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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Tim Nuttall, John Wright, Jeanne Hoffman, Nkosi Sishi, Sam Khandlela. *From Apartheid to Democracy: South Africa, 1948-1994.* Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1998. 134 pp. R37,45 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7960-1203-6.

Reviewed by Manelisi Genge (Michigan State University)
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This textbook is intended for use in teaching history to high school students in South Africa. In the South African context of the last three (or even beyond) decades, this is the first history textbook for high schools to be written by so many persons. And for the first time, Africans are involved in the writing of the South African history textbook for high schools. In this sense, this book is a positive beginning toward the inclusion of Africans in the writing of South African history. This book paves the way for post-apartheid textbooks for teaching history at high schools in South Africa.

This work is mainly concerned with the establishment of the Afrikaner policy of apartheid from 1948 and its demise in 1994. In this sense, it captures an important chapter in South African history. The history of apartheid is well documented in general, and this textbook does not pretend to bring anything new to this story. However, the strength of this textbook lies in its discussion of the resistance organizations or structures to the apartheid policies.

The history of the African National Congress (ANC), Pan African Congress (PAC), and the South African Communist Party (SAPC) was not allowed to be taught in high schools, and to some degree even at the university level, since the banning of these organization by the apartheid government in the 1960s. Thus, the history of largely black South Africans' resistance to apartheid had remained a little known episode in South African high school curricula. This is so in spite of the fact that such a history has been common knowledge outside South Africa.

That most of the historical players in the story of this text are still alive might bring home to students the fact that history is not a dead story or past, but that it lives in the present and is made by human beings. (History does not make people, instead, it is people who make history.) Source-based exercises, thought-provoking questions, and suggestions for students to conduct research either in libraries or by interviewing people are further strengths of this textbook. These aspects of the book would equip students with skills to gather data and think independently. This is a departure from the apartheid education which discouraged the development of such skills, especially in students who were subjected to what was known as Bantu Education (education designed exclusively for black South Africans) since the 1950s.

However, this textbook has serious weaknesses. Its title is shaped by present concerns which make this book somehow ahistorical in its perspective. Since this is the first history textbook for South African high schools after 1994's democratic and popular elections, one would expect a title which indicates a common trend that has gone through the so-called Third World countries: an emphasis on decolonization process. A title like, *From Apartheid to Decolonization*, provocative as this suggestion may seem, would have at least situated South African history within the context of post-colonial African history (and other decolonized countries) in the 1960s and 1970s.

To avoid the theme of decolonization in a textbook like this does not only deny South African students one of the significant perspectives from which to view the events leading up to 1994 elections, but also to exaggerate the uniqueness of the South African historical events in the context of African history. Scholars are now beginning to draw our attention to the pitfalls of avoiding an analysis based on decolonization theme.[1] Therefore, in a real sense, this textbook still shows the orientation of the mainstream South African historiography. Granted, there are many xconflicting viewpoints regarding the end of colonialism in South Africa. But the existence of such points of view should not make those who write South African history shy away from them. High school students ought to be exposed to the diversity of opinions in history.

Another indication of this textbook's concern with the present is its use of African languages when giving instructions to students to work on assignments in each chapter. But this is done without any explanation in

the book as to why African languages are used only in phrases giving instructions. One finds this an unnecessary window-dressing, if it is done to show that these languages are now officially recognized alongside English and Afrikaans. What purpose is it served by usage of such phrases?

And it is a bit misleading to say, "the term 'Bantu' was an adaptation of the Zulu word abantu, meaning people" (p. 23). This term is also found in isiXhosa. Therefore, to say this term has its origins from isiZulu either reveals the extent of the authors' limitations in understanding the mutual intelligibility of these two languages–which in South African linguistics are grouped as "Nguni" languages–or is an attempt to promote Zulu ethnicity. (This reviewer is aware of the inherent problems in the term "Nguni" as discussed elsewhere by John Wright, Julian Cobbing, and himself.)

In the absence of an appropriate term to replace the flawed one ("Nguni"), we might think to continue using it with a disclaimer or a caveat. The use of this term in this textbook echoes what has become one of the central points in the debate on the so-called "Mfecane" episode in South African history, namely, the linguistic origin of the concept "mfecane." In light of the debate on the "Mfecane," one would expect that some insights might have been applied in writing a less controversial history of South Africa.

One is also taken by surprise by the use of the term "tribal" in this work (p. 30). Recently, scholars have debated the appropriateness of this term in African history. On H-Africa, at least, there was a scholarly consensus that this term ought to be abandoned.[2] Thus, the use of this term in this textbook may be an indication of the knowledge gap of the authors of this work regarding cutting-edge issues in international historiographical trends.

There are many gaps and missed opportunities to draw insightful parallels in the text. For instance, an analogy could have been made between Mandela and Mahatma Ghandi on page 122. Significant concepts such as racism and class, which have been somehow central to South African history, are left out in the otherwise useful "wordpower" glossary features in the text. Thus, after reading this book, students may not have a broader picture of the effects of these concepts on South African societies.

The history of the western Cape is not well documented here. For example, there is utterly no reference to the role or place of the Malay Muslim community of the western Cape in apartheid South Africa. And yet, the activities of this community in post-1994 South Africa in dealing with what it labeled drug related problems are now a common story in the media. Could students be able to locate this community within the larger South African society after reading this book? The answer to this question seems to be on the negative. Also disturbing is the failure to provide a brief history of the development of ethnically based white universities in South Africa–English versus Afrikaans language institutions–in the discussion of the establishment of universities for Blacks (p. 33).

There are a few other minor points. Some of the photographs and drawings do not enhance the quality of the discussion in this book; the political cartoon reproduced on page 23 is a case in point. Some of the study questions at the end of each chapter are narrowly phrased and do not provide room for students' alternative thinking; for example, see last question on page 42. In more general terms, this work also lacks sufficient maps to illuminate its discussion.

The authors seem to have been in a rush to produce this book. The last chapter, especially, is hastily done and might require a major revision. In the absence of any other textbook, however, this work will be of use for school students. But it should be considered a stop-gap measure toward the writing of a more complete and balanced one.

Notes

[1]. Eghosa E. Osaghae, "Comparative Frameworks for South Africa's Transition: The Case for an African Perspective," *Africa*, LII, 4 (December 1997), 475-496.

[2]. The extensive discussion of this on H-Africa can be found at <http://www.h-net.msu.edu7africa/threads/index>.

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