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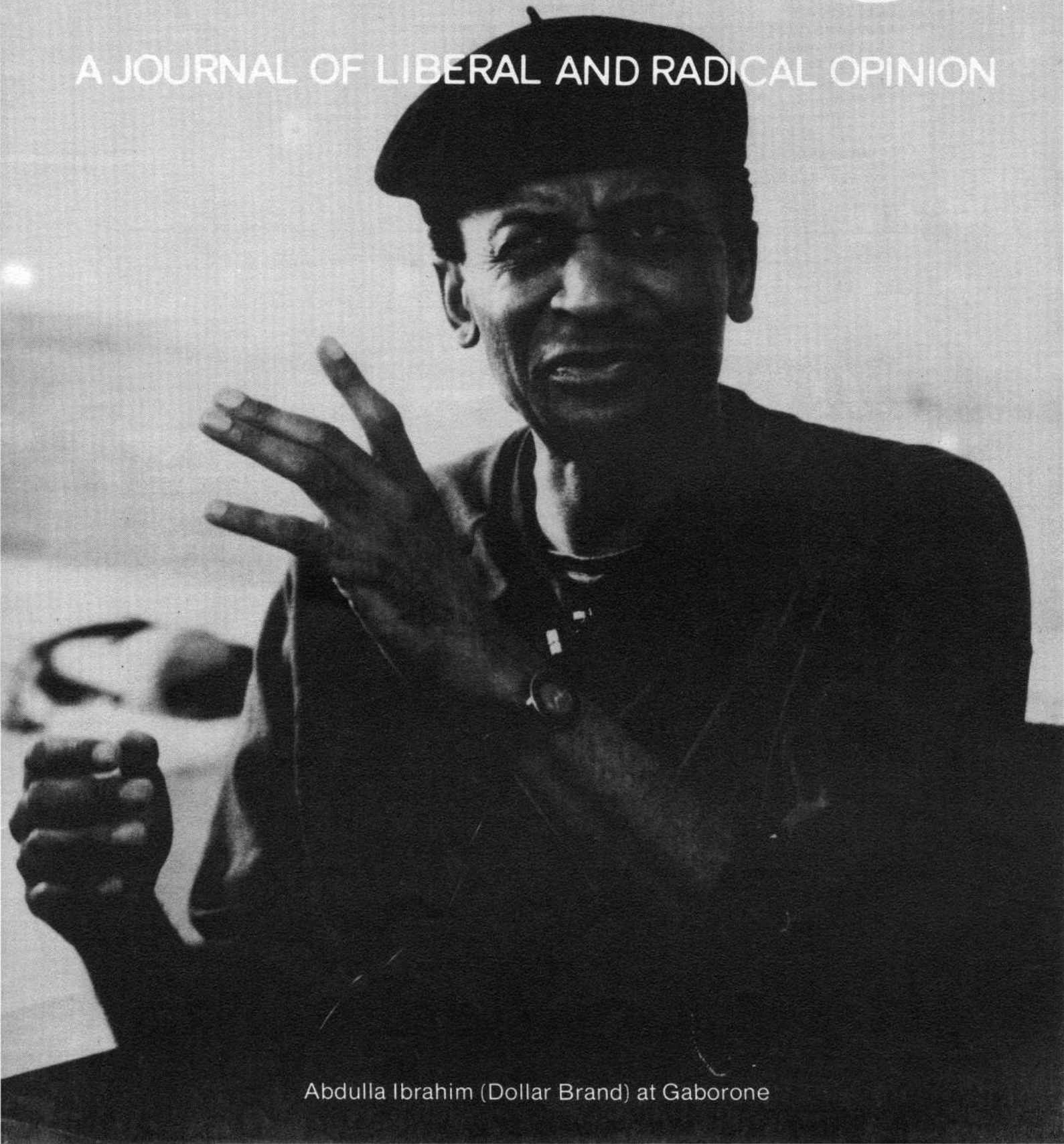

Abdulla Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) at Gaborone

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in this issue . . .

EDITORIALS

1. Ka-Ngwane and Ingwavuma.

We should not have been surprised by the manner in which the Government has conducted itself over Ka-Ngwane and Ingwavuma, or that it should not have bothered to consult the people of either area about what it was proposing to do with them.

In our thirty-fifth year of Nationalist Party rule we should have learnt that it is not what Blacks think about the policies proposed for them which counts, or how many of them get hurt in the course of their implementation. What counts is what seems to the Government, at any particular moment, to be the best way to ensure continued Afrikaner Nationalist control for as long as possible. At this moment, it seems, whoever manufactures Nationalist Party policy has decided that the best way to achieve that objective is to give Ka-Ngwane and Ingwavuma to Swaziland. We have some difficulty in following the argument, as we suspect most sane people would, but there it is.

