

not enough is done to expand on the causes and implications of this dire situation.

Throughout the volume, voices and perspectives of young people are disappointingly absent, with virtually the only mention being an offhand comment that “it is clear that the youth is characterized by extremely high levels of anti-social behavior, criminality and descent into AIDS infection”(p.14) As acknowledged in the introduction, the issue of education, perhaps one of the country’s most significant development dilemmas, is not addressed. This is a disappointing gap in what is otherwise a wide range of issues. The environmental/social nexus the book positions itself in seems in touch with rural and industrial realities, but one of the country’s most important voices – that of the urban, underemployed, undereducated young person – is entirely missing. This arguably leaves an important gap in understanding the country’s political reality. The final chapter gives a nod of about a page in this direction, which is an inadequate treatment of something so important.

Overall, this volume contributes to some of the key developmental challenges of South Africa, and particularly does justice to the links between environmental and social justice. Don’t expect a reading of this book to brighten your day with hope for the future, but hopefully a follow up may include some case studies of where citizens and the state have effectively played a developmental role.

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Raymond Suttner. *The ANC Underground in South Africa*. Auckland Park: Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd, 2008. 198pp.

In this history of the African National Congress (ANC) underground from the 1950s to the 1980s, Raymond Suttner sets himself a twofold agenda: he aims to salvage the experiences of many past activists, whose stories may otherwise not be told; and he advances a new interpretation of the history of the ANC, calling into question its conventional periodization. He argues that contrary to received wisdom the ANC continued to be an organizational force in the country throughout the 1960s and 1970s, even with most of its leaders in exile or in jail. His argument relies on oral histories,

most of which he conducted. As he describes in his Introduction, Suttner was a member of the ANC underground in the 1970s and 1980s, and spent time in jail for his activities. These experiences, and his long-lasting connections with the ANC, brought him into contact with many “rank and file” members of the underground, and it is interviews with these less well-known individuals that provide much of the material for the book. The focus, however, is not particularly anecdotal or personal. Instead, this book provides a more sociological analysis, examining what it was like, and what it meant, to be “underground” for the ANC. Its arguments are provocative and worthy of close reading and discussion.

The book can be divided into two sections. The first half of the book provides a chronological account of the ANC’s underground experience. The 1950s have typically been described as a period of aboveground mass action, while the 1960s, which saw the banning of the ANC and the arrest of most of its leadership, have been described as a time of quiescence. Suttner disagrees with both of these characterizations – instead, using testimonies from activists from the period, he suggests that the 1950s saw a higher level of preparation for underground work inside the ANC than has been acknowledged. And in the 1960s, he argues, activists rapidly reconstituted underground ANC networks after the arrests of the leadership. He highlights the influence of key figures, such as Albertina Sisulu in Soweto. He also reminds his readers that many political prisoners were released in the late 1960s, and resumed their political activities. Suttner also emphasizes the cultural aspects of affiliation to the ANC, pointing to an ongoing tradition of support for the ANC within families. Suttner’s work here productively reminds his readers of the continuity of sentiments and practices of resistance throughout the apartheid period, even in the absence of aboveground, formal bodies challenging the state.

Suttner also addresses a key debate in the South African historiography concerning the relationship between the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). In essence, Suttner argues that SACP members were important for the ANC, but that they did not, as some critics have proposed, control the ANC for their own ends. This argument has been made most vociferously with regards to the exile period (see, for example, Ellis and Sechaba, 2002, and Twala and Benard, 1994), and Suttner confronts these accusations directly. He acknowledges that it is indisputable that there was much overlap in membership between the two organizations in exile.

However, Suttner suggests, although the Party did take decisions about what policies should be enacted and then attempt to push these options at ANC meetings, this need not necessarily be read as “undemocratic” (p.51). He also raises the new and interesting possibility that the SACP, seen as an elite formation in exile, came to be treated as a route to advancement and patronage for those who joined (p.57). This last point in particular should be a stimulus to future research.

