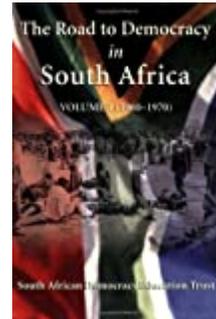




South African Democracy Education Trust. *The Road to Democracy in South Africa.* Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004. xxviii + 756 pp. R304.00 (paper), ISBN 978-1-86872-906-7.



Reviewed by Saul Dubow (University of Sussex)

Published on H-SAfrica (February, 2006)

At 750 pages in length, bearing the official endorsement of the state president and testifying to the involvement of senior public officials as well as the corporate sector, this collaboratively written contribution to the history of the liberation movement in South Africa—the first volume of a planned four—must have risked becoming a monumental exercise in courtly hagiography by committee. In fact, it represents a serious-minded and valuable effort to record vital aspects of the history of resistance to apartheid. Led by Professor Bernard Magubane, and with an editorial committee comprising some of South Africa’s senior historians, the project deserves generous commendation.

In sixteen chapters, several of which are jointly written, the authors cover many aspects of the anti-apartheid struggle in the post-Sharpeville decade. The key landmarks and waystations of this struggle have already been laid out by pioneering scholars like Karis and Carter, Sheridan Johns, Gerhart, Walshe, and Lodge. Building on this well established lineage, the contributors to this volume add much new material, drawing on previously unknown or proscribed sources: court records, state archives, around 200 personal interviews, as well as the effusion of biographies that have appeared over the past fifteen years of so. A particularly welcome feature of this book is the number of contributions it contains from

younger scholars—in addition to the presence of more familiar names such as Magubane, Bonner, Nieftagodien, Adhikari, Legassick and Saunders.

The training provided by the Wits History Department, and the imprint of its History Workshop, is strongly evident. This influence is detectable not only in respect of the contributors themselves, but also in their receptivity to social and life history. Taken as a whole, the institution-based and leadership-centric approach which mark many of the first-wave accounts of resistance, are thus significantly modified as the experiences of less well-known activists are brought to the fore. Judicious editorial decisions have ensured that this volume is not merely a paean of praise to the ANC. Pan-Africanism, the African People’s Democratic Union (an affiliate of the Non-European Unity Movement), the National Committee of Liberation (NCL) and the African Resistance Movement (ARM), are all afforded separate chapters. There is also a chapter on “above ground” liberal-left activity, encompassing the opposition emanating from the churches and the National Union of South African Students, to the Liberal and Progressive parties.

The volume begins with a broad synoptic essay by Magubane which sets the political context of the 1960s. Two essays, by Siphamandla Zondi, Sukude Matoti and

Lungisile Ntsebeza, consider the rural dimensions of resistance in Zeerust, Sekhukuniland, and Pondoland. Interviews with participants add significantly to what is already known about these regions from the work of Delius, Bundy and Beinart. The turn to sabotage and violence is surveyed on a regional basis in a multi-authored chapter. Three further chapters, written by Magnus Gunther, Brown Maaba, and Sello Mathabatha, focus on the NCL/ARM movement, the PAC, and its military arm, Poqo, respectively. The theme of interaction between rural and urban resistance is further explored by Robin Kayser and Mohamed Adhikari, who trace the Trotskyite theory of permanent revolution and armed struggle through the little-known African People's Democratic Union of Southern Africa.

Madeleine Fullard's treatment of state repression in the 1960s, which focuses on legislation and the growth of internal security measures, sets the context for a chapter by Noel Solani and Noor Nieftagodien on Robben Island, which draws on prisoner accounts and memories. Separate chapters by Sifiso Ndlovu on the ANC in exile, and on its efforts to mobilize world opinion, cast new light on these still sketchily understood aspects of external activity. Contributions by Nhlanhla Ndebele and Nieftagodien on the landmark Morogoro Consultative in 1969, as well as a multi-authored account of Umkhonto we Sizwe's Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns, significantly

extend our understanding of the ANC's military ambitions and strategies in the second half of the decade.

In two final chapters, common assumptions about the political quiescence of the post-Rivonia period are questioned. Gregory Houston draws our attention to ongoing internally-based ANC/SACP organizational capacity in this era, while Martin Legassick and Christopher Saunders discuss the extent of quasi-legitimate, largely white liberal-led, opposition to apartheid. The book closes with a number of appendices, an extensive bibliography, and a workable index.

The publication of *The Road to Democracy* marks an important development in the literature of liberation. Fresh sources of information, and a new generation of scholars (supported by established academics) are building significantly on earlier, institution-based, accounts. The value of the project as a whole will be further enhanced with the appearance of later volumes—which will further test the editors' skills of selection and direction. We are still living in the afterglow of the transition to democracy. As a new generation either takes the gains of freedom for granted, or else comes to question what has in fact been achieved, many of the tough historical questions which have yet to be asked will surely be posed. This book will help to frame the way these questions are posed.

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Citation: Saul Dubow. Review of Trust, South African Democracy Education, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*. H-SAfrica, H-Net Reviews. February, 2006.

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