The South African Democracy Education Trust' "Road to Democracy" Project

Draft of a paper presented by Gregory F. Houston at Jarvis Doctorow Hall, St Edmund Hall, Oxford University, 13 November 2009

INTRODUCTION

The South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) was established in 2000 as a research organisation to conduct a major study of South Africa's political history between 1960 and 1994. The "Road to Democracy in South Africa" Project was initiated by the former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, who felt concerned that there was very limited research done on the achievement of a peaceful political settlement in South Africa after decades of violent conflict. This paper will provide a brief historical background to the formation of SADET; its areas of focus and research approach; and the various methodologies adopted.

The issues dealt with in the second area of focus include some detail about the products completed during the course of the project, as well as products envisaged during the next two-and-a-half years that are left before the project winds down. In part, a discussion is provided of some of the reasons why President Mbeki initiated the project drawn from a few of his speeches and articles on the project. In the third area of focus, we will examine some of the archival sources available inside South Africa as well as SADET's Oral History Project. Included here is a discussion of some of the main methodological issues that arose during the course of the project.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

President Mbeki approached businessmen such as Seth Phalatse, then a Director of BMW (SA), and leading academics, such as Drs Vincent Maphai and Yvonne Muthien, who were both then still working for the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), to take the process forward. A Trust Board was established in mid-2000, initially comprising Dr Essop Pahad, Minister in the Presidency, as Chair, Mr Seth Phalatse, Professor Muthien,

Dr Ivan May of Nedcor, Mr Jacques Sellschop of MTN, and Mr Isaac Makopo of the MK Veteran's Association, Minister Lindiwe Sisulu, Professor Maphai (then of SABreweries), Professor Magubane (then still at the HSRC), General Andrew Masondo (Chief of Service Corps, South African National Defence Force).

Dr Muthien requested Professor Bernard Magubane and I, both then still employed by the HSRC, to draft a proposal for the project. SADET Board members approached the private sector, and funding was secured for the project from MTN and Nedbank. The initial idea was that an HSRC team, led by Professor Magubane, and to include Dr Sifiso Ndlovu and I, was to work on the project. However, following the departure, first, of Professor Maphai, and then of Professor Muthien from the HSRC, it was decided that an independent organisation by established, leading to the birth of SADET.

The Africa Institute of South Africa was approached and agreed to second Dr Sifiso Ndlovu as senior researcher, while the HSRC agreed to my secondment as Project Coordinator and chief research specialist at SADET, which was to be led by Professor Bernard Magubane. Elsa Kruger (a former HSRC employee) was appointed Project Administrator, and SADET moved into its offices in the Nedbank Building on Church Street on the 1st September 2000.[1] The next few weeks were spent dealing with the details involved in setting up a new organisation – arranging bank accounts, telephone connections, the purchase of office equipment, etc.

SADET'S MISSION AND AREAS OF FOCUS

SADET's mission is to examine and analyse events leading to the negotiated settlement and democracy in South Africa. The focus is on the history of the liberation movements, with an emphasis on the following four themes:

[1] The office space was donated by Nedcor and has its own historical significance – it is where Dutch anti-apartheid activist Klaas de Jonge's lived for two years while he was keeping out of the reach of the South African apartheid authorities in what was then the Dutch Embassy.

- the events leading to the banning of the liberation movements;
- the various strategies and tactics adopted in pursuit of the democratic struggle;
- the events leading to the adoption of the negotiation strategy; and
- the dynamics underpinning the negotiations process between 1990 and 1994.

It is necessary to turn here to one of the challenges/tasks set for SADET by President Mbeki in his various speeches and articles on the project,[2] and that is to *discover* and *record*[3] the 'hidden' history of our past. This history is hidden and needs discovery for a variety of reasons, including the nature of the primary subject matter, which are the activities of revolutionary organisations and the counter-revolutionary activities of the state. For both, secrecy in their operations was of vital importance. So many of their activities were conducted away from television cameras, without written records, and 'hidden' from the public that they still remained to be discovered and made public.

In this respect, scholars on SADET's core topics had limited access to primary sources, such as documents and oral testimonies of the actors prior to the advent of our democracy.

Since 1994, a significant amount of archival material has been made public, including the ANC archival material at the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, the ANC archives at Fort Hare University, the PAC archives at Fort Hare University, and the I B Tabata collection of the University of Cape Town Manuscripts and Archives Division. There are also a number of privately held collections, such as the Unity Movement of South Africa (UMSA) Papers privately held by Robin Kayser. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has also produced its own vast collection of material, which is currently housed at the National Archives in Pretoria. To this can be

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2 Thabo Mbeki, 'Address at the launch of the South African Democracy Education Trust', 21 March 2001. www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/2001/tm0321.html.; Thabo Mbeki, 'Foreword', in South African Democracy Education Trust (hereafter SADET) (eds), *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970*, Zebra Press, Cape Town, 2004; Thabo Mbeki, 'Our historians must have the courage to speak the truth', *ANC Today*, Vol 4, No 25, 25 June – 1 July 2004. (www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/anctoday/2004/at25.htm).

3 Thabo Mbeki, 'Foreword', 2004, pp viii-ix.

added the Karis-Carter Collection at the Universities of the Witwatersrand and South Africa, the United Democratic Front (UDF) Archives at the University of the Witwatersrand, and the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) archives and Jack Simons Papers at the University of Cape Town. Many exiles returned with significant private collections, such as Essop Pahad's collection on the South African Communist Party (SACP), and Mark Shope's papers, which provide new insight into the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Thami ka Plaatjie, one of the contributor's to SADET's volume 2 on the 1970s and volume 4 on the 1980s, has a large number of the Pan Africanist Congresses' documents and journals, as well as unpublished manuscripts produced by the movement's members. SADET has made extensive use of these archives. Recently, a series of interviews conducted annually with leading South African figures by Padraig O'Malley between 1985 and 2004 has been added to the Nelson Mandela Foundation website.

In addition, the return of thousands of exiles and, more important, the advent of democracy, have provided researchers with a rich source of informants on many issues of our past that were 'hidden'. It is important to note here that, in the case of the liberation movements, much of their inner workings, clandestine missions, and so on, were known only to a few, and any attempt to discover their history requires the casting of a wide net of sources. These sources are now available, and SADET's Oral History Project aims to interview as many such people as possible.

SADET's Oral History Project enjoys access to a wide range of individuals from the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the National Party (NP), the Bantustan authorities, as well as members of the civil services and security forces of the apartheid era, largely because it is a Presidential Project and the research is being conducted in a period which permits openness on many issues which in the past were not spoken about. The organisation thus has the opportunity to interview key (and in many cases, less well-known) actors in the country's political history. Hundreds of individuals have been interviewed during the past

nine years, with interviews ranging from under an hour with some individuals to 26 hours in the case of such a significant informant as Eric Mtshali of the ANC.

In the process SADET is able to add to the existing body of knowledge about certain aspects of our past, as it does about the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns.[4] Thus, most of the chapters in our volumes are attempts to add to what is already known, for example, about the turn to armed struggle, the activities of MK regional commands, the rural struggles in Mpondoland and elsewhere, the African Resistance Movement, the Soweto uprising, the UDF, and so on.

In the process of discovering our history, however, new facts are thrown up which may refute some of the popularly held perceptions of this history. For instance, there has long been a widely held perception that the second half of the 1960s was 'a time of silence and defeat, almost without a history'.[5] One of the objectives in the first volume, as we point out in the Preface, was to challenge

> …the notion that the 1960s was simply a decade of political quiescence. When compared to the mass defiance campaigns of the 1950s or the revolutionary upheavals that followed the Soweto uprising in 1976, the period under discussion certainly represented a low point in the history of the liberation struggle. However, as the various chapters in this book demonstrate, not even the intense repression of the 1960s by the state could crush the spirit of resistance. Impressive numbers of men and women refused to bow down to this yoke of oppression and contributed hugely to the ultimate destruction of apartheid.[6]

This spirit of resistance inside the country is evident, for example, in the efforts of Bram Fischer to resuscitate the underground,[7] the activities of propaganda activists from 1966,[8]

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4 Refer to Moses Rendani Ralinala et.al, 'The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns', in SADET (eds), 2004, pp 479-540.

5 Graeme Bloch, 'Sounds in the Silence: Painting a Picture of the 1960s', *Africa Perspective*, No 25, 1984, p 3.

6 SADET, 'Preface', in SADET (eds), 2004, p xv.

7 Gregory Houston, 'The Post-Rivonia ANC and SACP underground', in SADET (eds), 2004, pp 619ff.

the large number of convictions for political crimes between mid-1965 and 1969,[9] and the various efforts to establish local, regional and national underground networks.[10] Intensified repression always followed intense resistance, and during the second half of the decade the apartheid parliament passed the 'most extensive piece of repressive legislation', the Terrorism Act of 1967.[11] This serves as another indication of the existence of internal resistance. It thus becomes possible to confirm or refute some conclusions reached by scholars who have written on similar topics before us.

There are also a number of minor historical facts that we are able to correct. For instance, it has long been held that Chris Hani entered South Africa in 1974 to carry out underground work.[12] Hani himself points out in an interview with Wolfie Kodesh in 1993 that he returned to the country in 1973.[13] This is confirmed in another interview with Sipho Hina, from Port Elizabeth, who recalls that he met Hani for the first time at a meeting held at the house of an unnamed Stellenbosch University professor in 1973. We are also able to add to the little that is known about Hani's underground work at the time.

President Mbeki also charged SADET with recording and making public our hidden history. Initially it was envisaged that the project team would, in a two-year period, write 5 short volumes covering the three and a half decades. However, it soon became clear that the considerable time and effort it took to bring in a range of institutions and research teams, the volume of material collected during the course of the research and the range of issues to be covered required more time and a new range of research products. In particular, it was drawn to our attention that other research projects of a similar nature –

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8 Ibid., pp 632ff.

