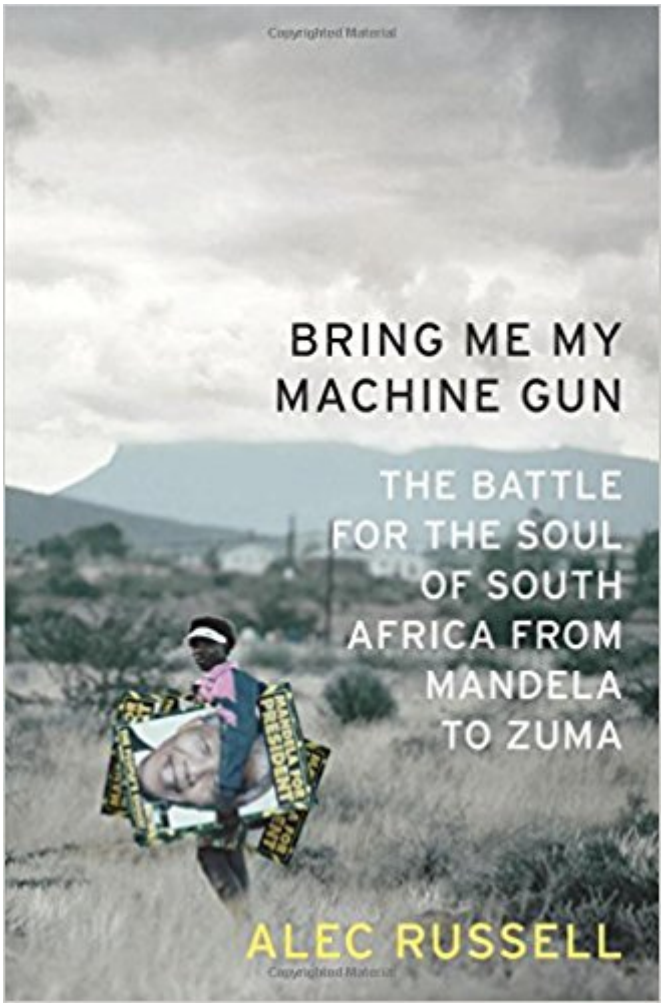
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Bring Me My Machine Gun: The Battle For The Soul Of South Africa, From Mandela To Zuma



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Synopsis

Award-winning journalist Alec Russell was in South Africa to witness the fall of apartheid and the remarkable reconciliation of Nelson Mandela's rule; and returned in 2007-2008 to see Mandela's successor, Thabo Mbeki, fritter away the country's reputation. South Africa is now perched on a precipice, as it prepares to elect Jacob Zuma as president—signaling a potential slide back to the bad old days of post-colonial African leadership, and disaster for a country that was once the beacon of the continent.Drawing on his long relationships with all the key senior figures including Mandela, Mbeki, Desmond Tutu, and Zuma, and a host of South Africans he has known over the years—including former activists turned billionaires and reactionary Boers—Alec Russell's Bring Me My Machine Gun is a beautifully told and expertly researched account of South Africa's great tragedy: the tragedy of hope unfulfilled.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

From 1993 to 1997, British journalist Russell reported from Johannesburg and witnessed the Ã¢â ¬Å“fairy-taleÃ¢â ¬Â• ending of apartheid with the release of Mandela. Now he returns to find South Africa still has one of the worldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s starkest divides between rich and poor, little redistribution of land, and continuing rampant corruption. In open, journalistic style, he looks in depth and detail at the stalled dream of peace and reconciliation, and he speaks to the leaders, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Jacob Zuma, and also to many ordinary people: Afrikaners in a small town, with their casual, unacknowledged racism about Ã¢â ¬Å“theyÃ¢â ¬Â• and Ã¢â ¬Å“themÃ¢â ¬Â•; blacks in the poverty-stricken townships, who want just modest change: running water and electricity, health care, education. Scathing in his criticism of newly rich

magnates, he also exposes the two-faced liberals. He shows close-up that the widely reported attacks on immigrants are rooted in the anger and anguish of the poor and dispossessed.Ã Â This is exciting contemporary history, a must for anyone concerned with what is happening now. --Hazel Rochman

Peter Godwin, author of When a Crocodile Eats the Sun Ã¢â ¬Å“A vivid portrait of post-apartheid South Africa, briskly depicting the dramas of a young nation and the telling threats to its future.Ã¢â ¬Â•Kirkus Reviews, March 1, 2009 Ã¢â ¬Å“Financial Times world news editor Russell offers a cogent study of the political perils ensnaring South Africa since the fall of apartheidÃ¢â ¬Â¦ An important dispatch from a journalist in the trenches.Ã¢â ¬Â•Booklist, review 4/15 Ã¢â ¬Å“In open, journalistic style, Russell looks in depth and detail at the stalled dream of peace and reconciliationÃ¢â ¬Â¦ This is exciting contemporary history, a must for anyone concerned with what is happening now.Ã¢â ¬Â•Gillian Slovo, Financial Times, 4/4 Ã¢â ¬Å“Bring Me My Machine Gun, layered with anecdote, historical background and close scrutiny of recent events, stands as an informative, nuanced, and provocative end-of-era reportÃ¢â ¬Â¦ A valuable contribution to the debate about the future of the rainbow nation. Alec Russell has looked at the country with a sympathetic and knowledgeable eye and he leaves his reader with a deep understanding of the challenges to come.Ã¢â ¬Â•

