

became the foundation on which existing state welfare provisions are based. Breckenridge's work suggests that the use of biometric technology has been shaped by its history and present concerns. In the developing world it has become the means by which economic inequalities are ameliorated – biometric systems with their origins in South Africa are being utilized in Mexico, Brazil and India where earlier dissent over their use has largely disappeared. In the west, however, the association of biometrics with coercion has made it incompatible with civil liberties. It is nonetheless utilized here as a means of identifying and controlling the movements of those deemed to be unqualified for full citizenship – criminals, immigrants – under the aegis of national security.

This is a book that is clearly and succinctly written and persuasively argued but, more significantly, makes history relevant by highlighting the ways in which existing and ambitious attempts to identify human beings – both for the purposes of social welfare and international and domestic security – have been built on earlier projects with their origins in British imperial ambitions to know and, by so doing, control the vast, diverse and largely illiterate populations that fell under its ambit.

*The new radicals: A generational memoir of the 1970s*

(Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd, 2014, xi +283 pp. ISBN 978-1-4314-0971-6)

**Glenn Moss**

Steve Lebelo<sup>1</sup>

lebelmj@unisa.ac.za

Moss's *the new radicals: A generational memoir of the 1970s* explores three distinct but related themes. It chronicles a “political, ideological and organisational journey undertaken by a group of students”. In a manner suggested by Amilcar Cabral, they are ready to commit class suicide. These students move from “relatively insular liberal protest and symbolic politics of an elite university to help in creating the preconditions for a radical challenge

---

<sup>1</sup> Until recently, Lebelo was teaching history at Unisa. He is also co-author of *Soweto, 16 June 1976 – It all started with a dog* and *Nine family histories: Completing the circle*.

to a society which had formed them”.

The second theme, to which Moss pays no more than a customary genuflection, is the emergence of the black radical tradition. Inspired by Steve Biko, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) is a parallel radical formation, whose Black Consciousness (BC) philosophy Moss and the new radicals contemptuously dismiss as “false consciousness”.

The third, and probably the most significant theme is the historical moment when the paths of the new radicals and the exiled African National Congress (ANC) converged. The new radicalism becomes part of “embryonic initiatives which moved South African resistance movement from its historical low point at the end of the 1960s to the organisation, mobilisation and rebellion evident by 1976”. Moss’s memoir contributes to and reinforces the contested orthodoxy asserting that opposition to apartheid was defined by the unbroken thread of non-racialism.

Having demonstrated a penchant for radical action at the conservative Pretoria High School by burning the old South African flag, Moss’s radicalisation was quickened with what was a chance encounter with John Harries. Harries is the Johannesburg station bomber who was a member of the Armed Resistance Movement (ARM).

The new radicalism, presented in an autobiographical form, appears as a critique of liberalism, articulated by the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). Moss had already internalised radical tendencies when he entered Wits University in 1970. Moss’s political struggle in his formative years mirrors the radicalisation of NUSAS. He drew attention to himself soon after entering Wits in 1970. In March of that year he joined a lone picketer in Jan Smuts Street. The picketer turned out to be Wits Student Representative Council (SRC) President, Ken Costa. It being ten years since the Sharpeville massacre, Costa was reminding the public of the tragic events of that day.

For a while Moss’s radicalism was focused on student matters and articulated as a negation of liberalism and a radical challenge to the apartheid state’s policies. But the Anti -Republic Day campaign was very significant, both in the way it drew the attention of the Wits community and also in the way in which it heralded a change of paradigm in the university’s opposition to apartheid. In 1971 he was at the centre of the Anti-Republic Day campaign.

But it was the annual Richard Feetham Academic Freedom Lecture at Wits University that offered Moss an opportunity to reach out to the university community, appealing for a paradigm shift in understanding the opposition to apartheid. The choice of Joan Lestor, the British Member of Parliament and an activist with the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), to deliver a keynote address for that year raised a few eyebrows. But it also established Wits' reputation as a radical campus in the next two decades.

But it was Moss's interaction with Ahmed Timol's family that steered him towards the politics of the African National Congress (ANC) and its armed formation, Umkhonto we Sizwe. For Moss and the new radicals, the decisive antagonism was defined by the specificity of the apartheid social formation. And understanding the complexity of apartheid capitalism or Colonialism of a Special Type (CST), was an esoteric exercise requiring specialised skills taught at the University of Natal's Political Philosophy Department by Rick Turner.

Moss and his "comrades" in NUSAS were determined to apply and test the validity of the claim that capitalist exploitation and not white supremacy is the decisive antagonism. In their view, class as opposed to racial antagonisms, "both as an analytical tool and a basis for organisation, found its expression in the prioritisation of worker rather than black interests... and in the new worker organisations were beginning to emerge" (pp. 100-101).

The Wages Commission and the Industrial Aid Society (IAS) were at the cutting edge of the mobilisation of workers, invariably black workers, against employers. The fatal shooting of 11 mineworkers at the Western Deep Level Mines in 1973 created a context in which the Wages Commission and the IAS could illuminate and expose the ways in which apartheid was a rational instrument of capital accumulation and not an irrational system of racial oppression.

To deepen this understanding of the relationship between racial oppression and capitalist exploitation among black workers, the Wages Commission and IAS established worker education programmes in factories in the Witwatersrand, Durban and the Western Cape. Throughout 1974 Moss continued to work tirelessly as an IAS organiser reaching out to workers in factories.

