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A. M. Kathrada. *No Bread for Mandela: Memoirs of Ahmed Kathrada, Prisoner No. 468/64.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011. xxiii + 400 pp. Illustrations. $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8131-3375-1.

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In a recent issue of South Africa's *Sunday Tribune*, the journalist Dennis Pather recounted an anecdote about President Jacob Zuma that was designed to underscore how far Zuma has traveled since his radical political days.[1] It was 1974, and Zuma was struggling to make ends meet during the first days and weeks after his release from Robben Island. Subject to the notorious *dompass* laws–by which he could be "endorsed out" of Durban in a heartbeat–he found a job as a birdseed packer in Berea Road for a meager wage. Frustrated by the terrible work and the terrible pay, he decided to get a driver's license so he would have better employment options. The white inspector summarily failed him because he was unable to control his vehicle as it raced down the back side of the notoriously steep Sydenham Hill. Fearful that his chances for a license had slipped away, Zuma asked the inspector: "Sir, does your hand reach your mouth?-"–by which he meant, the work I do earns me so little I can't feed myself. To make a long story short, Zuma was granted his license, and the rest is history.

The point of Pather's story is to remind readers of the *Sunday Tribune* not just of how sympathetic Zuma once was to the plight of the poor but of how close to poverty he once was as well. "As he scans the horizon from the vantage point of his top balcony at Union buildings," Pather speculates, " I ... wonder what goes through his mind as he witnesses the teeming masses eking out a living in conditions where their hands barely reach their mouths." But Pather has another motivation as well. For the original chronicler of the Zuma story is Phyllis Naidoo, whose book *Footprints in Grey Street* (2002) Pather has mined for evidence of Zuma's early days in the struggle. "Disoriented and penniless" upon his prison release, Zuma had sought refuge and succor at Naidoo's modest Grey Street legal practice, which was famous as a crossroads for ex-islanders, saboteurs, schemers, and ban-breakers. It was a haven, in other words, for activists like Zuma, who either passed through legal trouble or passed onto work opportunities thanks to the help of Naidoo and her comrades working in the law office. As significant as her legal aid work was, Pather suggests that Naidoo's subsequent role as historian of these little-known, under-recorded aspects of the anti-apartheid movement–especially in the small, non-racial spaces of agitation, sociability, and comradeship–is equally critical. Those non-racial (what North Americans would call interracial) spaces where black, brown, white, and coloured comrades mixed and mingled, if not always easily, are especially hard to glean from archives contemporaneous to the period. Yet they are crucial to histories of anti-apartheid big and small. As Pather says at the very start of his column, Naidoo's *Footprints* are "a must-read for anyone interested in the *real* history of our Struggle" (emphasis mine).

The same is arguably true for Ahmed Kathadra's *No Bread for Mandela*, published originally in 2004 in South Africa and re-issued by the University of Kentucky Press in this 2011 edition. Though written from memory and via hindsight, "Kathy's" story is, nonetheless, an archive of the ins and outs of anti-apartheid South Africa through a struggle autobiography of the kind that has been flying off the shelves at least since the publication of Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994). Kathy echoes Madiba's title and its themes in his own memoir, which is divided into three parts (the third of which is entitled "The End of the Long Walk"). Like his hero and friend, Kathy begins his narrative with the view from childhood. This "boy from Schweitzer" was born in 1929, the fourth of sixth children in a Gujarati-speaking family of South African Indian Muslims. His father ran a general dealership, one of a dozen shops in town operated by Indians and patronized by whites and blacks. Sent to school in Johannesburg, he was thrown into contact with the South African Indian political leaders of the day, Yusuf Dadoo and the Cachalia brothers, Yusuf and Molvi. "One thing led to another," he recalls, "as if my future had already been chalked out for me" (p. 29). Though his is ostensibly a story of local political radicalism, Kathy makes repeat-

edly clear how thoroughly his young life and his political education, formal and informal, were shaped by external events, some global and some India-centered. One of his most powerful youthful memories is of working for Bengal Famine relief in the 1940s from the basement of the Cachalia brothers' shop in Market Street, licking envelopes and collecting money. Such local-global axes cross-hatch the memoir, allowing us to appreciate how laced the struggle was not just by global forces but by the cosmopolitanism of South African urban spaces as well.

Kathy's account of his early life is reminiscent of the stories Ismail Meer tells of his adolescence and ideological awakening in *A Fortunate Man* (2002). Taken together, their memoirs suggest that there was scarcely a time in their lives when these men were pre-political. It is beyond the scope of my review to map the convergences and divergences of the two accounts, but I suspect that comparative studies of this genre of struggle autobiography are destined to flourish. Meanwhile, in Kathy's narrative we get an amazingly detailed version of his journey to the heart of anti-apartheid politics: how he cut his teeth in protest against the Pegging and Ghettos Acts (1941, 1943), his prison experiences, his account of the Treason Trial (1956), his life on the run, his conviction at Rivonia (1964), and his more than two decades as a prisoner of the South African state. He was in good company: his fellow Rivonia Trialists were Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Dennis Goldberg, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Elias Motsoledi, and Andrew Mangeni. To observe that these were formative years seems painfully self-evident. Yet as both this memoir and in his edited collection, *Letters From Robben Island: A Selection of Ahmed Kathrada's Prison Correspondence, 1964-1989* (1999), make clear, incarceration made the man, as it did all those who survived similar experiences. In some respects, Kathy's letters are more valuable than this memoir, because they are shards and fragments from the actual time. But as with Naidoo's *Footprints* and other testimonies like it, *No Bread for Mandela*–though written after the fact–contains narrative histories, intimate histories, political histories, and fraternal histories that students of the regime and its enemies will mine for years to come.