9 Ibid., p 640. 452 people were convicted under the Suppression of Communism Act, 245 under the Unlawful Organisations Act, 54 under the Terrorism Act (from 1968 only), and 80 of sabotage under Section 21 of the General Law Amendment Act of 1962.

10 Ibid., pp 639ff.

11 Madeleine Fullard, 'State Repression in the 1960s', in SADET (eds), 2004, p 347.

12 For example, by Karis, Thomas G and Gerhart, Gail M (eds), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990, Vol 5, Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979*, UNISA Press, Pretoria, 1997, p 280.

13 Interview with Chris Hani conducted by Wolfie Kodesh , 1 April 1993, Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture in South Africa's 'Oral History of Exiles Project'. Robben Island Museum-Mayibuye Centre, University of the Western Cape.

the study of the role of Sweden in the anti-apartheid struggle by Tor Sellstrom and a proposed five-year study of the role of the Netherlands in the Southern African struggle – necessitated research outputs more considerable than 5 short volumes. SADET's mission then became the publication of a number of substantial volumes of research covering the successive decades – 1960-1970, 1970-1980, 1980-1990, 1990-1994 – in the run up to the first democratic elections, with a focus on the following terms of reference:

- Political context: the political dynamics of each decade, such as the banning of the liberation movements, the formation of insurgency structures, exile and the containment of black resistance in the 1960s.
- Key organizations and key individuals: the formation, policies and objectives, membership and activities of key organizations during each decade, and the role of key historical, as well as less well-known but significant, actors.
- Strategy and tactics: the evolution of the strategy and tactics of key organizations, including debates around changing strategies and the impact of adopted strategies and tactics on revolutionary developments.
- Regime response: the response of the apartheid regime to the activities of the liberation movements, including changes in the nature of the apartheid state, the evolution of policies to contain black resistance, and repression and counter-revolutionary strategy.
- International context: the role of the international community in the liberation of South Africa and international events and processes that impacted on the liberation struggle.
- Regional context: regional events and processes that had an impact on the liberation struggle and the decision to adopt a negotiation strategy and studies of provincial and local involvement in the liberation struggle.
- Outcome: the major outcomes at the end of each decade.

SADET's first publication, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970*, was launched in 2004, and the second, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980* in June 2006. In the mean time, it had become clear to the SADET

Board that the focus of the SADET volumes was on the internal struggle and the activities of the liberation movement in this regard. Consequently, it was decided that a new series be initiated to deal with international solidarity. In June 2008, SADET launched its third product, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity*. The manuscript for the next publication, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 4, 1980-1990* is currently with the publisher, and a launch is expected early next year. Work on the second volume on international solidarity, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 5, African Solidarity*, is nearing completion, and a launch is expected late in 2010. The teams for *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 6, 1990-1994* have already been put in place, and work on the period is currently under way. Efforts are under way to commission scholars for the third volume on international solidarity, which will be SADET's volume 7 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*.

As mentioned above, SADET's Oral History Project has led to the collection of thousands of hours of interviews with a wide range of individuals central to an understanding of our past. These include members of the liberation movement, as well as individuals such as Percy Yutar, prosecutor in the Rivonia Trial in 1963-1964 that led to life imprisonment for Nelson Mandela and others, leading figures in the apartheid security establishment, and former Presidents PW Botha and FW de Klerk. The tapes and transcripts have been handed over to the National Archives of South Africa, and will be widely distributed to schools, universities and other repositories in the near future. It also became clear to the SADET team and its Board that the material collected during the course of the interview process was significantly more extensive and of such great value that another series of products was necessary, giving rise to the first of SADET's volumes of edited interviews: *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1, 1950-1970.*

A second key challenge/task President Mbeki set for SADET was to illuminate and celebrate 'the heroes and heroines who helped to make this history' of our country.[14] This

[14] Ibid.

appears to be a consistent theme in President Mbeki's speeches and articles on the project. It was most clearly put in the 'Foreword' he wrote for the first volume, where he illustrates this theme by using a poem by Bertolt Brecht, '*Questions from a worker who reads*'.[15] The central point is that so much of 'public history' is about the achievements of kings and emperors, the so-called 'Great Men' of history, and not about the contributions of the other thousands upon thousands to every one of their achievements, including the achievement of democracy in South Africa.

Thus, SADET has been challenged to go beyond the Mandelas, the Sisulus, the Goldbergs, the Hanis, the Slovos and the Mbekis of this world to make part of 'public history' the contributions of those heroes and heroines that still remain 'hidden'. The history of these 'hidden' heroes and heroines becomes the central focus, using the data from the oral histories collected in hundreds of interviews from SADET's own Oral History Project.

For many South Africans, some of the most important heroes and heroines of the struggle are those who were active in the military wings of the liberation movements. But, for the most part, many of these people are unknown to the general public, or, if known, their exploits remain 'hidden'. There are too many examples to choose from, but I will illustrate with just a few from our first and second volumes. These tales of heroism arise from demonstrations of individual sacrifice, commitment, bravery, endurance, and so on.

For instance, in volume 1 we recount Justice Mpanza's fond recollection that his first sabotage operation included Elinor Kasrils in the MK unit. Kasrils drove them to the electric pylon in Westville and after the unit successfully blew up the pylon she drove Mpanza to his home in KwaMashu. She arrived 'hardly minutes' before the police arrived at Mpanza's home to check on him.[16] Mpanza also recalls that his wife, Regina

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15 Bertolt Brecht, *Poems Part Two*, Eyre Methuen, London, 1976. Cited in Thabo Mbeki, 'Foreword', 2004, pp viii-ix.

16 Interview with Justice Mpanza conducted by Ben Magubane and Jabulani Sithole, Groutville, 10 November 2001, SADET Oral History Project. Cited in Bernard Magubane et.al., 'The turn to armed struggle', in SADET (eds), 2004, p. 110.

(nee Dludla), was drawn into his underground activities when she transported dynamite hidden in the blanket that she used to carry the baby on her back.[17]

Vuyisile Mini, a trade union organiser and SACTU leader, was among the first MK cadres to be executed for his actions. Mini is noted for going to the gallows singing.[18] In addition, Mini was offered commutation of his death sentence if he would testify against the second commander-in-chief of MK, Wilton Mkwayi, when the latter was arrested in 1964. He refused and was hanged.[19] Matthews Meyiwa's commitment to the struggle is demonstrated by his participation in a sabotage operation at a time when his wife was expecting to give birth at any moment.[20] Meyiwa also participated in the Wankie campaign in Rhodesia in 1967, as did Mpanza.[21] James Masimini is remembered by many participants in the Wankie campaign for his heroic sacrifice. Despite being badly wounded in one of the battles with the Rhodesian security forces, he told his comrades to leave him behind and escape to safety while he provided covering fire. Delmas Sibanyoni was another brave individual who stood his ground against the Rhodesian forces until he was killed by gunfire from a helicopter.[22]

SADET has also brought to public attention the exploits of some of the members of the PAC's military wing, *Poqo*. Despite the differences in approach between MK and *Poqo*, and the resulting deaths of a number of whites and convictions for murder of many of the perpetrators, for many in the PAC these were heroes of the struggle.[23]

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17 Interview with Justice Mpanza. Cited in Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, 'The ANC in exile, 1960-1970', in SADET (eds), 2004, p 437.

18 Bernard Magubane et.al., 2004, p 131.

19 Madeleine Fullard, 'State repression in the 1960s', in SADET (eds), 2004, p 373.

20 Interview with Matthews Meyiwa, conducted by Jabulani Sithole, Cato Ridge, 10 October 2001, SADET Oral History Project. Cited in Bernard Magubane et.al., 2004, p 112.

21 Refer to Moses Rendani Ralinala et.al, 2004, pp 479-540.

22 *Dawn*, Vol 3, No 7, August 1979, p 6. See also Chris Hani, 1986, p 35. Cited in Moses Rendani Ralinala et.al., 2004, p 499.

23 Refer to Brown Bavusile Maaba, 'The PAC's war against the state, 1960-1963', in SADET (eds), 2004, pp 257-298; Sello Mathabatha, 'The PAC and *Poqo* in Pretoria, 1958-1964', in SADET (eds), 2004, pp 299-318.

In our second volume we look at the exploits of Solly 'Jabu' Shoke, now a general in the SANDF, who operated inside the country for almost four years. Shoke joined MK after the Soweto uprising when he and a number of his school friends managed to make their way out of the country to Swaziland.[24] After completing his training, Shoke, together with Mteleki Nsizwa (real name Nicky Hlongwane), infiltrated the country through Swaziland in 1977 using false passports. Their mission, as members of the G5 unit, 'was to go and recruit and train people in Soweto and the East Rand'. Shoke began operating in Wattville in the East Rand, while Nsizwa went to Soweto.

The first publicised operation Shoke participated in was the attack on the Daveyton police station on the 2 February 1978. Shoke recalls that the use of bombs in the initial attacks was aimed at emulating MK's sabotage campaign in the early 1960s, where the targets were 'railway lines, buildings, until actually we took our struggle to higher heights when we started in fact physically engaging the Security Forces'.[25]

In this volume we recount the activities of the G5 unit of MK, which was responsible for the attacks on police stations in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Its commander, Johannes Rasegatla, was interviewed for the first time by SADET. He is a virtually unknown figure, while other names such as Snuki Zikalala and Keith Mokoape are better known for their MK activities in the 1970s.

The key elements of Rasegatla's contribution to the struggle begin when he and Siphiwe Nyanda were deployed to Mozambique in 1977 to lead MK's machinery there.[26] The so-called Transvaal Urban Machinery was responsible for preparing MK cadres for missions in the former Transvaal, infiltrating these cadres as well as arms and ammunition,

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24 Interview with General Solly Shoke conducted by Bernard Magubane, 2 June 2004, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project. The unit was so-named, according to Shoke, because when it was originally formed it had five members.