Fascinating insights into the political motivations and characters behind South Africa since the end of apartheid. Opened my eyes to many new facets of politics - the fact that the fall of Communism in Europe recast the ANC into a party that the white apartheid government believed that it could deal with (they were more afraid of communism than black nationalism) - the Reagan-like qualities of Zuma, an uneducated glad-hander on the surface, with political skills beyond any of his contemporaries - the scale of the AIDS denial disaster propogated by Mbeki who was responsible for a wave of death on the scale of the Holocaust - the mechanics and consequences of BEE (Black Economic Empowerment)and the resulting new, small band of black "oligarchs" in South Africa.Be sure to read Meredith’s "Diamonds, Blood and War" to learn how the events of just 40 years since the discovery of diamonds shaped the country.

The question on everyman’s mind is will South Africa make it. Will it end up like Zimbabwe or Zaire, or will it be a large Botswana. The jury is still out. Big man rule for now has not been sustained in South Africa. However corruption is still a large part of the issue in the South African economy. Will

the ANC evolve into a party that competes in elections or will it become the equivalent of the PRI in Mexico.South Africa has made great strides in overcoming apartheid. However it now has to stop the overwhelming violent crime to satisfy its population. Political corruption and mismanagement has to be controlled. Finally, employment and a fair share for the nation's resources has to be distributed to the nation's population.Russell details the evolving nature of South Africa's political future. It has moved forward, but more needs to be done. This is a nice read for a country that is a model for the rest of Africa.

I have not had the time to read this; but I am looking forward in doing so. Most books (that I find here in the US) in regards to South Africa are outdated; most are still before Mandela, or if they are recent ones, will be about South Africa's history up to Mandela being president. I'm looking forward to this as it appear to be more relevant with South Africa's history. Great service to by seller!

In post apartheid South Africa, only the color of one's skin matters. It was that way under the Afrikaners. So what has changed? Alex Russell's well written dissection of modern South Africa suspends most moral judgments in describing the African National Congress' corrupt political control of South Africa. The facts speak; the ANC's "trade of political contacts for shareholding;" how "politics could be expected to take primacy over law;" and how "affirmative action compound[s] a shortage of skilled workers." The emigration of young educated whites and the daily flight of engineers can not bode well for this country, seriously in need of "a new business culture." South Africa's crime statistics overwhelm the reader. Chose your adjective when it comes to Russell's condemnation of Mbeki's AIDs policy; "putting politics over science . . . outlandish . . . deranged." Jacob Zuma's elevation to power is Capone's Chicago, circa 2009. Russell's treatment of the Zimbabwean issue fascinates; at the end, he asks if the Mugabe experience is the future of South Africa. His ANC to Zanu-PF comparison is worthy of Pol Sci 301 on the fate of revolutionary movements at Oxford or Georgetown. He does not mention the coming World Cup to South Africa in 2010. His prototype of the present day white south South African is a khaki clad racist spouting apartheid gibberish. This may be a journalistic penchant to characterize the extremes of society as Russell is fair and reasonable in his views. His book takes the reader many places and is a worthy and welcome addition to the public affairs' book shelf.

It's so refreshing to read a well-written book from a person who had access to everyone he needed to talk with to tell a story that was worth telling. This is that book.Russell has interviewed everyone

who is anyone in the ANC: Mandela, Zuma, Mbeki, Terror Lekota, Cyril Ramaphosa, and countless others. He also spoke with unreconstructed Boers, people in the trenches protesting, and all sorts of other characters necessary for a full picture of South Africa. He puts together a story that makes sense: it would have been tough for anyone to follow Mandela but Mbeki didn't make it any easier on himself, and Zuma could bring South Africa back from the precipice of one-party big-man rule or jump off with both feet. There is no idol-worshipping here - Russell even has critical things to say about Mandela - but at no time do I think he's being unfair or unjust in his comments or analysis. The chapter on Zimbabwe is particularly insightful, showing how everyone expects South Africa not to follow Zimbabwe's path but also showing that no one has any real reason to think it won't happen, just a national myth that it's impossible.In short, Russell is an analytical journalist. These days it's so rare to find someone with this skill that I almost want to stand up and applaud. Instead I encourage you to buy this book.

A balanced view of South African politics and politicians from Mandela forward. It gave me a much greater understanding of the people and the forces that shape South African politics today.

Highly recommended for any new comer to recent South African politics. A considered work from a knowledgeable journalist. Eager to read his thoughts on the last four years.

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