

“THIS WILL HELP IN HEALING OUR LAND”: REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING QUATRO IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

*This article employs the history of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)'s 1980s prison camp, Quatro, as a case study to broadly explore the political jockeying over the memory of anti-apartheid prison camps (as sites of human rights abuses) in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. This is done by tracing how the collective memory of Quatro had been received and interpreted by different political groups and the media in post-apartheid South Africa. This article proposes that, with regard to the collective memory of Quatro, two diverging streams of memory politics co-exist in post-apartheid South Africa: one that chooses to remember, and one that chooses to forget. Both these streams reinforce the “Rainbow Nation” *mentalité* or the myth of the “new South Africa”, albeit in different ways. Opposition groups like the former National Party (NP) and the Democratic Alliance (DA) have frequently drawn on the collective memory of Quatro as a way of challenging the ruling African National Congress (ANC)'s hegemonic position. Much of this is framed in the context of the democratic rhetoric of post-apartheid South Africa. The ruling ANC, on the other hand, has negated the ambiguous narrative and traumatic memory of Quatro in order to write a “shared history” of the past that can foster a “new South Africa”.*

Keywords: African National Congress (ANC); Angola; Democratic Alliance (DA); *L'histoire de mentalities*; memory; post-apartheid South Africa; Quatro; rainbow nation; trauma; Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC); Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK).

Slutelwoorde: African National Congress (ANC); Angola; Demokratiese Alliansie (DA); *L'histoire de mentalities*; geheue; post-apartheid Suid-Afrika; Quatro; reënboognasie; trauma; Waarheids- en Versoeningskommissie (WVK); Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK).

1. INTRODUCTION

As South Africa entered a new political era after the country's first democratic election in 1994, strong emphasis was placed on reconciliation and the “healing” of a formerly “divided” past.² The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was initiated in 1996 to facilitate such a process by allowing both victims and

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2 Colin Bundy, “The beast of the past: History and the TRC” in Wilmot Godfrey James and Linda van de Vijver (eds), *After the TRC: Reflections on truth and reconciliation in South Africa* (Cape Town, 2000), p. 9.

perpetrators alike to share their stories and, thus, shed light on the human rights violations that occurred during apartheid.³

The myriad of human rights abuses and atrocities that occurred during apartheid were by no means committed by the apartheid state alone. The African National Congress (ANC), its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), and other anti-apartheid groups were also responsible for human rights abuses.⁴ Noteworthy examples of this are the Angolan detention camps where people from ANC ranks, who violated regulations or were suspected of collaborating with the apartheid state, were interrogated and tortured. The most infamous of these camps was Quatro.

The ANC's detention camps and the atrocities that were committed there, however, occupy a problematic position within the collective memory and public discourse of the "new South Africa". As a relatively recent chapter in South African history, the collective memory of Quatro lies somewhat dormant in the national psyche; the event is at once half-remembered and half-forgotten. It has, at times, been seized by some groups and completely ignored by others, making it difficult to situate within the South African unconscious.

This is partly due to the nature of the TRC. The Commission's emphasis on "healing" and reconciliation was closely bound to a project of nation-building and the fostering of the "rainbow nation".⁵ This required the "imagining" of a new form of national community based on "collective memory", a "shared history" which would be determined by means of a "national consensus".⁶ Despite attempting to acknowledge atrocities committed by both the apartheid state and the anti-apartheid movement, the TRC's project of fostering a "collective memory" and a "shared history" ran the risk of presenting a highly reductive version of the past.⁷

Such an interpretation of apartheid threatens to establish a dichotomy which casts the "white" apartheid state as the "evil perpetrator" and the "black" anti-apartheid movement as the "noble victim", thus eliminating all ambiguities and complexities.⁸ If, as Fullard and Rousseau contend, the TRC served as the "founding myth" of the "new South Africa" by imposing such a "master narrative" on to the past, then it also holds that those narratives that disrupted the victim-perpetrator

3 Deborah Posel, "The TRC Report: What kind of history? What kind of truth?" in Debora Posel and Graeme Simpson (eds), *Commissioning the past: Understanding South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Johannesburg, 2002), p. 147.

4 Todd Cleveland, "'We still want the truth': The ANC's Angolan detention camps and postapartheid memory", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25(1), 2005, p. 64; Leopold Scholtz & Ingrid Scholtz, "Die ANC/SAKP in Angola: 'n Gevallestudie rakende interne demokrasie", *Historia* 54(1), 2009, p. 211.

5 Bundy, p. 12.

6 Posel, p. 149.

7 Bundy, p. 17.

8 Madeleine Fullard and Nicky Rousseau, "Uncertain borders: The TRC and the (un)making of public myths", *Kronos* 34, 2008, p. 228.

binary risked being silenced.⁹ The central question of this article, therefore, is how the collective memory of Quatro and other ANC detention camps has been received and interpreted by different political groups in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. By exploring the political jockeying over the memory of Quatro, the author hopes to shed light on where and how this episode resides in the “national memory” of post-apartheid South Africa.

The TRC is a crucial component of any study that attempts to explore the memory of apartheid era atrocities in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. In recent years, however, the TRC has become one of the most over-studied topics within South African humanities and social sciences. Fullard and Rousseau have pointed out that several of these studies are actually quite flawed and that they have uniformly inscribed the TRC as the origin of the “founding myth” of the “rainbow nation”.¹⁰ They have, therefore, stressed the need for a “second wave” of TRC scholarship: studies that focus on the ways in which the TRC has destabilised the “master narrative” of the “rainbow nation”, rather than enforcing it.¹¹ This article attempts to explore how the collective memory of Quatro has been received and interpreted within the realm of post-apartheid politics and media, thus becoming part of the “national memory”.

2. POINTS OF DEPARTURE

This study is situated within *l’histoire des mentalités* (the history of mentalities). This approach draws heavily on the French *Annales* School, which stressed the importance of writing a “total history” of a given phenomenon in *la longue durée* (the long term). The very notion of *mentalité* is quite a tricky term to pin down because of its psychological nature.¹² In short, it refers to the certain way in which ordinary people understand and experience their everyday lives.¹³

More specifically, *l’histoire des mentalités* explores the collective underlying psychological realities of a given community or the “mental horizons of an age” over an extensive historical period.¹⁴ Jacques Le Goff, therefore, argues that the historian of *mentalité* must play the role of a “social psychologist” who delves into

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 217, 228.

10 Fullard and Rousseau, p. 238.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 239.

12 Patrick Hutton, “The history of mentalities: The new map of cultural history”, *History and Theory* 20(3), 1981, p. 240; Donald M MacRaild and Avram Taylor, *Social theory and social history* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 119.

