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## The South African Democracy Education Trust's 'Road to Democracy' Project: Areas of Focus and Methodological Issues<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This article summarises the story of the production of the historical volumes by the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET). SADET was established after former president Thabo Mbeki expressed concern that there was very limited research done on the achievement of a peaceful political settlement in South Africa after decades of violent conflict. SADET's mission is, and has been to conduct a major study of South Africa's political history between 1960 and 1994. The focus of the article is on the project's editorial structure and on its research methodology, particularly the benefits and limitations of the use of oral interviews as the main research tool.

**Keywords:** SADET, democracy, negotiations, struggle, cooperative history

### INTRODUCTION

The South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) was established as a research organisation to conduct a major study of South Africa's political history between 1960 and 1994. This paper will provide a brief historical background on the formation of SADET; its areas of focus and its approach to research; and the various methodologies the project adopted.

### BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The 'Road to Democracy' project was initiated by former South African president Thabo Mbeki, who was concerned that only very limited research had been done on the achievement of a peaceful political settlement in South Africa after decades of violent conflict. The idea of conducting a study of this history was put to researchers based at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), namely Dr Vincent Maphai and Dr Yvonne Muthien. Their support, and in particular that of Dr Muthien in soliciting funds for the project led two leading South African companies, Mobile Telephone Networks Group (MTN) and Nedbank to offer core funding for two years. Professor Bernard Magubane and I were part of a small HSRC team led by Dr Muthien, which created a finished research proposal.

1 I am grateful to the two anonymous reviewers of the draft article for their useful comments.

Following the departure, first of Dr Maphai and then Dr Muthien from the HSRC in early 2000, it was decided that an independent organisation be established, which ultimately led to the birth of SADET. Meanwhile, a Trust Board was set up in mid-2000, initially comprising of Dr Essop Pahad, then Minister in the Presidency (chair); Drs Muthien and Maphai; Mr. Seth Phalatse; Dr. Ivan May of Nedbank; Mr Jacques Sellschop of MTN; Mr Isaac Makopo; Minister Lindiwe Sisulu; Professor Magubane and General Andrew Masondo. The current SADET Board is made up of Dr Pahad (chair), Minister Sisulu, Minister Collins Chabane, Advocate Selby Baqwa, Ms Eunice Maluleka, Mr Phalatse, Drs Muthien and Maphai, Mr Makopo, Professor Magubane, Dr Matloteng Matlou, and Dr Gregory Houston.

The Africa Institute (of South Africa, or AISA) was approached and agreed to second Dr Sifiso Ndlovu as Senior Researcher, while the HSRC agreed to the secondment of Dr Gregory Houston as Project Coordinator and chief research specialist at SADET, which was to be led by Professor Magubane. SADET moved into its offices on 1 September 2000. 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 AISA on 18 September 2000 to conduct research on behalf of SADET and contribute to its first volume. Letters introducing the SADET team and its mission, as well as an invitation to participate in the project were sent to Political Science and History departments of universities throughout the country. Meetings were held in Pretoria with members of the Departments of Political Science of the University of Pretoria and the Rand Afrikaanse Universiteit. The team travelled to Cape Town, East London and Durban in October, holding meetings with members of the departments of History and Political Science of the universities of Cape Town, Western Cape, Fort Hare, Transkei, Durban-Westville and Natal, resulting in the participation of some of their members. SADET contacted the Wits History Workshop and began working out a contract with the HSRC. Negotiations with established institutions and the creation of the research teams took a large part of the first months, and the final contract was signed in June 2001.

## MISSION

SADET's mission was, and is to examine and analyse events leading to the negotiated settlement and democracy in South Africa with a focus on:

- 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 negotiation process between 1990 and 1994.

Initially, it was envisaged that the project would have a lifespan of two years, with the project team writing up to five short volumes covering the three and a half decades ending with the first democratic elections in 1994. However, it soon became clear that the considerable time and effort it took to bring in a range of institutions and establish

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new research teams, the volume of material collected during the course of the research and the range of research topics to be covered required more time and a new range of publications. SADET's mission then became the publication of five substantial volumes covering the successive decades — the 60s, 70s, 80s, and 1990–94, with an overview volume. The SADET Board subsequently decided to include two volumes on the story of worldwide support for the movement toward democracy in its series, arguing that international solidarity was a significant component of the struggle for liberation and therefore, deserved to be considered alongside the internal struggle. The idea of an overview volume was discarded at the same time.

SADET's other key objective was, and is to develop a collection of oral histories of South Africans from all political persuasions and experiences of the liberation struggle during the three-and-a-half decades under study. SADET research teams enjoy 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 took shape as a 'Presidential Project' at a time when people are able to speak openly about many issues, which was never the case before. The organisation had the opportunity to interview both known and less familiar key actors in the country's political history. In the early years of the project the emphasis was placed on interviewing those who had just returned from exile as well as members of the internal wings of the liberation movements and, in particular, the veterans, to ensure that their life histories were captured while they were still alive. This was treated as a matter of urgency due to the fact that a number of leading members of the liberation movements who had returned to the country in the early 1990s had passed away by the time the project was initiated.

The interview material collected in the first phase of the project could not all be used in the first volume; SADET decided on another series of volumes composed of edited interviews. In addition, SADET would produce a popular-history series derived from the longer, more inclusive and academic series — SADET's publications are to date thus: *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 1, 1960–1970*; *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 2, 1970–1980*; *The Road to Democracy in South Africa Volume 3, International Solidarity*, and (of the aforementioned volumes of interviews), *The Road to Democracy: South Africans Telling Their Stories Volume 1, 1950–1970*. The fourth volume of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa 1980–1990*, and the second volume of *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories 1960–1980*, was launched by Minister Collins Chabane (representing President Jacob Zuma) at the Presidential Guest House in Pretoria on 6 October 2010.

