

*Beyond the Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa in the 1980s.* Photographs by Twenty South African Photographers, selected by Omar Badsha, Gideon Mendel, and Paul Weinberg. Historical essay by André Odendaal. Foreword by the Reverend Frank Chikane. London: Kliptown Books, Ltd., 1989. 144 pp.

One of the first photographs in *Beyond the Barricades* is a portrait of P. W. Botha, former President of the Republic of South Africa. It is a solemn portrait, taken at a military parade in Pretoria in 1980. He stands in the ultimate posture of respect—his hat held reverently over his heart—as the barrel of an enormous howitzer passes in front of him. This portrait is, in fact, framed by the weaponry of the South African military machine.

The photo on the preceding page has a slightly different tone. The context of this one is also a parade, of a sort, and the weaponry of the South African military machine also frames this photo, but invisibly. The parade is a funeral; the central figure, a pallbearer; the weapon, teargas. The pallbearer is crying, fist held high, shouldering the coffin of a victim of the "unrest."

Brutality is the framework for all of the pictures in this moving collection. South African society itself is very brutal and violent (as anyone who follows events in Africa will know). These photos focus on a particular era and a particular theme: oppression and resistance to it in South Africa during the 1980s, a significant era for the photographers because of the heavy restrictions on photojournalists that were enacted in 1986. In the preface, the photographers write,

Photography took on a particular significance in this period of our history as it provided irrefutable documentation of popular resistance and state brutality. The "camera" became a voice for those denied a vote and basic human rights, and was instrumental in bringing the South African struggle to the international arena.

The state responded by focusing its attack on the media. The camera was accused of being an instrument of insurrection. (p. 7)

*Beyond the Barricades*, then, is an answer to these new restrictions, and it is not just a collection of photographs. The book shows funerals, riots, civil disobedience, strikes, meetings, demonstrations. It shows coffins and the bodies in them, riots and the people killed, police vans and the schoolchildren arrested, guns and the people who shoot them, scars and the people who carry them. We see people mourning the dead, confronting the police, and celebrating at alternative cultural events.

But pictures do not tell the whole story, and the photographers have added other material to enhance their work. The captions that accompany the pictures are more than just "blurbs": they contain background information about forces and events relevant to what is shown; they define and explain the terms used, and they offer interpretations that are unavailable to most of the world. In addition, the photographers have included other useful documentation. There are personal testimonies of those, especially women and children, who have suffered in detention or have witnessed violence inflicted on their families, friends, and neighbors. The complete text of the Freedom Charter has also been included, and excerpts from the Security Regulations give a hint of the incredible breadth of the restrictions. Poetry can be found on the pages as well, illuminating another dimension to the life portrayed in the photos. A foreword by Frank Chikane, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, and an historical essay following the photos by André Odendaal, a South African historian, complete the text of the work.

*Beyond the Barricades* is different from many of the other photo-essay books about South Africa. Because of the broad scope of the material used to explain and corroborate the photographs, it is becomes a kind of textbook, a documentary of South Africa in the 1980s. It provides information about resistance that is difficult, if not impossible, to get from any official (i.e. government or government-controlled) sources. One section, for example, focuses on the role of funerals in the resistance; because so many people are killed in confrontations with the South African military machine, the funerals take on the role of rallies:

Emotions run high on these sad occasions as people grieve for the dead and renew their commitment to resist the government. Huge African National Congress banners are unfurled, and coffins draped with ANC colors remind the participants of the political causes of the deaths. The funerals are also marked by moving oratory. (. . .) The crowds participating in the funerals sing political songs and perform militant new dances, turning the funerals themselves into remarkable forms of political and cultural expression. (p. 72)

Another section chronicles the development of vigilante groups that receive passive and active support from the government. These groups terrorize neighborhoods and carry out assassinations of those whose fight is more visible: a chief who successfully fought the forced removal of his community, a young activist whose speeches spurred people with flagging spirits, a man who refused to betray his son.

Odendaal's historical essay at the back of the book seems like an afterthought. It is quite comprehensive, covering different aspects of the events of the 1980s, such as government attempts to reform apartheid, the rise of the United Democratic Front, and the development of vigilante activity and popular response to it. The essay would perhaps be more useful at the beginning of the book, as an introduction to the photographs. Following the photos, however, makes the essay appear flat and rather dry.

It is difficult to know what to say about a book like *Beyond the Barricades*. The photos themselves speak far more eloquently than any review of them. One anticipates the day when such difficulties vanish—because the need for books such as this will have vanished as well.

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