitarian efforts were easier to defend politically. After funding was acquired, more Finnish NGOs started cooperating with the ANC as well. Later on, the PAC would be granted some funding from the Finnish state.

The Finnish Transport Workers' Union (*Auto Ja- Kuljetusalan Työntekijäliitto*, AKT) funded SOMAFCO, the ANC's refugee camp in Tanzania. The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (*Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö*, SAK) supported the ANC's printing works in Lusaka, and established connections with SACTU. With the creation of COSATU in 1985, SAK and affiliated unions started supporting the new organisation immediately, and the total financial support would amount to FIM 1 900 000 over the next decade. This was in part seen through by the newly established Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland (*Suomen Ammattiliittojen Solidaarisuuskeskus*, SASK).⁵⁰⁶ In the same year, AKT initiated a blockade of goods to South Africa, minimizing trade between the two countries.⁵⁰⁷ According to Soiri and Peltola, the trade unions eventually became the most important Finnish actors supporting the

⁵⁰⁴ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 137.

⁵⁰⁵ Koponen and Heinonen, 'Africa in Finnish Policy', 17–18.

⁵⁰⁶ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 143. Roughly EUR 320 000. SASK took over the work of SAK, and the structure resembles that of AIS.

⁵⁰⁷ Koponen and Heinonen, 'Africa in Finnish Policy', 18.

anti-apartheid struggle, and were more or less responsible for Finland cutting the financial ties with South Africa in 1987, which even though it was marginal (0.5% of total foreign investments) made a clear stance.⁵⁰⁸

7.4. A unique Nordic approach?

Beyond their cultural and historical ties, the Nordics are sometimes exemplified as a societal model to aspire towards, the “Nordic model”. The region is perceived as one consisting of social democracies with elements of socialism, high levels of equality, strong welfare states with high taxation, and a large degree of trust in the state.⁵⁰⁹ This has also been attributed to the countries’ involvement around the world, with some theorizing a “Nordic model of humanitarianism and development aid”. This assumption could be extended to a study of Nordic solidarity movements.

Norwegian Historian Sunniva Engh claims that the Nordic model is viewed as a sort of “Sonderweg” marked by the countries shared history and assumed shared values.⁵¹⁰ This way of thinking constitutes an idea of a “rational middle-way” and “unique modernity” which has been attributed to the Nordic countries’ role in international politics and humanitarianism. In the article “The Nordic Model in International Development Aid: Explanation, experience and export” Engh argues that this is an idolized simplification which does not take the importance of Nordic image building and *realpolitik* into account, which she deems more defining for the shaping of Nordic foreign policy.

She seeks to understand the Nordic model’s applicability to development aid with reference to the three “Es” in the title. As an *explanation*, the Nordic model has several

⁵⁰⁸ Soiri and Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, 144. This should however also be seen in bigger Nordic context, as similar official rulings were passed in Norway and Denmark.

⁵⁰⁹ Nicola Anne Witcombe, ‘The Nordic Model’, Nordics.Info (Aarhus University), 11 December 2023, <https://nordics.info/themes/the-nordic-model>.

⁵¹⁰ Engh, ‘The “Nordic Model” in International Development Aid’, 130.

shortcomings, as highlighted above. The Nordic countries share some similar *experiences* when it comes to their shared histories of solidarity and humanitarianism, but due to several differences one can argue that this is not significant enough. And lastly, Engh argues that one cannot describe the Nordic model as an *export* article, since implementing Nordic values has rarely been an outspoken intention in development aid.⁵¹¹ Sandegren however proposed “Nordic democracy” as an alternative between a “liberalist America” and “closed Eastern Europe” for “third world countries” to orient itself towards in the monograph from 1977, when explaining the importance of LO’s international work.⁵¹²

Given notions of Nordic “exceptionalism” and “egalitarianism” it is no surprise that the history of Nordic support has been framed as something unique and groundbreaking, with more critical scholarship only surfacing in recent times. Danish Historian Hans Erik Stolten emphasizes this in the 2019 article “Nordic Solidarity with South Africa: A Danish Perspective” where he calls for a more critical and nuanced approach.⁵¹³ He criticizes what he perceives as a hegemony of Swedish research, mainly due to an emphasis on Sweden from the NAI. Additionally, he critiques a tradition of Nordic history of humanitarianism which is utilized to boast a national image.⁵¹⁴ As we have seen in this chapter, while the Nordic countries were relative forerunners in the West, all countries had to be subjected to varying degrees of internal and external pressure before a decision was made.

