

Badat, Saleem: *The Forgotten People. Political Banishment Under Apartheid*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers 2013. ISBN: 978-90-04-24633-1; 364 S.

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After her epic car journey to visit banished people across South Africa in 1962, renowned anti-apartheid activist Helen Joseph famously remarked that the banished were "punished within the law but outside justice"<sup>1</sup>. Banishment, as Saleem Badat states, was an „extra-judicial administrative process with no recourse to courts“ (p. 33). The practice of banishment, confining individuals to designated areas outside their place of residence for an indefinite period, brought tremendous hardship, pain and suffering to those who were subjected to it: it was a „slow torture of the soul, a living death“<sup>2</sup>, as Helen Joseph further remarked.

By the time of Joseph's journey in the early 1960s, banishment had become a key tool in the state's attempt to silence opposition to apartheid policies. The majority of banishments occurred between 1949 and 1965 under the Native Administration Act of 1927. With a few exceptions it affected mostly men in rural areas. Removing rural political leaders, authorities believed, would disrupt networks of political mobilisation and eventually encourage local communities to collaborate with the state. The notion of a few 'agitators' stirring up protests and inciting otherwise content communities underwrote the state's counter-insurgency strategies and perception of political protests throughout the apartheid period.

Until very recently, Joseph's book „Tomorrow's Sun: A Smuggled Journal from South Africa“<sup>3</sup> was one of very few accounts depicting the role and impact of banishment during the apartheid period. Saleem Badat's „The Forgotten People. Political Banishment under Apartheid“ aims to address this gap. Inspired by the author's encounter with Joseph during the early 1970s, „The Forgotten People“ traces the trajectories of individuals who were banished and contextualises their experiences

within a broader framework of political, social and economic change.

Banishment, Badat demonstrates in his first chapter, has a long history. From the banishment of African leaders by colonial authorities and the enforced exile of Lenin and Trotsky in the late 19th century to the recent use of banishment of Palestinians in Israel, banishment has frequently been used as a repressive tool to stifle opposition. Situating banishment within a comparative analysis of repression allows Badat to highlight that the South African case was by no means exceptional. His argument that „banishment is associated with power and authority and is usually deployed by the state' and that it is a 'means of political and social control'“ (p. 8) goes to the heart of theoretical debates on punishment and repression. However, this section is relatively short and more comparative research would be required to further illuminate Badat's points. In the second part of the first chapter Badat traces the legal roots of banishment in South Africa and compares it to other repressive measures applied to opponents of the regime. His contextualisation of repression certainly provides a useful framework to understand individual cases.

However, the main strength of „The Forgotten People“ lies elsewhere. Based on empirical data and secondary literature, the main part of the monograph sheds new light on the daily struggles of the banished and their families. Unfortunately, life history interviews were in most cases not available as the great majority of the banished have died. Instead Badat reconstructs their stories through archival records of the Human Rights Welfare Committee – the organisation Joseph was a founding member of – as well as reports written and collected by administrators, newspaper articles and other written historical sources. Secondary literature complements archival sources, and photographs serve as vivid illustrations. The individual stories speak of hardship, despair, isolation, illness and great poverty. Some of the ban-

<sup>1</sup> Helen Joseph, *Tomorrow's Sun: A Smuggled Journal from South Africa*, New York 1967, pp. 123–4.

<sup>2</sup> Helen Joseph, quoted in Badat, *The Forgotten People*, p. xviii.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Note 1.

ished died of old age, sickness or starvation. However, the book also sketches moments of resilience, courage and defiance. Kenneth Mosenyi, banished for his involvement in resistance politics in Bahurutshe, defiantly wrote in a poem: „The Minister put me here. It is not for me – To go on my knees and ask for freedom as a favour.“ (p. 84)

Through the individual stories of the banished, Badat traces the impact of government policies and local responses by rural communities. The 1950s and early 1960s saw the advent of numerous rural rebellions that shaped political discourses and practices across the country. Betterment schemes, the installation of illegitimate chiefs under the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and rapid erosion of livelihoods provided the bedrock for popular resistance and revolt. A crisis of legitimacy and social reproduction thus was at the heart of rural struggles. Badat's biographic approach allows him to examine the cross-fertilisation of localised rural struggles and the national movements. Anderson Ganyile for example, a member of the African National Congress and one of the leaders of the Mpondoland revolt, connected the Mpondo rebellion to national politics.<sup>4</sup> Hence despite the African National Congress' neglect of rural grievances, revolts in the countryside were not divorced from national political movements and ideologies.

Although the majority of those banished were men, Badat also sketches the involvement and fate of a few women. Banished for the same reasons as their male counterparts, women and their involvement in rural resistance require further research. More generally, despite the centrality of rural resistance, the body of scholarly literature on rural struggles is relatively small.<sup>5</sup> South African historiography continues to be marred by an ongoing bias towards struggles in urban areas and formal political organisations (p. xxii). In chapters two to four in particular, the author contributes towards the historiography of rural struggles by examining revolts and resistance in GaMatlala, Witzieshoek, Bahurutshe, Sekhukhuneland, Mpondoland, Thembuland and Natal.

Badat also pays attention to urban struggles and banishment under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. Both Winnie

Madikizela-Mandela and Mamphela Ramphele were banished to desolate areas in the late 1970s. However, as the author argues, by that time recourse to banishment had begun to diminish. Urban political leaders suffered from different repressive measures including banning orders that confined them to their houses and detention without trial. Although Badat offers a tentative explanation as to why the use of banishments began to decrease and was mostly used in rural areas, the changing nature of state repression warrants further research. State power was never monolithic and even underwent profound changes. Thus a more detailed historical analysis of the relation between power, hegemony and repression would add to an understanding of the nature of the apartheid state. Also, little is known about the social background and trajectories of administrators, policemen and in some cases chiefs.

However, as argued earlier, Badat's aim is not to understand the nature of state power. Instead his focus is on recovering the experiences and life stories of those that were 'forgotten' twice: during the apartheid period the banished were removed to remote and desolate areas without meaningful interaction with the outside world. In post-apartheid South Africa, their voices and contributions have been marginalised both in scholarly literature and recent political discourse.<sup>6</sup> Badat makes an important contribution to reinsert hitherto marginalised aspects of resistance and the voices of the banished into historiography and public consciousness.

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<sup>4</sup> William Beinart, The Mpondo Revolt through the Eyes of Leonard Mdingi and Anderson Ganyile, in: Them-bela Kepe and Lungisile Ntsebeza (eds.), *Rural Resistance in South Africa. The Mpondo Revolts after Fifty Years*, Leiden 2011, pp. 91–113.

<sup>5</sup> There are, of course, a number of notable exceptions including theses and dissertations, journal articles, monographs and edited volumes. For an overview of the literature see Lungisile Ntsebeza, *Resistance in the Countryside: The Mpondo Revolts Contextualised*, in: Kepe and Ntsebeza (eds.), *Rural Resistance in South Africa*, pp. 21–42.

<sup>6</sup> Thembela Kepe and Lungisile Ntsebeza, Introduction, in: Kepe and Ntsebeza (eds.), *Rural Resistance in South Africa*, pp. 4–9.

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