13 Hutton, p. 237.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 237, 242

the collective unconscious of society as a whole.¹⁵ The major difference is that the former studies such phenomena over *la longue durée*.¹⁶

Such parallels between the historian of *mentalité* and the social psychologist are due to the fact that both deal with psychological phenomena. *L'histoire des mentalités* – as a field that deals with the collective unconscious as well as the past – inevitably finds itself engaging with yet another psychological phenomenon, namely that of memory.¹⁷ This is not surprising; *mentalité* and memory are intrinsically bound to one another. According to Michel Vovelle, “[c]ollective mentality ... [is] composed of unconscious layers of memory, unconscious but operative”.¹⁸ Mentalities, therefore, are the product of memories that have accumulated within a community’s collective unconscious over many years.¹⁹

Memory appears to be a seemingly simple concept but – like *mentalité* – it is a lot more complex. This article makes use of Maurice Halbwachs’ definition of memory as a socially constructed phenomenon.²⁰ Halbwachs argued that “the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society” and that “[s]ociety ... obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them.”²¹

Moreover, Halbwachs argued that historical memory – or memory that does not personally belong to an individual – cannot be remembered directly and can only be recalled through acts such as reading about or commemorating past events “in concert with other people”.²² Even individual memories are caught up in this process. Individual memories can fade with time and need to be reinforced by those who shared this experience with us.²³ Furthermore, individual memories can become subsumed by the social milieu in which they operate and together

15 Alon Confino, “Collective memory and cultural history: Problems of method”, *The American Historical Review* 102(5), 1997, p. 1389; Jacques Le Goff, “Mentalities: A new field for historians” in Robert M Burns (ed.), *Historiography: Critical concepts in historical studies*, (New York, 2006), p. 333.

16 Vovelle, p. 5.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 170.

19 It should be noted that the events that occurred at Quatro are, of course, relatively recent historical phenomena and the memory thereof has not yet evolved and grown over *la longue durée*. It, therefore, seem quite contradictory to situate this study within *l'histoire des mentalités*. The author is aware of this tension but also hopes this article will shed some light on the development of a *mentalité* in its initial stages.

20 Maurice Halbwachs, *On collective memory* (Chicago and London, 1992), p. 22.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

23 *Ibid.*

they form collective memory.²⁴ All memory is, therefore, inherently collective and socially constructed.

Because historical memory is socially constructed in the present, it plays a central role in political action.²⁵ Nancy Wood notes that because memories of the past are reconstructed with regard to the demands of the present and then performatively expressed through “vehicles of memory”, memories can be mutated in such a way that it suits the interests of those who are recalling it.²⁶

This very process of restructuring and claiming certain historical memories as one’s own facilitates a process of social differentiation that delineates in-groups and out-groups.²⁷ Moreover, by allowing for the continuity of the past, the restructuring of memory serves as kind of “temporal anchoring” for the individual or collective in the present.²⁸ The mutable nature of memory, therefore, allows that it can continually be restructured so that it can become part of the political discourse in the public domain.²⁹

This kind of appropriation of memory for political purposes is possible for several reasons. The primary reason – as suggested above – is that memory, like *mentalité*, is inherently vague, imprecise and unreliable.³⁰ Memory’s vulnerability in this regard is partly due to the fact that memory can fade, that we can forget.³¹ For Benedict Anderson, it is precisely our ability to forget that impels us to remember; because we are always at risk of forgetting the past, we narrate it in such a way that it gives meaning to the present and, most significantly, to our identities.³²

The recent “turn to memory” by historians has, interestingly, been coupled with the advent of trauma theory within academic circles.³³ This is not too surprising. Memory is a major component in the study of trauma.³⁴ What’s more, the study of trauma has generally been concerned with the study of *traumatic memory*.³⁵ Trauma – like memory – is a famously slippery object of study. In the same way that memory is “vague” and “unreliable”, trauma – or more precisely,

24 Nancy Wood, *Vectors of memory: Legacies of trauma in postwar Europe* (Oxford and New York, 1999), p. 1.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

29 Confino, p. 1393; Wood, p. 5.

30 Confino, p. 1403; Paul Ricœur, *Memory, history, forgetting* (Chicago and London, 2004), p. 57.

31 Ricœur, pp. 412-414.

32 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London and New York, 2006), pp. 204-205.

33 Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the memory of politics* (Cambridge, 2003), p. xiii; Susannah Radstone, “Trauma theory: Contexts, politics, ethics”, *Paragraph* 30(1), 2007, pp. 9, 21.

34 Radstone, p. 13.

35 Edkins, p. xiii.

traumatic memory – is essentially “unknowable”.³⁶ The reason for this is because trauma resists language and articulation.³⁷

Edkins argues that traumatic memory essentially resists articulation through language because the process involves the language of the very community – be it the nation-state or the family-unit – that allowed the traumatic event to occur in the first place.³⁸ This inability to articulate trauma and, therefore, deal with it directly can lead to a formation of repressed memories, memories that lie dormant though not entirely forgotten. This is one of the ways in which people can work through traumatic memory.

This issue touches on the unanswered question from the previous chapter: How is forgetting a form of remembrance? In order to address this issue, one must take note of yet another similarity between trauma and memory, namely its importance in political action. Traumatic memory – by virtue of its “unknowable” and “unreliable” nature – is rendered doubly mutable and can therefore be appropriated and restructured to suit the demands of the present.³⁹

According to Radstone, the process of forgetting is in itself a way of dealing with, or working through, trauma and traumatic memories.⁴⁰ The various commemorative practices that are involved in the reinforcement of memory politics can, therefore, imply and involve a process of forgetting as much as a process of remembering.⁴¹

A problem that trauma poses is that, in working through traumatic memories and experiences, victims of trauma usually require a single narrative that is free of ambiguity in order to make sense of the suffering they have experienced. The problem arises when such “healing” narratives attempt to negate or silence the various ambiguities and differences with which the trauma victim were faced.⁴² This article will show this point is particularly applicable to the memory of Quatro in post-apartheid South Africa.

3. REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING QUATRO

Upon gaining independence from Portugal in 1975, Angola opened itself up and gave sanctuary to the liberation organisations (like the ANC and SWAPO) from neighbouring countries.⁴³ By the next year, the exiled ANC and its military wing,

36 Radstone, pp. 11-12.

37 Edkins, pp. 7-8.

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

39 Dominick LaCapra, *Writing history, writing trauma* (Baltimore and London, 2001), p. 65.

40 Radstone, p. 17.

41 Edkins, p. 12.

42 LaCapra, pp. 21-23.

43 Cleveland, p. 64.

MK, had settled in Angola and started using the country as one of its bases of operation against apartheid.⁴⁴

That same year, it began to construct training camps for engineers and MK guerrilla soldiers.⁴⁵ By 1978, it had built more camps at Viana, Quibaxe, Pango and Quatro.⁴⁶ Of these camps, Quatro was the most notorious. Quatro – also known as Camp 32 or, much later, the Morris Seabelo Centre – was to be used as a detention camp for “ANC cadres who had transgressed the organisation’s disciplinary rules”.⁴⁷ Quatro officially opened its doors in 1979.⁴⁸

