



# Global support for South Africa during and after apartheid

How a history of Nordic solidarity was  
created and used by social movements and  
governments

By Hans Erik Stolten



# Anti-Apartheid Movement history

- Access to Western anti-apartheid movements' (AAM) archives important for South Africans
- Records registered by NAI, Russian State Archives, ASC Michigan, Fort Hare, UWC...
- Much AAM and official writing is uncritical
- AAM history writing as continued solidarity
- The AAMs was part of a global social movement



# Difficulties of global solidarity I

- Western solidarity movements can only seldom portray themselves as directly affected victims of conflict or repression
- The value stream still goes north; the western native country profits by the exploitation of the third world
- No combined victories for the liberation- and solidarity moments to show that have lead to fundamental socio-economic changes

# Difficulties of global solidarity II

- Success for the global solidarity movement may inflict higher living costs on people expected to be involved in protests
- A growing part of western populations are feeling uncomfortable by the potential costs of solidarity
- Activists and researchers are often stuck in a tradition of nationalism or localism

# Arguments for continued solidarity

- An oblique and unequal world is also an unstable world which produces fugitives and terrorism
- More wealth would transform countries now poor into better trading partners
- Inside research: theory of liberation and social movements theory



# Roots and history of solidarity I

- French activists aided the American Revolution. French Revolution influences
- Anti-slavery campaign emerging in England
- African-American missionaries reported on King Leopold's regime in the Congo
- Working class internationalism after 1848
  - Socialist Internationals and Comintern



# Roots and history of solidarity II

- Anti-colonialism and pan-Africanism
- Vietnam, Chile, anti-Americanism
- After 1990 decline in popular solidarity
- Government aid canalised through professionalised NGOs
- Inside research: country AAM case-studies



# AAM pillars of strength



- Concerns about domestic racism in western countries
- AAMs was part of the liberation of Southern Africa through popular aid
- Both broad domestic and international appeal through boycotts and sanctions
- Combination of tactics of the desk and the street, of blockades and conferences
- Basic optimism of freedom struggle



# Some conference papers on the subject



For my manuscript: *Nordic Solidarity Revisited...*

- Håkan Thörn: Anti-apartheid as a global social movement
- Timo-Erkki Heino: Finland, a unique case
- Nina Drolsum Krogvold: Norwegian solidarity with Southern Africa
- Christopher Morgenstjerne: African freedom struggle – in Denmark

# ... and even more papers

*For my manuscript: Nordic Solidarity Revisited...*



- Steen Christensen: The Danish debate on support to the liberation movements
- Morten Nielsen: The anti-apartheid struggle in Denmark
- Reinhart Kössler: A situation where you could show some decency

# Support strategies after 1990

- Take over of popular solidarity traditions by continued government to government transitional aid
- Deterioration of NGO political solidarity
- From links to RDP's collective enthusiasm to GEAR's individualised demobilisation
- Mix of aid and business interests
- Economic stability, growing social gaps
- Need for continued NGO solidarity

# Foreign government and organisation interests

- Social-liberal influence on nation building
- Small-state possibility for market share
- Domestic humanitarian legitimacy
- Organisational profiling
- Individual career interests

# The history of solidarity

- Enclaves of African Studies sustained
- Donor governments pointing out their own national merits of solidarity
- Building the historical legend, that the anti-apartheid support of the Nordic countries was especially heroic
- Swedish competitive use of solidarity history
- Holding on to liberatory history for the defence of ideals for a new society





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