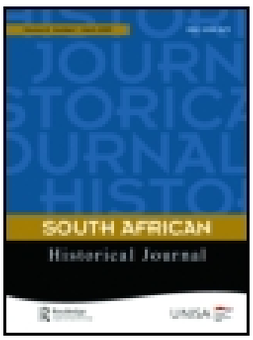

South African Historical Journal

ISSN: 0258-2473 (Print) 1726-1686 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rshj20

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To cite this article: Jeremy Seekings (2010) Whose Voices? Politics and Methodology in the Study of Political Organisation and Protest in the Final Phase of the 'Struggle' in South Africa, South African Historical Journal, 62:1, 7-28, DOI: 10.1080/02582471003778300

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02582471003778300

Whose Voices? Politics and Methodology in the Study of Political Organisation and Protest in the Final Phase of the 'Struggle' in South Africa*

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Abstract:

The study of the 'liberation' struggle in South Africa is unusual in that, with respect to the final phase of struggle in the 1980s, the literature was dominated by an 'indigenous' scholarship produced in whole or in part inside the country and, initially, during rather than after the period of struggle. This article examines three phases in this indigenous scholarship, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s with a phase of research that emphasised the local sources of political protest. In the early 1990s this gave way, partially at least, to a phase of 'critical indigenous' scholarship, focused primarily on the (mis)conduct of the 'youth'. Finally, beginning in the late 1990s and continuing into the early 2000s, there was a phase of 'activist-oriented indigenous' scholarship, focused on political leadership and networks. Each phase was defined in large part by the political context, which substituted for a theoretical or comparative framework for analysis. They were also distinguished by shifting methodologies and sources. While the 'voices' of participants in protest and organisation were emphasised in these three phases, different voices were given prominence in each of these. The challenge for scholars now is to integrate diverse voices into an overall picture, whilst recognising that voices are incomplete, that some potential voices are likely to remain silent, and that making sense of voices requires going beyond them.

Key words: Liberation; historiography; African National Congress; United Democratic Front

Most struggles for 'liberation' or democracy attract hagiography during the period of struggle and critical reflection only *after* political change has been achieved. The historiography of the struggle against apartheid is unusual in that a considerable volume of indigenous research – by

* This paper has benefited from critical comments made when it was presented at Chris Saunders's conference on Liberation in Southern Africa at the University of Cape Town in September 2008, by Raymond Suttner, and by an anonymous referee.

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South African Historical Journal 62 (1) 2010
ISSN: Print 0258-2473/Online 1726-1686
DOI 10.1080/02582471003778300

which I mean research conducted inside the country – preceded the transition to democracy. In this article I analyse and periodise the historiography of political organisation and protest during the final phase of political struggle in South Africa, from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. I identify three periods, all of which were primarily indigenous. The indigeneity of much South African research explains why some issues that were only addressed *after* political transition in other cases were raised *prior* to 1994 in South Africa. At the same time, however, South African research, both before and after 1994, bears the clear imprint of the changing political context. Research was driven more by political imperatives than by the comparative theory or systematic study of revolution or resistance.

This article does not discuss three literatures relevant to the study of the South African struggle. First, the three historiographical periods discussed here followed two distinct periods that I ignore. The first of these comprised a period of incipient indigenous scholarship, written (or at least researched) inside the country, including Edward Roux's *Time Longer Than Rope*, Leo Kuper's *Passive Resistance in South Africa* and Govan Mbeki's (and, apparently, Ruth First's) *South Africa: The Peasant Revolt*.[1] Such research was cut short by repression. All three of these books were, I think, banned (notwithstanding that Kuper had no connections to the Communist Party, but was rather a stalwart of the Liberal Party). The suppression or departure abroad of many critical voices in the 1960s meant that the centre of scholarship clearly shifted to Britain and, to a lesser extent, North America. Jack and Ray Simons's *Class and Colour in South Africa*, completed in Manchester, reflected a shift to a second period of primarily exile-based research.[2] The major contributions in this period were written by exiled scholar-activists in response to the explosion of protest in Soweto and elsewhere in 1976.[3]

Second, this article does not discuss the massive and excellent historical literatures written since the 1970s on the history of political resistance in South Africa prior to the mid 1970s. Resistance by slaves in the Cape, that against colonial conquest across the whole of southern Africa, as well as that in the transforming towns and countryside across the twentieth century, have all been analysed in rich and illuminating detail. This article concentrates on the final phase of political contestation.

Third, the article does not discuss analysis produced, within the various liberation and other political movements that opposed apartheid, on the conditions facing political resistance or the theory informing strategic or tactical choices.[4]

1. E. Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1948); L. Kuper, *Passive Resistance in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); G. Mbeki, *South Africa: The Peasant Revolt* (London: Penguin, 1964).
2. J. Simons and R. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa* (London: Penguin, 1969).
3. B. Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash: The Soweto Revolt, Roots of a Revolution?* (London: Zed, 1979); A. Brooks and J. Brickhill (1980), *Whirlwind before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprising in Soweto and the Rest of South Africa from June to December 1976* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1980).
4. Political activists tended to focus on the external challenges facing political organisations or movements, while (as we shall see) generally stepping around issues internal to the organisations or movements themselves. Thus scholars within the African National Congress (ANC) analysed critically Inkatha: see Mzala (1988), *Gathsa Buthelezi: Chief with a Double Agenda* (London: Zed, 1988). At the time, however, they but at the time rarely moved beyond hagiography about the ANC itself: for example, F. Meli, *South Africa Belongs To Us: A History of the ANC* (Oxford and Bloomington, Indiana: James Currey and Indiana University Press, 1989). While I do not discuss debates on how to theorise conditions or the ensuing strategies and tactics, I do note below their indirect importance in encouraging indigenous scholarship on political organisation and protest themselves.

I The (Re-)Emergence of Indigenous Analysis of Contemporary Resistance

Whereas the events of 1976 were analysed primarily by exiled scholar-activists, the events of the following decade were investigated extensively by scholars inside South Africa. While the earlier research relied overwhelmingly on press reports and other sources that were readily available to researchers who were far removed from Soweto,[5] the new indigenous scholarship of the 1980s relied heavily on very local sources. The re-emergent indigenous literature was largely sympathetic and sometimes propagandistic, but was often also critical, not least because of ongoing debates over strategies and tactics. The *South African Labour Bulletin* (begun in 1974) reflected the rise of a critical analysis of as well as strategic engagement with organisation in the workplace among black industrial workers. Comparable analysis and engagement with township-based organisation and protest was delayed until the mid 1980s, but then grew rapidly. In 1992 I edited a bibliography of publications on 'township politics' in the 1980s which included several hundred items (some admittedly very brief, including articles in *Work in Progress*).[6] The emergence of an indigenous scholarship did not, of course, mean an abrupt end to scholarship from 'exile'. The two continued in parallel, generally employing different emphases, approaches and methodologies.