Calls have been made for a greater study of Nordic solidarity with the liberation movements in Southern Africa, exceeding the national boundaries which so far are dominating. With reference to the NAI, Finnish historian Harri Siiskonen in 2010 proposed several areas in which one could expand on the specifically Nordic role. These areas are to a large degree the

⁵¹¹ Engh, ‘The “Nordic Model” in International Development Aid’, 137.

⁵¹² Sandegren, *Fagbevegelsens internasjonale engasjement*, 20–21.

⁵¹³ Stolten, ‘Nordic Solidarity with South Africa’.

⁵¹⁴ Stolten, ‘Nordic Solidarity with South Africa’, 113. NAI also receives some funding from Finland and Iceland, but has no affiliation to the Nordic Council, like institutes in other countries.

same which have been studied in national histories of solidarity, as well as in this thesis, namely the role of governments, diplomats, civil society (i.e. trade unions and student organisations), and religious movements.⁵¹⁵ Siiskonen points out three main obstacles to such a joint study, namely a lack of physical accessibility to archival material, poor universalization of source material across borders, and potential language barriers.⁵¹⁶ Further critical voices have made similar calls, and one that sticks out is the lack of studies from the perspective of the recipients of aid or other forms of support.

No matter the motivations behind Nordic humanitarian support, a common denominator for each country was the unwillingness to support the armed struggle in South Africa and emphasizing that any support would have to be strictly used for non-violent measures. Whether this was a result of moral or political considerations is unclear, as there is no evidence that the Nordic countries are more “peaceful” than other regions. Norway and Denmark have a history of taking part in NATO operations around the world, and with the recent membership of Sweden and Finland, their “peaceful and neutral” image has changed. The ANC realized that humanitarian support was the way to go when the Nordics refused military support.⁵¹⁷ Literature brings up the fact that there is a chance some of the funding from the Nordic states, or the national labour movements for that matter, were used for violent means, but to this day no evidence exists beyond accusations.⁵¹⁸

When comparing the Nordic solidarity movements on the official and civil level, some key differences emerge, largely shaped by different geopolitical situations and the countries’

⁵¹⁵ Harri Siiskonen, ‘Southern African Liberation Struggles and the Nordic Countries - Idea for Research’, in *Documenting Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa. Select Papers from the Nordic Africa Institute Documentation Project Workshop 26–27 November 2009* (Nordic Africa Institute, 2010), 25–30.

⁵¹⁶ Siiskonen, ‘Southern African Liberation Struggles and the Nordic Countries’, 30. Siiskonen points out that the language barrier mainly applies to Finnish material, as Scandinavian researchers will likely have no issues accessing Norwegian, Swedish and Danish material equally.

⁵¹⁷ Ndlovu, ‘South African Apartheid and Resistance’, 210. “[...] to complete the cycle, humanitarian support was needed, [Joe Matthews from the ANC] elaborated: ‘We looked at the Scandinavian countries and said right they rejected supporting our armed struggle but they are prepared to give humanitarian assistance.’”

⁵¹⁸ van Wyk, ‘Sweden Against Apartheid’, 22; Østbye, ‘Official Norwegian Support’, 147.

relations to each other. Denmark and Norway were already members of NATO, which prompted policies of not wanting to provoke powerful allies with close ties to South Africa. Finland only started prioritizing external issues later, treading cautiously when trying to find its footing in the post-war era. Sweden did by all accounts have the earliest and most radical attitude towards the liberation movements, inspiring its neighbours. This was partly made possible by Sweden's outspoken neutrality which led to less pressure from both East and West, as well as Palme's close relation to the ANC. The possibility to form a Nordic anti-apartheid bloc on the international stage was also fruitful for a group of small countries.

