

expelled from the party when Dadoo was its chairman. This broader context is not mentioned, and there is no mention either that it had been a central committee decision that Dadoo should leave the country to mobilise international solidarity and consolidate the external structures of the party,⁶ so Turok's snide remark is the only reason given as to why Dadoo was sent abroad.

These caveats aside, the book is a welcome addition to the scholarship on South Africa's revolutionary turn. The attempt to bring about a revolution in South Africa was ultimately defeated by the apartheid state's brutal repression, mass arrests, and imprisonments, including that of Mandela, or, for those who managed to escape, political exile, and apartheid was to remain in place for the next thirty years. While the strategic shift from nonviolence to armed insurrection is often blamed for the apartheid state's ensuing retaliation, Landau importantly reminds us that 'Mandela and his comrades could not see the future' but, in a Marxist sense, '[t]hey tried to make it' (292).

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The Party of the Century

Red Road to Freedom: A History of the South African Communist Party, 1921–2021

By Tom Lodge. Auckland Park: Jacana, 2021, and Suffolk: James Currey, 2022. Pp. 626. R380.00, Jacana paperback (ISBN: 9781431421342); £70, James Currey hardcover (ISBN: 9781847013217); £24.00, e-book (ISBN: 9781800105102).

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Since the ending of apartheid, a fair amount has been published on the previously hidden history of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA)/South African Communist Party (SACP). This work has tended to focus on specific (usually limited) periods or consisted of biographies and autobiographies of its leaders and more public personalities. Much of it has been published as journal articles. Until now, there has been no comprehensive overview of the party from its early beginnings until the present.¹ This has been a serious omission from South African historiography. Given

⁶See B. Bunting, *Moses Kotane: South African Revolutionary* (3rd edn, Belville, 1998), 262.

¹See, for example, C. Bundy (ed.), *The History of the South African Communist Party* (Cape Town, 1991); L. Callinicos, 'The Communist Party during the war years: the beginnings of grass-roots politics', *South African Labour Bulletin*, 15:3 (1990), 101–7; L. Carneson, *Red in the Rainbow: The Life and Times of Fred and Sarah Carneson* (Cape Town, 2010); S. Clingman, *Bram Fischer: Afrikaner revolutionary* (Cape Town, 1998); A. Drew, 'Events were breaking above their heads: socialism in South Africa, 1921–1950', *Social Dynamics*, 17:1 (1991), 49–77; A. Drew, 'Writing South African communist history', *Science & Society*, 61:1 (1997), 107–13; A. Drew, *Discordant Comrades: identities and loyalties on the South African left* (Pretoria, 2002); D. Everatt, 'Alliance politics of a special type: the roots of the ANC/SACP alliance, 1950–1954', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18:1 (1991), 19–39; G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children: Three Families and*



its skillset and contribution, and the fact that it was the only non-racial force of opposition in the country for most of its history, the party consistently played a far greater role in the liberation struggle and the politics of the country than its membership numbers alone would suggest. It also played a major role in ensuring the enshrinement of the principles of non-racialism in the constitution after the achievement of democracy.

Lodge's work — produced in the centenary year of the party — is a labour of love spanning about forty years of research by arguably the foremost scholar of its history. He begins by discussing its emergence among a variety of competing socialist traditions from the 1890s. In doing so, he also explores the notion that conditions in South Africa were, in some ways, 'more Russian than British' (11) and details some of the intriguing conflicts between the early socialists. These included debates about the role of anarchism in the evolution of socialism, the relationship between race and class, perceived threats posed by the recruitment of Chinese labour to the goldmines, the relative value of confrontationalist/militant or more conciliatory approaches and tactics, and the value of transnational links in the workers' struggle. One of the characters who intrigued me the most was 'Pick-handle Mary' — Mary Fitzgerald. The lover of Archie Crawford, one of the leaders of a syndicalist branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), in 1911 she wielded this weapon of choice in conflicts with 'police and would-be scabs'. The IWW subsequently deployed a 'pick handle brigade' in breaking up meetings of the Labour Party (23). This demonstrates just how violent some of the clashes within the wider labour movement could become, serving as a precursor of later violent clashes between communists and Afrikaner nationalists in Johannesburg during the Second World War.