This renaissance of indigenous research reflected a combination of factors that are unusual in periods and circumstances of severe political contestation. First, a number of universities inside the country provided space for lecturers and students. Second, South Africa had a robust and independent 'civil' society that included liberal and 'alternative' media, progressive lawyers, and a range of service organisations (such as ones concerned with political detainees). Indeed, much of this civil society was intricately linked to political movements, such that it might more accurately be considered an extension of political society. Third, South African political activists engaged in often robust debates over strategies and tactics inside as well as outside the country. Fourth, there was a degree of political liberalisation by the state, especially from 1983. Finally, the state provided an impetus to and helped to make available sources for research, as we shall see below.

This emergent internal literature drew on four major sources. The first might be called 'personal experience': numbers of writers were involved in the events, either through the independent trade union movement or the United Democratic Front (UDF) and its affiliated organisations. (Some were involved with the African National Congress [ANC] underground also, but did not write about that aspect of the struggle). Second, studies drew extensively on interviews with participants, although during this period these were seldom tape-recorded or

5. The first major book-length of the events of 1976 was written by a journalist inside South Africa. John Kane-Berman's book was written without using eye-witness accounts, making it little different to the exile-based accounts: J. Kane-Berman, *Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1978). The events of 1976 also prompted a series of evocative novels. To the best of my knowledge, no South African-based academic at the time conducted a major study of the revolt.

6. J. Seekings, 'South Africa's Townships, 1981–1991: An Annotated Bibliography', *Occasional Paper* no. 16 (Stellenbosch: Research Unit for Sociology of Development, University of Stellenbosch, 1992).

transcribed, probably for a mix of good and bad reasons.[7] Many journalists, including in the politicised 'community' media,[8] similarly relied on interviews, and provided what might be considered an indirect way of accessing participants. Third, there was a considerable array of documentation, most of which became available through the trials of participants. And, finally, there were the trial records themselves. Access to these sources, more-or-less at the time, distinguished this emergent internal South African literature from its counterparts in most other 'liberation' struggles.

Trial records and associated documents assembled by legal defence teams provided a rich variety of views of the township revolt 'from below'. Major trials from Gauteng (or the 'PWV', Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal region, as it was then known) included the 'Delmas Treason Trial' of UDF officials and activists from the Vaal Triangle concerning events in late 1984, a legal application by civic activists from the West Rand in 1985–1986, and two major trials of activists from Alexandra concerning events there in early 1986. Other trials also provided the material for books, written by or in association with lawyers involved in the cases.[9] Court cases also provided material on forced removals and other forms of state repression.[10] Political trials provided researchers not only with the testimony of participants but also with access to huge volumes of documents seized from activists by the police and presented in court. These documents included political literature, minutes of meetings, notebooks, and even (sometimes) financial accounts.

Political trials were not only a source for scholars, but also helped to shape the research agenda. Trials provided an impetus to research in that the state presented an interpretation of the struggle that oppositional scholars sought to contest, in and out of court. In court, psychologists and historians were called on to provide expert testimony in mitigation of sentence, especially in cases where people were convicted of murder on the basis of participation with 'common purpose' in a crowd.[11] Teams of researchers assisted with the most prominent trials (notably the Delmas Treason Trial). More widely, outside of court, researchers developed a counter-narrative of political resistance.

South African social sciences and history have generally (and appropriately) born the 'burden of the present'. Very little of the literature on the South African struggle is framed in terms of the comparative 'theory' of revolutions, social movements, and so on, in other parts of the world or at other points in time. Instead, the research agenda for indigenous research was framed by

7. In my experience, many activists in the 1980s were wary of tape-recorded interviews, for security reasons. I myself relied primarily on written notes. It is possible, however, that researchers such as myself exaggerated such security concerns and missed opportunities to preserve oral testimonies. It stands to reason that there are some topics about which activists would have been especially wary of having their testimony recorded.
8. See L. Switzer and M. Adhikari, eds, *South Africa's Resistance Press: Alternative Voices in the Last Generation under Apartheid* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2000).
9. On the 'Sharpeville Six', see P. Diar, *The Sharpeville Six* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990); P. Parker and J. Mokhesi-Parker, *In the Shadow of Sharpeville: Apartheid and Criminal Justice* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); on the 'Upington 25', see A. Durbach, *Upington: A Story of Trials and Reconciliation* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999).
10. See, generally, R. Abel, *Politics by Other Means: Law in the Struggle against Apartheid, 1980–1994* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
11. D. Foster, 'Expert Testimony on Collective Violence', in D. Hansson and D. van Zyl Smit, eds, T*owards Justice? Crime and State Control in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1990), 154–172.

the political environment: politics thus served as a substitute for 'theory'. One reason for this was what might be called the humanistic intent of many researchers, who sought to emphasise the agency of ordinary people rather than the importance of structures, political opportunities or resources, i.e. the broader factors emphasised in theoretical studies of collective protest. 'Theory' was undeveloped or tangential even in most of the doctoral theses that arose from this third period of research.[12]

The South African literature was clearly politicised in a range of ways, with many scholars being 'activists' in some sense. For scholars who were closest to the activist end of the continuum, research should serve strategic purposes. For example, when Raymond Suttner and Andrew Boraine wrote about 'people's courts' and 'people's power',[13] or Roland White wrote about consumer boycotts,[14] or Eddie Webster wrote about stay-aways[15] or 'social movement unionism',[16] they were clearly intervening in strategic debates. Books such as Josette Cole's