To summarize, the Nordic countries shared several similarities in their approaches to liberation struggle in South Africa but had different priorities. One could argue that this was a result of a Nordic model guiding national decision making and civil movement, but historical and geographical similarities do not in themselves constitute sufficient proof of this, and the impact of *realpolitik* and image building as determining factors as proposed by Engh do line up with the critique from Stolten. Additionally, one should consider the motivations behind history writing on the national levels.

8. Conclusion

When it comes to understanding why South Africa became a focus area of LO, there is nothing suggesting that South Africa was *more* important to LO than to other Norwegian trade unions or civil society organisations. The movement against apartheid was a global phenomenon. LO was likely aided by its location in the Nordics, with a Government that was more supportive of the struggle than most Western countries, except its neighbours. LO as a trade union with international outlook was part of a transnational anti-apartheid movement.

It should not be underestimated LO has a political role, and the reasons for supporting either side in a conflict would by extension be the same as for a political party or national Government. Given the relation to the ruling party for most of the 20th century, one could perceive LO as acting as an extension of the Norwegian Government. However, Vetlesen and others argue that the union was closer to civil society and the political Left in a time of political turmoil, and bridged political decision making with public opinion, shaping the turn towards solidarity. The answer is likely somewhere in the middle, since LO had, and has, a tendency to be more “radical” than the mother party, though this thesis shows that the union’s international interests closely followed those of the party. LO pushed the agenda in accordance with the international labour movement in the period leading up to 1973, but from then on party and union were very much aligned according to the source material.

The impact of DNA on LO decision making is of importance, but as seen earlier, the 1970s-80s was a period of internal disagreement within the labour movement, and in which LO partly and AUF were proposing a more “radical” agenda than a DNA in crisis mode. While LO was one forefront for making South Africa a concern, LO’s shift towards Palestine was the result of a change of heart within DNA, and the decision to pause the South Africa campaign to focus on Poland in 1981 was pushed by the NPA. As a national trade union organisation, it is evident that the national interests of LO would always come first, illustrated by LO’s

hesitance when it came to the question of shipping and boycott in the 1980s. In this instance DNA arguably even pushed a more radical agenda than LO, whose main priority was to protect the organisational interests of its members.

What made the case of South Africa relevant to LO was the position of labour relations in the conflict. Solidarity was mainly with fellow workers in South Africa, but since the work force represented the majority of the oppressed, the dimensions of labour, class, and race became intertwined. To some extent this was also the case during the governmental crackdown in Poland. LO's solidarity with Palestine is still strong today, which can be explained by influence from voices on the political Left, happening at the same time as DNA has moved further to the Right.

Financial support was the main form of aid from LO to the South African trade unions and liberation organisations. The funding came from a combination of campaign donations to AIS and grants from the MFA. During the 1970-80s the coordination of funding was mostly handed over to the ICFTU, and additional support was handed to the other organisations after being greenlit by Government. This made it possible to exclude SACTU for ideological reasons, as they would need to align with the ICFTU to meet formal requirements. This changed with COSATU, since given the different political nature of the organisation LO could justify finding a loophole within the ICFTU, by cooperating with the other Nordic unions and the Netherlands. This was beneficial for COSATU when the organisation was in an internal conflict on whether or not to align with the "imperialist dominated" ICFTU.

Outside of the AIS activities, the secondary contribution from LO was the exchange of know-how, facilitated through personal relations to the trade unions. This was rather a later phenomenon, as contact with the South African labour movement was challenging up until the formation of COSATU. This aspect should not be overestimated, and the personal encounters were limited to receiving visits in Norway until the late 1980s, when Sandegren obtained a visa

and visited South Africa as part of an ICFTU delegation. LO was much more involved in the organisational activities of SATUCC, rooted in its own experiences from NFS.

The actual impact of Norwegian solidarity was marginal on a global scale and compared to other countries like Sweden the total amount of funding is small. In contrast to Sweden, which in many regards showed the way for Norway to follow, LO and the labour movement were an instrumental part in affecting public and political opinion. While the Swedish trade unions showed solidarity and supported boycotts, there was less of a need to affect political decision making as a cross-political opinion was established early on. Denmark and Finland had situations reminding more of Norway, in which trade unions and NGOs needed to push Government in the right direction.