The establishment of such a camp was due to several factors. Quatro was primarily a product of a tense and paranoid climate that developed in the ANC when infiltrators and informers began to enter the ranks of the ANC and MK after the Soweto uprisings in 1976; furthermore, the ANC’s security department, iMbokodo (meaning “the boulder that crushes but never breaks”), had started to clamp down on increased sex, drug abuse and dissenting views amongst the ANC members and MK rank and file in its training camps.⁴⁹ These problems were exacerbated by the generation gap between unruly young cadres and the disciplined leaders.⁵⁰ The Angolan authorities did not have time to deal with infiltrators within the ANC’s ranks, so the organisation took matters into its own hands by constructing a detention camp where it could interrogate suspected informers or detain those who disobeyed ANC protocol.⁵¹

Conditions in Quatro were notoriously terrible. The camp had no electricity or running water and there was not enough space to accommodate all of the detainees.⁵² They were horded into overcrowded and poorly ventilated cells and received little to no food or medical care.⁵³ Because Quatro’s detainees were regarded as “enemy agents and dissidents”, they were forced to endure a litany of especially brutal torture methods. The most common form of abuse at Quatro was known as “pompa”: detainees were forced to puff out the cheeks while guards repeatedly slapped them in the face.⁵⁴ This would sometimes continue until the detainees’ eardrums burst and their ears started bleeding. Another method of

44 Steven Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid: The ANC and South African Communist Party in exile*, p. 85.

45 *Ibid.*

46 Cleveland, p. 64; Scholtz and Scholtz, p. 213.

47 Bandile Ketelo *et al.*, “A miscarriage of democracy” in Paul Trehwela (ed.), *Inside Quatro: Uncovering the exile history of the ANC and SWAPO* (Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2009), p. 44.

48 Cleveland, p. 65.

49 Amnesty International Report, 1992; Cleveland, p. 65; Scholtz and Scholtz, p. 215.

50 Scholtz and Scholtz, p. 214.

51 African National Congress. Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1996.

52 Scholtz and Scholtz, p. 220.

53 Skweyiya Commission Report, 1992.

54 *Ibid.*

torture, known as “gasmask”, entailed pushing the skin of a hollowed-out pawpaw into the detainees’ faces and keeping it there until they could no longer breathe.⁵⁵ Verbal abuse and forced solitary confinement were other forms of punishment that detainees were forced to endure.⁵⁶

In 1985, conditions in Quatro and other camps were slightly improved, especially after the ANC’s Kabwe Conference where it was decided that detainees who were suspected of being infiltrators and state agents had to undergo a process of rehabilitation and re-orientation rather than punishment and torture.⁵⁷ This, however, came only after a series of violent mutinies by MK guerrillas at the Pango and Viana training camps in 1984, when mutineers elected a Committee of Ten to approach the ANC leadership with their grievances.⁵⁸ The MK soldiers in these camps were particularly upset about the poor living conditions in the training camps as well as an increased hostility by iMbokodo and the ANC leadership towards an attitude of self-criticism within the organisation.⁵⁹

These mutinies were crushed by the ANC’s security department and many of the mutineers were sent to Quatro because they were suspected of being state agents.⁶⁰ Shortly afterwards the ANC appointed a commission of inquiry, chaired by James Stuart (the MK *nom de guerre* of Hermanus Loots), to determine the cause of the mutinies as well as MK soldiers’ grievances against iMbokodo.⁶¹

The Stuart Commission found that – although there were state agents in the ANC’s and MK’s ranks – none of the mutineers or the members of the Committee of Ten were infiltrators and that their main grievances were that conditions in the camp were unsatisfactory.⁶² It has been argued that the brutal suppression of the mutinies was due to an “internal-enemy-danger-psychosis”. At that time, the ANC leadership and its security department had become increasingly hostile to any form of criticism or dissidence and sought to eradicate this by enforcing strict disciplinary rules.⁶³

In 1988 – after the signing of the New York Accord by Angola, South Africa, Cuba and the Soviet Union – all foreign troops had to leave Angola and the ANC was forced to evacuate the camps. By the end of that year, Quatro was completely evacuated and the camp was demolished.⁶⁴

55 Amnesty International Commission Report, 1992.

56 Skweyiya Commission Report, 1992.

57 Cleveland, p. 66; Scholtz and Scholtz, p. 220.

58 Amnesty International Commission Report, 1992; Scholtz and Scholtz, p. 219.

59 Scholtz and Scholtz, p. 219.

60 *Ibid.*

61 *Ibid.*, p. 214; Stuart Commission Report, 1984.

62 Stuart Commission Report, 1984.

63 Ketelo *et al.*, p. 13; Scholtz and Scholtz, p. 237.

64 Cleveland, p. 66.

Quatro and the ANC's other detention camps properly entered the public discourse of apartheid-era South Africa after the Forsyth Saga. In August 1988, Olivia Forsyth – a 27 year old woman with dual British-South Africa citizenship – took refuge in the British Embassy in Luanda, claiming that she escaped from Quatro where she had been interrogated and tortured for a period of 22 months.⁶⁵ Forsyth became involved in student politics while studying journalism at Rhodes University, where she was a member of the local National Union of South African Students (Nusas) committee.⁶⁶ During this time many of Forsyth's fellow Nusas members suspected her of working as a spy and a double agent.⁶⁷

Forsyth left Rhodes in 1985, claiming that she had gotten a job working for a research company that travelled throughout Southern Africa; she then disappeared without a trace, only to resurface again in August 1988.⁶⁸ Forsyth's refuge at the British Embassy in Luanda resulted in a diplomatic tug-of-war between Britain and Angola.⁶⁹ Moreover, her alleged torture at Quatro caused a storm in the South African media. Prior to the Forsyth Saga, the existence of Quatro and other ANC detention camps was mostly rumoured.⁷⁰

Quatro's presence within the public discourse became more visible in 1990 with the unbanning of the ANC and other anti-apartheid movements and the influx of exiles back into South Africa. The ANC gradually came under increasing pressure to address the issue of atrocities that had taken place in their camps. The first call for a commission of inquiry into the ANC's detention camps came in the form of an open letter from ex-detainees to Nelson Mandela in April 1990.⁷¹

The ANC was also being pressured by the Returned Exiles Coordinating Committee (RECOC), under the leadership of former Quatro detainee Rodney Twala.⁷² RECOC was especially concerned about the ANC's evasiveness regarding the mutiny of 1984 and the murders of former ANC dissidents and mutineers. They too demanded that a commission of inquiry be made into the ANC camp atrocities, a demand that ANC President Nelson Mandela agreed to.⁷³ Mandela consequently appointed the Skweyiya Commission to investigate the torture claims of former ANC camp detainees.⁷⁴ The Commission was conducted over a period of almost

65 *Beeld*, 2 August 1988; *The Cape Times*, 2 August 1988; *The Star*, 1 August 1988.