25 TRC Amnesty Committee, Amnesty Hearings for Application AM6211/97, General Siphiwe Nyanda, General Solly Shoke and Johannes Rasegatla, testimony of General Shoke.

26 Interview with Johannes Malekolle Rasegatla conducted by Bernard Magubane and Gregory Houston, 15 July 2004, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project. Rasegatla pointed out to the SADET team that the only previous interview he had was to discuss his knowledge of Joe Modise's role in the struggle. The testimony given by Shoke and Rasegatla at the TRC was very brief and the interviews with them are more detailed.

providing support for the cadres based inside the country, conveying instructions to, and receiving reports from them, etc. For instance, Rasegatla prepared the Solomon Mahlangu unit for its operation in mid-1977. During a two-week period Rasegatla prepared Mahlangu, George Mazibuko and Monty Motloung psychologically for the mission, and he recalls that he would ask them to repeatedly say the following at each session: 'My blood will nourish the tree which will bear the fruits of freedom.' It is recorded that these words were among Mahlangu's last as he walked to the gallows.

Rasegatla eventually infiltrated the country, and joined the G5 unit of MK that operated from dug-outs and safe houses in Soweto. Here he participated in various missions such as the attack on the Orlando and Booysens police stations. Rasegatla recalls the events which followed the arrest of three members of the G5 unit, and gives one of the most moving tributes to, and demonstration of the type of heroes that the struggle brought out.

> So, Marcus Motaung, [Simon] Mogoerani and [Jerry] Mosololi they got arrested there. And, they stand trial and they were all sentenced to hang. … Now what is worth noting in this, Marcus Motaung, because of his ability to keep the unit together – like I said, he was a natural commissar – I recommended that he be part and parcel of the HQ. But he remained here with me. But he is part and parcel of the high command and he was in charge of that wing there. Now he used to come to me in Soweto, quite a number of times, to give me feedback. 'This is where we are. This is what we are doing. This is what we've achieved.' They used to make some attacks – a number of police stations they were attacked by that unit. Now, when he got arrested, they knew exactly where I am. I was staying in Orlando East in a shack, a corrugated structure, corrugated iron structure. He knew exactly if I sleep I will be facing this way and that. But the amount of confidence I had in that unit. You know the love we have developed towards one another, it was so great that it made me violate the conspiracy, the security rules. I said 'if Marcus can sell me out then this struggle is not worth it'. You know, I literally stayed there, from his arrest, throughout his trial, until he was hanged. That guy has not revealed even a bullet. He has never said anything that compromises the struggle, Marcus Motaung. You know, each day, this one is painful as well, as

> painful as this one of Solomon Mahlangu. But there is this thing in me, that, it's a torture, I ask myself, you know, why did Marcus not walk away? Not save his life? And sell me out. I'm aware we took resolutions. We had promised each other we will never sell out. We will serve to the bitter end. But practically, when a person is facing this noose, to be hanged by his neck until he dies, it's a different situation. And Marcus, even in that situation, kept the promise. Why? It becomes a torture to me (he breaks down in tears). It becomes a torture to me in the sense that each time I'm looking at myself or what I'm doing, the question whether Marcus saved my life to do what I'm doing, in the way that I'm doing it, becomes too heavy. What is important in my life? What was so much important that Marcus saved it? Is everything that I'm doing things that he laid [his] life for? Would it be things that he would approve me doing? He is no more. He was hanged, together with other comrades, of course, who also have some information. They knew. I used to meet them. They knew I was inside the country. I used to work with them, but they've never said anything that compromised my security. I've never left the country because these people were arrested, and they've never created the situation that suggested to me that these people have sold out. But there it was. It's really, it's shocking to see the type of heroes that the struggle has produced. And to some of us it is torturing, especially where it reaches some instances where one thinks of saying 'if we had a Marcus here, if we had a Seeiso here, if we had a Solomon Mahlangu here, can we really be doing what we are doing?' But that was that.[27]

Other key members of MK, whose names and exploits are made public in SADET's second volume, include Solomon Mahlangu, Linda Jabane (MK name Gordon Dibeku, the 'Lion of Chiawelo'), Nicky Hlongwane (MK name Mteleki Nsizwa), Marcus Motaung, Bobby Tsotsobe, Nicky Sangele, Tokyo Sexwale, Naledi Tsiki, Jabu Moleketi, Wandile Dlamini, Norman Ngwenya, Thandi Modise, Denis Ramphomane, and Richard Mmapela (MK name Authi Muzorewa).

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[27] Interview with Johannes Malekolle Rasegatla.

While the contributions of many of our heroes and heroines have been in the more spectacular area of armed struggle, there are many, many more whose contributions have been in the less visible arena of underground political work. In volume 1 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, special mention is made of the role of Alfred Nzo, Duma Nokwe, Thomas Nkobi and Ruth Mompati in rebuilding the ANC underground after the banning of the organisation and the State of Emergency in 1960.[28] More detailed attention is also given to the role of people like Michael Dingake, Josiah Jele, Gertrude Shope, Albertina Sisulu, Dan Tloome, Bram Fischer, Winnie Mandela, Samson Ndou, Rita Ndzanga, Joyce Sikakane and others in rebuilding underground structures after the Rivonia arrests. Other key underground political workers such as Alexander Moumbaris and Anthony Holiday are also acknowledged.[29]

We also turn attention to the ANC's political underground in the second volume. There were quite a number of individuals involved in this underground, including a number who continued their underground work from the 1960s. Joyce Sikakane serves as an example of this category of underground activists.[30] Sikakane, who had been active in the underground network initiated by Winnie Mandela in Soweto in the late 1960s, immediately began working underground on her release from detention in September 1970. One of her immediate tasks was to link up with the leadership of the newly-formed South African Students Organisation (SASO).

Rita and Lawrence Ndzanga, Elliot Shabangu, and Samson Ndou, other members of the same network initiated by Winnie Mandela, also continued with their underground work after their release from detention. Despite being banned, Ndou recalls that 'this did not stop us to continue' with underground work.[31] His main task was to recruit people to the ANC underground and to provide them with political education, particularly on the Freedom Charter

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28 Bernard Magubane et.al., 2004, pp 75-79.

29 Refer to Gregory Houston, 2004, pp 601-660.

30 Interview with Joyce Sikakane conducted by Gregory Houston, 23 April 2002, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

31 Interview with Samson Ndou, conducted by Siphamandla Zondi, 21 May 2001, Thoyandou, SADET Oral History Project.

Robert Manci represents that group of newly released political prisoners which, Oliver Tambo noted in his January 8 statement for 1972, would join underground structures on their release from prison.[32] Manci, who joined the ANC in 1952, was arrested for attempting to leave the country in 1963 and sentenced to five years imprisonment.[33] On his release from prison in 1969, he was placed under a two-year banning order. Manci avoided other members of the ANC during these two years because he felt that he 'would be exposing them, exposing myself and the underground structures'. However, on the expiry of his banning orders in 1971, Manci joined with Nkadimeng in his underground network. Henry Makgothi and Joe Gqabi were brought into the network on their release from prison. Gqabi worked closely with Zwelakhe Sisulu, but often sought 'advice and guidance on specific issues' from Albertina Sisulu.[34] Manci recalls that during this period he 'continued working, and we were busy with Nkadimeng in meetings and so on – meetings and meetings, underground, until we got contact with Swaziland. Thabo [Mbeki] was still in Swaziland. Thabo and [Jacob] Zuma (the current President and Deputy President) they were in Swaziland. We got contact with them. They sent a message to us to say that look, now the ANC needs soldiers, you have got to organise and get soldiers, to come out for training.'[35]

A number of people active in the ANC underground were also prominent members in organisations of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). People like Billy Masetla, Elias 'Roller' Masinga, Super Moloi, Joseph Malibele, and Nkosizana Dlamini (now Dlamini-Zuma), were leading members of two Black Consciousness student organisations – the South African Students Organisation (SASO) and the South African

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32 January 8 Statement – 1972, 'The Building of a Nation', Speech by O.R. Tambo – commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the founding of the ANC, on January 8th, 1972, *Sechaba*, Vol 5, No 12/Vol 6, No 1, January 1972, p 3.

33 The section below dealing with Robert Manci is taken from interviews with him conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu, 8 March and 14 June 2001, Roodepoort, SADET Oral History Project.

34 Interview with Albertina Sisulu conducted by Elinor Sisulu for Elinor Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In our Lifetime*, David Philip, Claremont, 2002 and kindly made available to SADET by Elinor.

35 Interview with Robert Manci.

Students Organisation (SASM) – who used their membership of these organisations to carry out tasks for the banned African National Congress.

'Roller' Masinga's role in this regard will serve as an illustration. Masinga was born into an ANC family in Sophiatown in 1953 and his political consciousness developed at an early stage.[36] In 1964 or 1965 his father was caught up in a police sweep that netted hundreds of activists, and this influenced his political outlook. Another major influence was Lawrence Ndzanga, who taught Masinga about 'the ANC, Operation Mayibuye, and so on'. Ndzanga and Masinga's father also had contact with people involved in the liberation struggles of some of the other Southern African territories, such as Namibia and Mozambique, and these people would pass 'through Johannesburg to go to Botswana and so on'. Masinga would learn about these struggles through these contacts. He also became involved with Castro Mayetula while still at school. Mayetula worked for a church organisation that enabled him to maintain links with 'those freedom fighters who were coming from other countries'.