The impact LO had in South Africa is addressed in a handful of available primary sources, since the effect was relatively small. While there were several interactions between LO and the South African liberation movement, solidarity beyond financial support was mostly symbolic, and the impact of the solidarity campaigns was more noticeable in Norway.

It is unlikely that there would not have been a solidarity movement in Norway without LO, given the international pressure. But the importance it had for the shaping of Norwegian solidarity should not be underestimated. LO's impact in the greater scheme of it all is small, but this is rather a result of Norway small stature on the world stage. LO's work is founded in working class solidarity, but since the working class made up the majority of the oppressed population the impact was felt beyond this. The essence of activism and solidarity is to do what you can, and the struggle against apartheid is one of many examples of persistence paying off.

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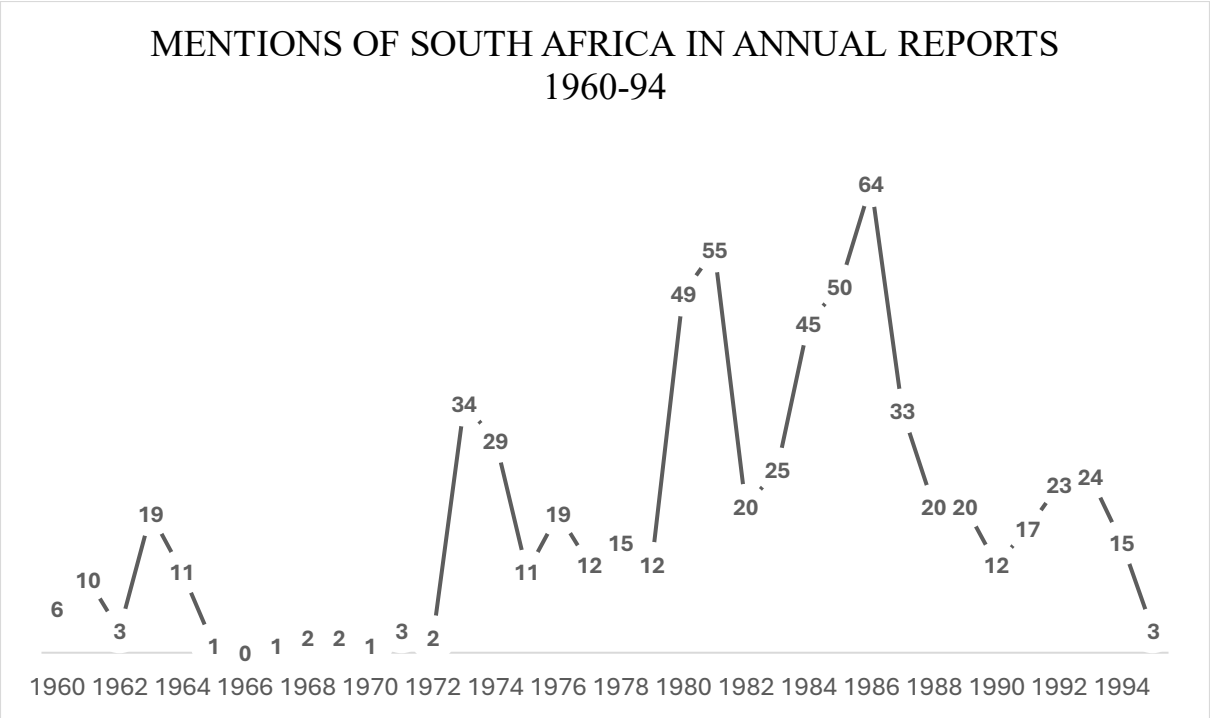
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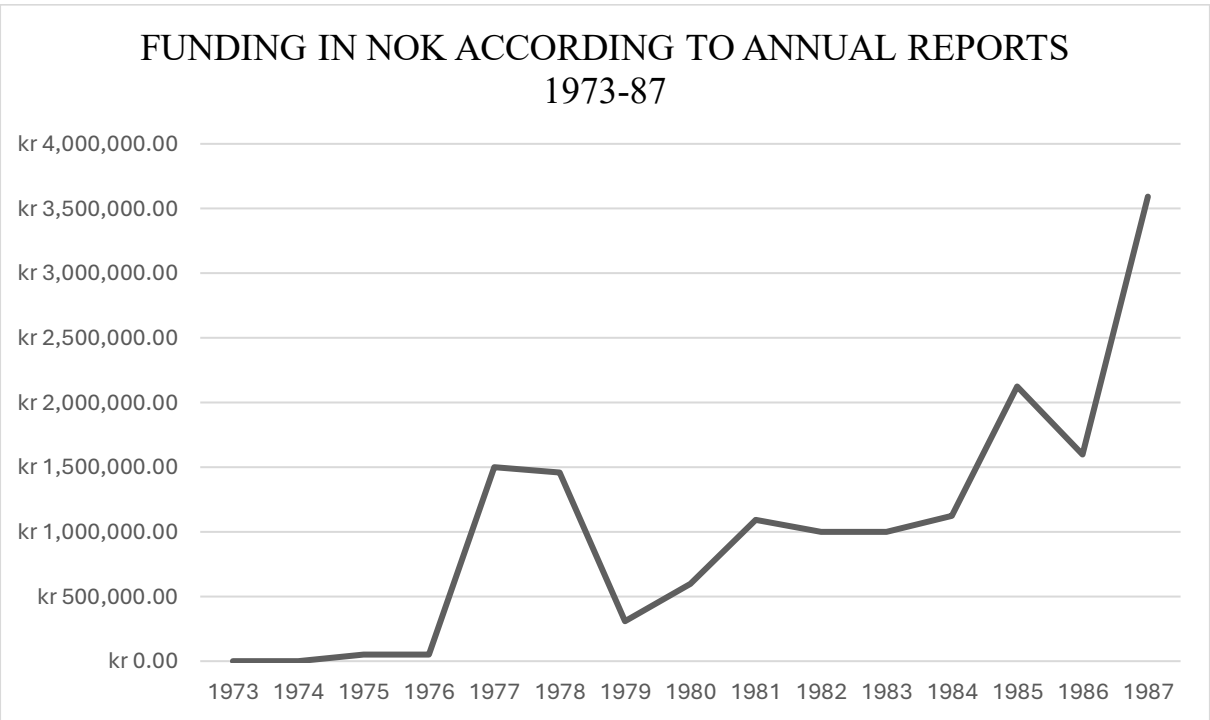
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Attachments