66 *The Argus*, 2 August 1988; *The Sunday Star*, 7 August 1988; *Weekly Mail*, 11 August 1988.

67 *Weekly Mail*, 11 August 1988.

68 *Ibid.*

69 *The Star*, 1 August 1988; *The Sunday Star*, 7 August 1988; *Weekly Mail*, 11 August 1988.

70 *The Cape Times*, 2 August 1988; *The Argus*, 2 August 1988; *Beeld*, 2 August 1988.

71 Ketelo *et al.*, p. 45.

72 *The Star*, 13 July 1990 & 8 May 1992.

73 *Beeld*, 24 August 1991; *City Press*, 25 August 1991; *Sowetan*, 30 August 1991.

74 *The Cape Times*, 4 September 1991; *The Star*, 4 September 1991; *Vrye Weekblad*, 31 January 1992.

a year and its report was based on the *in camera* testimonies of 17 victims of the ANC's detention camps.⁷⁵

The Skweyiya Commission Report was released in October 1992.⁷⁶ The Commission found that the ANC was responsible for several human rights abuses in its camps – particularly in Quatro – and recommended that the torturers and perpetrators be identified and held accountable for their actions.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the Commission Report recommended that the victims receive some sort of monetary compensation for the physical and psychological damage as well as the losses of property that they had suffered at the hands of their torturers in the camps.⁷⁸ The ANC welcomed the Skweyiya Commission's report and Nelson Mandela announced that the organisation took full responsibility for the human rights abuses detailed in the Commission's report. The organisation, however, refused to make public the names of those who were responsible for the camp atrocities.⁷⁹

While the Skweyiya Commission was under way, another commission – this time an independent one – was launched as well. In 1991, the International Committee of the Red Cross asked the ANC permission to probe the disappearances of approximately 50 ANC-camp detainees; the ANC rejected the organisation's request.⁸⁰ At the same time, Amnesty International also began to pressure the ANC to open its detention camps to the world and allow the Red Cross access into these camps.⁸¹ Amnesty International, therefore, initiated an independent commission of inquiry into the ANC camps; this probe was eventually accepted by the ANC.⁸² Amnesty International's report was published at the same time as the Skweyiya Commission Report and confirmed the Commission's findings.⁸³

Yet another independent commission of inquiry that was initiated in response to the shortcomings of the Skweyiya Commission was the Douglas Commission. Upon the publication of the Skweyiya Commission Report in October 1992, it was revealed that Nelson Mandela had been handed a list of ANC members who were responsible for torture in the camps but that this list had not been made public.⁸⁴ The ANC was severely criticised for this and the public demanded that these names be made known. As a result, the Washington-based International Freedom

75 The Skweyiya Commission Report, 1992.

76 *Beeld*, 24 October 1992; *The Star*, 20 October 1992; *Sunday Times*, 18 October 1992.

77 The Skweyiya Commission Report, 1992.

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Business Day*, 20 October 1992; *The Star*, 20 October 1992; *Sunday Times*, 11 October 1992.

80 *The Cape Times*, 8 May 1992; *Sowetan*, 30 August 1991; *The Star*, 22 August 1991.

81 *Die Burger*, 31 August 1991 & 2 April 1992; *Financial Mail*, 4 December 1992.

82 *Die Burger*, 31 August 1991 & 9 May 1992; *The Citizen*, 9 May 1992.

83 *Die Burger*, 28 November 1992; *City Press*, 29 November 1992; *Negotiation News*, 17 December 1992.

84 *The Citizen*, 21 October 1992; *The Star*, 20 October 1992; *Sunday Times*, 11 October 1992.

Foundation (IFF)⁸⁵ appointed an independent commission of inquiry to identify those who were responsible for torture in the ANC camps.⁸⁶

The resulting Douglas Commission Report, published in January 1993, confirmed that the ANC was responsible for several human rights abuses within its camps and that several ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) leaders – including Ronnie Kasrils and former ANC-ministers, Joe Modise and Jacob Zuma (now President of the ANC as well as South African President) – were amongst those responsible for allowing these abuses to occur.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the Douglas Commission Report recommended that “the ANC will have to confront and address its responsibility and accountability for the crimes against humanity committed by it in exile”.⁸⁸ The ANC’s response to the Douglas Commission Report was generally dismissive.⁸⁹

The final commission of inquiry into the ANC’s detention camps was, once again, commissioned by the ANC itself. Published in August 1993, the Motsueyane Commission Report confirmed the findings of previous commission reports and concluded that these abuses violated the ANC’s code of conduct and that the victims deserved to be compensated for the damage that had been done to them.⁹⁰ The ANC accepted collective responsibility for the abuses that took place in their camps and expressed regret at what had happened.⁹¹ The organisation, however, also stressed that the abuses that had taken place in its camps were “excesses” rather than a result of the ANC’s policies and that the violence was a product of “paranoia” and “hysteria”.⁹²

These commissions and the testimonies on which they were based were also responsible for the construction of a collective memory of Quatro as well as the embedding of this collective memory in the South African “unconscious”. This period can, therefore, be regarded as the time during which Quatro began to ferment within South Africans’ popular psyche. The issue of how this collective memory of Quatro was received and used by a range of political parties and the media can now be addressed.

85 The IFF’s status as a staunch right-wing, anti-communist organisation means the Douglas Commission’s finding should be taken with a pinch of salt. The Motsueyane Commission, however, confirmed that many of the individuals mentioned in the Douglas Commission Report were responsible for human rights abuses in Quatro.

86 Anthea Jeffery, *People’s war: New light on the struggle for South Africa* (Johannesburg and Cape Town, 2009), p. 517; *The Star*, 21 October 1992.

87 The Douglas Commission Report, 1993.

88 *Ibid.*

89 *Die Afrikaaner*, 27 August 1993; *Sunday Times*, 17 January 1993; *Weekly Mail*, 15 January 1993.

90 *Die Afrikaaner*, 27 August 1993; *The Star*, 3 September 1993; *The Weekly Mail & Guardian*, 3 September 1993.

91 *The Citizen*, 31 August 1993; *Sowetan*, 2 September 1993; *Sunday Nation*, 29 August 1993.

92 Cleveland, p. 67; *The Citizen*, 31 August 1993; *The Star*, 9 September 1993.

The various commissions of inquiry into the ANC's detention camps – particularly the Motsueyane Commission – came at a critical time in South African political life. At this stage the ANC was involved in tense negotiations with the National Party (NP) government over the possibility of a transitional government based on compromise, power-sharing and democratic values. The ANC's position as the “vanguard of the broad South African liberation movement” gave the organisation something of a morally superior and untarnished aura and the commissions' findings seriously threatened the ANC's position in this regard.

Opposition parties and groups in post-1994 South Africa have frequently drawn on the collective memory of Quatro, using it primarily to challenge the ANC's hegemony and the organisation's legitimacy. In fact, this has occurred so frequently that it is perhaps possible to speak of a political “tradition” amongst opposition parties of employing the memory of Quatro. This trend did not, however, only appear after 1994; it essentially began in the time that Quatro was entering the public discourse.