## RESEARCH APPROACH

For the first path-setting volume on the 1960s, SADET adopted two approaches to collecting data and writing.

Firstly, in line with the goal of making this a truly national project and drawing in as many people as possible into the project, contracts were signed with six participating institutions/research teams, bringing approximately 26 more researchers into the project. Contracts were signed with researchers based at the Africa Institute (of South Africa); 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 University of Port Elizabeth, Rhodes University and the University of Transkei; as well as a KwaZulu-Natal research team made up of researchers from the University of Natal. In 2004, SADET secured a R3-million grant from the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund, which was used to bring additional researchers into the project. Consequently, in addition to the research teams that contributed to Volume 1, contracts were signed with the Steve Biko Foundation and researchers based at the Free State University and the University of the North-West. Funds were made available for university-based research teams to include a number of research assistants, mainly postgraduate students, substantially increasing the number of participants in the project. Most of the same researchers and teams who contributed to Volumes 1 and 2 were retained for Volume 4.

These participating institutions/regional research teams were charged with conducting interviews 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. The teams were also charged with the responsibility of collecting archival material — the Govan Mbeki Research and Documentation Centre was charged with collecting archival material on the ANC and the PAC (housed at Fort Hare), while the Western Cape regional team were to collect archival material in the Mayibuye Centre and the archives of the University of Cape Town. Finally, the teams were requested to write chapters or sections of chapters. The material collected in the interviewing process and archival searches itself gave rise to the specific themes that resulted in the chapters found in SADET's first publication.

Volumes 1 and 2, as well as the forthcoming volume on the 1980s were thus collaborative exercises, with contributing authors using interviews conducted by researchers in a variety of research teams and archival material collected by other researchers. A number of the chapters have contributors from across research teams.

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Secondly, individuals who were not part of the participating institutions/research teams were commissioned to write up some chapters for the volumes. Only one author was so commissioned for the first volume, while five were commissioned for the second volume, 29 authors for the third, and nine for the fourth volume. SADET thus brought various experts on particular topics into the project. Magnus Gunther, the commissioned contributor to Volume 1, had been doing research on the African Resistance Movement (ARM) for close to thirty years.<sup>2</sup> Gunther could bring into the project the vast collection of interviews and archival material made over this period, while contributing a chapter that bears the stamp of his years of research. In Volume 2, Bhekisizwe Peterson was able to draw on prior research on culture in his chapter on 'Culture, resistance and repression'. Volume 3 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, which deals with the contributions of a select group of international organisations, governments and solidarity movements to the South African liberation struggle, involved the commissioning of many researchers who were selected for their expertise on the topic, their participation in solidarity activities, or both. Eddie Maloka was able to draw on his own book research for a chapter on the South African Communist Party (SACP) for Volume 4, while Siphamandla Zondi was able to draw from his prior research on the role of faith institutions in the liberation struggle for his chapter for the same volume.

As noted, during the initial phase of the research the focus was on conducting 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. Once this had been done, a two-day workshop, attended by researchers and research teams from various universities was held on 16 and 17 February 2002 to share ideas and resources about the research. Individual researchers were also assigned to particular themes, and names of additional researchers were suggested. During this workshop a draft outline of the first volume was also prepared, and a deadline for the first drafts set. Martin Legassick, a member of the team of researchers in the Western Cape commissioned to carry out research for SADET was requested to draft a final outline for Volume 1, and to propose specific themes and chapter titles arising from these discussions.

Legassick was thereby responsible for a change in the title of the project from 'The Road to Negotiations' to 'The Road to Democracy', as Noor Nieftagodien asserts in his tribute to Legassick. Legassick was however, not responsible for creating room for

2 M. Gunther, 'The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM)', in South African Democracy Education Trust (hereafter SADET), eds., *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 209-256.

'recording and interpreting the contributions of all the main liberation movements'.<sup>3</sup> As indicated above, the research proposal for the SADET project was prepared in mid 2000, before Legassick was brought into the project, and the terms of reference in this proposal included the following theme: '... the formation, policies and objectives, membership and activities of key organizations during each decade ...'<sup>4</sup> Nieftagodien's claim that Legassick edited 'many of the chapters' slights the considerable contribution that other members of the editorial committee made to the final manuscript.

SADET held periodic two-day workshops with all the researchers; and this became the researchers' main form of interaction throughout the production of the volumes, with the exception of Volume 3. After the initial workshop in 2002, draft chapters of Volume 1 were distributed to all the researchers, and workshops were held to discuss them in their various stages of development. The same process was followed in the production of Volumes 2 and 4.

The involvement of many 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 Umkhonto we Sizwe (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.

Besides making the project truly a national production, the deployment of regional research teams proved to be cost effective. Since 1994 many of the leading figures in the ANC, MK, the SACP, the PAC, and so on, as well as members of the Bantustan and

3 N. Nieftagodien, 'A tribute to Martin Legassick', *South African Historical Journal*, 56 (Dec 2006), 9–13. The SADET team is very appreciative of the contribution made by Legassick, Phil Bonner, Nieftagodien and Jabulani Sithole as members of the committee that edited the final draft chapters of Volume 1 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*. See also Martin Legassick, 'Debating the Revival of the Workers' Movement in the 1970s: The South African Democracy Education Trust and Post-Apartheid Patriotic History', *Kronos*, 34, (2008), 240–266; Jabulani Sithole, 'Contestations over knowledge production or ideological bullying? A response to Legassick on the workers' movement', *Kronos*, 35, (2009), 222–41; and Ciraj Rassool, 'History anchored in politics: An interview with Martin Legassick', *South African Historical Journal*, 56, (2006), 19–42.