Attachment I



Attachment II





Nr. 5-1985



Sør-Afrika - i våre hender



Massbegravelse
i Dancien Village.
38 likster i 1981-flagg ...
(Foto: Peter Tygesen/Alfa/Samfoto).



Opprørsaktivitet
i township, nussert ...
(Foto: Dave Harriman/Link/Samfoto).



Et daglig bilde
i dagens Sør-Afrika ...
(Foto: Paul Weinberg/Afrapix/Samfoto).



Demonstrasjon
og begravelse. Slagordene
sier alt ... (Foto: Paul Weinberg/
Afrapix/Samfoto).



Skolebarn og
studenter demonstrerer
i Addis, Cape Town ...
(Foto: Dave Harriman/Link/Samfoto).

Heenes mann er i fengsel. Der har han vært lenge. Selv er hun blitt et symbol på den harde kampen. Fru Nelson Mandela har mange med seg når hun kjenner seg om de hvite undertrykkene i Sør-Afrika. Dagens situasjon er en kretsløp. Ingen vet når det virkelig snart snelles komene. De vet bare at det må komme. Det finnes ingen forhandlingsvei til forsoning i Sør-Afrika, styrt politiske ledere i eksil. Der er bare væpnet kamp som fører fram. Væpnet kamp av oss selv. Men vi trenger støtte. Fra alle frihetselskende

folk verden over. Boikott. Støtte. Solidaritet. Der er oss mer til å heve knyttneven. Og våpenet, når knyttneven blir for svak. Om ikke de store nasjonene i verden forstår sitt ansvar for det som skjer i Sør-Afrika, og strekker oss en åpen hånd istedenfor å støtte Botswana, vil vår knyttneve ikke åpne seg for Sør-Afrika har sett det største blodbadet i Afrikas historie ... Det er vi beredt til, for vår egen frihet. (Foto: Gill de Vlieg/Afrapix/Link/Pindureportage).