From here, Lodge explores the formation of the CPSA in 1921 by socialists disillusioned by the failure of their purported comrades to offer serious opposition to the imperialist First World War, taking this up to about 1926. He also links this to motivation provided by the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and its massive role in transforming the existing world order. In the remaining seven chapters, he explores the development and vacillating fortunes of the party, its factions and fronts, its reconstitution underground and in exile as the SACP, its activities and relationships in Africa and other parts of the world, its role in the negotiated political change in South Africa, its reconstitution as a legal body and its functioning after 1990 in what he terms the 'post-communist' period. I have reservations about this term which I will discuss later.

Lodge's discussion of the party's divisions over race and debates about who constituted the working class and what class struggle meant in the South African context is exceptionally nuanced and reveals discussions and contestations around these crucial and controversial themes to have been far more diverse than other authors have allowed for. In addition to extensive debate within the party and the Comintern about the relationship between national liberation and the class struggle, which

the Price of Freedom in South Africa (Johannesburg, 1999); B. Hepple, *Young Man with a Red Tie, A Memoir of Mandela and the Failed Revolution* (Sunnyside, 2013); B. Hirson, *Revolutions in My Life* (Johannesburg, 1995) [Hirson was a Trotskyite]; R. Hodgson, *Foot Soldier for Freedom: A life in South Africa's liberation movement* (Johannesburg, 2010); E. Johanningsmeier, 'Communists and Black freedom movements in South Africa and the US: 1919-1950', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30: 1 (2004), 150–80; R. Kasrils, *'Armed and Dangerous': My Undercover Struggle Against Apartheid* (Oxford, 1993); A. Lerumo [M. Harmel], *Fifty Fighting Years: The Communist Party of South Africa 1921-1970* (London, 1971); N. Levy, 'The final prize: my life in the anti-apartheid struggle', *South African History Online*, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/final-prize-norman-levy>, accessed 15 Apr. 2016; T. Lodge, 'Secret party: South African Communists between 1950 and 1960', *South African Historical Journal*, 67:4 (2015), 433–64; M. Roth, 'Eddie, Brian, Jack and let's phone Rusty: is this the history of the Communist Party of South Africa (1921-1950)?', *South African Historical Journal*, 42 (2000), 191–209; SACP, *The Red Flag in South Africa: A Popular History of The South African Communist Party 1921-1990* (Johannesburg, 1990); R. Seedat and R. Saleh (eds.), *Men of dynamite: Pen Portraits of MK Pioneers* (Lenasia, 2009); J. Slovo, *Slovo: The Unfinished Autobiography* (London, 1996); B. Turok, *Nothing but the Truth: behind the ANC's struggle politics* (Cape Town and Johannesburg, 2003); A. Wieder, *Ruth First and Joe Slovo in the War Against Apartheid* (New York, 2013). For a comprehensive overview of the history of MK, see T. Simpson, *Umkhonto we Sizwe: The ANC's Armed Struggle* (Cape Town, 2016). While I have focused on published sources here, special mention should be made of A. Lissoni, 'The South African liberation movements in exile, c. 1945-1970' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2008).

culminated in the adoption of the so-called native or Black republic policy, there were heated discussions and conflicts about (among others) the potential for rural revolt, fears of a possible strategic shift to popular frontism, dismay about alleged division and disunity among various cliques within the party, expulsions of alleged dissidents (not limited to those identified as factionalists, opportunists, and Trotskyists), the relationship between idealism and practical politics, the role of internationalism and transnationalism, and the degree to which the Comintern line reflected (or even understood) the intricacies and complexities of the local situation.

Arguably the major theme (and strength) of the work lies in its exploration of the central role played by the party in assisting to transform the African National Congress (ANC) from a largely elitist organisation into a mass-based militant movement capable of driving the national democratic struggle, operating Umkhonto we Sizwe and becoming the ruling party of the country. Crucially, in doing so, Lodge demonstrates that this assistance did not take the form of domination, despite the apartheid state's propaganda that stressed that white communists were manipulating their Black allies in the ANC, at the behest of the Soviet Union. Rather, as Lodge skillfully demonstrates, there was dual membership and partnership between the two organisations and their compatriots in the Congress alliance. He also shows that there was a wide diversity of opinions in the party and in the alliance. There was ongoing debate and contestation between the party and non-Communists in the ANC, and between the communists in the party itself. Additionally, the ANC also maintained its own links with socialist countries and organisations independent of the SACP. As I was previously unaware of it, I found the brief discussion of the links with the Irish Republican Army, which set up a bomb-making school in Luanda, particularly interesting (396).