In 1959, Masinga's family was forced out of Sophiatown and settled in Senaoane in Soweto, where he did most of his schooling. He joined SASM in 1973, which 'became a link point for' him, as a member of the ANC, 'to get involved with the youth'. Masinga recalls that at this stage he, together with Joseph Malibele, Malele Mapetla, and others formed a 'unit that was led by the ANC'. Besides SASM, Masinga joined a youth organisation called the Ekukhanyeni Cultural Youth Club and the Transvaal Youth Organisation (TRYO), a regional structure of the Black Consciousness-aligned National Youth Organisation (NAYO). These organisations served as 'a cover-up, you know, to cover our underground activities for the ANC'. 'We were educating young people about our culture, about the politics, about the social environment in which we found ourselves.

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[36] The section below dealing with Elias "Roller" Masinga is taken from an interview with him conducted by Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 12 November 2003, Johannesburg, SADET Oral History Project. Masinga was arrested in late 1976 and brought to trial together with Tokyo Sexwale, Naledi Tshiki, Joe Gqabi, Martin Ramokgadi and eight others in 1977. See the S v Mosima Sexwale and eleven others, the Supreme Court of South Africa, Transvaal Provincial Division, Case Number CC 431/77, National Archives, Pretoria. He was president of the Ekukhanyeni Cultural Youth Club in 1975 and became vice-president of the Transvaal region of SASM in the same year.

And also discussing, on a large scale – because when we had Ekukhanyeni we used to have different people to come to speak to us. Some on the labour issues, some on religious issues, so that we could find a global picture of what was happening in our country.' SASM, on the other hand, enabled the youth 'to have a lot of workshops, seminars, [and] conferences where these issues were discussed'.

During the first few years of the decade emphasis was placed on political education. Older members of the ANC and other political organisations would be invited to address the youth club on a variety of issues. Masinga and Zweli Sizane[37] often travelled to Botswana, where they obtained banned literature from ANC people like Isaac Makopo and Keith Mokoape in Botswana, and Stanley Mabizela and Moses Mabhida in Swaziland. They also obtained Black Consciousness literature from Harry Nangankulu, who was based in Botswana in the first half of the decade. This literature was distributed among select members of the youth organisations. During these trips to Botswana and Swaziland, the members of the ANC based there also briefed Masinga and Sizane.

In 1974 Masinga transferred to the Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto. It was from this school that many of the leaders of the Soweto uprising were drawn in 1976. After completing his schooling in 1975, Masinga remained active in the Ekukhanyeni Youth Club and TRYO, which served as links between school-going youths and those who had completed their schooling. It was through these links that Masinga was able to play a significant role in the events leading up to the Soweto uprising. A decision was taken some time after Masinga had left school that SASM should form 'a shadow committee, as SASM, and this is an underground', to avoid harassment of all leaders by the security police. Potential youth leaders would be identified and assigned to a 'shadow committee', and 'shadow committees were then spreading throughout the country because we were planning a national upsurge against the state'. On the other hand, SASM still had to maintain a public face, 'and then we decided that Mafison [Murphy] Morobe,[38] Tsietse

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37 Sweli Sizane became president of the Transvaal region of SASM with Masinga as vice-president in 1975. See S v Mosima Sexwale and eleven others, testimony of Elias Masinga, p 1990.

38 Morobe was secretary of the Transvaal region of SASM in 1975. See S v Mosima Sexwale and eleven others, testimony of Elias Masinga, p 1983.

Mashinini[39] and many others will remain at the above-board operation so that they can engage students and even the public about what was happening'. It was this group, led by Mashinini and Morobe, which constituted itself as an 'Action Committee' that led the Soweto uprising, and was later transformed into the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) after June 16.

In late 1975, the majority of the leadership of the Ekukhanyeni Youth Club was arrested, and brought to trial in 1976. Among the members of NAYO arrested nationally were Amos Masondo (currently Executive Mayor of Johannesburg), Joseph Malibele, Nkululeku, Ngobese, David Nhlapo, Jabu and numerous others.[40] Masinga was named as one of the co-accused in the trial because he had gone into hiding in late January or early February 1976.[41] Masinga returned to Soweto just prior to the uprising, and in the aftermath decided to go to Mozambique for further training. In late August or early September, Masinga passed through Swaziland on his way to the ANC machinery in Mozambique, where he spent three months undergoing training 'basically … as an organiser'.[42] He returned to South Africa in November, and began contacting his former colleagues in the Ekukhanyeni Youth Club and SASM to establish underground cells.

During this period Masinga was also instrumental in taking some of the leaders of the SSRC to Swaziland to meet with the ANC leaders based there: 'I took Billy Masetla,[43] Super Moloi, and others, and Mafison Morobe was involved, just to go and engage with the External Mission in Swaziland.'[44]

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39 Mashinini was treasurer of the Isaac Morrison High School branch of SASM at the time. See S v Mosima Sexwale and eleven others, testimony of Elias Masinga, p 1984.

40 The seven accused in the NAYO trial were Joseph Molokeng, Amos Masondo, Andrew Moletsane, Bheki Langa, Pumza Dyanyi, David Nhlapo and Benjamin Mafenjane. See the S v Joseph Molokeng and six others, Witwatersrand Local Division, Case Number 30/76, National Archives, Pretoria.

41 S v Mosima Sexwale and eleven others, testimony of Elias Masinga, pp 1991-2.

42 Interview with Elias 'Roller' Masinga.

43 Billy Masethla became the national secretary of SASM in 1975. See S v Mosima Sexwale and eleven others, testimony of Elias Masinga, p 1984.

44 Interview with Elias 'Roller' Masinga.

Masinga's activities in the ANC underground became even more involved after his visit to Swaziland with the two SSRC leaders. He recalls: 'when we came back [from Swaziland] that's when Tokyo Sexwale and others came back into the country and we were launching the armed struggle. But we wouldn't talk about these things [laughs] in court, because that's where I was supposed to be the key person in terms of linking the movement with that. So, but what I am saying is that when we went out some of the people who had gone like Tokyo Sexwale were coming back. We were opening space for them to operate in the country.' However, within a month of his return to South Africa from Swaziland, Masinga was arrested at the home of Robert Manci whilst discussing a document on a proposed merger of the internal leadership of the ANC underground with a number of colleagues.

Knowledge about the contribution of the international community to the liberation struggle is extremely limited in South Africa. There was general knowledge of the support of the Soviet Union, of Cuba in Angola, and of national anti-apartheid movements for the struggle. However, except for the few inside the country who had direct access to the international solidarity movement, particularly during the height of the struggle in the 1980s, the true extent and nature of international solidarity and, more importantly, the heroes and heroines who were the backbone of the movement, were virtually unknown to the public. Thus, in volume 3 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* attention is drawn to the role of international organisations such as the United Nations, governments and solidarity movements, as well as key individuals in supporting the South African liberation struggle.

The third main challenge/task president Mbeki set for SADET was to provide the opportunity for 'the makers of history' to 'tell their own story as well as the story of the struggles they waged'.[45]

During the apartheid era, a 'vacuum' existed, where people 'were cut off from our history, the history of struggle, as to what went on before us' as a result of 'the banning

[45] Ibid.

of people's organisations in the '60s'.[46] Instead, the subordinated were subjected to versions of history in which only the dominant were seen to have 'the capacity to make history',[47] and the subordinated to be 'dependent for their very being on what was said and done' by the dominant. Thus, the history of South Africa was seen to have been shaped by those who ruled it, and never in any way by those who were subordinated. This history was the history of white conquest, of white state building, and so on, and not the history of black resistance: of the Defiance Campaign, the anti-Bantu Education struggles, the turn to armed struggle, the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns, and so on. The consequence is that it appeared as though the majority of South Africans had become total objects of history, without any control of their history. 'South African history was marked, for generations, by ignoring much of what had indeed taken place.'[48] This 'hidden' history deserves its place in the sun, and SADET's volume 1 is a clear demonstration that the subordinated also had the capacity to make history.

Furthermore, the subordinated were seen as having 'no history except as secondary, peripheral, inferior and lesser beings dependent for the discovery of' their 'past on what their overlords decided' was their past.[49] The consequence was a distorted history riddled with historical falsehoods. Indeed, as President Mbeki points out:

> For years fruitless efforts were made to implant into the collective mind of all our people historical falsehoods, which suggested not only that history began with the arrival of whites, but also that blacks converged on the South African shores simultaneously as whites began their pillage of this country, including the genocide of the Khoi and the San people. For decades these falsehoods were peddled as historical truths and given a veneer of respectability by many apartheid academics. It is therefore the responsibility of all of us to ensure that our people,

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46 Interview with Murphy Morobe conducted by Julie Frederickse. Cited in Julie Frederickse, *The unbreakable thread: Non-racialism in South Africa*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1990, p 162.

47 Thabo Mbeki, 'Foreword', 2004, p x.

48 Thabo Mbeki, 'Speech at the launch of the South African Democracy Education Trust's publication', Presidential Guest House, Pretoria, 26 June 2004.

49 Thabo Mbeki, 'Foreword', 2004, p vii.

> especially the youth, are well-versed about the achievements and sacrifices made for the freedoms we all enjoy today; equally about the distortions, euphemisms, and obfuscations of the false history propagated by apartheid.[50]

This false history was not a history that the subordinated could call their own.

SADET's efforts are an attempt to rectify this situation, by providing a space for those who were subordinated, and indeed did make their own history, to be seen as the makers of history. And what better way to do so than by using their own words to tell this history, by shifting 'the narrative to the foot-soldiers of the liberation organisations'.[51] In this way, as well, we are able to make them the owners of that history.

That the subordinated were the makers of their own history is clearly demonstrated in SADET's first two volumes. Admittedly there are many texts that deal with this history, including those that were unbanned and others written since 1994. However, SADET's aim is to take a different approach by attempting as far as possible to ensure that the 'makers of history' are the authors of that history. Thus, the first volume of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* is punctuated with the words of the makers of this history, and the stories of their struggles in their own words. SADET made extensive use of quotations from interviews in its first volume – interviews with some 200 individuals were used[52] - and this was deliberately done because it was one way of providing an opportunity for 'the makers of history' to tell their own story, and, to become 'the authors' of that history. Indeed, as SADET writes in the Preface to the volume:

> It is our firm belief that the voices and/or experiences of "ordinary" people, if there is anything of the sort, comes much closer to the "truth" than the most

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50 Thabo Mbeki, 'Speech at the launch of the South African Democracy Education Trust's publication'.