The first reactions by the opposition to Quatro began with the Forsyth Saga in 1988. Much of the rhetoric surrounding the Forsyth Saga primarily functioned within the discourse of the apartheid state. Newspaper articles tended to paint Quatro as a hotbed of atrocious torture, communism and HIV/AIDS and generally made use of loaded headlines such as “ANC-wraak” or “Down the trail of deception, into the ANC's clutches”.⁹³ Most significantly, the press organs of the NP government seized the opportunity to use Quatro to challenge the ANC's legitimacy. An editorial in the Afrikaans newspaper *Beeld* perfectly summarised the Nationalist attitude:

“Die ANC is 'n 'bevrydingsorganisasie', word luidkeels hier en in die buiteland verkondig. Die manier waarop hy met andersdenkendes werk, vertel wat sy idee van vryheid werklik is. Dit is bekend dat 'n hele paar ontgogeldes wat die waarheid oor die ANC begin vertel het, al in sluipaanvalle in Suid-Afrika omgekom het; ook dat daar strafkampe in Angola is waar hard gewerk word met mense wat wil afdraai van die ANC se duiwelpad.”⁹⁴

Although functioning particularly within the discursive framework of the apartheid state, this paragraph gestures towards a prevailing attitude that several other opposition groups would assume with regard to Quatro after 1994. For opposition parties, Quatro symbolised a kind of failure on the ANC's part and could, therefore, be used against the party as “proof” that it was not fit to rule.

The period of negotiations in the early 1990s signalled a time when the opposition – particularly the NP – began to draw more and more on the memory of Quatro as a means of challenging the ANC. At this time, Nelson Mandela's leadership as well as international support for the ANC gave the organisation an

93 *The Aida Parker Newsletter*, 31 March 1989; *Beeld*, 2 August 1988; *Rapport*, 5 February 1989.

94 *Beeld*, 2 August 1988.

almost mystical and morally superior aura.⁹⁵ The memory of Quatro, however, severely challenged this aura and posed as something of a counter-memory to the more morally pristine memory of the “struggle”. It is, therefore, not surprising that the NP began to use the memory of Quatro as a reason to demand that an independent commission of inquiry be made into the ANC’s camps.⁹⁶

The opposition’s reaction to the release of the Skweyiya Commission Report in 1992 also illustrates how parties began to draw on Quatro as a means of challenging the ANC. The Skweyiya Commission Report was severely criticised by the NP, the Democratic Party (DP) and the Conservative Party (CP) for failing to reveal the names of those who were identified as torturers and demanded that the ANC identify the perpetrators.⁹⁷ Similarly, the release of the Motsueyane Commission Report gave the opposition another opportunity to criticise the ANC and demand that the perpetrators be held accountable.⁹⁸ For example, Marthinus van Schalkwyk argued that the Commissions’ findings “indicated yet again that an ANC government would be bad news for South Africa” while Tony Leon demanded that the Quatro perpetrators be taken to court.⁹⁹ In a similar fashion, during the run-up to the 1994 elections, the NP circulated electoral campaign advertisements drawing on the findings of the various different commissions and criticising the ANC for its Angolan detention camps.¹⁰⁰ One such advertisement boldly stated:

“So far the Douglas, Skweyiya and Motsueyane Commissions have uncovered many atrocities committed by the ANC in exile. Nevertheless, some of those still appear on the ANC national candidates list ... Unlike the ANC, who ignored their own Commissions’ findings, President de Klerk has acted swiftly and effectively in response to the Goldstone Commission’s report, although the report stressed that the evidence at this stage is only *prima facie*. Vote for the party you can trust to enforce justice.”¹⁰¹

For the most part, this kind of mud-slinging occurred within the context of negotiations and the run-up to the elections. This attitude was, however, not restricted to pre-1994 South Africa. What is critical about this period is that it saw the emergence of a specific trend that would characterise inter-party relations in post-apartheid South Africa. One can argue that the opposition has, in a sense, seized and appropriated the narratives and experiences of the victims of Quatro and has used it as a tool for challenging the legitimacy of the ANC. In doing so, the

95 Trehwela (ed.), p. 46.

96 *Die Burger*, 30 November 1992; *The Citizen*, 17 June 1992; *The Star*, 21 October 1992.

97 *The Citizen*, 21 October 1992; *Sowetan*, 22 October 1992; *The Star*, 21 October 1992.

98 *Die Afrikaner*, 27 August 1993; *The Star*, 3 September 1993; *Weekly Mail & Guardian*, 2 September 1993.

99 *Business Day*, 30 November 1992; *The Star*, 7 May 1997.

100 *Die Burger*, 9 April 1994; *Sowetan*, 30 March 1994.

101 *Sowetan*, 30 March 1994.

victims of Quatro are reduced to – what Radstone terms – “objects of voyeuristic, or triumphalist fascination”.¹⁰²

After the 1994 elections, the ANC became the dominant party in South African politics and – as a result – opposition parties began to utilise the memory of Quatro more and more. This occurred on several occasions and primarily functioned as a challenge to ANC hegemony. The first noteworthy instance of this took place during the TRC when the DP and the NP began to demand that the ANC submit the then still unpublished Skweyiya Commission Report to the TRC; they argued that the ANC had released only a “sanitised” version of the report and that the full report needed to be made public.¹⁰³ In keeping with the TRC’s mandate that past atrocities needed to be revealed in order to ensure that they do not happen again, the DP argued that the release of the full Skweyiya Commission Report would prevent perpetrators from assuming positions of power in government.¹⁰⁴ The DP’s censure of the ANC in this regard can, for the most part, be understood within the discursive framework of the post-apartheid state, championing the notion of criticism of the ruling party as an essential part of the democratic political culture of the “new South Africa”.

The NP’s reaction to the ANC on the issue of Quatro had a strong counter-accusatory thrust. This was most probably due to the severe criticism that the NP received from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a body generally viewed by opposition groups as a mouthpiece for the ANC.¹⁰⁵ During this period, the NP frequently fell back on the memory of Quatro whenever it was confronted by the TRC about apartheid state atrocities.¹⁰⁶ On one occasion, the NP issued a statement that “die ANC moet sy allerheilige fasade laat vaar en die volle omvang van sy gewelddadige verlede onthul” (“the ANC must drop its holy façade and expose its violent past”); on another occasion, Quatro and other ANC detention camps were compared to the Russian gulags.¹⁰⁷ This reaction says a great deal more about the NP than it does of the ANC: Such counter-accusatory behaviour came specifically at a time when the NP’s power began to wane and the party felt that it was being scapegoated by the TRC.¹⁰⁸

After the TRC had come to an end and the NP’s influence in the South Africa politics had diminished, the memory of Quatro became something of a crutch for

102 Radstone, p. 17.

103 *Beeld*, 11 December 1997; *Die Burger*, 11 December 1997 & 7 March 1998; *The Citizen*, 8 December 1997.