4 The terms of reference are found in the Prefaces of all SADET publications and were drawn from the project proposal. For another take on the supposed ideological bias in the SADET project refer to the review of the first volume by Cornelius Thomas, 'Potholes in the Road', *Safundi*, Vol 6, Issue 1, (January 2005), 1–3.



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apartheid civil service have scattered throughout the country. It made sense for SADET to have regional research teams. The alternative was to have researchers travelling all over the country to conduct specific 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 would not be able to pay for accommodation and transportation for two researchers over long periods. By contrast, the Eastern Cape research team was able to carry out a large number of interviews, because its team members lived and worked throughout the province. The regional teams thus enabled SADET to minimise 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, was that not all proximate researchers had the same investment in a given topic. As a result, some interviews and archival searches were insufficiently grounded in prior knowledge. On the other hand, in some cases researchers have ignored SADET policy and used its funds to travel to parts of the country where other research teams are based in order to carry out their own interviews or archival searches.

However, bringing together a large number of researchers to contribute to or collaborate on chapters in a project of this nature has a number of disadvantages. There is always the danger that authors would use the project to promote organisations that they support or to undermine those that they oppose. Conflicts would be bound to arise as a result of different ideological strands brought into the project. The SADET team had to ensure that the various contributions were not used for such purposes. As might be expected, there is a considerable amount of material in the interviews, archival material and secondary literature that is dismissive, disparaging or critical of particular political organisations and individuals.

Where criticism was justifiable the materials were included, 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.<sup>5</sup> Internal criticisms found within the ANC were certainly covered in the volume, as well as the well-known travails of the ANC training camps in exile.

Ideological conflicts between authors very occasionally arose. Sometimes only a single word or phrase could lead to tension. Differences arose between two of the authors of a draft of Chapter 2 of the first volume, pertaining to the following statement: 'The ANC's commitment to non-violence was deep-seated and long lasting'. The SADET

5 S. Ndlovu, 'The ANC in exile, 1960-1970', in SADET (eds), *Volume 1*, 2004, 436ff.



debates probably mirrored the debate inside the ANC when the decision to take up the armed struggle was announced. One of our 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 historically. 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 might be changed under the conditions obtaining when the ANC was banned.

A more significant disagreement arose during the editing process for Volume 2 on the South African political history of the 1970s. SADET's core team had initially envisaged two chapters on the independent trade union movement, with a separate chapter devoted to the role of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in the revival of the unions. It was then decided that the role of SACTU could be included in a single chapter on the trade union movement chapters. Later however, the SADET team felt that the draft of this chapter, submitted by Dave Hemson, Martin Legassick and Nicole Ulrich had dealt inadequately with the role of SACTU, and that their focus was rather on the role of white activists in the revival of the unions.<sup>6</sup> Two external reviewers who were given a chance to review the draft chapter also reached this conclusion. The decision was reached to request Jabulani Sithole and Sifiso Ndlovu to contribute a separate chapter on the role of SACTU, a decision reinforced by Mrs Gertrude Shope's provision of Mark Shope's SACTU papers. The SADET team also decided to change the title of Hemson, Legassick and Ulrich's chapter from 'The revival of the workers' movement' to 'White activists and the revival of the workers' movement' over the objections of Legassick, which were included in the first footnote of the chapter (Vol. 1, p. 243).

During the course of this disagreement, Legassick and the SADET team got involved in an exchange of emails that had the effect of diverting energy from the editing process and making it difficult for SADET to establish a broader editorial committee — as had been done for Volume 1, when Ben Magubane, Phil Bonner, Martin Legassick, Jabulani Sithole and this author were constituted to edit the final drafts of the chapters. Consequently, the core SADET team in Pretoria selected various other contributors to the volume and distributed the draft chapters of Volume 2 to them to assist with the editing process. The latter approach was also adopted for Volume 3 on the subject of international solidarity, with the contributors based in many different countries, and for Volume 4 on the 1980s. For these volumes, the contributors were requested to review all the draft chapters and/or edit final drafts.

Finally, a number of SADET Board members also read the draft chapters for the various volumes. Board members played a significant role in finding relevant themes and topics

6 Dave Hemson, Martin Legassick, and Nicole Ulrich, 'White activists and the revival of the workers' movement', in SADET (eds), Vol. 2, 2006, 243ff.

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for study that had not been identified by the research teams, while their reviews of draft chapters were useful in locating gaps in the manner in which themes were investigated, drawing attention to historical inaccuracies, and pointing out relevant sources. There was no interference in the content of the chapters by Board members, except to request that authors try to avoid making disparaging comments about organisations and individuals.

It is necessary to turn to some of the criticisms of SADET's approach found in reviews of its published volumes. Allison Drew rightly draws attention to 'the absence of any discussion of the National Liberation Front (NLF)' in her review of Volume 1 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*.<sup>7</sup> From the outset, SADET's intention was to be as inclusive of all organisations as possible; and a number of efforts were thus made (through influential members of the SADET Board) to arrange a meeting with Dr Neville Alexander. These efforts did not pay off — for reasons I am unaware of, and SADET decided due to the pressure of publication schedules, the failure to locate an individual who had published on the organisation, and the lack of participation of the leadership of the organisation to publish Volume 1 without a chapter on the NLF. SADET did not intentionally try to undermine the contribution of the NLF. Drew also criticised SADET for the absence of a focused chapter or section of a chapter on the role of women in the liberation struggle in Volume 1. SADET was aware of the need for such a chapter, and Zine Magubane contributed a chapter entitled 'Women's struggles, 1950–1990: A theoretical interpretation' for the fourth volume.