12. Suttner correctly notes that my book on the UDF (J. Seekings, *The UDF: The United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983–1991* [Athens, OH, Oxford and Cape Town: Ohio University Press, James Currey and David Philip, 2000]) avoids explicit theorising: R. Suttner, 'The UDF Period and its Meaning for Contemporary South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 3 (September 2004), 692. But I suspect that he understands theory in terms of the *political* theory underlying strategic and tactical choices (such as the theory of national democratic revolution), not of the comparative theory of revolution or protest. One exception was a limited engagement with the work of Manuel Castells and David Harvey on 'urban social movements' and, especially, struggles over rents and busfares: see, for example, J. McCarthy and M. Swilling, 'The Apartheid City and the Politics of Bus Transportation', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 25, 3 (December 1985), 381–400; M. Swilling, 'Social Movements and Apartheid's Urban and Regional System', in R. Tomlinson and M. Addleson, eds, *Regional Restructuring under Apartheid: Urban and Regional Policies in Contemporary South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1987), 138–153; J. Robinson, 'Passenger Transport as an Urban Issue: Case-Studies from the Eastern Cape' (MA thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1987); J. Seekings, 'The Black Townships of the Transvaal', in P. Frankel, N. Pines and M. Swilling, eds, *State, Resistance and Change in South Africa* (London and Johannesburg: Croom Helm and Southern Books), 197–228; C. Reintges, 'Urban Movements in South African Black Townships: A Case-Study', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 14, 1 (March 1990), 109–134. The general lack of engagement with social science theory coincided with the predominance of historians among senior scholars who shaped research (including as supervisors), but it is impossible to say what was cause and what was effect.
13. R. Suttner, 'Popular Justice in South Africa Today' (Paper presented to the Sociology Department, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, May 1986); A. Boraine, 'Mamelodi: From Parks to People's Power' (BA Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1987).
14. R. White, '"A Tide has Risen, A Breach has Occurred": Towards an Assessment of the Strategic Value of Consumer Boycotts', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 11, 5 (April/May 1986), 69–99; see also K. Helliker, A. Roux and R. White, '"Asithengi": Recent Consumer Boycotts', *South African Review*, 4 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), 33–52.
15. E. Webster, 'Stayaways and the Black Working-Class: Evaluating a Strategy', *Labour, Capital and Society*, 14, 1 (April 1981), 10–38; Labour Monitoring Group, 'The November Stayaway', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 10, 6 (May 1985), 74–100.
16. E. Webster, 'The Rise of Social Movement Unionism', in Frankel, Pines and Swilling, *State, Resistance and Change*, 174–196.

Crossroads,[17] research into reactionary township vigilantes, and much of the scholarship on local-level negotiations were all clearly intended as strategic interventions. The more obviously strategic writing was published in outlets such as the UDF's *Isizwe*[18] and 'community' media such as *Grassroots*[19] and *South*.[20] Media such as *Work in Progress* and the *South African Labour Bulletin* provided outlets for articles that were simultaneously scholarly and strategic.

Scholars at the less activist end of the continuum were also politicised, if in less obvious ways. On the one hand, politically embarrassing questions and topics were generally avoided. 'Progressive' scholars could pay critical attention to Inkatha, but (generally) not to the UDF, its affiliates, or the trade unions. On the other hand, the research agenda was framed in large part by the state, through its reactionary narratives of 'agitators', 'conspiracies' and murderous 'mobs'. These narratives were presented most explicitly and in most detail in court, in the trials of the state's opponents – at a time when the state's weakness meant that it sought to delegitimate its opponents through the legal process (as in the 1950s) rather than simply ban and repress them (as in the early 1960s).

In court, the state relied on three kinds of evidence with respect to the alleged conspiracies of agitators. First, expert witnesses testified that there was an ANC/South African Communist Party (SACP) conspiracy, citing ANC and SACP publications in which they called for (at different times) mass popular protest, the formation of organisations, 'ungovernability' and the establishment of structures of 'people's power. Second, expert witnesses showed that 'unrest' occurred similarly across many locations. Third, witnesses gave evidence that the accused were prominently involved in political organisation and protest in at least some of these locations. The coincidence of geographically widespread protest supposedly demonstrated that there was a conspiracy, with identifiable activists (i.e. the accused) providing the link between events on the ground and the puppet-masters in exile. The weakness of the case pushed prosecutors to fabricate evidence on a direct connection between activists and violence. The most notorious such instance was in the Delmas Treason Trial, when a witness was intimidated into telling the court that Terror Lekota had trained activists in Tumahole in the use of petrol bombs. The larger argument rested on unsubstantiated assertions, and it is unsurprising that the accused were acquitted, either in the initial trial or on appeal, in each of the major political trials.[21] Ironically, the ANC itself tended to articulate a similarly conspiratorial narrative, claiming that events inside the country were all parts of the ANC-led and directed conspiracy.

This was the context in which much of the contemporary, indigenous research was conducted. As the state emphasised conspiracies and sought to delegitimate popular organisation and

17. J. Cole, *Crossroads: The Politics of Reform and Repression* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1987).
18. J. Seekings, 'The United Democratic Front and the Media, 1983–1991', in Switzer and Adhikari, *South Africa's Resistance Press*, 223–259.
19. I. van Kessel, '*Grassroots*: From Washing Lines to Utopia', in Switzer and Adhikari, *South Africa's Resistance Press*, 283–326.
20. M. Adhikari, '"You Have the Right to Know": South, 1987–1994', in Switzer and Adhikari, *South Africa's Resistance Press*, 327–377.
21. The 'common purpose' provision made it easier to construct cases against identified members of murderous 'mobs', since the state needed to do little more than demonstrate that the accused were members of the crowd on the occasion that a murder was committed. Even in common purposes cases, however, judges sometimes acquitted the accused.

protest, so researchers responded by emphasising the local material and political grievances experienced by large numbers of township residents. Researchers documented how, in the absence of effective institutional mechanisms for raising their grievances, ordinary people turned to dramatic but largely peaceful forms of protest and demonstration, which understandably gave way to violent forms of resistance only when the state responded with brutal repression. The underlying narrative was clear: the guardians of apartheid were unreasonable and brutal, while protesters were reasonable and violence-averse. The key weaknesses of this period of research were its neglect of leadership and near-silence on the role of the ANC, and its emphasis on popular non-violence and accompanying reluctance to examine acts of popular violence. While critical in some respects, this period of research was also somewhat sanitised.

For the most part, researchers adopted what might be called a 'humanistic' position with respect to their accountability. 'Reality', wrote Belinda Bozzoli in 1986, 'does not fit into the interpretive straitjackets demanded by specific political movements, and one of the purposes of the researcher must be to reflect the ambiguities that reality contains, even while he or she may wish to challenge the ongoing iniquities with which we are faced'.[22] Bozzoli was not saying that researchers must be apolitical, but rather that there is a place for researchers who define their political projects in sufficiently broad terms that they cannot and should not be tied to any particular political organisation. Elsewhere, Bozzoli expressed the hope that her work might provide readers with a better understanding of how and why other people think, feel and act as they do:

> If a work of sociology can achieve that, it will have made a small contribution towards creating that most elusive of all things – a humane and democratic society, in which all are respected for who and what they are, and in which 'liberation' refers to the freeing of subjectivity as much as to the altering of structure.[23]

Others argued for a more formal accountability of researchers to their research subjects.[24] For the most part, however, a combination of state repression and popular enthusiasm meant that researchers could and did operate on the basis of a vague and humanistic sense of responsibility rather than any formal accountability.