104 *Beeld*, 3 July 1998; *Die Burger*, 7 March 1998; *The Citizen*, 15 December 1997.

105 RW Johnson, *South Africa’s brave new world: The beloved country after apartheid* (London, 2010), p. 292; *Die Afrikaner*, 3 July 1998; *Rapport*, 5 July 1998.

106 *Beeld*, 3 July 1998; *Die Burger*, 7 March 1998 & 29 June 1998; *The Citizen*, 9 December 1997.

107 *Beeld*, 8 December 1997; *Rapport*, 14 December 1997.

108 Johnson, p. 275.

post-apartheid Afrikaner anxiety. The memory of Quatro was frequently invoked by the likes of Pieter Mulder of the Freedom Front Plus and Johann van der Merwe (former Police Chief) as a challenge to the ANC's legitimacy. For the most part, they argued that Afrikaners had been portrayed as villains by the TRC, that the Commission had not put enough pressure on the ANC and that "true reconciliation" would only be possible if the ruling party would come clean about its "violent past".¹⁰⁹ These cries have, however, failed to make a significant impact on South African political life; both prior to and during the TRC. The ANC had in fact admitted and taken responsibility for past atrocities committed in the party's name and the opportunity for "true reconciliation" – in the form of the TRC – had long since passed. These expressions of post-apartheid Afrikaner anxiety have, therefore, constituted only a vocal minority in South African political life.

In South Africa's post-TRC political landscape, a more visible opposition towards the ANC came in the form of the Democratic Alliance (DA). This was especially true with regard to the memory of Quatro. In 2003, for example, the DA severely criticised the ANC for naming a training college for intelligence professionals after former Quatro torturer Mzwai Piliso.¹¹⁰ In a press release Joe Seremane, chairperson of the DA at that time, said:

"South Africa must never forget the sins of the past. We must not forget one single murder or one single act of torture. By forgetting, we dishonour the victims. By remembering, we safeguard the future through our understanding of the past. By honouring the perpetrators, we insult the victims. True reconciliation embodies justice, repentance and forgiveness across the board. There can be no spirit of 'African Union' in our country if people like Piliso receive these sorts of tributes."¹¹¹

This kind of language would become characteristic of opposition groups' rhetoric against the ANC. The possibility that Quatro could be forgotten was seen as a threat to South African post-apartheid democracy. The DA, in particular, became a sustained voice in this regard and the party's rhetoric frequently reflected the attitude illustrated above. In a way, the DA had echoed Mulder's and Van Der Merwe's arguments that "true reconciliation" can only be possible through the ANC's cathartic recognition of Quatro.¹¹² This is perhaps due to the fact that the DA has become something of a receptive home for post-apartheid white anxiety and scepticism towards the ANC government. In either case, criticism of the ANC for its dubious past is essentially framed as a democratic activity that will help to keep the ruling party in check. Most significantly, this kind of criticism is motivated by the idea that by holding the ANC accountable for the abuses at Quatro, all South

109 *Die Burger*, 12 November 2009; *Rapport*, 31 January 2010; *Volksblad*, 2 August 2007.

110 *The Citizen*, 23 May 2003; *City Press*, 25 May 2003; *The Star*, 27 August 2004.

111 *City Press*, 25 May 2003.

112 *Volksblad*, 2 August 2007; *Die Burger*, 12 December 2009.

Africans can successfully be reconciled and the “Rainbow Nation” can gallantly strive towards a “democratic future”.¹¹³

The attitude within the ANC towards the collective memory of Quatro underwent a great deal of change after 1994. The organisation’s attitude has, to a great extent, been characterised by amnesia and attempts to negate the collective memory of Quatro. Prior to 1994, the findings of the various commissions of inquiry into Quatro had – to a degree – been welcomed by the ANC. This was arguably due to the strong reconciliatory and humanist thrust of Nelson Mandela’s leadership style at that stage.

The organisation, however, failed to apologise directly to the victims of the camps and also failed to follow the Commission’s recommendations and compensate the victims for their losses and suffering.¹¹⁴ The ANC welcomed the release of the Motsueyane Commission Report in a similar fashion, stating:

“The ANC therefore has taken a courageous first step [in opening a national discourse on the human rights violations of the past]. Recognising that abuses did occur, representing a breakdown in the difficult chains of command and communication that can occur under siege conditions, we express our profound sense of regret, collective moral responsibility and apologise to all those who suffered as a consequence.”¹¹⁵

While accepting “collective moral responsibility” for the abuses that had occurred in the camps, the ANC was also quick to point out that it had “acted in accordance with the moral imperatives required in the circumstances” and that the human rights abuses occurred as a result of a climate of “paranoia” and “hysteria”.¹¹⁶ In response to the Motsueyane Commission Report, the ANC proposed that a truth commission needed to be established to investigate the human rights abuses committed by both the apartheid state *and* the anti-apartheid movement.¹¹⁷ The proposal was also partly a reaction to the NP’s demands for those responsible for torture and abuse in Quatro to be held accountable for their actions.

In *The Star*, Kader Asmal argued that the NP’s criticism of the ANC for abuses in its detention camps – as well as other acts of political violence – was misdirected for three reasons. Firstly, he argued, the violence acts committed by the anti-apartheid movement were not on the same moral plain as those committed by

113 See Christian Ambler Williams’ thesis *Exile history: An ethnography of the SWAPO camps and the Namibian nation*. Williams explores a similar dynamic within the context of post-colonial Namibia. As he points out, there have been a number of people in Namibia who stress that true reconciliation can only be possible once “both sides” of the history of the liberation struggle are examined. Moreover, such arguments need to be understood within the discourses of democracy and human rights.

114 *Financial Mail*, 23 October 1992; *Negotiation News*, 23 November 1992; *Sowetan*, 2 September 1993.

115 NEC Response to the Motsueyane Commission Report, 1993.

116 Cleveland, p. 67; *The Star*, 9 September 1993; Scholtz and Scholtz, p. 215.

117 NEC Response to the Motsueyane Commission Report, 1993.

the apartheid state. Secondly, the violence perpetrated by the apartheid state was a “product of policy” whereas the torture and abuse in Quatro, for example, was not part of ANC policy but rather a violation of the organisation’s code of conduct. Thirdly – and most significantly – Asmal pointed out that the ANC had in fact taken steps to acknowledge and take responsibility for human rights abuses within its own ranks while the NP government had done no such thing.¹¹⁸

While opposition groups used the collective memory of Quatro to criticise the ANC, the ANC initially employed it for the strategic purpose of asserting their credibility and moral superiority at a time of tense pre-election negotiations. It, therefore, appears that the Motsueyane Commission Report played a key role in the establishment of the TRC in post-apartheid South Africa. If this is the case, does it also imply that the collective memory of Quatro played an important role in the creation of the so-called “Rainbow Nation Myth”? In order to address this issue, one must first understand the nature of both the ANC’s and the TRC’s rhetoric in the period shortly after 1994.