## METHODOLOGY: ORAL HISTORY

SADET used material from interviews with approximately 200 individuals in its first volume, over 180 in Volume 2 and some 290 in Volume 4. The series' key methodological tool is oral history.<sup>8</sup> Why oral history, you may ask?<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *African Studies Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3, (December 2007) 164–166.

<sup>8</sup> Much has been written about the benefits and limitations of the use of oral history as a source. See David Henige, *Oral Historiography* (London, Longman, 1982); David Henige, 'Where seldom is heard a discouraging word: Method in oral history', *Oral History Review*, 14 (1986), 35–42; Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (trans. from the French by H. M. Wright) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965); Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 1985); Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Opus Books, 1978); David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baun (eds), *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, second edition (Walnut Creek: California, AltaMira Press, 1996); Ronald J. Grele, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, second edition (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, Inc., 1985); Mark Kramer, Bruce J. Allyn, James G. Blight and David A. Welch, "Remembering the Cuban Missile Crisis: Should We Swallow Oral History?" *International Security*, 15, 1 (Summer, 1990), 212–218; and Elaine Batty, 'Reflections on the use of oral history techniques in social research,' *People, Place & Policy Online*, 3/2 (2009), 109–121.

<sup>9</sup> SADET draws extensively from the tradition of using oral history found in the work of the Wits History Workshop, and in particular, its focus on 'history from below', that is, the history of South Africa from the point of view of 'ordinary people'. For details about publications of the Workshop refer to the University of the Witwatersrand website, wits.ac.za.

much of what constitutes history is not recorded by a camera crew, by newspaper reporters, in the form of minutes, for which the sole source is the memory of those who were present. Much of what constitutes the history of the liberation movements is to be found only in the recollections of their members. To illustrate, we may look again 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? This could only be achieved by using the recollections of the actors themselves.<sup>10</sup>

It is particularly so that the principal subject matter of 'The Road to Democracy' project, the activities of revolutionary organisations and the counter-revolutionary activities of the state, have not always left substantial material records for historians to find. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has also brought to light many of the unrecorded activities of the apartheid era security services. Especially for the participants who rightly feared betrayal after the turn to armed struggle,<sup>11</sup> however, secrecy in their operations was of vital importance. Without written records of critical meetings, we can rely only on the memory, for example, of the participants in the various meetings to discuss Operation Mayibuye just before the Rivonia arrests.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, however, for SADET the 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'.<sup>13</sup>

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

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 [the ANC's first military campaign undertaken in S. Rhodesia/Zimbabwe]. 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.<sup>14</sup>

10 B. Magubane et.al, 'The turn to armed struggle', in SADET (eds), Vol. 1, 2004, 80ff.

11 M. Fullard, 'State Repression in the 1960s', in SADET (eds), Vol. 1, 2004, 341-390.

12 Magubane et.al, 'The turn to armed struggle', 139-141.

13 Thabo Mbeki, 'Our historians must have the courage to speak the truth,' *ANC Today*, 4, 25 (25 June - 1 July 2004), internet ([www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/anctoday/2004/at25.htm](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/anctoday/2004/at25.htm)).

14 SADET, 'Preface', in SADET (eds), Vol. 1, 2004, xix.

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SADET's oral history project has adopted two approaches. SADET has collected whole life histories of informants, and oral testimony focusing on specific events, processes, structures, etc. for which the informant was thought particularly informed.

The 'life history' approach was followed extensively during the early stages of the project, particularly in cases where very little was known about the subject matter apart from informants' roles. While life histories remained a central approach, expert testimony was introduced to focus on specific issues and areas as the research expanded. The life histories were elicited with questions tailored for specific categories of informant; interviews with members of the liberation movements, for instance, focused on their developing political consciousness, their earliest political activities, and the organisations they belonged to. This line of questioning permitted a range of varied experiences to emerge, such as informants' participation in the 1961-63 sabotage campaign, the journey into exile, military training abroad, participation in the Wankie campaign, and so on. In the process, in other words, informants would direct us to relevant issues and to other informants, and our scope was thereby expanded.

Thus, one of the benefits of the life-history approach at SADET is that it throws up new issues, events, structures, and processes that have scarcely been researched before. For instance, I myself began interviewing Joyce Sikhakhane in 2001 merely because I had been told that she had participated in the struggle and was readily available. In our first interview, Joyce alluded to the existence of an underground network initiated by Winnie Mandela during the second half of the 1960s. This interview then formed the basis of further interviews with Joyce, Snuki Zikalala, Wally Serote, and others. This led further to a search for any secondary literature on the topic, to an analysis of newspaper and other reports on the court cases involving members of this network, and to an investigation of the court records at the National Archives in Pretoria/Tshwane.

Another point in favour of the life-history approach is that it facilitates the researcher in identifying common themes and issues across a number of interviews. Sifiso Ndlovu analysed the content of the life-history interviews of 30 informants with significant common experiences in the 1960s. He identified the following themes: the process by which informants achieved political consciousness; their journeys into exile; difficulties in exile such as finding financial support; leadership issues in the ANC; relationship of the ANC with African states; daily life in the military camps; and attempts by MK guerrillas to infiltrate back into South Africa. These themes then informed one of the chapters that Ndlovu wrote for Volume 1.

The life-history approach also fits well with SADET's overall project, which spans three-and-a-half decades of South African history, allowing the team to cover the relevant details of an informant's life over those years. Most of the people interviewed for Volume 1 on the 1960s are generally those who spent the large part of their adult

lives participating in the conflict, either as members of the South African Police, South African Defence Force, the civil service, or the National Party, or alternately, as members of the ANC, the PAC, MK, and so on.