51 SADET' 'Preface', in SADET (eds), 2004, p xv.

52 While the bulk of the interviews used were drawn from SADET's Oral History Project, interviews conducted by Howard Barrell and Wolfie Kodesh (located at the Mayibuye Centre), Julie Frederickse (located at the University of the Witwatersrand), and interviews carried out by particular institutions (the Wits History Workshop) and individual authors (Magnus Gunther and Robin Kayser) before they became involved in the SADET project were widely used.

> skilfully written books on their history which do not have their voices. We are sure our readers will learn more from the unprocessed words and sometimes halting memories of our interviewees than any other history written about them.[53]

Thus, the objective is to provide an opportunity for 'the makers of history' to 'tell their own story as well as the story of the struggles they waged'. What better way to ensure that the makers of this history can also take ownership of it?

RESEARCH APPROACH

SADET adopted two approaches for the collection of data and writing up the volume on the 1960s (volume1), 1970s (volume 2), and 1980s (volume 4). Firstly, with regard to volume 1, in line with the goal of making this a truly national project and with drawing in as many people as possible into the project, the SADET team's immediate task was to secure contracts with established research institutions and to create research teams in various parts of the country to carry out the research. The first contract was signed with the Africa Institute of South Africa on the 18th September 2000. The team then traveled to Cape Town, East London and Durban in October to meet with prospective research team leaders and members for the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal regions, respectively. Contact was established with the Wits History Workshop and the team began negotiating a contract with the HSRC. Negotiations with established institutions and the creation of research teams took a large part of the first months, and the final contract was signed in June 2001.

However, it was during this process that SADET encountered its first major obstacle. Some scholars that had been contacted during this process indicated their concern that it was an ANC project, given that it was initiated by the ANC president, Thabo Mbeki, that the Board was overwhelmingly ANC in character, and that the ideological position of the team members, Professor Magubane and I in particular, were clearly ANC. Nevertheless,

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53 SADET, 'Preface', in SADET (eds), 2004, p xix.

our objective was always to draw in scholars from different ideological perspectives, and, the extent that we have succeeded or failed to do so, we leave to others to judge.

Contracts were signed with six participating institutions/research teams, bringing approximately twenty-six more researchers into the project. Project proposals were submitted by the Africa Institute; the HSRC; the Wits History Workshop; a Western Cape research team made up of academics from the Universities of the Western Cape and Cape Town, and the Robben Island Museum; an Eastern Cape research team consisting of staff members from the Govan Mbeki Research and Documentation Centre at Fort Hare University, and researchers from the Universities of Port Elizabeth and Transkei; and a KwaZulu-Natal research team made up of researchers from the University of Natal. After receiving a substantial grant in 2004, SADET was able to establish research teams in the Free State and Bophuthatswana, and to commission the Steve Biko as well as researchers from Rhodes University, and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (previously the University of Port Elizabeth) to participate in the project. This has brought in a total (besides the four researchers based in the SADET office) of 34 senior researchers. Emphasis in this phase of the project was placed on mentoring post-graduate students and funds were obtained for employment of 33 such students as research assistants. This has considerably expanded SADET's capacity to interview people.

These participating institutions/regional research teams were charged with conducting interviews of relevant people based in various regions (for instance, the Africa Institute was charged with interviewing people in the North West and Mpumalanga provinces, while the Wits History Workshop focused on people based in Johannesburg and Pretoria); collecting archival material (for instance the Govan Mbeki Research and Documentation Centre was charged with collecting archival material on the ANC and PAC housed at Fort Hare, while the Western Cape regional team collected archival material in the Mayibuye Centre); and contributing chapters or sections of chapters. In the latter respect, very few of the participating institutions/research teams submitted topics for chapters with their research proposals, and the emphasis was placed on the collection of material. It was the material collected in the interviewing process and

archival search that gave rise to specific themes which resulted in the chapters found in SADET's first publication, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970*.

Members of certain participating institutions contributed full chapters (such as Brown Maaba of the Govan Mbeki Research and Documentation centre) while others made significant contributions to joint chapters (such as Jabulani Sithole of the University of Natal to chapters on the 'Turn to Armed Struggle' and the Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns). In most cases, then, the first major product, volume 1 on the 1960s, was a collaborative exercise, with contributing authors using interviews conducted by researchers in a variety of research teams and archival material collected by other researchers, while a number of the chapters have contributors across research teams.

Secondly, individuals were commissioned to write up chapters for the volumes. Only one author was commissioned for the first volume, while five were commissioned for the second volume. This approach allowed SADET to bring experts on particular topics into the project. For instance, Magnus Gunther, who contributed to volume 1, has been doing research on the African Resistance Movement (ARM) for close to thirty years. Gunther could then bring into the project the vast collection of interviews and archival material made over this period, while contributing a chapter that has the stamp of years of research.

During the initial phase of the research the focus was on interviews, leading to the interviewing of approximately 200 people by mid-2002. The next step was for individual researchers to identify topics for the first volume. An editorial committee, comprising researchers from the various teams and the SADET research team, was then set up, and met for the first time on 16 February 2002. During this two-day workshop a draft outline for the first volume was prepared, individual researchers assigned to particular themes, ideas about the research shared, and a deadline for the first drafts set.

Throughout this process the Board was given research reports and was able to assist the SADET team with a range of research issues, such as attempting to facilitate access to archival material, providing contact details of relevant informants, and facilitating interviews for the SADET research team.

The use of participating institutions brought with it a number of benefits. Firstly, it was expected that these institutions would already have the appropriate research staff and infrastructure to carry out the research. The Wits History Workshop, for instance, brought into the project a team of researchers who had been working together over a number of years on topics relevant to the SADET project. The Workshop also made available to SADET a large number of interviews it had conducted with leading members of the ANC, the SACP and MK during the early 1990s. Some of these participating institutions have extensive libraries and archival material, which was also a great advantage to the SADET team in general.

The use of regional research teams, besides the benefit of making the project national, proved to be cost effective. Since 1994, many of the leading figures in the ANC, MK, the SACP, the PAC, and so on, and members of the Bantustan and apartheid civil service, and so on, have been scattered throughout the country. A large number of these people are based in the national and provincial capitals, and it made sense for SADET to have regional research teams. The alternative is to have researchers traveling all over the country to conduct interviews. Such a situation emerged when the Africa Institute was assigned the task of conducting interviews in the North West and Mpumalanga provinces. It soon became clear that SADET was going to be unable to carry the costs of providing accommodation and transport for two researchers over long periods. By contrast, the researchers at the Govan Mbeki Research and Documentation Centre were able to carry out a large number of interviews in the Eastern Cape because its team members were scattered throughout the province. In addition, the regional teams enabled SADET to minimize the costs that would have been necessary, for example, to send researchers from Pretoria to interview informants in Cape Town, or to collect archival material at Fort Hare.

The main disadvantage, however, is that it cannot be expected that a researcher who is not intimately involved in the research of another would be able to give the same attention to detail, nor have the same breadth of knowledge of the research topic, as the individual researcher concerned. Each senior researcher in the project had his or her own specific research topic, and it is rather difficult to expect someone to conduct an interview or collect archival material for another researcher. The result is that such interviews and archival searches are insufficiently dealt with. In some cases researchers have simply ignored SADET policy and used SADET funds to travel to parts of the country where other research teams are based to carry out their own interviews or archival searches. On the other hand, quite a few have used opportunities provided by other commitments, such as conferences, to conduct interviews and do archival searches.

Bringing together a large number of researchers to contribute chapters or to collaborate on chapters in a project of this nature – writing up the political history of South Africa with a focus on key organisations and individuals – has a number of disadvantages. The first arises from the range of ideological strands that were brought into the project. There is always the danger that authors would use the project to promote organisations they support or to undermine others they oppose, and it was always important for the SADET team to ensure that the various contributions were not used for ideological purposes. There is a considerable amount of material that is dismissive, disparaging or excessively critical of various political organisations and individuals in the interviews, archival material and secondary literature. The only criterion for allowing such statements to be included in the volume was that they illustrate a particular point, or where there is sufficient justification for criticism, as the author of the chapter on the ANC in exile in volume 1 does when he focuses on the woes and dynamics of the ANC and its allies during the 1960s.[54] Here the focus is on the problems the ANC and its allies experienced in exile, such as factional fissures, the impact of ethnicity, internal differences and misunderstandings between the ANC headquarters in Tanzania and ANC representatives in various countries, the perceived lack of communication between the ANC and SACP

[54] Sifiso Ndlovu, 'The ANC in exile, 1960-12970', in SADET (eds), 2004, pp 436ff.

in the first decade of exile, and so on. Likewise, internal criticism of the ANC leadership in the famous Hani Memorandum after the Wankie campaign is dealt with in two chapters,[55] while a critical view of the ANC's training camps in Tanzania made by one cadre (who became disgruntled with the ANC in the aftermath of the Wankie campaign) is reproduced as follows:

> They put us in a place that was far from civilisation, where you hardly saw a person wearing a suit. If you could get a woman, she was a prostitute. We were eating dirty food; sometimes they brought old rice with worms. There was no bread, nothing! Water was scarce. This would cause running stomachs and vomiting…[56]

Despite these examples, some might argue that we have not met President Mbeki's injunction to the researchers made at the launch of the first volume on the 26 June 2004: that we make use of the criticisms of the liberation movement's enemies, and not only commentaries of sympathisers or allies.