II Critical Indigenous Scholarship

This narrative only really began to shift after 1990, in a fast-changing political climate. One reason for the shift was that a number of students completed doctoral theses, mostly at universities

22. B. Bozzoli, 'Preface', in B. Bozzoli, ed., *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1987), xvii.
23. B. Bozzoli with M. Nkotsoe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900–1983* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1991).
24. G. Adler, 'The Politics of Research during a Liberation Struggle', in R. Grele, ed., *International Annual of Oral History 1990* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 232–233.
25. J. Seekings, 'Media Representations of "Youth" and the South African Transition, 1989-1994', *South African Sociological Review*, 7, 2 (April 1995), 25–42; J. Seekings, 'The "Lost Generation": South Africa's "Youth Problem" in the Early 1990s', *Transformation*, 29 (1996), 103–125; J. Seekings, 'Beyond Heroes and Villains: The Rediscovery of the Ordinary in the Study of Childhood and Adolescence in South Africa', *Social Dynamics*, 32,1 (June 2005), 1–20.

outside of South Africa, in which they developed more critical analyses. A second reason was the changing political environment itself. Mandela and other ANC leaders themselves questioned aspects of the 'struggle', above all helping to fuel a moral panic about the 'lost generation' of young people.[25] In these changing times, a series of scholars documented some of the less seemly side of 'youth politics'.[26] In the field of labour studies, the equivalent – somewhat belatedly – was a more critical stance towards either the grass-roots or the leadership of trade unions.[27] The easing of repression and the prospect of completing the transition to democracy also meant that there was a sharp decline in the scholars' perceived accountability or responsibility.

In other respects, however, the context remained little changed through the early 1990s. Most of the major studies researched in the early 1990s adopted a more critical approach to local politics but at the same time maintained the existing focus on the *local* and skirted the kinds of overarching political networks that had been integral to the apartheid state's reactionary narrative. These emphases and weaknesses reflected the use on sources that presented an incomplete picture of the past – i.e. either or both of trial records and interviews with former participants in resistance, who, at least until 1994, were wary of discussing their more clandestine activities in the 1980s.

26. C. Carter, 'Comrades and Community: Politics and the Construction of Hegemony in Alexandra Township, South Africa, 1984–1987' (DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1991); C. Carter, '"We are the Progressives": Alexandra Youth Congress Activists and the Freedom Charter, 1983–5', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 17, 2 (June 1991), 197–220; C. Campbell, 'Learning to Kill? Masculinity, the Family and Violence in Natal', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 3 (September 1992), 614-628; G. Straker, *Faces in the Revolution: The Psychological Effects of Violence on Township Youth in South Africa* (Cape Town and Athens OH: David Philip and Ohio University Press, 1992); J. Seekings, 'From "Quiescence" to "People's Power": Township Politics in Kagiso, 1985–1986', *Social Dynamics*, 18, 1 (June 1992), 20–41; J. Seekings, *Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1993); L. Ntsebeza, 'Youth in Urban African Townships, 1945–1992: A Case-Study of the East London Townships' (MA dissertation, University of Natal, Durban, 1993); W. Scharf and B. Ngcokoto, 'Images of Punishment in the People's Courts of Cape Town, 1985–87', in N.C. Manganyi and A. du Toit, eds, *Political Violence and the Struggle in South Africa* (Halfway House: Southern Books, 1990); I. van Kessel, '"Beyond Our Wildest Dreams": The United Democratic Front and the Transformation of South Africa' (PhD thesis, University of Leiden, 1995); I. van Kessel, *'Beyond Our Wildest Dreams': The United Democratic Front and the Transformation of South Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); H. Pohlandt-McComick, '"I Saw a Nightmare". Doing Violence to Memory: The Soweto Uprising, June 16th, 1976' (PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 1999).

27. See, for example, K. von Holdt, 'From the Politics of Resistance to the Politics of Reconstruction? The Union and "Ungovernability" in the Workplace', in G. Adler and E. Webster, eds, *Trade Unions and Democratization in South Africa, 1985–1997* (London: Macmillan and New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), 100–128; K. von Holdt, *Transition from Below: Forging Trade Unionism and Workplace Change in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2003).

To various degrees, these strengths and weaknesses are evident in studies of many parts of South Africa: of the Eastern Cape,[28] the Western Cape,[29] Gauteng,[30] and parts of Limpopo.[31]

The most recent of such studies – sharing most of their strengths and weaknesses – was Bozzoli's *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid*, which examined the township revolt in 1986 in the Johannesburg township of Alexandra.[32] Events in Alexandra were unusually well-documented, on account of the two major political trials.[33] Bozzoli constructed a finely textured and detailed account of events in early 1986, when 'the previously predictable street life of residents' was transformed abruptly into an 'unpredictable, unforgettable period' of conflict and confrontation.[34] She relies very heavily on trial records, but – like most of the studies in this period of scholarship (including my own) – pays little attention to the limitations of trial records as a source. Ironically, Bozzoli places a great emphasis on the 'theatricality' of revolt, by which she seems to mean primarily that many of the events in the revolt were performed for audiences, whether present (in the case of funerals and marches) or absent (in the case of televised or reported events, including necklacings, as well as exemplary hearings in 'people's courts'). But she does not interrogate how the theatricality of political trials shaped the quality and selection of evidence presented therein (and used thereafter by researchers). What voices, and on what subjects, are excluded from trials? To what extent do trial records really allow us to assess participation in and attitudes to violence, for example? To what extent do trials allow us to hear the voices of 'ordinary' people?