Consider the following example by way of illustration. We identified Lennox Tshali for his role in the Wankie campaign of August and September, 1967. Our six hours of interviews with Tshali then elicited a large amount of material relevant to a number of the chapters for the first and second volumes, touching on early underground political activity, exile, military training abroad, life in MK's camps in Tanzania, early attempts by MK to infiltrate the country (including the seaborne entry in 'Operation J'), and Tshali's role as part of the MK machinery in Mozambique from the mid 1970s. It is clear that the life-history approach made SADET's overall task easier as we moved into the writing of the volumes, because part of the material had already been collected in the initial phase of the project.

In contrast, as the deadlines for the publication of Volume 1 approached, we began to rely more and more on expert testimony to focus on particular themes. At the same time, when we began doing the research for the second volume, we discovered that we had sometimes missed opportunities in interviews with a number of significant individuals on their experiences in the 1970s and subsequent decades. Then, sometimes people had since passed away, retired and moved far from our research centres, changed jobs, or otherwise became inaccessible. In the life-history approach there is always the danger that the relevant questions may not be asked, or that the interviewer may not probe to get all the details. These problems were particularly acute in our earliest interviews as we discovered as the project continued.

We found that many informants who have been interviewed repeatedly nonetheless, tended to recount the same familiar stories interview after interview, often leaving out significant periods of their life. For instance, SADET had access to three separate interviews conducted between 1990 and 2002 with Wilton Mkwayi, who served as second commander-in-chief of MK after the Rivonia arrests in May 1963. These were interviews conducted by the Robben Island Museum Memory Project by SADET, and one conducted by Wolfie Kodesh. All three interviews produced very little on his role as commander-in-chief of MK and of MK activity during this period.

Trauma could also lead to lacunae in recollections. One particularly alarming example is that of an interview conducted with a group of MK veterans by SADET team member Sifiso Ndlovu, leading Ndlovu at one of the SADET research workshops to refer to 'amnesia as a result of painful experiences'.<sup>15</sup> Towards the end of the interview one of

15 C.f. Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century* (New York, M. E. Sharpe Publishers, 1998), x, and Kim Lacy Rogers, Selma Leydesdorff and Graham Dawson, *Trauma and Life Stories: International Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1999).

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the other informants chipped in to remind one of the veterans that he had forgotten to speak about his participation in the Wankie Campaign's military engagement, but in fact he did not even discuss the campaign.

Finally, as Magnus Gunther points out in Volume 1, decades after experiences there is often simply no consensus recollection of a given event. Thus, Alan Lipman recalled that he and two African members of the ARM 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, including Lipman, to saw through the pylon. Lipman does not recall Berman taking part in this mission.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps the best-known example of conflicting recollections dealt with in the volume concerns, again, the shift toward violent action by the ANC. In particular, there was the dispute between Govan Mbeki and other leaders of the Congress Alliance about the discussions concerning 'Operation Mayibuye'. Mbeki consistently maintained that the plan was adopted first by MK and then at a Joint Executive meeting of the ANC and the SACP.<sup>17</sup> Mbeki recalled that:

It was in two, A and B. Joe (Slovo) 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.<sup>18</sup>

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]'.<sup>19</sup>

While most of the time one can reconstruct events using interviews as a source, by cross-corroborating recollections with a number of informants, this is clearly not always the case.

As highlighted above, the use of interview proved especially frustrating when we tried to reconstruct military engagements such as the Wankie and Sipolilo battles. Aged men had to cast their minds back to events more than thirty years ago in the midst of the fog of war. Recollections had become disassociated from placeable battles; to make

16 M. Gunther, 'The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM)', in SADET (eds), 2004, 215n.

17 Magubane et.al, 'The turn to armed struggle', 139–40.

18 Cited in Magubane et.al, 'The turn to armed struggle', 139.

19 Cited in Magubane et.al, 'The turn to armed struggle', 139.

matters more difficult, the researchers who conducted the bulk of the pertinent early interviews had left the project.

We knew from the available literature on the Wankie Campaign<sup>20</sup> that there were two units comprising MK and ZIPRA (Zimbabwe African Peoples Revolutionary Army) cadres, one moving towards the east to establish bases inside Zimbabwe, and the other moving south to infiltrate South Africa. We had to connect the informants to particular units — possible, for instance, when Chris Hani was mentioned, since we knew of his whereabouts in a unit moving southward. Once we knew, for instance, that Justice 'Gizenga' Mpanza was in the southwards-moving unit, we looked to the published accounts of the Wankie Campaign to anchor recollections in Mpanza's interview. In the end we were able to establish that there were three major battles during the course of the campaign — the first was on 13 August 1967, and it involved the unit moving east, and two of the battles took place on 20 and 21 August, and involved the unit moving south, along with a number of subsequent, smaller skirmishes involving the latter.

A project such as SADET, with its potentially wide exposure, led some individuals to exaggerate their role in the struggle. By various forms of cross-checking we were able to guard against this feature of oral history. Conversely, interviews conducted with former members of the apartheid government and security forces tended to downplay actions which might invite criminal charges. The project offered some of this general category of informants the opportunity to present their role in historical events in a very favourable light. For instance, in an interview with former President F.W. de Klerk there are a number of instances in which he presents himself as an enlightened member of the National Party. De Klerk claimed 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'.<sup>21</sup> The tone of

20 In particular C. Hani, 'The Wankie Campaign', *Dawn*, Souvenir Issue, 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MK (1986), 34–7; Comrade Rodgers, 'Basil February', *Dawn* (1986); 'A Guerrilla Speaks', *Sechaba*, 3 (11), (November 1969), 3–6; 'Confrontation! The Battle Lines are Drawn Up!' and 'From the Front', *Sechaba*, 1 (11) (November 1967), 1–5; P.L. Moorcroft and P. McLaughlin, *Chimurenga: The War in Rhodesia, 1965–1980* (Marshalltown, Sygma/Collins, 1982); Ron Reid-Daly, 'War in Rhodesia – Cross-border Operations', in A.J. Venter (ed.), *Southern Africa within the African Revolutionary Context: An Overview* (Gibraltar, Ashanti, 1989); Vladimir Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow* (Bellville, Mayibuye Books, 1999); and D. Dabengwa, 'ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation', in N. Bhebe and T.O. Ranger (eds), *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1995), 24–35.