The SADET team also had to avoid a situation where authors make spurious or exaggerated claims about particular organisations or individuals. As I pointed out above, the editorial committee was charged with reviewing all the chapters, and one of their concerns was to check for historical inaccuracies. For instance, something apparently simple such as the claim that a particular organisation had "significant support" in a particular region has to be qualified by answering the following question: was this organisation's support in the region "significant" in relation to the support of other organisations in the area, or in relation to its support elsewhere? A question such as this could raise some concern for the editorial committee: was it raised because of ideological differences between the authors and the reviewer, or was it a justified question aimed at avoiding inaccurate conclusions on the part of readers of the volume?

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55 Rendani Ralinala, Jabulani Sithole, Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane', 'The Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns', in SADET (eds), 2004, pp 535-7; and Nhlanhla Ndebele and Noor Nieftagodien, 'The Morogoro Conference: A moment of self-reflection', in SADET (eds), 2004, pp 586-9.

56 Interview with IL Maphoto, conducted by Siphamandla Zondi, 2 May 2001, SADET Oral History Project. Cited in Rendani Ralinala et.al, op.cit., pp 482-3.

Ideological tensions between authors (although very few) were most evident between authors collaborating on chapters. A single word, or phrase, could lead to tension. For instance, differences arose between two of the authors of Chapter 2 of Volume 1 on the following statement: "The ANC's commitment to non-violence was deep-seated and long lasting". The debate on this probably mirrored the debate inside the ANC when the decision to take up the armed struggle was announced. One of the authors argued that non-violence was merely a strategy and not a principle for the ANC. The other argued that it was a principle, and therefore lay at the root of understanding the ANC at the time. A compromise was reached by pointing out that, for some ANC members, non-violence was a principle, while for others it was a strategy that could be changed under certain conditions, which arose when the ANC was banned. Two chapters had to be included on the trade union movement in volume 2 because some of us felt that insufficient attention had been given to the activities of SACTU and black trade union activists in the original chapter on the topic.

A second major problem with having such a vast number of contributors – which is common to any similar situation – is the difficulty of meeting deadlines. Each participating institution or research team had its own internal dynamics, determined by the availability of appropriate researchers to carry out the research, their own commitments (other research projects and/or teaching), and the individual capabilities of their researchers. For instance, some teams signed contract early in the process, only to appoint staff to carry out the research some months later. Secondly, progress in the research was determined by each individual researcher's own schedule. Finally, some researchers were capable of producing work within a short time-frame (also determined by the availability of material for their topics), while others took longer. The result was that teams were working to different time frames. We were only able to reach a common time frame when the editorial committee met for the first time in February 2002. However, these problems continued throughout the process until the final manuscript was handed over to the publishers in late 2003.

Methodology

SADET used material from interviews with approximately 200 individuals in its first volume[57] and the key methodological tool in SADET's "Road to Democracy" project is oral history. Why oral history, you may ask?[58]

There is so much of historical significance that is not recorded by a camera crew, by newspaper reporters, in the form of minutes, etc., that the sole source is the memory of those who were present. To illustrate, we need just look at the manner in which the authors of Chapter 2 of volume 1 deal with the Congress Alliance's turn to armed struggle. How else can we understand the turn to armed struggle without looking at the unrecorded debates that raged within the Alliance, stances of particular leading individuals, and steps leading to the adoption of this strategy?[59] This could only be achieved by using the recollections of the actors themselves. Similarly, the processes and events that are collectively know as the Soweto uprising are made richer and clearer by drawing on the recollections of the many participants in the uprising.

However, for SADET an added significance of the oral history approach is that it provides a space for 'the makers of history' to 'tell their own stories as well as the story of the struggles they waged', and thereby become 'the authors who record that history'.[60]

What we cannot capture in a written work is the physical expression of emotions: the tears, laughter, anger, and pain that the informants displayed during the interviews. Hopefully these will be captured in a future documentary series using video-taped interviews.

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57 While the bulk of the interviews used were drawn from SADET's Oral History Project, interviews conducted by Howard Barrell and Wolfie Kodesh (located at the Mayibuye Centre), Julie Frederickse (located at the University of the Witwatersrand), and interviews carried out by particular institutions (the Wits History Workshop) and individual authors (Magnus Gunther and Robin Kayser) before they became involved in the SADET project were widely used.

58 There is a considerable amount of literature – both theoretical and practical – about the benefits and limitations of oral history as a source. Unfortunately I do not have the time to deal with this but to focus instead on a few of our own experiences at SADET.

59 Bernard Magubane et.al, op.cit., pp 80ff.

60 Thabo Mbeki, 'Our historians…', op.cit.

SADET highlights some of the limitations of oral history as a source in its preface to the first volume:

> We cannot, of course, ignore major weaknesses in tape-recorded and spontaneous oral histories. Our subjects had to cast their minds back to events that took place in the early 1960s. There is no question that there were lapses of memory and therefore many inaccuracies. In some cases, these were corrected by interviewing others who participated in the same events, such as the Wankie Campaign. We augmented personal accounts by using archival material to support the arguments of interviewees. Any inaccuracies that may be found will not, on the whole, invalidate the story or the sacrifice of the foot soldiers that constitute the bulk of this volume.[61]

SADET's Oral History Project has adopted two oral history approaches: life histories of informants; and oral testimony focusing on specific events, processes, structures, etc. for which the informant is able to give expert testimony.

The life history approach was utilised extensively during the early stages of the project – particularly in cases where very little was known about the subject except general areas of knowledge or of particular informants' roles. But as the research process expanded, although life histories remained the key approach, expert testimony was introduced to focus on specific issue areas.

One of the benefits of the life history approach, in our experience at SADET, is that it throws up new issues, events, structures, and processes that have never been researched before, or have been under-researched. For instance, I began interviewing Joyce Sikakane in 2001 merely because I had been told that she had participated in the struggle, and also because she was readily available. However, in my first interview with Joyce she alluded to the existence of an underground network initiated by Winnie Mandela during the

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[61] SADET, 'Preface', in SADET (eds), op.cit., p xx.

second half of the 1960s. This interview then formed the basis of further interviews with Joyce and other informants such as Snuki Zikalala and Wally Serote, analysis of newspaper and other reports on the court cases involving members of this network, accessing the court records at the National Archives in Pretoria, the search for secondary literature pertinent to the topic, and so on.

Another use of the life history approach is that it enables the researcher to identify common themes and issues across a number of interviews. Sifiso Ndlovu, senior researcher at SADET, did a content analysis of the life history interviews of 30 informants with more or less common experiences during the 1960s. He identified the following themes: process by which informants achieved political consciousness; their journeys into exile; conditions in exile and other problems such as financial support, international support, support given by the liberation movement, etc.; leadership issues in the ANC; relationship of ANC with African states; life in the military camps, with an emphasis on relationship with the local community, leisure time and entertainment, and various crises and problems; and attempts at infiltration into South Africa by MK guerrillas. These then became the themes of one of the chapters Sifiso wrote.[62]

The life history approach also has a particular resonance with SADET's 'Road to Democracy in South Africa Project', as well as with the type of people chosen for the life history interviews. In the first place, the project spans three-and-a-half decades of South African history, and the life history approach enables the team to cover the relevant details of an informant's life over those three-and-a-half decades. In the second place, the type of people we interviewed at the outset of the project are generally people who spent the large part of their adult lives, on the one hand, as members of the South African Police, South African Defence Force, the civil service, the National Party, and so on, and, on the other, as members of the ANC, the South African Communist Party, MK, and so on.

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[62] I am grateful to Dr Sifiso Ndlovu for pointing this out to me.

Just to illustrate, the six hours of interviews conducted with Lennox Tshali in 2001 – who was basically identified for his role in the Wankie Campaign – contained a large amount of material that was relevant to a number of the chapters for the first volume – namely, those that dealt with early underground political activity, journey into exile, military training abroad, life in MK's camps in Tanzania – as well as material relevant to the 1970s volume – namely, early attempts by MK to infiltrate the country, in particular its attempt at a seaborne entry in 'Operation J', and his role as part of the MK machinery in Mozambique from the mid-1970s. It is clear then that this approach makes the task easier as we move into the writing of the volumes for the decades that follow the 1960s, because part of the material has already been collected in the initial phase of the project.

The benefits of this approach can be contrasted with our experience as the deadlines for the publication of the first volume approached. We began to rely more and more on expert testimony to focus on particular themes, only to discover when we began doing the research for the second volume that we had missed the opportunities for interviews with a number of significant individuals on their experiences in the 1970s and subsequent decades. People have passed away, moved into retirement far away from our research centres, become more inaccessible because they have changed jobs, and so on.

One major problem with the life history approach is that many informants who have been interviewed repeatedly tend to recount the same familiar stories in interview after interview, often leaving out significant periods of their life. For instance, I had access to three separate interviews conducted with Wilton Mkwayi, who served as second commander-in-chief of MK after the Rivonia arrests in May 1963, between 1990 and 2002. These were interviews conducted for the Robben Island Museum Memory Project, SADET's Road to Democracy Project, and an interview conducted by Wolfie Kodesh. I searched in vain for relevant information on his role as commander-in-chief of MK and of MK activity during this period in all three interviews.

One particularly alarming example is that of an interview conducted by Sifiso Ndlovu with a group of MK veterans, which might be an example of what Ndlovu calls 'amnesia

as a result of painful experiences'. Towards the end of the interview one of the other informants chipped in to remind one of the veterans that he had forgotten to speak about his participation in the Wankie Campaign. He never did discuss his participation in the campaign for reasons unknown to SADET.[63]

In addition, in the life history approach there is always the danger that the relevant questions may not be asked, or the interviewer does not probe to get more detail about certain issues. These problems were particularly acute in our earlier interviews. As the research process unfolded, and as we accumulated more and more material from interviews, archives and secondary literature, we discovered that some interviews contained scant information from relevant informants on events that became significant in the research process at a later stage. For example, Professor Magubane and Dr Sifiso Ndlovu conducted the SADET interview with Wilton Mkwayi in the early phases of the project, and his role as commander-in-chief of MK only became relevant when I began working on the history of the second National High Command at a much later stage. Of course, these problems are understandable, because none of the researchers knew at the outset of the project all there is to know about the history of the ANC, nor of the history of each individual informant, nor of what we were going to focus on in the first volume.