Some of Kathy's stories are tales of high risk or derring-do, as when an escape vehicle he was using during the passive resistance campaign stalled out, only to be pushed by the police with such force that it enabled him to drive away. Others are of almost unimaginable political principle, as when Mandela opts against publicizing the entrapment of a drunk white Johannesburg prosecutor in a staged "sexual" encounter with an African woman, a dirty trick Kathy has pulled off to discredit a very real enemy (pp. 82-83). We also get glimpses into life on the run with a level of detail that is breathtaking, as much for the chutzpah of the saboteurs as for their frequent good luck. All manner of contraband was snuck into prison, from cigarettes to newspapers to radios, and though I haven't done the exact math Kathy gives the distinct impression that the prisoners outwitted the guards more often than not. To wit: "Jafta 'Jeff' Masemola proved to be both a handyman and a genius in this respect. He made false bottoms and secret compartments for some of the stools in our cells. These hidey-holes were so well-crafted that they escaped detection during raids so thorough that the warders would even unroll our toilet paper, just in case we had written messages on some sheets" (p. 247). One is struck by the pluck and determination and sheer grit of these men as they battled a vicious and uncompromising regime to the very ground, at tremendous–nay, immeasurable–personal cost. The loss of comrade after comrade under horrific circumstances punctuates Kathy's private living memory no less, presumably, than his public narrative.

Though modest and in many ways unassuming, Kathy's memoir is unquestionably a story of triumph. And at the heart of that story is the non-racial brotherhood forged between black men and brown; between Africans and people of South Asian descent; and in this instance, between Kathy and Mandela himself. Though born out of shared struggle, such confraternity was as striated as it was smooth. As Mandela relates in his own autobiography, in his youth he was suspicious of Indians, wary of the communists among them, skeptical of their commitment to the cause, and segregated from them politically as well as socially in ways that prevented real knowledge let alone exchange across the two communities. This is to say nothing of the official ANC proscription against non-African membership until as late as 1969. Kathy, for his part, faces this down in part 2 ("Another Terrain of Struggle"), lamenting the fact that he was imprisoned for activities that supported the ANC yet was prohibited from actual membership in it (p. 249). He also recalls an extremely heated confrontation with Mandela (c. 1950) in the context of a strike that involved the ANC Youth League, the Communist Party, and the Transvaal Indian Congress (pp. 67-68). It was a conflict that was by no means easily resolved. Yet despite this–despite the solitary confinements, the separation from loved ones, the endless years in prison, and the threat of a life sentence hanging over his head–there is remarkably little bitterness in Kathy's account. Meanwhile, his lifelong friendship with Mandela remains the dominant

narrative thread as well as a major feature of the book's self-representation: on the cover is a photo of the two of them, heads bent ever so slightly toward one another, in a markedly post-prison, post-apartheid scene.

Given the histories of tension and friction between African and Indian communities before, during, and after apartheid in South Africa, we cannot nor should not necessarily be content with such a harmonious image. Beyond his patent frustration with the ANC's color bar, Kathy gives very little sense of the struggles between anti-apartheid heroes. I am curious about the "hidey-holes" in his narrative, the ones that future research–likely to be most successfully undertaken and written up well after the major players are gone–will plumb for a less presumptively affirmative view of the variety of tense and tender racial struggles that underpinned apartheid. Surely the role of women–brown, black, white, and coloured–in the making of the struggle will be more prominent, given their indispensable work not just in the movement but in many cases in bridging the distance between black and brown especially. Kathy lists a number of women activists but they are not agents in this drama. Mandela, in *Long Walk to Freedom*, credits the Cachalia women–specifically Amina (nee Asvat, b. 1930)–with helping to mediate accumulated histories of racial difference and distance between African and Indian communities through interaction around Indian cooking and shared meals. In fact, the role of commensality in shaping cultural reproduction and political community for Indians in late twentieth-century Durban has been beautifully documented by Goolam Vahed and Thembisa Waetjen's *Gender, Modernity and Indian Delights* (2010). Their work offers a model of how to grasp more complex struggle narratives than the developmentalist struggle memoir in its gendered male mode has, perhaps, the capacity to register. Reading *No Bread for Mandela* and in tandem with such work, and alongside Phyllis Naidoo's voluminous published writings, is a promising start for thinking about what a truly desegregated apartheid history might look like.

Note

[1]. *Sunday Tribune,* April 22, 2012, 20.

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