21 Interview with Mr F.W. de Klerk conducted by Bernard Magubane, Gregory Houston, and Christopher Saunders, 10 February 2003, Cape Town, SADET Oral History Project. All SADET's interview tapes and transcripts have been handed over to the National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria. A moratorium has been placed on public access to the interview material until the conclusion of the SADET project.



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.

Interviewers themselves could also affect the outcome of interviews. This was apparent during the two interviews I had with former President P.W. Botha in 2006. The first unrecorded interview was excellent, with Botha responsive to questions put to him. The second was disappointing, as his thinking had apparently been contaminated by an intervening interview by apartheid era TV journalist Cliff Saunders. When I returned for the second interview with a tape recorder Botha largely ignored questions put to him and chose to speak about topics that were irrelevant to SADET.

## METHODOLOGY: ARCHIVES

In Volume 1 and 2, as well as Volume 4, SADET made extensive use of archival material based at the University of Fort Hare's ANC and PAC Archives, the University of the Western Cape's Mayibuye Centre, the University of Cape Town's Department of Manuscripts and Archives and Alan Paton Papers, the ANC's website, the Rhodes University Archives, the Botswana National Archives, as well as the National Archives of South Africa. One significant private collection on the African Peoples Democratic Union (APDUSA) used was held by Robin Wilcox, while Magnus Gunther had an extensive collection on the ARM. As mentioned above, SADET was given access to Mark Shope's private papers, while Thami ka Platjie, who contributed to chapters on the PAC to Volumes 2 and 4, has an extensive private collection of PAC papers. Notable private collections used in Volume 4 include Essop Pahad's collection of SACP documents, and archival material collected by Jeremy Seekings for his book on the United Democratic Front.<sup>22</sup> In addition to the archival sources mentioned above, contributors to Volume 4 made use of the Johannesburg Art Gallery's Fuba file, the Free State Archives Repository, the archives of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Documentation Centre, and the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository.

Contributors to Volume 3 on International Solidarity made use of the following archives: the Anti-Apartheid Movement Papers at Rhodes House, Bodleian Library, Oxford; Aktiekomitee Zuidelijk Afrika (Action Committee on Southern Africa) Archives at the Library of the Catholic University of Leuven; the archives of the Amistad Research Centre, Tulane University, New Orleans; the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire; the Archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba; Archive of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee; South African Collection Archives of the Cuban Council of State; Archives of Solidaritaetsdienst-international

<sup>22</sup> J. Seekings, *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983–1991*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 2000).

e.V. (SODI), Berlin; the Central State Archive of History, St Petersburg; the Dokumente der Aussenpolitik der Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik; the archives of the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG), Amsterdam; the Library Archives, Canada; the archives of Macmillan Brown Library, Canterbury University; the archives of the Manchester Museum of Labour History; the archives of Michigan State University; the archives of the Mitchell Library, Sydney; the Fort Hare University Archives; the National Archives of South Africa; the National Archives of the United Kingdom, Public Record Office, Kew, London; the archives of the National Library of New Zealand, Wellington; the Russian State Archive of Modern History; and the Russian State Archives of Military History.

The archival sources were multifaceted, ranging from letters, drafts of constitutions, press statements, 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. The focus here is on trial records as a source.

Trial records have served as a useful source and were used extensively in a number of chapters.<sup>23</sup> The value of these records is that they contain original documents that were used as evidence such as Operation Mayibuye for the Rivonia Trial, and the testimony of witnesses and defendants.

Magnus Gunther uses a number of documents from the trials of the ARM leadership and of Eddie Daniels in his chapter on the ARM. For instance, from the first trial<sup>24</sup> he makes use of documents submitted as State Exhibits that included the objectives of the ARM, its constitution, as well as details of its sabotage plans, including escape routes. From

23 See Ann Christine Berlin's Honours dissertation, *Using Political Trials as Historical Evidence: The Case of the State versus Abram Fischer – 1966* (University of the Witwatersrand, 1994). Studies of political trials in South Africa per se: Michael Lobban, *White Man's Justice: South African Political Trials in the Black Consciousness Era* (New York and Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Glen Moss, *Political Trials 1976–1979* (Johannesburg: Development Studies Group, University of the Witwatersrand, 1979); David Sibeko, *South Africa's Secret Trial, the PAC Bethal 18 Case* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978); Richard Abel, *Politics by Other Means: Law in the Struggle against Apartheid, 1980–1994* (London: Routledge, 1995); C. Albertyn, 'A Critical Analysis of Political Trials in South Africa, 1948 to 1988', (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1993); and M.L. Norton, 'The Political Trial in South Africa: The Quest for Legitimacy', *Natal University Law Review*, 3, (1982/3), 75–98.

24 National Archives, Pretoria, State versus Baruch Hirson and others, Supreme Court of SA, Transvaal Provincial Division, Criminal Case 508/64, 1964.

the records of the second trial,<sup>25</sup> Gunther uses 'Exhibits' which contained a 23-page synopsis of Che Guevara's manual on guerilla warfare; a manual of detailed procedures for carrying out sabotage; a document on the organisational structure required for carrying out sabotage, and detailed plans to destroy the Government Garage in Cape Town, among other sources.