In Volume 1 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Magnus Gunther points to one significant problem with the use of the memory of informants as a source, particularly decades after events, and that is different recollections of the same event. In the example given by Gunther, Alan Lipman recalled that he and two African members of the National Committee of Liberation used hacksaws over a period of more than two hours to saw through the legs of an electricity pylon in Edenvale on 9 October 1961. Monty Berman recalled the same incident, but said that it took two or three nights for the group,

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[63] There could, of course, be a variety of other reasons why this informant refused to discuss the Wankie Campaign. Dr Ndlovu points out that he was quite eloquent about other areas of his role in the struggle and that his memory was good. I am grateful to Dr Ndlovu for this point.

including Lipman, to saw through the pylon. Lipman does not recall Berman taking part in this mission.[64]

Perhaps the best-known example of conflicting recollections dealt with in the volume is the dispute between Govan Mbeki and other leaders of the Congress Alliance about events surrounding the discussions on Operation Mayibuye. Mbeki consistently maintained that the plan was adopted at a Joint Executive meeting of the ANC and the Communist Party, which followed the adoption of Operation Mayibuye by MK.[65] Mbeki recalled that this joint meeting was attended by, amongst others, J.B. Marks, Bram Fischer, Ruth First, Joe Slovo, and Walter Sisulu, and that:

> It was in two, A and B. Joe presented A and I presented B. We discussed it at the High Command. We approved the document. We said now the document must go the Joint Executive of the ANC and the Communist Party. And it went there. But then differences now begin to arise over that.[66]

Walter Sisulu, on the other hand, rejected Mbeki's recollection that Operation Mayibuye was adopted by the ANC, and says: 'None of the others will agree to that – we don't agree. It was never. It was under discussion when we were arrested {at Rivonia}'.[67] The following quotation from an interview with Rusty Bernstein shows that the differences in recollection on this issue are even more complex:

> There was a great deal of disagreement, and even now there is disagreement as to whether the document was ever adopted or wasn't adopted by anybody except the MK High Command ... My clear memory of it is that it was never endorsed by the [Communist] Party ... On the other hand, if you talk to Slovo he'll probably tell

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64 Magnus Gunther, 'The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM)', in SADET (eds), op.cit., p. 215n.

65 This is discussed quite extensively in Bernard Magubane et.al, op.cit., pp. 139-40.

66 Interview with Govan Mbeki, 23 October 1993, Wits History Workshop. Cited in Bernard Magubane et.al, op.cit., p. 139.

67 Interview with Walter Sisulu, 15 July 1993, Wits History Workshop. Cited in Bernard Magubane et.al, op.cit., p. 139.

> you it was, and there were strong objections to it on the Party's Central Committee. ... Some of the people like Sisulu will tell you the ANC never adopted it. That will be disputed by some of them in the ANC. I am sure. I'm sure Mbeki will dispute it.[68]

Although, in most cases, one is able to reconstruct events (when exclusively using interviews as a source) by using the corroborating recollections of a number of informants, this case demonstrates just how problematic this source is. We will never know for sure which organisations adopted Operation Mayibuye because of the conflicting recollections.[69]

The use of interview material to reconstruct various events, particularly those of a similar nature, proved extremely difficult in a number of cases. This was particularly so when we tried to reconstruct the events around the Wankie and Sipolilo battles. Recollections of the various battles were drawn from old men who had to cast their minds back to events taking place more than thirty years ago, events which were for some traumatic and, for others, glorious. For us, besides the problems of exaggerated accounts of the battles (the number of enemy killed in various battles, for instance),[70] was one of absolute confusion: fitting the recollections into particular battles. We knew from the available literature on the Wankie Campaign that there were two units comprising MK and ZIPRA cadres – one moving towards the east to establish bases inside Zimbabwe, and the other moving south to infiltrate South Africa. After painstaking research – because it is not clear anywhere in the available literature – we were able to establish that there were three major battles during the course of the campaign: the first on the 13 August, 1967, involving the unit

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68 Interview with Rusty Bernstein, 2 March 1994, Wits History Workshop. Cited in Bernard Magubane et.al, op.cit., pp. 139-40.

69 What we do know is that the people arrested at Rivonia on the 11 July 1963 were discussing the document. What we do not know is if this led to the adoption of the plan by the SACP and ANC.

70 For instance, Mpanza put the number of fatalities among the Rhodesian forces in one of the battles at 33.[70]

moving east, and two involving the unit moving south on the 20 August and 21 August.[71] There were also a number of smaller skirmishes involving the unit moving south.

However, what we had before us were a number of accounts of battles without any reference points to determine which unit was involved, and what particular battle was being discussed. It took an enormous amount of detective work to link up particular accounts from the interviews with specific battles and skirmishes. This task was made more onerous because the researchers who had conducted the bulk of the relevant interviews had left the project, while some interview material was drawn from interviews conducted by researchers who were caught up with their own writing.

We first had to connect the informants to particular units – which was easy in some cases because they mentioned Chris Hani, who we knew was in the unit moving south. Then we began deciphering the recollections to link them to particular battles, which was the most difficult task. Once we knew, for instance, that Justice 'Gizenga' Mpanza was in the unit moving south, we used some of the published accounts of the Wankie Campaign[72] as a reference point, looking for common recollections in both accounts.

Interviews, particularly in the case of a project such as SADET's "Road to Democracy in South Africa" project, which is a Presidential project with a potentially wide exposure, offered some individuals the opportunity to exaggerate their role in the struggle. We had to guard against this feature of oral history by avoiding use of such interviews in our volume. We leave it to those historians who follow us and make use of our interview material to make their own judgements.

In addition, interviews conducted with former members of the apartheid government and security forces tend to skirt many issues that are controversial, or which might invite

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71 It must be noted that in the published accounts of MK cadres in the campaign, very little is written about the battles in which their forces are routed. Perhaps the only such account is that given by Comrade Rodgers ('The Battle of Nyatuwe', Dawn, souvenir issue, 25th anniversary of MK, 1986). In particular, the battle in which the remaining members of the unit moving towards the east were killed or captured is seen as a part of the earlier major battle of the unit.

72 Refer to the articles in *Dawn*, souvenir Issue, 25th anniversary of MK, December 1986.

criminal charges. The project offers some of this general category of informants with the opportunity to present their role in historical events in a very favourable light. For instance, in the interview with former President FW de Klerk there are a number of instances in which he presents himself as an enlightened member of the National Party. In one instance he claims very early in an interview that 'before I became Member of Parliament, this is the late, the last few years of the sixties, [I was] quite actively involved already in the debate, the growing debate which there was that we must change.'[73] Indeed, he at times goes to great lengths to indicate his distaste for some of the abhorrent events in National Party history, such as the statement by Minister of Police Jimmy Kruger after the death in detention of Steve Bantu Biko 'that it leaves him cold'. He recalls:

> And I got so upset that I decided that I'm not standing for this. I'm not going to take it. I'm going to now say something about it, and sort of oppose him on his attitude. And, I was standing in a little queue, there was still one speaker before me who wanted to speak, and then I would at the one microphone, and there were two or three at the other microphone. And then the late Ben Schoeman, who was chairing the discussion, suddenly got up and said, "we have discussed this enough". So, I don't know what my political career would have been if I ever got to that microphone [laughs], because I was deeply upset by his attitude on that.[74]

The tone of the rest of the interview is one of a reasonable and enlightened individual with some commitment to change, including awareness early in his political career that one-man-one-vote would have to be introduced at some stage. However, the interview might just be a true reflection of what type of person he is.

As pointed out above, SADET make extensive use of archival material. The archival sources were multifaceted, ranging from letters, drafts of constitutions, press statements, reports (including those of meetings of organs of the liberation movements and police

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73 Interview with Mr FW de Klerk conducted by Bernard Magubane, Gregory Houston, and Christopher Saunders, 10 February 2003, Cape Town, SADET Oral History Project.

74 Ibid.

intelligence reports), memorandums, cabinet minutes, minutes of meetings, resolutions, notes on discussions, presentations at conferences, programmes of organisations, statements to the security police and magistrates, circulars, newsletters, communiqués, unpublished mimeos, and trial records. I would like to focus on trial records as a source. Trial records were used extensively in a number of chapters in both volume 1 and 2. The value of these records is that they contain original documents that were used as evidence, such as Operation Mayibuye for the Rivonia Trial,[75] and the testimony of witnesses and defendants.

Magnus Gunther uses a number of documents taken from the trial of the ARM leadership and the trial of Eddie Daniels in his chapter on the ARM. For instance, from the first trial[76] he makes use of Exhibit M 5(2), which was a document of the African Freedom Movement that included its objectives,[77] and Exhibit M 5(3), which contained the constitution of the ARM,[78] as well as details of its sabotage plans, including escape routes.[79] From the records of the second trial,[80] Gunther uses Exhibit C10, which contained a 23-page synopsis of Che Guevara's manual on Guerilla Warfare, which circulated later within the ARM,[81] Exhibit C69, which is a manual of detailed procedures for carrying out sabotage,[82] Exhibit C70, which is a document prepared by Robert Watson on the organisational structure required for carrying out sabotage,[83] Exhibit C8, which contained detailed plans developed by Daniels to destroy the Government Garage

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75 We must recall that only three copies of Operation Mayibuye existed at the time of the Rivonia arrests: one in the possession of Oom Govan Mbeki at the Lilliesleaf farm, another that was sent out of the country with Joe Slovo, and one given to Wilton Mkwayi who escaped arrest at Rivonia. Refer to the State versus Nelson Mandela and others, Supreme Court of SA, Transvaal Provincial Division, 1964 (National Archives, Pretoria).