28. G. Adler, '"The Factory Belongs to All Who Work In It": Race, Class and Collective Action in the South African Motor Industry, 1967–1986' (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1994); M. Swilling, 'Urban Control and Changing Forms of Political Conflict in Uitenhage, 1977–1986' (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1994); M. Tetelman, 'We Can: Black Politics in Cradock, South Africa, 1948–85' (PhD thesis, Northwestern University, 1997); K. Lanegran, 'Social Movements, Democratization and Civil Society: The Case of the South African Civic Associations' (PhD thesis, University of Florida, 1997); J. Cherry, *Kwazakele: The Politics of Transition in South Africa* (PhD thesis, Rhodes University, 2000).
29. G. Gunnarsen, 'Leaders or Organizers against Apartheid: Cape Town 1976–1984' (PhD thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2001); Van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*.
30. Van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*; J. Seekings, 'Quiescence and the Transition to Confrontation: South African Townships, 1978–1984' (DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1990); J. Seekings, 'Broken Promises: Discontent, Protest and the Transition to Confrontation in Duduza, 1978–1985' (Paper presented to the History Workshop conference, University of the Witwatersrand, February 1990); J. Seekings, 'Identity, Authority and the Dynamics of Violent Conflict: Duduza Township, 1985' (Paper presented at a conference on Political Violence in Southern Africa, Oxford, June 1991); Seekings, 'From "Quiescence" to "People's Power"'; Carter, 'Comrades and Community'; M. Marks, *Young Warriors: Youth Politics, Identity and Violence in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2001).
31. Van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*; P. Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle: Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1996).
32. B. Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (Athens OH and Edinburgh: Ohio University Press and Edinburgh University Press, 2004).
33. These were also used, though less fully, by Charles Carter in his doctoral study 'Comrades and Community', as well as in his articles, 'We are the Progressives' and C. Carter, 'Community and Conflict: The Alexandra Rebellion of 1986', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 1 (March 1992), 115–142.
34. Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle*, 86.

This is especially unfortunate because of her silence on the role of the ANC and of Johannesburg-wide or even national networks and factors in the events in Alexandra. Alexandra is treated like an offshore island, cut off from events elsewhere, despite the fact that revolt exploded there fully eighteen months *after* it had done so in the Vaal Triangle and East Rand. Bozzoli's research is as emphatically localist as most of the previous studies in this period (despite a promise, in her introduction, to explore the 'interface between [Alexandra's] typicality and its exceptionalism'.[35]) She asks what led to this 'unprecedented mobilization of the township masses' in Alexandra in 1986, but does not locate the events in Alexandra in the broader landscape of South Africa, and does not examine the role of the ANC – or even above-ground regional or national networks – in linking Alexandra with the rest of the country. Such links, as we have seen, were something that the state sought to emphasise in court, albeit without evidence, but which defence lawyers downplayed. The goal of the defence legal team in political trials was generally to represent the accused as peace-loving activists who had raised legitimate grievances and then tried to restore order in the face of unruly youth and violent police. That there is little evidence of revolutionary intent or political conspiracy in trial records does not mean that these were figments of prosecutors' imaginations. To probe such links, one would have to go beyond trial records, and beyond what activists in the 1980s and early 1990s were generally willing to discuss in interviews. In producing another 'isolated island' view of the township revolt, Bozzoli continues rather than breaks with the existing tradition of case-studies, framed by the combination of method and 'theory' rooted in the politicised environment of the late 1980s themselves.

III Activist-Oriented Indigenous Scholarship

Perhaps the major failing of the successive periods of indigenous scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s was its neglect of the role of political leadership and networks. In my 1992 bibliography I noted that scholars had hitherto 'neglected or circumvented issues of organization and leadership', and mentioned specifically 'the role of the African National Congress' and 'the character and activities of youth congresses and the Congress of South African Students (COSAS)'.[36] A series of publications since about 2000 have filled many, but not all, of these gaps. Although some documents survive (with respect to, for example, the UDF inside the country and the ANC in exile), this third period of 'activist-oriented indigenous' research has relied primarily on the testimony of activists, interviewed long after most of the events being documented.

My study of the UDF focused on its national and provincial structures and leaderships. This focus attracted criticism from some such as Raymond Suttner, who argued that this misses the character of the UDF as a movement that encompassed its many affiliates and their members.[37] I would concur with Suttner in arguing the broader movement deserves analysis, and that much more comprehensive attention needs to be paid to the links between national and regional leaderships within the UDF's structures and its affiliates 'on the ground'. But I see my study of the UDF as an important contribution to this broader project, documenting for the first time many of the networks and activities that constituted the UDF as an organisation, and which had

35. *Ibid.*, 2–3.
36. Seekings, 'South Africa's Townships, 1981–1991', 11–12.
37. See note 12 above.

been almost entirely overlooked in earlier, more localist studies (including my own). A more telling criticism, in my view, is my neglect of ANC (and SACP) networks within (and outside) the UDF. Although published in 2000, the bulk of my research for the book was conducted in the early 1990s, at a time when the topic of ANC (and SACP) networks remained highly sensitive. Marks's detailed study of the leadership of one youth congress (in Soweto) suffers from a similar wariness with respect to the ANC.[38] Unfortunately, there are (to the best of my knowledge) no substantial studies of either the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) or the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) at provincial or national levels.

The most important original contribution in this third period of research is, to my mind, the emergent history of ANC structures *inside* South Africa (including on Robben Island). Prior to 2000, the literature on the ANC comprised primarily Tom Lodge's valiant analyses of publicly available documentation in a series of articles,[39] Howard Barrell's brief history of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)[40] and his outstanding but largely unpublished doctoral thesis on ANC strategy.[41] Barrell provided a strong analysis of what the ANC did *not* do – in terms of igniting an immediately or obviously successful revolution – but he did not extend this analysis to what the ANC *did* do inside the country. Similarly, the inclusion of documents in Tom Karis and Gail Gerhart's fifth volume of *From Protest to Challenge* provided more detail on what the ANC was trying to achieve than what 'it' was actually doing.[42]

Buntman's brilliant analysis of political prisoners on Robben Island drew back the curtains on prison as a site of struggle.[43] She shows how, at first, prisoner resistance on Robben Island was directed at the brutal conditions, and the goal was survival. Later, having achieved some respite from the worst brutality, prisoners turned to the establishment of their own ordered community within the prison, with cultural, academic and sporting activities. Buntman provides a rich account of the organisation in prison of and debates within both the ANC, Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and much smaller 'Black Consciousness' grouping, and of the strategic debates on the Island, hinged around the tension between principle (non-collaboration, non-racism) and opportunities to improve conditions through securing 'privileges' or 'taming' warders. She distinguishes between 'categorical resistance', i.e. resistance as the articulation of an uncompromising political principle, and 'strategic resistance', where resistance was clearly a flexible means to an end and not the end in itself. The 1960s prisoners inclined toward 'strategic resistance', in the specific material conditions they faced in the early years on the Island. Later, in the 1970s, they were challenged by new prisoners with different views.