The testimonies of both witnesses and defendants in a number of court cases used in Volume 1 offered information quite relevant to the project. This included people's reasons for getting involved in political organisations, the activities, structure and leadership of these organisations, stories of their exile, training abroad, acts of sabotage, murder, etc. Bram Fischer, who appeared as defence counsel in many political trials at the time; would in adopting the approach taken in the Rivonia Trial of using the courtroom as a political platform, often lead defendants through their autobiographies.

The testimony of state witnesses, who were often accomplices, witnesses for the defence, and defendants, should be treated with caution. People might of course dissemble in order to avoid conviction. For instance, Elias Masinga, a young activist in a Johannesburg-based ANC underground network in the mid-1970s, pointed out in an interview that he was involved with Tokyo Sexwale in the recruitment and training of a number of youths. Masinga was one of the accused in the trial of the 'Pretoria 12' with Sexwale. At the same time, as he said, 'But we wouldn't talk about these things in court'.<sup>26</sup> As Madeleine Fullard reminds us, however, the state puts great pressure on people to testify, threatening and applying torture, indefinite imprisonment, and personal blackmail. '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'.<sup>27</sup>

In some instances trial records contain valuable tidbits of information that led to further investigations. In the trial of members of the Pretoria MK units in 1964, for example, one of the accused, Petrus Segwarithle admitted that he and another MK member in Pretoria, Levy Molefe, had carried out an attack on the Brooklyn telephone exchange in December 1963.<sup>28</sup> Again, in the trial of David Ernst, Rowley Arenstein and Joseph Finkelstein, defence counsel submitted that the notes found in a suitcase of documents in state witness David Rudin's possession just before Bram Fischer's arrest were written

25 National Archives, Pretoria, State versus Eddie Daniels and Others, Supreme Court of SA, Cape Provincial Division, Criminal Case 349/64, 1964.

26 Interview with Elias Masinga conducted by Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 12 November 2003, Johannesburg, SADET Oral History Project.

27 Madeleine Fullard, 'State Repression in the 1960s', 370.

28 National Archives, Pretoria, The State versus Andrew Mashaba and nine others, Supreme Court of SA, Transvaal Provincial Division, Criminal Case 369/64.

by Fischer. These notes gave some insight into Fischer's activities during his period underground.<sup>29</sup>

In this context, one notes that the evidence presented by the security police is also a valuable source, although it too clearly must be treated with circumspection. During the 1960s police infiltration of the ANC, SACP and MK led to a number of trials, and among the most significant was that of Bram Fischer and 13 others in Johannesburg in late 1964, followed by Fischer's separate trial in 1966.<sup>30</sup> The main police witness in these cases, Gerard Ludi, had managed to infiltrate the Communist Party in the early 1960s. Ludi was thus able to provide testimony, which was supported by documentary evidence that was so damning that 12 of the 13 accused with Bram Fischer were found guilty. When Fischer was eventually captured in November 1965 after having operated underground from January of that year, he too was found guilty, largely because of Ludi's testimony. These trials are clearly part of the wider story SADET is interested in depicting; and used cautiously, they also provide further source material for SADET.

Finally, information about political trials in general provided researchers with insight into the extent of political activity at particular times, and the nature of predominant forms of political activity. In the period from mid 1965 to the end of 1969, at least 831 people were convicted for 'political crimes' — compared to the 1604 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. The trials reveal that the most significant types of 'political crimes' during this period were — being a member of the ANC, taking part in its activities, holding ANC meetings; contributing or soliciting subscriptions to the organisation, conspiring to commit sabotage, recruiting people for military training outside South Africa, as well as undergoing military training abroad.

One source that was not used is the collection of files kept on individual political activists by various government departments. Tom Lodge makes this criticism in his review of Volume 1 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*.<sup>31</sup> SADET repeatedly made requests for preferential access to official records through the two Cabinet Ministers on its Board. The relevant archives SADET requested access to were the South African Military Archives, archives of the National Intelligence Service (NIS); the records of the Security Legislation Directorate of the Department of Justice; the State Security Council records, 1980–1990; the apartheid-era files of the South African Security Police; the files of ex-political prisoners of the Department of Correctional Services, 1966–1994; the Department of Foreign Affairs Archives; and, in particular, the TRC

29 G. Houston, 'The Post-Rivonia ANC and SACP underground', in SADET (eds), 2004, 629.

30 Gerard Ludi, *Operation Q-018* (Johannesburg, National Commercial Printers, 1969).

31 *South African Historical Journal*, 51, 1 (2004), 275–280.

records taken into the custody of the Department of Justice in 1999 and subsequently placed at the National Archives of South Africa, which contained many relevant files from the other archives mentioned above. Of these SADET was eventually given preferential access to the archives of the TRC at the National Archives.