76 State versus Baruch Hirson and others, Supreme Court of SA, Transvaal Provincial Division, Criminal Case 508/64 (National Archives, Pretoria).

77 Magnus Gunther, 2004, op.cit., pp 222-3.

78 Ibid,, pp 232-4.

79 Ibid., p 101.

80 State versus Eddie Daniels and Others, Supreme Court of SA, Cape Provincial Division, Criminal Case 349/64 (Cape Town Repository).

81 Magnus Gunther, 2004, op.cit., p 224.

82 Ibid., p 236.

83 Ibid., p 236.

in Cape Town,[84] amongst others. Another valuable historical source are the 250 documents discovered by the police when they raided Lilliesleaf, including 106 maps of targets that included 'police stations, post offices, Bantu Administration offices, both state and municipal, the homes of Bantu policemen and Bantu administrators, electric power stations and lines, pylons, railway lines and signal boxes, as well as telephone lines and cables'.[85]

The testimonies of both witnesses and defendants in a number of court cases used in the first volume contain a vast amount of information relevant to the project, including their reasons for getting involved in politics and the organisations they were active in, some of the activities of organisations and the structure and leadership of these organisations,[86] stories of their journeys into exile, training abroad, acts of sabotage inside the country, acts of murder,[87] infiltration after receiving military training, etc. Bram Fischer in particular, who often defended a large number of members of the Congress Alliance on Trial in the first half of the sixties, adopting the approach in the Rivonia Trial of using trials as a political platform, would take the defendants through their life histories.

However, the testimony of state witnesses (who were often accomplices), witnesses for the defence and defendants should be treated with caution. In the case of the latter two, it is obvious that they could be expected to lie in order to avoid conviction of the accused. In the case of accomplice state witnesses, the following observation by Madeleine Fullard is relevant:

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84 Ibid., p 237.

85 Opening address by the state prosecutor, Dr Percy Yutar, in State v Nelson Mandela and nine others, cited in Thomas Karis and Gwendolyn Carter, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964,* Vol 4, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, California, 1977, p 672.

86 Testimony about the structure and leadership of the South African Communist Party, and in particular its links with Umkhonto we Sizwe were given in a number of trials. See Berlin, Ann Christine: Using Political Trials as Historical Evidence: The Case of the State versus Abram Fischer – 1966, Hons, University of the Witwatersrand, 1994 for an analysis of some of these trials.

87 This was particularly the case with trials dealing with members of Poqo. Refer to Brown Maaba, 'The PAC's war against the state, 1960-1963', in SADET (eds), 2004, pp 257-298; and Madeleine Fullard, 2004, op.cit., pp 341-390.

> …most state witnesses were genuine activists who succumbed to pressure exerted on or invidious choices placed before them. To ensure convictions, the state required members of the liberation movements to testify against their comrades. Forms of coercion included the protracted and renewable periods of detention that stretched out endlessly; mental and physical torture; the threat of long prison sentences or even capital punishment; blackmail based on specific personal circumstances. The system ensured that few trials were short of state witnesses, be they ANC, PAC or ARM, drawn from all echelons of the organisations and ranging from high-ranking officials to the lowliest recent recruit.[88]

Extensive use of trial records was made in both Chapters 6 and 9 of volume 1, to provide insight into the activities of Poqo, and the various convictions of its members.[89] In Chapter 9, numerous trial records are used to provide evidence of different forms of repression, ranging from convictions for leaving the country illegally to undergo military training abroad,[90] torture of political detainees,[91] the use of accomplice witnesses in political trials,[92] and political executions.[93]

The evidence of the security police in trials also provides a valuable source, although these should also be treated with caution.[94] During the 1960s, police infiltration of the ANC, SACP and MK led to a number of trials, the most significant being that of Bram Fischer and thirteen others in Johannesburg in late 1964[95] and Fischer's own trial in 1966. The main police witness in these trials – Gerard Ludi – had managed to infiltrate the Communist Party in the early 1960s, and was so trusted that he was able to record

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88 Madeleine Fullard, 2004, op.cit., p 370.

89 Brown Maaba, 2004, op.cit., pp 257-97; and Madeleine Fullard, 2004, op.cit., pp 384-8.

90 Madeleine Fullard, 2004, op.cit., pp 346-7.

91 Ibid., p 361.

92 Ibid., pp 369-81.

93 Ibid., pp 381-9.

94 One of the objects of political trials was to remove political activists from the political arena and the state used all the information at its disposal, including evidence arising from surveillance of individuals, supporting documentation, etc. in these trials.

95 The trial records are not in the National Archives but an account of his penetration of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and his evidence in the trial is given by the policeman involved, Gerard Ludi, in his book, *Operation Q-018*, National Commercial Printers, Johannesburg, 1969.

meetings at the home of one of the members of the Party, and to rent a post box for Party use allowing him to intercept the mail. Ludi was thus able to provide testimony supported by documentary evidence that was so damning (together with the testimony of Piet Beyleveld, an accomplice witness who had served in the Central Committee of the Communist Party with many of the accused) that twelve of the thirteen accused with Bram Fischer – who had not returned to the trial after being given bail to attend a trial in London – were found guilty. When Fischer was eventually captured in November 1965 after operating underground from January of that year he too was found guilty largely because of Ludi's testimony.

Finally, information about political trials in general provided the researchers with insight into the extent of political activity at particular times, and the nature of the predominant forms of political activity. For instance, we know that extensive underground work continued during the second half of the 1960s simply by looking at trial records. In the period from mid-1965 to the end of 1969, for example, at least 452 people were convicted under the Suppression of Communism Act, 245 under the Unlawful Organisations Act, 54 under the Terrorism Act (from 1968 only), and 80 of sabotage under Section 21 of the General Law Amendment Act of 1962.[96] The most significant types of 'political crimes' are demonstrated in the 1968 trials of Thabo Matsoening (becoming or continuing to be a member of the ANC in 1966-67; taking part in its activities; holding an ANC meeting in his home; contributing or soliciting subscriptions to the organisation), 27 men in Victoria West (conspiring with one another and with 65 others to commit sabotage), Gideon Mdhletshe (recruiting people for military training outside South Africa) and the 1969 trial of Donald Mathangela for undergoing military training abroad. The 831 convictions for political offences during the period can be compared to the 1 604 people convicted after the waves of mass arrests in 1963 and 1964 that followed a period of the most heightened political activity of the decade.

One source that was not used and which might have proved particularly useful is the collections of files kept on individual political activists by various government

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96 Various *Annual Surveys of Race Relations* between 1967 and 1970.

departments. During particular historical periods certain government agencies took the leading role in counter-revolutionary activity, in particular surveillance of anti-apartheid activists. For example, during the 1960s and 1970s, the Security Branch of the South African Police played a central role in this aspect of counter-revolutionary activity. During the 1980s, however, it was the Department of Defence's Military Intelligence that increasingly assumed the leading responsibility in this regard, although supported to some extent by the Security Police and the National Intelligence Service (NIS).

For SADET's purposes, files on individual activists that would prove most useful are those kept by the particular agency that assumed the leading responsibility for conducting surveillance of political activists during a particular period. For example, I managed to get access to one of the files kept at the National Archives, that of the late Dr Fabian Ribeiro, who was murdered, together with his wife Florence, by the South African security forces in the mid-1980s. All that the file contained was a few brief official documents regarding visits by a magistrate to Dr Ribeiro whilst he was in detention, and some newspaper articles about his arrest. There was nothing on his political activities that led to his and his wife's murder. Indeed, the family was only able to get more information about the events surrounding their deaths from the Amnesty Hearings of the TRC. And what we now know from these hearings is that it was the Military that was responsible for their deaths. Thus, we will have to obtain access to the files of Military Intelligence in order to do justice to the history of the 1980s.

In the earlier phase of the project the National Archives only had the files of the old Directorate of Security Archives of the Department of Justice and the files on political prisoners of the Department of Correctional Service. The files of the security branch were scattered in individual police stations throughout the country, and SADET was able to get a list of the existing files from the South African Historical Archives (SAHA) based at the University of the Witwatersrand. During all three decades to be covered in the study, the predecessors of what is now known as the Department of Correctional Services kept files on political prisoners. The files of Military Intelligence were stored in the archives of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). According to a former

investigator for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), former NIS management members who were working for the National Intelligence Agency (NIA, the successor to NIS) claimed that NIS had destroyed all its pre-1990 files on individuals, unless they were still regarded as 'active files'.[97]

In addition, even where collections are available at the National Archives, it has a policy in place regarding access to the files of individuals that were regarded by the apartheid regime as a security threat, and any researcher who seeks access to them requires the written permission (including Identity Number) of the individual concerned or the family of that individual, if deceased. This is understandable, because, according to the National Archivist, Dr Graham Dominy, these files may contain material which would embarrass the individual concerned, such as photographs of them naked, evidence of embarrassing personal habits, unsubstantiated suggestions of links with the security police, and so on. Getting the permission of the individual concerned or the family is an onerous task, and SADET did not have the funds nor the manpower to engage in this process.

CONCLUSION

The publication SADET's four major products, and, their impact, serve as vindication of the project as a whole. The SADET project does provide a number of significant opportunities. One of these is to develop a core of black historians who can play a fundamental role in ensuring that the history of black people is written by black historians. It is with this in mind that SADET ensured that the majority of contributors to the first volume were young black researchers. The number of such researchers has also expanded considerably for the second volume. In addition, SADET has made funds available for the employment of post-graduate students to work as research assistants in the project. It is this contribution of SADET that, it is hoped, will ensure that black people increasingly become the subjects of history and not the objects, as they have been for a large part of our country's history.

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97 Nicky Rousseau, e-mail communication to the author, 13 April 2002.