

Invitation

Czech Association for Social Anthropology
&
Czech Sociological Association
in cooperation with
Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences
&
CEFRES

are pleased to invite you to the

177th GELLNER SEMINAR

Gellner seminar founded by Jiří Musil and Petr Skalník in 1998

which is taking place

on Tuesday 14 May 2019 at 4:30 pm

**at the Conference room of the Institute of Czech Literature, Na Florenci 3, Prague 1,
3rd floor, door across the yard**

Professor Tom Lodge

*Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies
University of Limerick*

presents

South African and Czech Communists

You will find the abstract and the information about the speaker below:

Luděk BROŽ, v.r., Zdeněk UHEREK, v.r., Alena MILTOVÁ, v.r.

South African and Czech Communists

Tom Lodge

Documented Encounters between South African and Czech communists were sporadic and accidental in the early history of both Communist parties. Many years later the pioneering South African trade unionist, Ray Alexander, recalled meeting Klement Gottwald at a clandestine training school in her native Latvia shortly before her migration to Cape Town in 1930. The Czech crisis of 1939 prompted the resignation of a senior personality in the South African party. Young South African Communists visited Prague just after the Second World War and were later active in the Communist-affiliated international student movement based in the Czech capital. The Czech government maintained a diplomatic presence in South Africa until 1962, the last communist administration to do so and Czech officials were urged by South African communists to support trade sanctions. By the 1960s contact between the “fraternal” parties was more institutionalized. At this stage, the Czech army was beginning to supply training to Communist recruits in the insurgent force led by Nelson Mandela, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. The South Africa Communist Party, in exile from 1965, held a key party meeting hosted by Czech communists in Prague that year. For the next two decades the South African Party would be locally represented in Prague on the editorial board of the *World Marxist Review*. The South African Communists were divided internally by the events of the Prague Spring though in public they professed their support for “normalization”. In this paper I will explore the background to these contacts and encounters. The Czech “people’s democracy” of the 1950s was a key source of inspiration for the development of the South African notion of a “national democratic” revolution. Czech support for this programme in the 1960s and 1970s was both a source of confidence and fragility, though. The paper will consider South African-Czech connections and linkages against the backdrop of the broader strategic concerns that informed and shaped Soviet and East European support for the South African liberatory politics.

CV in brief.

With a mother and father born respectively in Calcutta and Brno, Tom Lodge was educated in Nigeria, Borneo and Britain. He has a D. Phil from York in Southern African Studies and he is a member of the Royal Irish Academy. After working as a research assistant at the University of York’s Centre for Southern African Studies he began teaching in the Politics Department at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 1978. He remained at Wits University until 2005, leading its politics department through the 1990’s. In 2005 he moved to the University of Limerick as Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies. He visits South Africa two or three times a year and is a board member of the Electoral Institute, a Johannesburg-based NGO. He has published extensively on South African political history. His books include *Nelson Mandela: A Critical Life* (Oxford University Press, 2005) and *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences* (Oxford University Press, 2017). He has almost completed a book about the history of the South African Communist Party from its origins in the syndicalist politics of the white labour movement in South Africa in the 1900’s to its present-day development as a mass party. He is about to begin a book commissioned by Routledge entitled “Political Corruption in Africa”.