The latter half of the book explores “the underground” as a place and as a social formation, with specific characteristics and particular effects on politics and on the individual. Considering the practicalities of underground work, including isolation and constant fear, Suttner acknowledges the sort of politics that such experiences can generate. He refers specifically to the challenges of financial accountability, the ease with which factions can arise, the difficulty of democratic decision-making, especially in urgent situations, and the potential for abuses. He examines the gendered nature of the underground, highlighting the different challenges these roles posed on men and women. He provides a thoughtful discussion of masculinity and the particular sort of masculinity foregrounded by the liberation struggle, and openly discusses the evidence of sexual assault and harassment of women in exile and the underground. He also describes leaders’ efforts to combat such abuses. He also discusses the strains that a revolutionary context puts on individuals *qua* individuals – and how these affect an individual’s judgment and personal relations. The extent to which the ANC’s own internal politics have been shaped by its exile and underground work has been the subject of much debate within South Africa, and Suttner here provides useful insights into these issues.

Chapter Eight stands somewhat apart, as it discusses the particular factors that enabled the ANC to gain hegemony during the mass democratic movement of the 1980s. Suttner points specifically to the persistence of ANC symbols, the significance of the ANC’s military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, even in the absence of significant military victories, the efficiency of the ANC in exile, the impact of political prisoners and prisons, most notably the political education many received on Robben Island itself, and the existence of the formal ANC underground. He also meditates on the ways in which the ANC was influenced by other political traditions, including the Unity Movement and the Black Consciousness Movement – this openness, Suttner suggests, enabled the ANC to absorb and adapt to

different ways of thinking (p.155). By these means, Suttner argues, the ANC was able to become the de facto organizing force behind the mass movement of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The chapter restrains itself to a discussion of the ANC's achievements and struggles as it worked to rebuild its influence inside the country, and does not address in depth the broader context of the mass democratic movement and trade union activism in the 1980s.

This book makes an important contribution to the history of the ANC. Suttner offers convincing new evidence that ANC structures persisted within the country even throughout the 1960s. However, some readers will take issue with the breadth of influence that Suttner accords the ANC, and with his omission of other liberation movements. A structuring element of Suttner's account is the idea of "the underground," construed as a revolutionary place and time. With this "underground" always potentially present, Suttner can construe any anti-state activity as potentially ANC. The ANC, he suggests, is more than an organization – it is a "cultural presence" and a "tradition of allegiance" (p.82). This leads him to understand actions such as propaganda dissemination as "freelance activities" for the ANC (p.71). Suttner's intention here, to expand consideration of the ANC beyond focus on official membership, is thought-provoking, but not all readers will agree with these propositions, which run the risk of underplaying the presence of other organizations inside South Africa.

For example, it is possible that Suttner downplays the differences between the ANC and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the 1970s in his attempts to demonstrate the concordance of this movement with the ANC's goals. While it is true that many Black Consciousness activists joined the ANC once in exile, Suttner's treatment, particularly of the role of the ANC around the Soweto uprisings of 1976, may obscure real differences in thinking and practice. Nelvis Qekema (2010), writing in reference to Suttner's work, has observed that "the June 16 uprising was waged aboveground by the masses and the BCM, and how anybody could go underground during an overt rebellion is a mystery of the 20th century!" Qekema is a member of the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), a BCM formation that emerged following the Soweto uprisings of 1976. Suttner's book makes no reference to AZAPO. In his discussion of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Suttner lists civic organizations, independent trade unions, and student organizations as forces that the ANC engaged with (p.152). But he does not

mention the significant political violence that took place between AZAPO and UDF supporters. Since the publication of this book, several scholars have turned their attention to the political violence in the 1980s (for example, Anthea Jeffery and Janet Cherry); it would have been useful for Suttner to have considered these issues, already debated in the public realm at the time of his publication. While Suttner's arguments about the rise of ANC hegemony are insightful, it would be interesting to see a broader discussion of the ANC's position in a field where other contenders vied for legitimacy.

Overall, this book covers new ground in describing and analyzing the experiences of ANC underground operatives, and makes some provocative assertions about the role of the ANC in the liberation struggle. It should be read and debated by scholars interested in any dimension of South Africa's liberation struggle.

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