Tracking Political Banishments: Sojourns in the Archives

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Introduction

Thirty years ago, in the course of conducting research on the forced mass removals and relocation of black South Africans, my curiosity was strongly aroused by tantalizing brief references to banishments. Robert Resha writing in the *Golden City Post* of 21 December 1958 made reference to the banishment of African leaders. So did others, without any elaboration, however, on the nature or the scale of banishments.

In 1982 I arranged to meet with Helen Joseph who was banned and restricted to her home in Norwood, Johannesburg. Helen had undertaken a monumental 13 000 km in 1962, soon after her banning order was lifted, to visit a number of banished people who were scattered around the country.

She was thrilled that I was taking an interest in banishments, which was by and large a forgotten issue. In due course, she provided me a stack of documents and papers that she had at her home, imploring me to undertake research and publish on banishment.

So, on and off, I have been working on banishment for the past thirty years determined to keep my pledge to Helen to publish on banishments.

The human rights abuses that were associated with state-sponsored violence and vigilante activities, and political detention and banning are generally well known.

Largely unknown is the apartheid state's legislated administrative practice of political *banishment*, in terms of which political opponents were plucked from their families and communities and cast, in the words of the late Helen Joseph, 'into the most abandoned parts of the country, there to live, perhaps to die, to suffer and starve, or to stretch out a survival by poorly paid labour, if and when they [could] get it'.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission gave little attention to political banishments, which occurred under the Native Administration Act of 1927 and was an extremely pernicious form of repression applied against political activists, especially from the rural areas of South Africa, during the 1950s and 1960s.

My research has sought answers to questions such as: who was banished and why; what were the origins of this repressive measure; why was it utilized given the availability of other repressive measures; from which localities and to which areas were people banished; and were the banishments accepted passively or were they resisted, and how.

The research will culminate in a book late this year or early next year.

Currently, there are 10 chapters.

Chapter 1 provides a historical and comparative analysis of the phenomenon of banishment.

Chapter 2 turns to banishment in colonial and apartheid South Africa. It distinguishes between 'banishment', 'deportation', 'endorsement', 'removal' and 'exile' in order to clarify that banishment was a distinctive form of administrative expulsion of individuals. It also sets out the historical development of the laws that provided for banishments.
Chapter 3 documents and analyses the incidence of banishments, noting that this was a long-standing repressive practice that came to especial prominence after 1948, when the Nationalist Party came to power on an apartheid platform. It also sets out the key questions that are the objects of the study.

Chapter 4 sketches economic, social and political, conditions during the 1950s and 1960s and the activities of the apartheid state, the period when banishment was most extensively employed against political opponents of the apartheid state.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the banishment of political opponents of apartheid from various rural areas and reserves. It locates the banishments within resistance to state interventions designed to enforce greater political and social control over rural people.

In Chapter 7 attention turns to the banishment of urban based political opponents of apartheid. There are case studies on Ben Baartman and Elizabeth Mafekeng, and a shorter one on Louis Mtshizana.

Thereafter, the banishment of political activists under the provisions of the Suppression of Communism Act (later the Internal Security Act) is considered in Chapter 8. A short case study focuses on Frances Baard.

Chapter 9 reflects on the political, social and economic impact of banishment on those who were banished and their families and describes the conditions under which those who were banished existed. Conditions in two banishment camps in remote rural areas, Frenchdale and Driefontein, are highlighted.

Resistance to banishment is the theme of Chapter 10, including an analysis of the different forms taken by such resistance.

Wherever possible, statistics, tables, maps, and photographs are used to complement description and analysis. Little known and neglected photographs of banished people and conditions in banishment will be sourced from Ernest Cole's *House of Bondage*, other Cole collections, the Baileys Historical Archives (taken by Peter Magubane and G. M Naidoo) and UWC Mayibuye archives.

There are a number of appendices to exemplify key banishment laws, banishment orders served on individuals, and media coverage on the banishment of specific political leaders.

I must make special mention of the index of persons banished under the Native Administration Act, the Suppression of Communism Act/Internal Security Act and Transkei regulations.