38. Marks, *Young Warriors*.
39. For example, T. Lodge, 'State of Exile: The African National Congress of South Africa, 1976–1986', in Frankel, Pines and Swilling, *State, Resistance and Change in South Africa*, 229–258; and T. Lodge, 'People's War of Negotiation? African National Congress Strategy in the 1980s', in *South African Review*, 5 (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1989), 42–55.
40. H. Barrell, *MK: The ANC's Armed Struggle* (Johannesburg: Penguin, 1990).
41. H. Barrell, 'Conscripts to their Age: African National Congress Operational Strategy, 1976–1986' (DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1993); see also H. Barrell, '"The Turn to the Masses": The African National Congress' Strategic Review of 1978–79', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, 1 (March 1992), 64–92.
42. T. Karis and G. Gerhart, eds, *Nadir and Resurgence: 1964–79*, Volume 5 of *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 1997).
43. F. Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

The need to examine the activities of the ANC (and other liberation movements) more generally provided important impetus to the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) project on 'The Road to Democracy in South Africa', launched in 2001. In the words of President Thabo Mbeki himself, SADET was charged with the tasks of recording the history of the liberation struggle and the journey to democracy, and celebrating 'the heroes, the heroines and the masses that have built and are building, that have walked and are walking, along this difficult road of freedom and hope'. The project was quite explicitly based on the perception on Mbeki's part that the history of the liberation struggle had not been told, and that the 'voices' of those who had made this history had not been heard. Introducing the first SADET volume, Mbeki proclaimed proudly that 'At last, the lions have produced their own historians'.[44] The SADET volumes were to be based primarily on oral history, and a huge number of interviews were conducted to this end.

While the political genesis and direction to the project were certainly cause for concern, as was the apparent assumption that there had not been any previous oral history, it was correct that there were huge gaps in the historiography of resistance (despite the progress made in the previous periods of indigenous research). Buntman's research on Robben Island helped to fill in one gap, but many others remained. The biographies of the top leadership – a series of which appeared in the early 2000s (notably, on Nelson Mandela, Walter and Albertina Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and Mac Maharaj) – help to fill in some gaps, but provide little detail about what was actually happening 'on the ground'.[45]

The primary achievement of SADET is to have helped to fill some of these gaps.[46] The first two volumes of the SADET history focused on the 1960s and 1970s respectively. Both considered a range of political organisations (and not just the ANC), both inside and outside South Africa. To my mind, the high-points of these two volumes are the studies of the ANC's underground.[47] More recently, Raymond Suttner's *The ANC Underground in South Africa* examines the period up to 1976,[48] whilst Padraig O'Malley's biography of Mac Maharaj (which includes long autobiographical sections by Maharaj himself) includes detailed discussions of aspects of the internal underground in 1988–1990.[49]

44. SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960–1970* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2004), xi–xiii.
45. A. Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorized Biography* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2000); E. Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002); L. Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004); P. O'Malley, *Shades of Difference: Mac Maharaj and the Struggle for South Africa* (New York: Viking, 2007).
46. The fact that scarce resources for scholarship have been heavily concentrated in one organisation (SADET) might mean that alternative (and perhaps more critical) approaches have been under-funded. I am unable to assess whether this has been the case, and, if so, precisely how significant it has been.
47. G. Houston, 'The Post-Rivonia ANC/SACP Underground', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy*, Volume 1, *1960–1970*, 601–660; G. Houston and B. Magubane, 'The ANC Political Underground in the 1970s', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Volume 2, 1970–1980 (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2006), 371–452; J. Cherry and P. Gibbs, 'The Liberation Struggle in the Eastern Cape', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy*, Volume 2, 569–614; J. Sithole, 'The ANC Underground in Natal', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy*, Volume 2, 531–568. Draft chapters for volume 4 of the SADET series, focusing on the 1980s, continue the good work included in previous volumes.
48. R. Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2008).
49. O'Malley, *Shades of Difference*.

This new literature on the ANC underground is not without weaknesses. First, it is not easy to analyse critically the practices of the ANC underground. It is unclear, for example, how often the underground veered towards the kind of abuse of power described by Pregs Govender, who was later told that her commander had sought permission to 'eliminate' her because she was insubordinate.[50] Less attention has been paid to these issues inside the country than outside.[51] Suttner points to a probably widespread 'suppression of the personal' in 'revolutionary morality', and especially the gendered dimension to this as many women experienced discriminatory treatment and even sexual pressure or abuse.[52]

More importantly, it is difficult to locate the activities of the underground in the bigger picture of opposition politics as a whole. While we now know that there were important links between underground and above-ground politics,[53] we know little about the import of these links. To take an obvious question: To what extent did the underground initiate above-ground organisation and (especially) protest, and to what extent was it reactive to substantially autonomous developments?

Beyond Voices

Each of these periods of indigenous research had (or has) weaknesses as well as strengths. While researching during the period I myself and others pointed to the breadth of participation in 'political' protest in the 1980s and the complex and contingent ways in which diverse actors, grievances, organisations and mobilisations came together in an almost countrywide 'revolt'. The township revolt of the mid 1980s was certainly a revolt against apartheid, but it incorporated protests over many immediate and often local social, economic and political issues in addition to the overarching issues of ending the political system of apartheid. But this literature remained localist, neglected the roles of leadership and networks, and focused more on the genesis of protest than on the patterns and dynamics of conflict thereafter. A more critical approach was adopted in period II, with more attention being paid to the ambiguities and often divisiveness of political violence, especially as perpetrated by the so-called 'youth'. Scholarship in this period was less sanitised than in the previous period, but remained largely localist and largely silent on issues of leadership and networking. In period III, attention shifted to political activists, in above-ground organisation, in prison, and in under-ground organisation. This has filled in many of the striking gaps in previous periods of scholarship, but has generally failed to probe deeply or critically how these networks fitted into a bigger picture of political opposition.

These strengths and weaknesses were rooted in the methodologies or sources used in each period of indigenous research and the political environment inside South Africa (which served as a substitute for 'theory' in shaping the kinds of questions that were asked). In periods I and II, scholars relied primarily on a combination of interviews, mostly unrecorded, and (especially in the second period) evidence presented in political trials. The shift from period I to period II reflected the changing political landscape, which made it much easier to examine aspects of the

50. P. Govender, *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2007), 180.
51. S. Ellis and T. Sechaba, *Comrades against Apartheid: The ANC and South African Communist Party in Exile* (Oxford and Bloomington: James Currey and Indiana University Press, 1992). See also articles in Baruch Hirson's journal *Searchlight South Africa* in the late 1980s and early 1990s.
52. Suttner, *The ANC Underground*, chapters 6 and 7.
53. See, *inter alia*, Suttner, *The ANC Underground*.

township revolt (including especially violence) much more critically. Scholarship in period III also entailed heavy use of interviews, now usually recorded. The political context after 1994, however, was one favouring an emphasis on the roles played by ANC cadres – or, put less benignly, a more triumphalist narrative that placed the ANC at the centre of events.

