

Govan Mbeki (Ohio Short Histories of Africa)

Colin Bundy



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Govan Mbeki (1910–2001) was a core leader of the African National Congress, the Communist Party, and the armed wing of the ANC during the struggle against apartheid. Known as a hard-liner, Mbeki was a prolific writer and combined in a rare way the attributes of intellectual and activist, political theorist and practitioner. Sentenced to life in prison in 1964 along with Nelson Mandela and others, he was sent to the notorious Robben Island prison, where he continued to write even as tension grew between himself, Mandela, and other leaders over the future of the national liberation movement. As one of the greatest leaders of the antiapartheid movement, and the father of Thabo Mbeki, president of South Africa from 1999 to 2008, the elder Mbeki holds a unique position in South African politics and history.

This biography by noted historian Colin Bundy goes beyond the narrative details of his long life: it analyzes his thinking, expressed in his writings over fifty years. Bundy helps establish what is distinctive about Mbeki: as African nationalist and as committed Marxist?—?and more than any other leader of the liberation movement?—?he sought to link theory and practice, ideas and action.

Drawing on exclusive interviews Bundy did with Mbeki, careful analysis of his writings, and the range of scholarship about his life, this biography is personal, reflective, thoroughly researched, and eminently readable.

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