In the Preface to *Fine Lines from the Box* (2007), Njabulo S Ndebele writes of his excitement when as a schoolboy, he found in a box in the garage a pile of banned books, and “copies of *Africa South* magazine”. Many of the books that he lists – *Down Second Avenue*, *Blame Me on History* and others – have long been republished; *Africa South* had to wait for M J Daymond and Corinne Sandwith to republish a selection of the essays.

It was a mighty task: 57 out of 460 essays originally published in *Africa South* now reappear, contextualised by an introduction by the editors and an interview with Ronald Segal, originator of the project, solicitor of many of the articles and editor of all the issues. The selection was made easier by the digitalisation of the set of 21 volumes, available at [www.disa.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za).

Appearing in 2011, the republication demonstrates the continuing relevance of commentary on and analysis of conditions in the `50s and `60s. Julius Lewin’s “No Revolution round the Corner”
(168-73), must now be examined in the light of the `80s and `90s – it survives well, especially the quotation from Hardy: “if way to the better there is, it exacts a full look at the worst”. Edward Roux (188-9) argues for the importance of the decolonising process: changes of government where the preceding regime has been racist are taking place throughout Africa. He speaks of “a government [which] might attempt to rule by permanent martial law” and prophesises that “the strain of this would prove intolerable.,”

Part of the interest of the book lies in its re-presentation of long-ago statements by men and women who remain famous: Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu are the most eminent, but Alan Paton, Fatima Meer, Helen Joseph, Brian Bunting, Ruth First, Cyprian Ekwensi – these and many others involved themselves in the *Africa South* project in the years when the Nationalist government was closing options for South Africans and severing ties with the rest of Africa.

It is difficult to emphasise particular articles, but authors writing from Natal have a special claim on this website: Paton’s “Association by Permission” (68-73), which opposes the outlawing of racially mixed organisations, and Meer’s “Satyagraha in South Africa,” which tells the story of Indian settlement in Natal and the racial oppression endured by Natal Indians, remain of great interest. Myrna Blumberg’s “Durban Explodes” dealing with the Beerhall Riots of 1959, is one of the liveliest pieces. She writes of “the heroines of the whole affair ... those magnificently built Zulu warriors of 1959” who by their derision prevented their menfolk from entering the beerhalls, and contrasts their militancy with the ignorant complacence of middle-class white men.

Writing about the heroic past, however valuable, must always involve a degree of distortion, simply because the historians are formed in a different era and know the outcomes of the words and deeds of the past. This book, where the authors write in hope and uncertainty, offers us history of another kind.