These initiatives attracted volunteers, notably Wits academics like Phil Bonner, Sheldon Leader and Bernie Fanaroff, who helped with the production of educational material. It is not clear how these initiatives impacted on the growing number of student, youth and cultural formations affiliated to the BCM that began to proliferate in and around Johannesburg between 1974 and the eruption of the student uprising in June 1976. This is a subject of intense ideological contestation between the congress tradition, to which Moss's new radicalism was affiliated, and BCM formations.

Some individuals within these BCM formations, and in some cases whole formations, embraced this new radicalism. They did not seem to discern the sharp ideological differences between the new radicalism and BCM philosophy. If they did, they seem to have embraced the new radicalism, impressed by what they considered its scientific approach to an understanding of the liberation struggle. This view, not reflected in this text, is often expressed in the narrative of the liberation struggled on the African National Congress Underground. Among these were members of the National Youth Organisation (NAYO), who also attended educational programmes run by IAS.

So by a circuitous route, Moss arrives at a figure that has become a common denominator in accounts of the ANC underground in the 1970s and its overstated impact on the Soweto revolt: Joe Gqabi. Gqabi was an ANC activist in the 1950s and 1960s and spent 10 years on Robben Island. Released in 1974, Gqabi operated underground networks that recruited cadres for the ANC. Among those recruited in this way were Tokyo Sexwale and Murphy Morobe, both of whom were considered active in the South African Students Movement (SASM).<sup>2</sup>

And while the new radicalism appears to have been making headways in organising black factory workers in the Transvaal, it was racked by internal conflict that would undermine its ability to influence developments that would erupt in just under twelve months in Soweto. Internal conflicts within the new radicalism, articulated through IAS, the Wages Commission, The Trade Union Advisory Coordinating Committee (TUACC) and the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE) concerned relationships between labour formations and political formations. The outcome of these tensions was that Moss was expelled from IAS and shortly thereafter, Steven Friedman and

---

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the ANC underground in the 1970s see G Houston, B Magubane, "The ANC's Armed Struggle in the 1970s", *The road to democracy in South Africa*, 2 (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2006).

others in the core group that set up these initiatives left.

When the Soweto uprising erupted, Moss and some of IAS's activists were in police detention. Moss was facing charges under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. And soon after 16 June 1976 some of the NAYO activists, with links to the ANC underground, were either in hiding or had been detained under the Terrorism Act. These developments limited the impact the new radicalism could have had on the Soweto revolt.

It became apparent that whatever influence the new radicalism may have had on the Soweto revolt would have been in the early days of unrest. Between 16 June and early August students in Soweto reorganised themselves. On 2 August 1976 the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) was founded. Members of NAYO and other formations that had embraced the new radicalism were not represented in the meeting. The SSRC pledged its loyalty to BCM and proceeded to call for a student march into Johannesburg and a stay away by workers. Police intercepted the march before it left Soweto. But the stay away was an overwhelming success. It was reported that over 80% of Soweto residents stayed away from work on 4 August 1976.

The student campaign was condemned by those embracing the new radicalism for failing to mobilise the working class. This criticism emanated from those who had expected worker formations that had been established as part of the Wages Commission and IAs to provide the organisational support and leadership in the stay away of August 4. This criticism overlooks the fact that it was the historical self-awareness as back people that influenced and shaped patterns of mass mobilisation in the 1970s.

These are developments that Moss may have observed from prison. The chasm between the students' movement and the new radicalism became apparent when the first president of the SSRC, Tsietsi Mashinini condemned the exiled movement on his arrival in Botswana. Khostso Seathlolo, the second president of the SSRC, urged students leaving the country never to join the ANC or the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in exile. A rejection of the ANC was simultaneously a rejection of the new radicalism.

It can therefore be concluded that the new radicalism did not define the decisive antagonism in the opposition to white supremacy in the 1970s. On the contrary, the decisive antagonism was defined by the Black Consciousness (BC) philosophy. The impact of the new radicalism on mass mobilisation

was deferred, becoming particularly evident in the 1980s and early 1990s. And even then its impact was more rhetorical than transformative. Moss's memoir can be located within existing literature on the liberation struggle in the era of mass mobilisation, 1952 to 1991. In this instalment Moss merely reinforces existing accounts that upholds the myth of the unbroken thread of non-racialism in the struggle for liberation.

*The concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War: A social history*

**(Auckland Park, Jacana, 2013, 391 pp., notes, diagrams, pictures.  
ISBN 978-1-4314-0542-8)**

**Elizabeth van Heyningen**

Charmaine Hlongwane

*North West University*

Charmaine.hlongwane@gmail.com

Elizabeth van Heyningen is a historian and an experienced writer who has written about the history of Cape Town, the social history of medicine and the history of colonial women. The book that Dr. van Heyningen has recently published on the concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War contains evidence, case studies, statistics and historic facts in an attempt to write a more balanced history of the Anglo-Boer War, also known as the South African War. The history themes encompassed in this book are on social, political, economic, psychological and religious issues, and the book depicts the experiences of the Boers and black people in the concentration camps. The book contributes largely to the historiography of the Anglo-Boer War and offers a fresh insight into the inmates' experiences that have often been neglected by other historians in this field. This book can be used by a large audience, ranging from the tertiary history student to anyone interested in the Anglo-Boer War as this work is a significant addition to the existing work on the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.

Although there has been work done on the Anglo-Boer War by a number of historians in South Africa, few have focused on the day-to-day lives of the people that were interned in the concentration camps. In the four parts of the book, van Heyningen gives an informative analysis of the camps and