Attachment IV

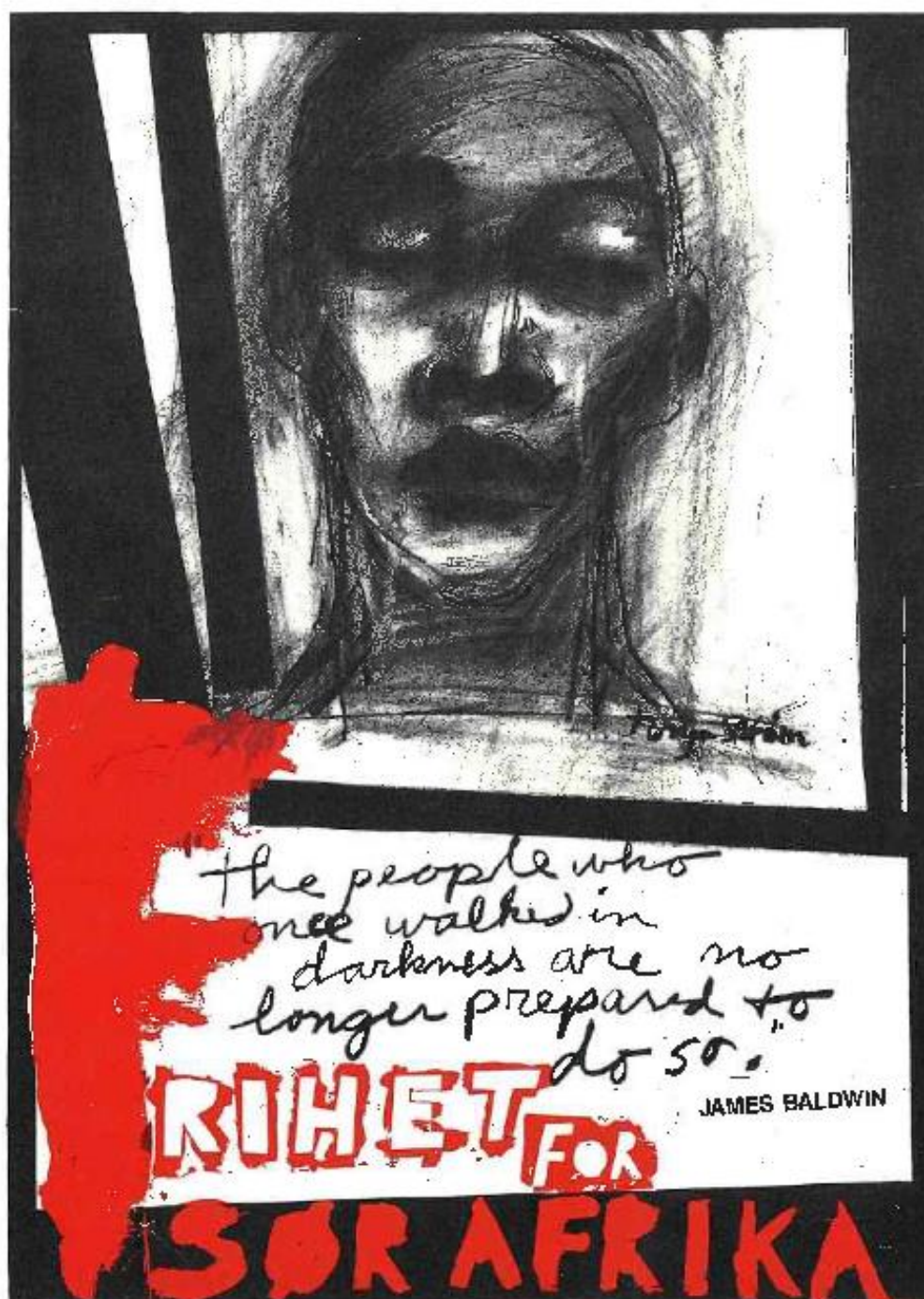


Rapport fra aksjon "Frihet for Sør-Afrika"

