

# 1968: A Global Perspective

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## **Lessons Not Yet Learned: State Violence in 1960s Cambodia and 1980s South Africa**

P.J. Haasbroek's Afrikaans language novella *Die jaar nul* (The year zero, 1986) offers a compelling critique of the Afrikaner regime's use of violence during "high apartheid" (the state of emergency in the 1980s) by drawing on historical parallels of state violence that occurred in 1960s Cambodia.

The year zero presents the story of Ton Ion Jin, a teacher of writing, and villagers from his peaceful community who are forced into hard labor in a far distant camp. Haasbroek juxtaposes the beauty and serenity of Cambodia's physical landscape with depictions of state and military violence. By remembering the beauty of Khrosmi's masterful dance, Ton Ion Jin is able to endure and chronicle the violence he witnesses and experiences.

This paper will explore Haasbroek's novella as a critique of the apartheid regime's use of state violence via the historical use of state and military violence in Cambodia. More broadly, I also might include some of the fiction of John Miles, an Afrikaner who also has written about state-sponsored violence in historical and contemporary contexts.