

other sources. It is useful to understand the purpose for which the book is written, because often, perhaps even unwittingly, the author pens his story to serve his own purpose rather than that of history. Books such as these, together with other primary documents, will provide the foundations on which historians will be able to build their research and produce more objective material via rigorous research. Their task will be to extract the many layers of evidence contained in the book. Some of it, the witting or the intentional message of the author, but more interestingly and valuable, his unwitting or unintentional meaning. It is this which reveals the character, beliefs, attitudes and values of the author and the principles and customs of the society he and his soldiers hailed from.

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An unconvincing memoir

Dirk Mudge, *All the Way to an Independent Namibia*

Protea Book House, Pretoria, 2016

511pp

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Although a brief, but perceptive biography of Dirk Mudge, based on considerable research, appeared in Afrikaans in 1999,² it was good to hear that Mudge, the most important internal leader in the process leading to Namibia's independence, had followed other Namibian politicians and written his memoirs. First published in Afrikaans in 2015, these now appear in an English translation, with a Preface by Piet Croucamp. Though some of his Preface makes no sense, one can agree with Croucamp that Mudge "contributed more than most to leading those on the inside into a brave new world called democracy" (p 15). Unfortunately, *All the Way to an Independent Namibia* badly needed an editor to eliminate repetition and confusion and improve Mudge's highly descriptive, often rambling style.³ In his account of his life, which he interweaves with potted history, he includes material from motions, debates and speeches, often quoting them and making some chapters almost unreadable. More

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2. A.J. van Wyk, *Dirk Mudge: Reenmaker van die Namib* (J.L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1999), reviewed in *Historia*, 45, 1 (May 2000). For a revealing interview with Mudge conducted by Tor Sellstrom in 1995, see <http://www.liberationafrica.se/intervstories/interviews/mudge/?by-name=1>
 3. For example, he says his career in politics began in 1955 and then almost immediately afterwards, in 1960 (pp 22-23); he goes on to tell us that he was a party organiser for the 1955 election (p 67) and won election to the Legislative Assembly in 1961 (p 69). He writes that the "rebellion" [sic] at Sharpeville "set the world on fire" (p 70), and that "in those days SWAPO was not a banned organisation..." (p 114), yet later tells us that it was never banned. Crocker was not Reagan's Deputy Chairman of Foreign Affairs (p 356); and the figures Mudge gives for UNTAG are incorrect (p 393).

importantly, he does not sift what is significant from what is not, fails to offer much in the way of self-critical reflection on his life and his relationships with others, and, in my view, claims too much for his own role, and that of other internal leaders, in the processes leading to independence.⁴

In writing about his support for Verwoerdian separate development in the 1960s, Mudge says he believed that Verwoerd “wanted to give everything to the black people he wished for himself” (p 115, also p 23) and failed to see that separate development “couldn’t work in practice” (p 23; cf. 126). At one point he does admit that he is “not too proud” of his political past (p 239), which included being an active member of the Broederbond until 1977. He showed political courage in breaking with the more extreme racist whites in the South West Africa National Party, and being willing to work with Clemens Kapuuo and, subsequently, other black leaders. For this he was denounced by his Dutch Reformed Church (p 333) and it was not without reason that Franz Josef Strauss of Bavaria sent him a bullet-proof Mercedes Benz, though he found the vehicle unsuitable for use in Namibia and abandoned it for an ordinary car (p 255). Yet for a work written from 2012 (the year, he tells us, that he began writing, when he was 84 years old), his memoirs appear out of tune with present-day Namibian realities and unintentionally reveal the limits of his break with his racist past. Although he prides himself on his colour-blindness, he writes of those not white as “these people” (e.g. p 181) and retains, for example, the term “SWAPO terrorists” (e.g. pp 111, 185, 202, 252).⁵ Kapuuo apart, whom he calls “the epitome of a black nationalist” (p 149), he has nothing good to say of his political opponents until he comes to his long chapter on the writing of Namibia’s constitution.

In the first half of the book, after describing his family background, Mudge has interesting passages, on, say, the emergence of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) in 1977 and he provides new information, for those interested, on the internecine infighting in the white politics of the 1970s. His visit to the United Nations in 1973 opened his eyes to the international community’s hostility to South Africa’s rule of Namibia, and he claims that on his return he persuaded Vorster to accept the idea of granting independence to Namibia via a conference of ethnic representatives, which became the Turnhalle. This he refers to as “the beginning of the peace and independence process” (p 157). He is misleading about the fate of the Turnhalle, suggesting that the Western Contact Group accepted the proposals it drafted (p 261), and is not candid, say, about where the funding for the DTA in the 1978 election came from (at least in part from the South African government, one assumes). He shows much naiveté when he writes of the role of the South African Defence Force (SADF). Essentially reproducing the SADF line on Cassinga, he goes on to mention, bizarrely and only in passing, that General Dimo Hamaambo, allegedly shown to have been responsible for Kapuuo’s assassination in documents found at Cassinga, had confessed to this when on a hunting trip on Mudge’s farm (p

4. Speakers at the launch of the Afrikaans edition in Windhoek went even further in their claims that he helped bring democracy to Namibia. See W. Menges, “Mudge gets Credit for Namibia’s Democracy”, *The Namibian*, 29 May 2015, p 3.

5. In one place they are “freedom fighters”, see Mudge, *All the Way*, p 186.

264)! He writes that the SADF saved “our country from the ravages of war” (p 22), makes the astonishing claim that he only knew of SADF military operations in Angola after independence (pp 300, 360) and says nothing of the increasing militarisation of the north, or of the SADF role there. “At the end of the war”, he writes, “even researchers confirmed that the SA Defence Force consistently handled military activities with great secrecy” (p 111).

It is not only the role of the SADF that he claims ignorance of. Though he says that the DTA was ready to fight an election against SWAPO, he writes of how the DTA chose to make an issue of the UN recognising SWAPO as the “sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people” at the Geneva Conference of January 1981, despite being told that the UN Security Council would not recognise such a General Assembly resolution. Mudge shows no remorse for effectively helping to sabotage the Geneva Conference, which he never wanted to attend. He effectively points out the pettiness of the way he was treated by P.W. Botha on many occasions, and the absurdity of the South African government’s refusal to allow the internal Namibian governments to remove racial and ethnic laws. He still cannot really understand why Botha “tried to derail” the DTA (p 356). He is probably right to put this down to fear of the far right in South Africa in the early 1980s, but why the South African government continued on such a tack until 1989 remains difficult to explain. Mudge was effectively excluded from the important international negotiations on Namibia in 1988, only hearing of the key Geneva Protocol of August that year through the media (p 386), but he survived and was able to take a leading role in writing the Namibian constitution in late 1989/early 1990, on which he writes at length.

But how significant was his role in bringing about a democratic, multi-party independent Namibia? “Local political initiatives”, he writes “ultimately played a decisive role in finding a political solution”, and this, he says, is “not recognised by historians in South Africa” (p 389). While such initiatives should not be downplayed, his book fails to persuade this reviewer that they were indeed “decisive”.

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Work of great value to heritage studies

Derek R. Peterson, Kodzo Gavua and Ciraj Rassool (eds), *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, and Infrastructures*

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In a manner reminiscent of some applied sciences, the discipline of Heritage Studies took off with its back against the wall. Whereas History left a long established record