

BOOK REVIEW

Jacob Dlamini. *The Terrorist Album: Apartheid's Insurgents, Collaborators, and the Security Police*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2020. 375 pp. List of Abbreviations. Notes. Index. \$29.95. Cloth. ISBN: 9780674916555.

Jacob Dlamini's *The Terrorist Album: Apartheid's Insurgents, Collaborators, and the Security Police* is a compelling study of the mechanics of apartheid from the inside. Sitting at the intersection of criminology, history, art criticism, sociology, and cultural studies, Dlamini tells the life history of state documents used to compel, bend, persecute, pressure, torture, and ultimately in some cases kill the opponents of the white supremacist state, the so-called Terrorist Album. This is a history of memory, of forgetting, of violence, and of state failure.

The center of Dlamini's book, the album itself, is actually a file of photographs and notations that first emerged organically in the 1960s but appears to have become a regularly organized and utilized compendium of the anti-apartheid activists in exile by the early 1970s. Each image was accompanied by a numerical code: S1 meant white; S2 meant Indian; S3 stood for "Coloured" in the racist parlance of apartheid, and S4 for African or Bantu.

The album or file was used by apartheid zealots, particularly the Security Police, the former Special Branch, and other state and quasi-state agents until the dying days of the de Klerk presidency, and was regularly updated; deceased figures were removed, while new targets were added. The bulk of material in the edition contextualized here dates from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Hundreds of copies of the file/album were produced and circulated to police divisions around the provinces, and they remained scattered around the country. Supposedly they were all destroyed during the last months prior to the handover, but miraculously three survived, and one is in the National Archives.

Dlamini uses the album to pick apart some false and tired clichés and stereotypes about the apartheid state. Yes, apartheid was brutal, racist, and obsessed with defeating its opponents at home and abroad. But it was also incoherent, inefficient, inept, and foolishly wrong at times. For a country so fanatical about racial identity and the imaginaries of racial classification, Dlamini documents some howlers worthy of Dugmore Boetie's fertile

imagination. For example, he tells the story of the album's conflation of a white Jewish student leader named Barry Gilder with an alleged terrorist mastermind, Aboobaker Ismail (a.k.a., Rashid Patel), an Indian Muslim ANC operative. Importantly, when Dlamini shows photos in the album to living survivors, some struggle to comprehend that the photos are indeed of them themselves; alternatively, they are at a loss as to how the police could possibly have gained access to a particular image.

The album became a crucial tool for the apartheid government, because the vast majority of its racist machinery had little to no knowledge about the nature of the opposition, especially those residing abroad in central and eastern Africa or farther afield in Europe or North America. Like the Nazis' meticulously detailed paper trail of their crimes, used contemporaneously to demonstrate higher up the chain of command that orders had been followed and goals reached, if not surpassed [or even the Stasi secret police after them], Dlamini reads the album against the grain as a record of hubris, of the failures of the "panopticon-like" vision apartheid's advocates had of their insuperable power to quash, destroy, and eliminate.

For Dlamini, white South Africa was a deluded, inchoate pariah entity, one that parroted and parodied authoritarianism. The album is exhibit A of this delusion. The vessel itself is composed of mugshots of political refugees (from official and unofficial sources) whose simple flight into exile was enough for them to be labeled as terrorists and to earn a spot in the book. The photos were then shown to collaborators and those being tortured to elicit identifications and information. Like the anti-Communist statutes in the 1950s and subsequent legislation whereby any opposition to the apartheid state was dubbed terrorism, the album was a tautological exercise wherein one's appearance in the album instantiated one's identity as a terrorist.

Dlamini, as a historian and journalist, is precisely the person to scrutinize this primary treatise of the bureaucratic absurdities of white supremacism. He situates the text within the long history of securitization, photography, classificatory systems, forensic criminology, and pseudo-science that often sustains it. He reminds his readers that the absolute power of South Africa's Security Police "to name, to jail, to hound, to terrorize, to kill" (53) was the political objective of apartheid's most fervent advocates. His journalistic skills are on full display when he interviews former police operatives, now retired. He reveals how they embodied inquisitor, prosecutor, jury, judge, and executioner simultaneously. He juxtaposes his narration of the album with testimonies from the Truth and Reconciliation Tribunals and other sources. And in a final punch to the gut, Dlamini turns the vehicle of apartheid terror on himself and shows the reader how he fits within the puzzle.

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