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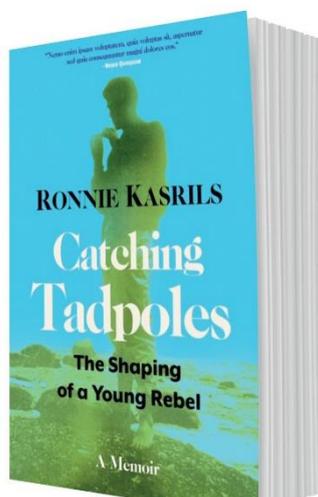
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# Catching Tadpoles

## The Shaping of a Young Rebel

Ronnie Kasrils



Ronnie Kasrils's memoir reflects on compelling questions as to what turned a white youngster from a modest background into a life-long revolutionary of note. A tiny minority who abandoned a life of privilege were the antithesis of conventionality and toeing the line. What made those such as Kasrils break all the rules and confront white power with such courage, unbridled spirit and yearning for the truth?

This is a challenging and fascinating conundrum but Kasrils will claim he is no aberration of history. The answers to that question, which unravel through twenty years, will beguile readers as he peers back with endearing frankness into the origins and experiences of his formative years.

A Yeoville-born boykie with Yiddish roots; heartfelt empathy for the underdog; an instinctive rejection of authoritarianism in school and wider society were influences informing his adult life as revolutionary activist.

With a remarkable memory and flair for the written and spoken word the narrative revels in the social, sexual and political awakening of a roguish boy's adventures with girls, rock music, bohemian culture and leaping across the colour barrier.

Kasrils's tadpoles of the memoir's title represent the submerged often illusive tracts of memory he searches for as he delves into the mystery of his metamorphosis. This stylistic element adds to the creativity of this fourth memoir.

*Catching Tadpoles is a delicious artistic achievement by Ronnie Kasrils on multiple levels: the aesthetic quality of the writing is enviably masterful; the meditation on the psychological quandary of reliable memory is philosophically rich; and the narrative of how a young white boy came to recognise the humanity of all of his fellow citizens regardless of racialised identities – with the concomitant moral and political duties that that awakening brings – will re-inscribe much needed hope into our discourse, making the case again for the possibility of cross-class solidarity in the continued struggle for an anti-racist South Africa. – Eusebius McKaiser, talk radio host and author of A Bantu in My Bathroom! Debating Race, Sexuality and Other Uncomfortable South Africa*

**Ronnie Kasrils** is author of *Armed & Dangerous*, which has been translated into German, Russian and Spanish, *A Simple Man* and the Alan Paton Award-winning *The Unlikely Secret Agent*, which has been translated into French. A commander in Umkhonto weSizwe from its inception in 1961 until 1990, he served in government from 1994 to his resignation as minister for intelligence in 2008. He describes himself as a social activist and lives in Johannesburg.

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