This was and continues to be a major and challenging task. Newspapers, newsletters, magazines, reports of government departments, parliamentary debates, law reports, archived government, personal and organisational collections, documents and indexes compiled by the HRWC and other organisations, *Race Relations Surveys*, and numerous articles and books had to be scrutinized to compile the index of persons that were banished during the apartheid period.

The Archives

The research has had to draw on many different primary and secondary sources and the search for primary sources has especially during the past year taken me into the archives in a way that I did not need to for previous research and publishing.

I see both my previous books on student politics in South Africa and the recent stand-alone book on SASO as well as the forthcoming book on banishments as historical research and history informed by social theory – historical sociology if you like.

Let me indicate the journeys that I have undertaken to different institutions and archives and distil some issues and 'lessons' from these experiences.

Cory Library (Rhodes) – numerous visits
- House of Assembly Debates between 1955 and 1977
- Report's of the Department of Native Affairs, 1911 - 1957
- South African Institute of Race Relations, *Surveys* between1952-1986

William Cullen Library (University of Witwatersrand) – one full-day visit
- Ballinger Papers
- Jean Sinclair Papers
- South African Institute of Race Relations records
- SAIRR Press Cuttings
- Helen Joseph

South African Library (Cape Town) – one half-day visit
Collection of *Drum* magazines, 1951 – 1960s

Mayibuye Archives (University of Western Cape) – two visits of two days and half a day
- Collections of New Age (1954-1962), *Guardian* (1937 –1952), *Spark* (1962, 1963) and others

- Collection of photographs on contact sheets – Ernest Cole, Peter Magubane, and others

South African National Archives (Hamilton Street, Pretoria) – two visits of two days and one and a half day
- NTS = Native Affairs/Natureellesake; 1880-1972; 1889-1938
- BAO = Bantu Administration and Development; 1924-1976
- BNS = Interior/Binnelande Sake
- SON = Co-operation and Development, 1973-1985
- JUS = Justice
- SAP = Commissioner of the South African Police
- URU = Executive Council
- KCA = Caprivi documents

URU: There is a volume number and a reference number

Source	Vol. No.	Ref. No.	Detail
URU	3255	1618	REMOVAL ORDER: JOEL **LINGISI.**
URU	3659	995	**VERWYDERING** VAN ALCOTT SKEI GWENTSHE

Usually has details of the banishment of individuals, the actual banishment order and the instruction to the police to, if need be, arrest and ensure move into banishment.

BAO: These cover a wide range of removals – 'endorsements', the deportation and repatriation of 'foreign' Africans, etc.

SON: Some deal with extraditions, others deal with banishments.

NTS: This comprises applications by Africans for movement from one area to another and their rejection or granting.

BNS: Related to deportation or repatriation of individuals for various reasons, including criminal activities – under section 22 of the Immigration registration Act of 1913.

JUS: One file related to the deportation of Philip Thompson in 1931 under the NA Act of 1927.

SAP: 671 did not relate to banishments. The other boxes may.

KCA: Not available – returned to Namibia. Has to do with Caprivi area – could relate to banishments from the area. Found a reference that indicates that individuals were also banished in the old South West Africa under articles i (d) or (b) a certain Native Administration Proclamation, No 15 of 1928 – eg. Martin Nambala Wilpard.

I may still visit

Killie Campbell Library (University of KwaZulu Natal)

- Campbell Collection
  - √ Native Administration Law, 1875; Law 44 of 1887; Natal Code of Native Law of 1891 (Law 19); The legislative debates around the introduction of the 1891 Natal Code of Native Law ; Act 47 of 1903 - Acts of the Parliament of the Colony of Natal, First session of the Fourth Parliament, 1903; The legislative debates around Act 47 of 1903; Natal Legislative Assembly (NLA) Debates, Vol XXXIII 29 April-30 June 1903, pages 153ff

The Experience

The times that I have spent at the various institutions indicated above and in the archives have been some of the most exciting in my scholarly life.

I indicated to Prof. Maylam on my return from the National Archive in Pretoria that I was like a little child in a sweet or toy shop, and that I now regret not having got into this kind of archival research before.