Lodge's study is impressively detailed, well written, and easy to read. The author is exceptionally skilled at capturing the personalities, ideologies, policies, programmes of action of the individual and organisational role players, and in describing the changing nature of the political economy of the region and the wider transnational context. While he does not write from a Marxist perspective, the work is sensitive to this and to the sensibilities and complexities of the individuals, organisations, and other role players. Sources include impressively diligent and detailed archival work, a wide range of interviews, Communist Party newspapers and journals and a thorough list of books, pamphlets, articles, conference papers, and dissertations. I personally would have liked more images than the ten photographs, newspaper reports, and linocut provided. But those included are well chosen and complement the text. Among his multiple sources, the occasional evidence of police informers was particularly interesting to read, as it demonstrated how active they were and how thoroughly they had penetrated workers' movements. During the struggle years, many activists ignored this to their peril. Lodge treats his sources with skill and care and weaves them into a seamless and skilled narrative and analysis.

There are a fair sprinkling of socialist/communist actors not mentioned in other works present in the text. But there are still omissions. Notably and unfortunately, this includes Ivan and Lesley Schermbrucker and some of their stalwart comrades and compatriots.² Both were critically important behind the scenes party members. I argue elsewhere that they typify the background activists and comrades without whose contribution the party could not have functioned.³ However, Ivan

²Lesley's name was officially Leslie. However, when writing my own work, she requested me to use the alternative spelling. I retain the practice here.

³Both Ivan and Lesley would come to serve on the central committee of the party and both would choose to go to jail rather than flee the country, as they had been advised to do. As business manager of the *Guardian* newspaper (under its various name changes), as proprietor of Arnold's Christmas Hampers, and on numerous collecting trips with Rica Hodgson and others, Ivan headed the team which ensured that the CPSA remained afloat financially before its banning and exile. He also played an active role in caring for the welfare of party members. Lesley organised for the smuggling of comrades out of the country to avoid (re)arrest, worked with Violet Weinberg and others to hide Bram Fischer during his period as the Scarlet Pimpernel and took over Ivan's fundraising and disbursing functions after his arrest and imprisonment. Lodge acknowledges that internationalisation did not bring an influx of funds from the Soviet Union and other socialist

receives only two mentions and Lesley none. A fuller exploration of the roles played by what I refer to as ‘ordinary communists’ or ‘everyday communists’ — those who worked in the background — would have strengthened Lodge’s work. It would also have assisted him in his exploration of the tensions and bitter factionalism between Stalinists in the party and those who fell foul of them (often with disastrous consequences) and the vitriolic feuds between the ‘stayers’ and the ‘leavers’ — those who chose to remain behind and those who went into exile.

I also find Lodge’s use of the concept of the ‘post-communist period’ problematic. In an interview with the *Mail & Guardian* published in 2005, Jeremy Cronin responded to a question about whether or not South Africa still needed communism by stating that:

What came to be called ‘communism’ in the former Soviet Union ended up as a terrible distortion of the ideals of Marx, Lenin and of socialism in general. I do not think we should try to repeat that here, or anywhere else. But the collapse of the Soviet system hasn’t made capitalism and its international variant, imperialism, one little bit prettier. On the contrary, capitalism has become more arrogant, more ruthless, and more of a danger to humanity. Since 1990 most African countries have become poorer, and in a world of plenty, millions starve. For me, communism means the struggle to build a country and a world based on social needs, not on private profits. That struggle is as relevant as ever.⁴

In attempting to track down this quotation while finalising this review, I came across Cronin’s review essay of the same work. Here he suggests that the term ‘post-sovietism would have been a better characterisation’ (1465).⁵ I would argue that this is an important distinction. In recent years, I have noticed a revival of interest in Marxist literature and discussion of socialism among my students. Structures such as the populist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) also rely heavily on socialist and revolutionary rhetoric in their criticism of the ANC government. While Lodge is certainly sensitive to this, he could have been more careful in his use of terminology.