In each of these three periods, the 'voices' or participants in the struggle were integral to the scholarship that was produced. 'Voices' were rarely named in periods I and II, reflecting the political circumstances, although agency (rather than 'structure') was central to research. Some voices were probably both reflected in scholarship in either period I or period II *and* expressed in new scholarship in period III, as individuals discussed above- and under-ground activities at different times, in different interviews.

Paying careful to a wide range of 'voices' is indispensable to analysis of the struggle, but it is not sufficient. Scholars must go beyond 'voices' because of the things that participants in protest do *not* say, whether in court (in the late 1980s) or in interviews (then or, even, later). The first thing that people do not readily speak about on an informed basis is what they did not themselves experience. Almost by definition, participants did not see the overall picture, but rather experienced or witnessed parts of it. It must be recognised this is a challenge for scholars, who all too easily leap from the rich testimony of their informants to a bold but highly selective version of the bigger picture.

Buntman's wonderful study of Robben Island is a good example. She seeks to go beyond analysing what happened on the 'Island' to explore the significance of this for the development of anti-apartheid politics more widely, i.e. for the bigger picture of the history of the struggle. But she leaps to bold assertions without adequate evidence. Inevitably, many ex-prisoners resumed their activism after their release, and their return from prison served often to rejuvenate organisation. The question is, did the fact that they had served time on the Island shape significantly their contributions to the political struggle after their release? Did the experience of being on the Island have effects that were not evident among activists who had not spent time there? The fact that ex-Islanders played prominent roles does not mean necessarily that they played distinctive roles. Buntman draws on interviews to make some questionable claims. I can provide several examples. First, drawing on an interview with Jacob Zuma, she claims that Robben Island was the only place in South Africa where the ANC could meet, debate and organise.[54] As Suttner and others have shown, this assertion was only partially true even during the repressive period between the mid 1960s and mid 1970s, and from the mid 1970s was not true at all.[55] Second, citing Murphy Morobe as her source, she suggests that the *toyi-toyi* – the rhythmic, militarist 'dance' used in demonstrations and rallies in the mid 1980s – entered South African public life via the Island, having arrived there with captured guerillas who brought it from the ANC's camps.[56] One would want a fuller study of the spread of the *toyi-toyi* before assuming that the route via the Island was the sole or even primary route into the country. Third, citing a series of informants, Buntman seems to suggest that the Island provided a *unique* venue for inter-generational debate and discussion. Again, Robben Island was not the only venue for such debate and discussion. Indeed, the revival of the ANC in many parts of the country in the mid and late 1970s was often based on such discussion groups, some involving former prisoners, others not. A careful study of these discussion groups might show that the presence of former prisoners shaped

54. Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance*, 149.
55. Suttner, *The ANC Underground*.
56. Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance*, 158–159.

political discussion and organisation-building. Buntman suggests that incarceration on the Island was distinctively formative in part because of the experience of daily interaction with the state. But prison was not the only place where activists engaged with the state and debated over how to do this. In townships across the country, activists not only experienced repeated interrogation and detention, but also negotiated with state officials over funerals, demonstrations, repression and so on. Just because one or other informant says something does not mean that it is correct, not so much because they are being dishonest as because they are extrapolating from what they experienced themselves to what they did not experience.

The selective knowledge of any particular participant, i.e. the limits to each individual's voice, is surely why the 'big picture' of opposition politics is so elusive. For obvious reasons, opposition politics in South Africa was always highly fragmented. The ANC underground was organised in terms of highly compartmentalised cells, with contact between them kept to a minimum for security reasons. This fuelled chronic problems of rival networks and lines of communication. It would be more accurate to describe the ANC underground as a set of networks than as a single network. Perhaps the most important consequence of the UDF was that activists from different townships and regions of the country could meet each other, establishing above-ground networks that were much more encompassing and integrated than anything possible underground. Most of the key figures in above-ground activity maintained some distance from the formal underground, to protect themselves, so even their knowledge is very incomplete. The challenge facing scholars is to go beyond the voices of individual participants, by identifying and making sense of the relationships between different components of resistance even (or especially) when each of those relationships was known only to a small and selective set of individuals.

The wider the range of 'voices' that are heard, however, the less likely that they will be readily consistent with one another. This is becoming clear with respect to the events of 1976. In the late 1990s, a series of studies of 1976 went beyond the work done twenty years earlier through paying careful attention to the voices of (selected) participants.[57] These studies add immensely to an understanding of the events of June 1976. They reveal the importance of distinguishing between students at different levels of the school system, and challenge the organisation- or ideology-centric interpretations of earlier researchers. Sifiso Ndlovu's most recent essay (in the second SADET volume) provides a valuable example of how to piece together the many disparate strands that came together in episodes such as June 1976.[58]

The exercise of synthesis is not easy, not least because research based on interviews all too easily involves unconscious processes of bias. How easy is it for researchers to adopt a uniformly critical stance towards individuals when so much information comes from the individuals themselves and the writer finds these key informants to be compelling and attractive? Put another way, how easy is it for researchers to step back and analyse in a uniformly critical manner the actions and beliefs of the very people whose cooperation has made the research possible, whose lives and struggles they wish to celebrate, and whose 'voices' they want to air? Scholarly analyses are clearly shaped by *which* interviews, i.e. interviews *with whom*, are of highest 'quality' or are

57. S. Ndlovu, *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter-Memories of June 1976* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1998); Pohlandt-McCormick, 'I Saw a Nightmare'; S. Mkhabela, *Open Earth and Black Roses: Remembering 16 June 1976* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 2001); see also K.A. Hlongwane, S. Ndlovu and M. Mutloase, *Soweto '76: Reflections on the Liberation Struggles* (Johannesburg: Pan Macmillan, 2006).