Following its victory at the 1994 election, the ANC found itself in “new circumstances of reconstruction and nation-building” and sought to refashion its rhetoric accordingly.¹¹⁹ As a result of this, the organisation began to channel its energy into the refashioning of South Africa as a “multi-racial, multi-cultural rainbow nation”.¹²⁰ Such a process marked the creation of a new *mentalité*, one that was opposed to that of the apartheid state and was essentially composed of a new set of collective memories. The TRC proved to be the ideal platform for such work. In fact, Mahmood Mamdani has gone so far as describing the TRC as the “founding myth of the new nation”.¹²¹ There are numerous reasons for this. According to Deborah Posel, the function of the TRC was primarily to “[reconcile] a previously divided society to a common future rooted in a ‘respect for human rights’”.¹²² This process of reconciliation was

“explicitly tied to the project of nation-building, ‘imagining’ a new form of national community base on ‘collective memory’, a ‘shared’ history. Exposure to the truth was the basis for a national consensus about the past and how to overcome its legacy in the future.”¹²³

It, therefore, appears the work that was done by the TRC suggested the creation of a new *mentalité* for a “new South Africa”. It is in this regard that the TRC’s mandate began to tie in with that of the newly-elected ANC government. As

118 *The Star*, 9 September 1993.

119 Report to the African National Congress 49th National Conference, p. 5.

120 Johnson, p. 11.

121 Quoted in Fullard and Rousseau, p. 217.

122 Posel, p. 149.

123 *Ibid.*

Johnson explains: “The ANC saw the TRC as merely the first step in a far larger change it wished to effect in the country’s moral and cultural climate.”¹²⁴

Anthea Jeffery emphasises this point by noting that the initial motivation for the establishment of the TRC – namely that it would investigate human rights abuses on both sides of the political conflict – was gradually replaced by strong nation-building and a “healing” imperative.¹²⁵ Whereas the initial plan was that the NP government would establish a truth commission in consultation with other political parties, it was the ANC who became the key facilitator of the TRC upon winning the 1994 election.¹²⁶ In doing so, the TRC began to share the ANC’s commitment to “reconstruction” and “nation-building”.

The ANC’s willingness to take part in the TRC and to allow probes into its past abuses quite clearly toes the ideological line set by Mandela’s presidency and the organisation’s post-election political culture. During this time, the ANC defined itself as an organisation that regarded its “culture of open debate and transparency” as one of its greatest strengths.¹²⁷ The ANC also recognised that, in the past, it had often been dogged by “instances of ill-discipline” and “strains between policy ... and the particular, perceived requirements of a specific ministry”.¹²⁸ This perfectly summarises the ANC’s attitude towards the collective memory of Quatro at that particular time: on the one hand, acknowledging past abuses but, on the other hand, framing these abuses as excesses or as violations of policy.¹²⁹

Colin Bundy has noted that the TRC had an immense impact on the unconscious or “popular psyche of South Africans”.¹³⁰ The TRC, therefore, was potentially an ideal opportunity for the memory of Quatro to be written into the new “master narrative” of South African history that the Commission was producing. There were, however, several factors that restricted the memory of Quatro from becoming part of the collective memory and “shared history” of the “new South Africa”. One of these factors was the very nature of the ANC’s submission to the TRC. The ANC’s attitude here mirrored that which it had taken with regard to the various different commissions of inquiry into the abuses at the detention camps. The ANC, once again, insisted that abuses such as those committed at Quatro were merely “excesses” and “instances in which the ANC’s own policies were contradicted or ignored”.¹³¹

124 Johnson, p. 11.

125 Jeffery, p. 517.

126 *Ibid.*

127 Report to the African National Congress 49th National Conference 1994, p. 2.

128 *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 7.

129 Cleveland, p. 64.

130 Bundy, p. 9.

131 African National Congress. Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1996; Scholtz and Scholtz, pp. 228-229.

This move was arguably motivated by the ANC's need to maintain its legitimacy and position as the "vanguard" of the South African liberation movement. There could also be more underlying factors at play. The following paragraph from the ANC's TRC submission is particularly telling:

"Combined with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ... all these efforts will afford us the confidence and resolve to say: Never again! ... [W]e hope that at the end of this process, South Africans will be wiser, and better able to march into the future with confidence in one another and in their capacity to create a prosperous, peaceful and just society in which any violation of human rights will be *fading memories of a past gone by, never to return.*"¹³²

On the one hand, this paragraph suggests a need to remember the atrocities of the past as a means of ensuring that such horrors are not repeated in the future. On the other hand, the final sentence gestures towards a desire to forget the past. It appears that, for the ANC, the memory of Quatro poses as a traumatic memory; a memory that the organisation would rather forget and, therefore, can only work through by repressing or negating said memory. The memory of Quatro, therefore, could neither be fully assimilated into nor articulated by the "master narrative" of the "new South Africa" that the TRC sought to construct.

There were several other factors that restricted the assimilation of the memory of Quatro into this new "master narrative". One of the major incidents that hampered this process was the testimonies given by former Quatro torturers such as Joe Modise, Mzwandile Piliso and Andrew Masondo. After 1994, these and other members of iMbokodo were appointed to senior positions in state organs such as intelligence and defence.¹³³ When they were called to appear before the TRC, the majority of these former guards and torturers completely denied the fact that there were any human rights abuses in the camps.¹³⁴ Others – like Modise, Piliso, Masondo and Jacob Zuma – were extremely defiant about testifying before the TRC and completely refused to accept responsibility for any abuses that occurred on their watch.¹³⁵

None of the former members of MK or iMbokodo who were responsible for human rights abuse in Quatro and elsewhere were held accountable for their actions and many of them remained in positions of power, despite being summoned to appear before the TRC.¹³⁶ This had a great impact on the testimonies of former Quatro detainees, by creating a climate that was hostile towards their attempts to speak out and share their experience of torture. Many former Quatro detainees were threatened and some even killed when it became clear that they wanted to expose

132 *Ibid.* [Italics added.]

133 Interview with Paul Trehwela, 5 October 2010.

134 *Rapport*, 6 December 1998.

135 Interview with Paul Trehwela, 5 October 2010.

136 *Ibid.*

what happened in the camps, thus making it very difficult for them to testify before the TRC.¹³⁷

Another major obstacle appeared when ANC president-elect, Thabo Mbeki, ignored Nelson Mandela's wishes and tried to prevent the publication and release of a report containing information about Quatro and the testimonies of Quatro detainees.¹³⁸ Mandela had no qualms about handing the report over to the TRC, but Mbeki tried to stop this behind his back because he felt that releasing the report would tarnish the ANC's image.¹³⁹ This move allegedly alienated Mbeki from several of his fellow members on the ANC's National Executive Committee who supported Mandela's decision to release the report.¹⁴⁰

The report was handed over to the TRC despite Mbeki's attempts. Although the report was made available to the public, Mbeki's attempts to suppress it gestured towards a change in the way the ANC approached the collective memory of Quatro. After Mandela's term as President, the ANC's attitude towards the memory started to move from one of recognition to one of negation and amnesia. This move seriously undermined the testimonies of the former Quatro detainees and consequently impacted greatly on the place of their voices within the collective memory of the "new South Africa".