There was something just so incredibly exciting to have in one's hands and touch in this thick bound book the original (yellowing) copy of the banishment order that was signed by the Governor General; the document signed by Verwoerd motivating for the banishment, and similar documents.

So too at the William Cullen Library – it was just incredible to be able to read and touch scores of hand-written letters between banished people and Helen Joseph and other members of the Human Rights Welfare Committee.

Issues and 'lessons'

Let me distil some issues and 'lessons' from having to get to the archives and being in the archives.

1. It can become demanding in terms of cost and time so your first port of call is the internet and you must do as much as you can on the internet.

   There is a considerable amount that you can do on the National Archive website (http://www.national.archives.gov.za/) through the National Automated Archival Information Retrieval System (NAAIRS). All the files and documents that I wanted to look at were identified through the NAAIRS engine.

   I also needed to use very old copies of the *South African Law Reports* – from the early 1900's and from the 1950s – as banishments were sometimes challenged in courts. Most of these *South African Law Reports* were accessible electronically through our Library search engines.

2. Don't be shy and talk and talk about your research to anyone who is willing to listen – this is the way that you sometimes make breakthroughs and get guidance and support.

   Verne Harris who is now with the Nelson Mandela Foundation accompanied Ariel Dorfman to Rhodes last year. As he was the previous National Archivist I mentioned my research to him and asked him who could be a good contact for me at the National Archives in Pretoria. He gave me a name and a cell number and I was on my way. Since then Gerrit Wagener has been most helpful.

   On another occasion when surfing the internet using keywords in Google I came across a scholar who did research on male identities as depicted in *Drum* magazine. I emailed her, discovered she knew me from when I was at UWC and she pointed me to where I could find an entire set of the original *Drum* magazines – the South African Library in Cape Town.

   And by talking is how I got a rare copy of Ernest Cole's *House of Bondage* as a birthday gift last year!

3. Don't hesitate to ask for help.

   People in the archives have generally been incredibly helpful and supportive, sometimes going beyond the call of duty. Only Killie Campbell was not all that helpful - they don't photocopy for you; you have to contract someone to do it for you or do it yourself.

4. Never give up – keep knocking on doors, calling, and generally persevering!

   Initially I was getting nowhere with National Automated Archival Information Retrieval System. I was inserting 'banishment' as my keyword but with little success. Then I inserted individual names of banished people and was a little luckier.

   The breakthrough came when I complained to Gerrit Wagener and he asked whether I had tried using the equivalent Afrikaans terms. To find the equivalent terms I had to consult Tim Huisamen in Afrikaans – but it was not 'verbanning' but 'verywydering' that was the jackpot. I inserted 'verwydering' and suddenly I was drowning in materials.

5. There will be dilemmas and choices and decisions that confront one.

   From a situation of scarcity, where for many years all I had to work on were the materials given to me by Helen Joseph and SAIRR Survey references and information from the House of Assembly Debates, I am now find myself in a situation of relative abundance.

   One part of me wants me to request the National Archive to photocopy almost 2 000 pages for me – at 80 cents per page. Another part says that a few select documents

and all the Executive Council documents of the actual banning orders should suffice, especially for the index of banished persons.

Much the same situation has confronted me at Mayibuye, going through the *New Age* collection. Do I photocopy every page with an article referring to banishment or do I instead make summary notes or do both?

I will soon also confront dilemmas and make choices around photographs of Ernest Cole, Peter Magubane, GR Naidoo and possibly others - these photographs are likely to be cost anything between R 350 and R 700 each.

6. Be a lone ranger or get help

   An ongoing issue for me has been whether I continue on my own or bring in assistance, especially for finalising the index of banished persons and cross-checking names, dates, places and other information.

   In my case it would be easy enough to bring in support and pay for it and would be good experience for a postgraduate; and of course to acknowledge the support.

   If this work was for a thesis, then there would be some ethical issues – whose work would the index really be?

7. Another issue will arise in due course – what to do with all the precious materials that I have collected once I have finished the research and the book is published. The National Archive documents are not digitised. If there was a fire and they were destroyed, my collection would be the only one available.

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