58. S. Ndlovu, 'The Soweto Uprising: Part 1: Soweto', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy*, Volume 2, 317–368.

most useful to the scholar. I wonder how much my own accounts of political mobilisation in various townships or of the UDF were influenced by the particular pattern of relationships that I developed with participants: good relationships with some, bad relationships with others. In the case of the UDF, my most detailed interviews – often entailing a series of interviews – were conducted with activists with whom I established more of a rapport, in part perhaps because I obviously admired them, and who perhaps were therefore more trusting of and open with me. How did such relationships affect the analysis that I presented in my book?[59] Conversely, my interviews with some other activists were 'unsuccessful', confirming my criticisms of them, and certainly colouring my analysis.

Some topics also remain hard to uncover through interviews. Interviews typically only cover the topics that the interviewees are *willing* to discuss. Buntman acknowledges that topics such as the trauma of imprisonment and intolerance of disagreement in prison are difficult to examine adequately (although she has a good go), while others (such as prisoners' giving of information under interrogation) are almost impossible to cover.[60] Participation in violence is often traumatic. Pohlandt-McCormick discusses an interview with a woman who, more than twenty years after the event, spoke for the first time ever about her participation in the killing of a (white) state official on 16 June.[61] This unprecedented, and hopefully carthatic, experience for the woman was also an exceptional interview for Pohlandt-McCormick, whose other interviews led her to an implausibly incomplete narrative in which heroic, peaceful students confronted evil, brutal police. This narrative persists because some voices remain notably silent, because some participants in violence prefer not to discuss it, while less self-conscious protagonists in violence are typically harder to find and to interview. The new literature on 1976 tells us far more about the sequence of events that led to the students' demonstration and then the killing of Hastings Ndlovu and Hector Pieterson on 16 June than it does about the dynamics of confrontation that seem to have begun during the demonstration itself,[62] and escalated rapidly once the police had opened fire. The voices of participants in the violence, of looters and stone-throwers and killers, remain largely silent. And, just because South Africa democratised does not mean that interviews are not affected by political considerations. Just as in earlier periods of indigenous research, activists rarely raised issues to do with the ANC when interviewed by researchers, so in the 2000s former activists might raise some issues but sidetrack others, or emphasise the roles played by some individuals while denigrating those of others, or even falsify past associations in order to claim a spurious legitimacy.

Finally, anti-apartheid activists were not the only participants in conflict, and their voices are not the only voices that need to be heard for a fuller picture to emerge. The value of interrogating the voices of the police and state officials is made very clear in Philip Frankel's remarkable study of the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, which draws heavily on interviews conducted more than thirty years after the event,[63] as well as in Pohlandt-McCormick's analysis of Soweto in 1976 which uses contemporary police testimony in court or to the official commission of enquiry.[64]

59. Seekings, *The UDF*.
60. Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance*.
61. Pohlandt-McCormick, '*I Saw a Nightmare*'.
62. E. Brink, M. Gandhi, S. Lebelo, D. Ntshangase and S. Krige, *Soweto, 16 June 1976: It All Started with a Dog* · (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001), 75–76.
63. P. Frankel, *An Ordinary Atrocity: Sharpeville and its Massacre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
64. Pohlandt-McCormick, 'I Saw a Nightmare'.

The Welcome Clash of Voices

What might a future wave of scholarship – in a period IV – look like? SADET moves forward in its march through the history of the struggle, reaching into the 1980s in its prospective fourth volume; it is for the first time moving onto a historical terrain that has already been studied in previous periods of *indigenous* research. This means that the challenge of reconciling and going beyond disparate voices will surely intensify. A clash of voices is to be welcomed.

To date, the SADET initiative has leaned towards an intervention in this prospective clash of voices rather than a neutral venue for all voices, in that the leadership of the ANC in exile believes that the voices of the ANC had been marginalised hitherto. It is certainly the case that the political circumstances under which the indigenous research of the 1980s and early 1990s was conducted were ones which favoured a 'bottom-up' view of political history, one that neglected issues of leadership and network. It was surely inevitable that such a view was going to clash with the favoured perspectives of some of the political leaders at the top, who saw their own role in much more important terms. Indeed, the ANC's entire strategic vision was premised on its vanguardist self-perception.[65] The contrast between the voices present in organisational histories and those present in more 'social' versions of the history of resistance will, I hope, contribute to and facilitate a more synthetic analysis.

Such an analysis must surely proceed *beyond* voices. Does an emphasis on voices not lead too easily to viewing history in terms of almost unconstrained agency? What happens is reduced to what (selected) people did, with little analysis of either why other people did *not* do likewise or of how the behaviour of the selected actors was constrained or shaped by the behaviour of *others*. The result is an almost whiggish narrative of inexorable progress towards a triumphant, and often somewhat sanitised, finale. Resistance and struggle are fundamentally about agency, but agency is constituted through 'structure' and contingency, and analyses need to take these into account. This means also a larger role for social science as well as history: If we are to move beyond celebration, we must surely transcend the 'localism' of earlier indigenous research not only through incorporating a clearer sense of the 'national' (including the role played by the ANC, for example) but also through a critical and *comparative* enquiry. Why was it in Soweto and not elsewhere that students demonstrated on a particular date in mid-1976? How do we explain the things that did *not* happen, the paths that were not taken? Might the study of the struggle in South Africa even begin to engage with the comparative theory of protest and revolution, and free itself of political over-determination?[66]

This is not the place to discuss in detail the kinds of issues raised in the comparative study of social movements, protest and revolution, but some pointers might be helpful. The comparative literatures on social movements have pointed, for example, to the value of systematic analysis of the structure of 'political opportunity', the roles of 'mobilising structures', the ways in

65. See Barrell, 'The Turn to the Masses'.

66. My unpublished doctoral thesis and related work sought to explain, *inter alia*, why some townships remained apparently quiescent whilst others exploded in protest during 1984–1986, but this work was far from systematic and certainly did not entail a rigorous application of the kind of work being done elsewhere in the world by scholars of either social movements or revolutions: Seekings, 'Quiescence and the Transition to Confrontation'; Seekings, 'From "Quiescence" to "People's Power"'.

which issues are 'framed, and the dynamic interactions between actors.[67] Activists in the ANC underground and/or above-ground political organisations enjoyed very uneven success in shaping latent discontent into collective action. The extent to which 'success' and 'failure' was rooted in the local political context, the resources or organisational character of local activists, the availability or constructed salience of particular issues, or the behaviour of other actors (such as local administrators and the police) remain almost entirely unexplored. These are certainly not the only questions that might be asked, but they are among the questions that have been largely neglected hitherto through successive periods of scholarship. And they are questions which require us to take into account what participants have to say, but to go beyond such testimony.

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