Not surprisingly, Thabo Mbeki's presidency signalled a dramatic change in the attitude of the ANC towards the memory of Quatro. Mbeki's alliance with former Quatro torturer, Joe Modise, as well as his reluctance to hand over a report of ANC abuses to the TRC, clearly suggests hostility towards the memory of Quatro.¹⁴¹ This attitude was most evident when the ANC, under Mbeki's leadership, severely criticised the TRC for "criminalising" the organisation and tried to suppress the publication of the Commission's findings.¹⁴² This behaviour, once again, suggests a desire to forget the memory of Quatro and to prevent it from being assimilated into the "master narrative" of the "new South Africa".

Today, there are no known memorials, monuments or interest groups commemorating the memory of Quatro.¹⁴³ Despite the Skweyiya Commission Report's recommendations, former Quatro detainees have yet to be compensated for their suffering and many of those responsible for abuses in the camps hold powerful positions in various different state organs.¹⁴⁴ What's more, these victims'

137 *The Independent on Saturday*, 22 August 1998 & 5 December 1998; *Sowetan*, 7 December 1988; *The Star*, 6 June 1991; *Sunday Tribune*, 10 August 1997.

138 Johnson, p. 150; *Weekend Saturday Argus*, 31 October 1998.

139 *Pretoria News*, 31 October 1998.

140 *Weekend Saturday Argus*, 31 October 1998.

141 Johnson, p. 32.

142 Fullard and Rousseau, p. 236; Johnson, p. 150.

143 Interview with Paul Trehwela, 5 October 2010.

144 *Ibid.*

accounts of abuse and torture have been quite absent from the likes of history textbooks and other historical narratives of the “struggle”. This is not too surprising since the ANC’s position as the dominant party in South Africa has ensured that Quatro remains largely absent from the dominant public and state discourse. The ANC’s amnesia has effectively spilled over into the public unconscious.

4. CONCLUSION

“Individuals within the ANC abuse their powers and they must be exposed. They hide behind the ANC and continue with their criminal activities. I once more lastly appeal to President Mandela to please take action against those who abused us in exile. This will help in healing our land. Perpetrators must be brought in front of the TRC in our presence, so that we [can] question them.”¹⁴⁵ *Olefile Samuel Mngpibisa, testimony, TRC Human Rights Violations Hearings, 1996*

This article has explored how the media, the ruling ANC and opposition parties like the NP and the DA have engaged with the memory of Quatro, and by implication, other ANC camps as sites of human rights abuses. The reader may have picked up that the voices of the very victims – such as the testimony that opens this chapter – who endured these abuses have been absent from this article. The omission of the victims’ voices has been deliberate. The focus of this article is not on the traumatic memory of the victims of Quatro, but rather on a much greater collective memory of Quatro and its place within the South African unconscious.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, this article has explored the complex dynamic by which the individual memories of the victims become subsumed under an overarching collective memory of the camps. This collective memory of Quatro is arguably not being kept alive in service of the victims themselves, but rather for the purposes of “memory politics”. In doing so, the victims’ traumas are effectively undermined and the process of working-through or healing is hampered.

Since the voices of Quatro’s victims have not been touched upon, it is perhaps appropriate that this article briefly turn to it now. The epigraph to this chapter is taken from the TRC testimony of a former Quatro detainee. In his testimony, Mngpibisa touches upon a crucial issue namely that by recognising the human rights abuses committed at Quatro, South Africa will – in a way – be “healed”. This raises the following question: Has the memory of Quatro actually helped “heal”

145 Cleveland, p. 63.

146 Todd Cleveland’s “‘We still want the truth’: The ANC’s Angolan detention camps and postapartheid memory” is an excellent analysis of the TRC testimonies and traumatic memories of former ANC camp detainees. Leopold and Ingrid Scholtz’s “Die ANC/SAKP in Angola: ’n Gevallestudie rakende interne demokrasie” offers a good account of the mutinies that took place in the ANC and the SACP’s camps in Angola. It’s analysis of the ANC and SACP leadership’s treatment of the camps is also insightful.

post-apartheid South Africa? This is a question that cannot really be answered. Such notions of healing and working-through function, specifically within the theological and psychological discourse of the TRC, need to be understood within that context.¹⁴⁷ It is perhaps more helpful to understand the construction of the post-apartheid or “Rainbow Nation” *mentalité* – as was done with the TRC – as an *attempt* to “heal” a “traumatised” South Africa. The question, therefore, needs to be rephrased: What role did the memory of Quatro play in the construction of the “Rainbow Nation” *mentalité* that was meant to reconcile a divided country?

As this article has shown, the answer to this question is by no means simple. With regards to the collective memory of Quatro, there have been two diverging streams of memory politics in post-apartheid South Africa: one that chooses to remember and one that chooses to forget. This article proposes that both these streams reinforce the “Rainbow Nation” *mentalité* or myth of the “new South Africa”, albeit in very different ways. Opposition groups – more specifically the NP and the DA – have frequently drawn on the memory of Quatro as a way of challenging the ruling ANC’s hegemonic position in post-apartheid South African politics. These organisations have stressed the need for the ANC to fully disclose and acknowledge the fact that it was responsible for human rights abuses during the liberation struggle. Such acts of censure are framed as a means of keeping the ruling party in check and, in doing so, subscribed to the democratic rhetoric that has characterised post-apartheid politics. This kind of memory politics – which frames its criticism of the ANC as democratic activity – toes the ideological line of the “Rainbow Nation” *mentalité* and effectively assists in the sustained construction thereof.

The ruling ANC government, on the other hand, has been actively engaged in a process of forgetting Quatro. It appears that the memory of Quatro presents the ANC with a traumatic and ambiguous narrative that does not fit into the master narrative of the “struggle”. The ANC has, therefore, practiced a kind of memory politics that involves the active negation of the ambiguous narrative and traumatic memory of Quatro in order to write a “shared history” of the past that can foster a “new South Africa”. In doing so, the ANC’s brand of memory politics contributes to the “Rainbow Nation” *mentalité* of post-apartheid South Africa. Both these acts of remembering and forgetting, therefore, reinforce the very specific construction or *mentalité* of post-apartheid South Africa.

147 Deborah Posel and Graeme Simpson, “The power of the truth: South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission in context” in Posel and Simpson (eds), *Commissioning the past: Understanding South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Johannesburg, 2002), p. 2.