Verne Harris and Sello Hatang of the South African History Archive (SAHA<sup>32</sup>) drew attention to the dismal state of the relevant archival material in an article published in *This Day* on 19 January 2004. In summary, they stated that large volumes of files kept on individuals by the Department of Justice during the apartheid era were destroyed — except for certain files from the Department of Justice as well as certain records from prison, the State Security Council and Security Police. In addition, surviving apartheid-era security establishment records had been dispersed throughout the structures of the security establishment.<sup>33</sup>

The TRC also found that many official documents had been destroyed, particularly from mid 1993.<sup>34</sup> The Commission wrote in Volume 1 of its report that:

The story of apartheid is, amongst other things, the story of the systematic elimination of thousands of voices that should have been part of the nation's memory. The elimination of memory took place through censorship, confiscation of materials, bannings, incarceration, assassination and a range of related actions. Any attempt to reconstruct the past must involve the recovery of this memory — much of it contained in countless documentary records. The tragedy is that the former government deliberately and systematically destroyed a huge body of state records and documentation in an attempt to remove incriminating evidence and thereby sanitise the history of oppressive rule.<sup>35</sup>

The TRC found that there had been a massive and systematic destruction of Security Branch operational files covering the surveillance of individuals and organisations, investigations, and detentions, as well as records confiscated from individuals and organisations. It was also found that the NIS's records had been destroyed from as early

32 Established by anti-apartheid activists in the 1980s, SAHA was closely connected in its formative years to the United Democratic Front, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the African National Congress. SAHA, now politically non-aligned, is today committed to collecting materials from organisations and individuals across a broad socio-political spectrum and making archives accessible to as many South Africans as possible. See [www.saha.org.za](http://www.saha.org.za).

33 Verne Harris and Sello Hatang, 'Pinning down apartheid's papers', *This Day*, 19 January 2004.

34 For more details about the destruction of records refer to Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1*, 201–43. (Accessible on [www.justice.gov/trc/report/final](http://www.justice.gov/trc/report/final).)

35 TRC, *Report, Volume 1*, 201.

as 1982, reaching a peak in a 6 to 8 month period in 1993 when NIS headquarters alone destroyed approximately forty-four tons of paper-based and microfilm records. Some SADF records were destroyed from as early as 1971 and country-wide from mid 1993. From as early as 1985 the Department of Prisons expunged material and a substantial volume of classified records from mid 1993.

Although most Security Branch offices destroyed most, if not all support function as well as operational records, there were exceptions. Certain operational records in the Ficksburg, Kimberley, Pietermaritzburg, Pietersburg, Port Elizabeth, Potchefstroom, Rooigrond, Thaba Nchu, Thohoyandou, Tzaneen and Welkom offices were not destroyed. Several thousand files were also preserved at the SAPS head office, although most of them were post-dated 1990. Eleven back-up tapes of the head office computerised database were located. The TRC was thus able to secure the following categories of records — general files — all post-dating 1990, computer data tapes containing data on anti-apartheid organisations, and individual case records in eight sub-categories — contraventions of emergency regulations, dockets, detainees under security legislation, surveillance of individuals (both anti-apartheid and right wing), surveillance of right wing organisations, security incidents (post-dating 1990), applications for indemnity, and files on returning exiles.<sup>36</sup>

The TRC discovered that the files of all security and political prisoners — including those of Nelson Mandela and the other Rivonia Treason Trial defendants, as well as prisoners sentenced to death were intact, in excellent condition and under the careful management of the Department of Prisons' Directorate of Security. The TRC noted however, that the files of security and political detainees had been under the direct control of the Security Branch of the South African Police.<sup>37</sup>

Most importantly however, the TRC discovered that substantial records had been retained by the Department of Justice's 'Security Legislation Directorate'. The Directorate's function was to make recommendations to the Ministers of Justice and Law and Order concerning the administration of security legislation. This included for example, recommending whether an individual or organisation should be banned — whether an individual should be restricted, whether a gathering should be allowed, and so on. Its recommendations were made on the basis of investigations initiated by the Security Branch of the South African Police, and supported by information gathered on its behalf by the Security Branch, the NIS, and Military Intelligence. Included here are case files for individuals spanning the period 1949–1991; case files for organisations

36 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume 1*, 217–218.

37 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume 1*, 225.



and for publications dating back from the 1920s; and policy, administrative and other subject-based correspondence files.<sup>38</sup> This is the most relevant available official source of records on individual political activists, and they are now located at the National Archives of South Africa.<sup>39</sup>

Even when files are available at the National Archives, any researcher who wants to access them would require the written permission of the individual concerned, or of the family of that individual, if the individual is deceased — especially those individuals who were regarded by the apartheid regime as a security threat. This, according to the National Archivist, Dr. Graham Dominy, is understandable since the files may contain material that is embarrassing to the individual concerned — such as their naked photographs, evidence of personal habits, unsubstantiated suggestions of links with the security police, and so on. The process of obtaining permission to access the files is extremely onerous — given the vast number of relevant individuals and their dispersal throughout the country. The demands of publication schedules made it impossible for SADET to undertake this task.

SADET was able to gain access to some official records during research for Volume 2, as Lodge acknowledges in his review of the volume — 'indeed, the wider exploitation of official archival material and police evidence is a major strength of this volume compared to its predecessor in the SADET project',<sup>40</sup> he writes. However, there is considerable scope for researchers who gain access to the TRC-husbanded files of individual political activists, to build on the work that SADET has done.

## CONCLUSION

SADET's 'Road to Democracy' project would have been difficult, if not impossible, to undertake without the involvement of the research institutions/university-based regional research teams and commissioned authors. The benefits of collaboration that this gave rise to far outweigh the disagreements between authors and the conflicts arising from them. Moreover, careful consideration must be given in future research to the benefits and limitations found in SADET's experience in the use of oral history

38 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume 1*, 225.

39 The South African History Archive has lists of security legislation files on individuals and organizations and correctional services — (previously the Department of Prisons) files on individuals, as well as a guide to archival sources relating to the TRC that can be accessed on its website.

40 *South African Historical Journal*, Vol 60, Issue 1 (March 2008), 160.



and trail records as sources. The publication of the first three volumes of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* and the first volume of edited interviews are, we hope on the basis of their impact, a vindication of the project as a whole. The SADET project does provide a number of significant opportunities. One of these is to contribute to the development of a core of black historians, who can play a fundamental role in contributing to the existing scholarship on the social history of black South Africans.

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