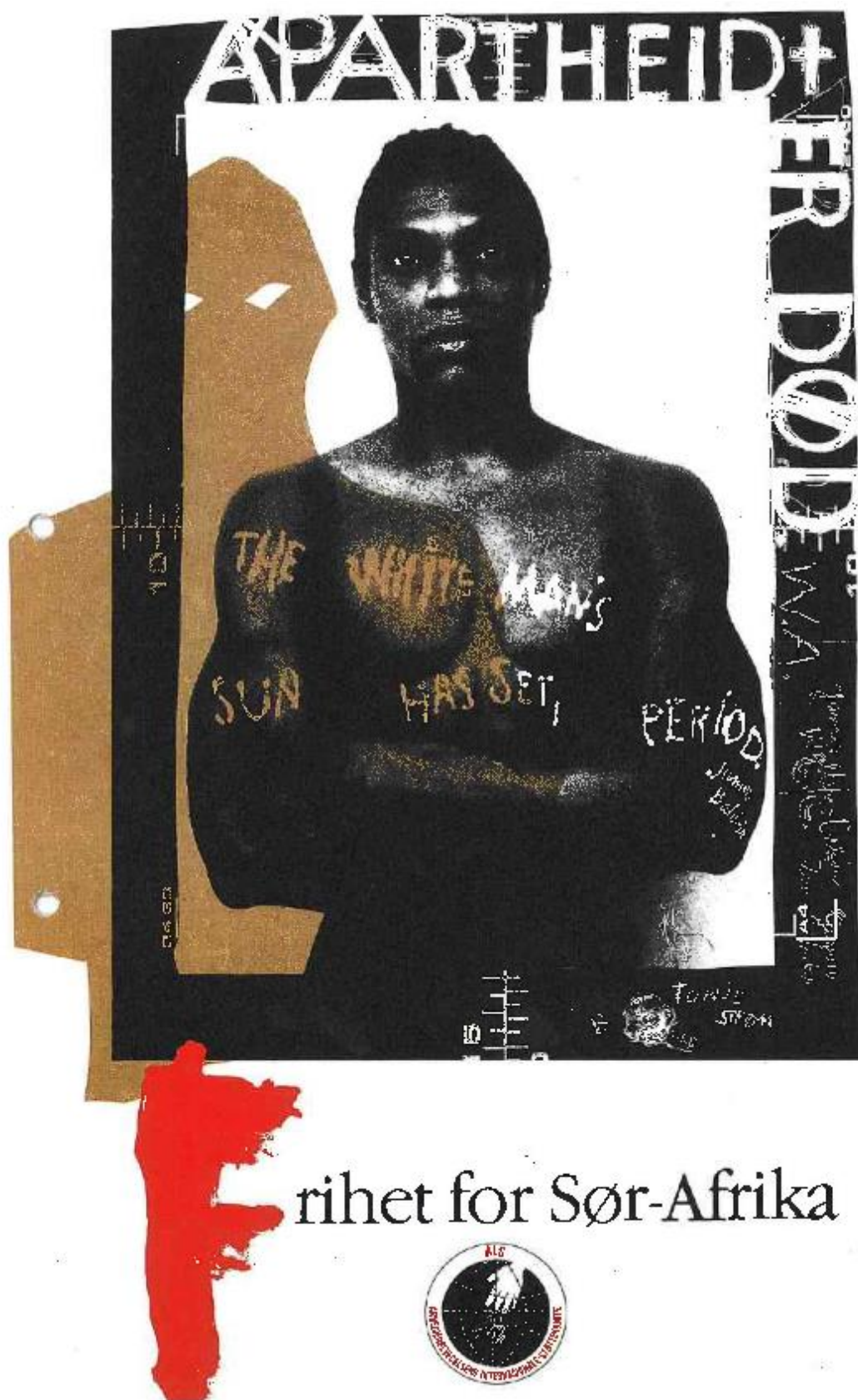
1986

LOS

UNGDOMSUTVALG



Attachment V



rihet for Sør-Afrika