Of course, even a book this voluminous and comprehensive cannot do everything. My comments should in no way be read as detracting from Lodge’s immense contribution. This will become an indispensable tool to academics and students studying South African history, labour history, communism, and transnationalism. Those activists and others interested in the contemporary situation in South Africa will also find much to think about and debate. Lodge makes it exceptionally clear that the party has long played an extremely significant role in the liberation and broader political history of South Africa. It has a long and complex history of mutual interaction and influence with the ANC. Given the factionalism, corruption, and lack of coherent direction which characterises government today, and concomitant declining electoral support, these debates are of crucial importance. He concludes by arguing:

Even an increasingly non-communist ANC leadership still routinely claims in its programmatic statements to be committed to the goals of a national democratic revolution, even if in everyday policy-making government decisions are shaped by quite different imperatives. ... [C]ommunists following their red road still belong to South Africa’s political mainstream. Their hundred-year history remains unfinished (488-9).

Just how this should unfold should be a matter of serious debate.

countries and formations. This demonstrates the crucial role that people like Ivan and Lesley played. See A. Kirkaldy, *Everyday Communists in South Africa’s Liberation Struggle. The Lives of Ivan and Lesley Schermbrucker* (Cham, 2002).

⁴T. Mohlala, ‘Jeremy Cronin – Communism is still relevant’, *Mail & Guardian*, 26 Apr. 2005. <https://mg.co.za/article/2005-04-26-jeremy-cronin-communism-is-still-relevant/>.

⁵J. Cronin, ‘Review – Tom Lodge, *Red Road to Freedom, A History of the South African Communist Party 1920-1921*, Jacana, Johannesburg’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 57:7 (2022), 1461–9.

I wish that Lodge's book been available when I was writing my own work, cited above. Had this been the case, it would have saved me months (possibly even a couple of years) of searching for (often obscure) details about organisations and people. The book represents a long-awaited and significant contribution to scholarship. It should be widely read and cited.

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Africans, Israelis, and the Postcolonial Built Environment

Architecture and Development: Israeli Construction in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Settler-Colonial Imagination, 1958–1973

By Ayala Levin. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022. Pp. 320. \$107.95, hardcover (ISBN: 9781478015260); \$28.93, paperback (ISBN: 9781478017882); ebook (ISBN: 9781478091820).

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Keywords: Ethiopia; Sierra Leone; Nigeria; Israel; architecture; transnationalism; development; diplomatic relations; modernity

Ayala Levin's book gives a comprehensive account of Israeli projects in sub-Saharan Africa, based on access to extensive archival material from Israeli architects and contractual firms that worked in Africa from the 1950s to 70s. Levin supplemented these archives with interviews with key actors in this period of activity in Africa. The book uses these materials to explore architectural projects with a focus on three sub-Saharan African countries: Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Ethiopia.

Using various theoretical frames — such as the interrogation of selfhood through Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* and African positionality as explored by Mahmood Mamdani in *Citizen and Subject*¹ — and working with the archival records of the key actors, Levin argues that the Israeli state's unique engagement with Africa, from shortly following its creation through the present day has been complex and oftentimes contradictory. That Israel positioned itself as an emerging nation-state made it a unique actor in the early postcolonial development aid sector in sub-Saharan Africa, which was dominated by former colonial powers and their Western allies. She argues that Israel was successfully able to reframe its involvement in the 'aid-game' as a genuine collaboration with emerging African partners who shared their aspirations with Israel to break colonial ties and invest in development projects, educational, institutional, and, eventually, commercial ventures.² However, Levin also highlights the contradictions in Israeli involvement, as it sought to distance itself from colonial powers and America whilst often being actually or seemingly involved with these same states in the financing and planning for many such African projects. She also charts the transition of Israeli involvement from altruistic collaboration and development to the more

¹F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1963); M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, 1996).

²For more on the 'aid game', see H. Singer, 'External aid: for plans or projects', in J. Bhagwati and R. Eckaus (eds.), *Foreign Aid: Selected Readings* (London, 1970).