That having been said, let it be said also that, however illusory the objective of the manoeuvre may be, the manner is which it has been carried out has been thoroughly unsavoury – murky diplomatic comings-and-goings, support from local dissidents, historical and ethnic justifications which every reputable authority has rejected as being without substance; these have been the foundations on which the Government's actions have been built. Had it not been for the determination with which the Government of Kwa-Zulu, and later that of Ka-Ngwane, reacted, the whole plan might by now have been safely completed. As it is it took three successful actions in the Natal Supreme Court to halt it. But for how long? The petulant reaction of the Government to the rulings in that Court were reminiscent of its attitude when it was being thwarted by the Judges in its attempts to get the Coloured voters off the common roll. It has now taken the matter on appeal and judgement will very likely have been given by the time this issue of REALITY appears.

We are told that, more than 20 years too late, there are a fair number of Nationalists who wish they had never committed the folly of taking the Coloured voters off the roll. We suspect that, much sooner than that, they will be regretting equally the total alienation of the Zulu people which this present move implies. And that alienation will be compounded by a new hostility to them in Swaziland itself, should they be seen to become involved in trying to ensure a friendly post-Sobhuza regime there – which they now seem bound to do.

The Ka-Ngwana/Ingwavuma plan highlights in dramatic form the Nationalist Party illusion that by turning South Africans into aliens, and reducing their numbers on paper, you build security for yourself. At a more humdrum level, every day, in a hundred pass-offices, the same thing is happening. People are having stamps put in their pass-books which effectively say "You are no longer a South African". And if Dr Koornhof's new "Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill" becomes law in its present form we will be well along the road to the point where,as Dr. Connie Mulder promised ten years ago, there will be no more Black South Africans. And will Nationalist Afrikanerdom even feel secure then? Of course not. Instead of having to worry about how to accomodate the aspirations of 20-and-more million black South African citizens, it will have to worry about something more serious. That will be the determination of those same people, as the poverty of their homelands is accelerated by growing populations and diminishing resources, while next-door the South Africa which has rejected them thrives on their contract labour, to get that citizenship back. □

2. The New Constitution

The single most important element in Mr. Botha's constitutional proposals is that all Africans must still expect to excercise their political rights in the homelands.;

Beside that, all else is insignificant.

THE MAN WHO DIDN'T MAKE IT

A Review of Phyllis Lewsen's JOHN X MERRIMAN

by Alan Paton.

Phyllis Lewsen's life of John X. Merriman is a superb book. It tells the story of South Africa from say 1860, the early days of self-government of the Cape, to Merriman's death in 1926, just after General J.M.B. Hertzog and his National Party, with the aid of Labour, won the general election, and inaugurated, although it was not apparent at the time, a new era in our history.

Great figures pass through these pages, Cecil John Rhodes, and Alfred Milner, Onze Jan Hofmeyr and W.P. Schreiner, President Paul Kruger, Louis Botha, Jan Christian Smuts, J.M.B. Hertzog. Great events happened too, the Jameson Raid of 1895, the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the First World War of 1914, leading to the Rebellion and the founding of the Afrikaner National Party. Louis Botha died in 1919, and Smuts succeeded him, only to be defeated by Hertzog in 1924. Let us face the fact that it is a white history. We meet Tengo Jabavu, J.L. Dube, and Sol Plaatjie, but only as they react to white history. The history of our country being what it has been, a biography of Merriman cannot be other than a white history.

Merriman had considerable intellectual gifts, but he did not have the brilliance of Smuts, nor his massive self-confidence that was near to arrogance. Nor did he have the charismatic gifts of Cecil John Rhodes, nor indeed his arrogance. There were people who thought that Merriman was arrogant too. The CAPE TIMES thought, on one occasion at least, that he was animated by "personal spite" against Milner, and the CAPE ARGUS called him, on one occasion at least, a "bitter dialectician". One could not come to such conclusions after reading Phyllis Lewsen. In fact this reader's affection and esteem for Merriman went on increasing as the book progressed.

Many people, including ex-President Marthinus Steyn of the defeated Orange Free State, wanted Merriman as the first Prime Minister of the new Union of South Africa, which after the end of the Anglo-Boer War in 1902 was seen to be the inevitable outcome of this tragic period. It was also a

miraculous outcome, and was seen at that time to be the triumph of big-heartedness, forgivingness, and sanity. In fact there were reasons of quite a different order for the coming together in Union of the four provinces, two of which had been fighting for their survival against the others, led of course by Britain herself. The new Union of South Africa, which came into being in 1910, entrenched the colour bar against which some people, not excluding Merriman, hoped the war was being fought. It was only three years after Union that Parliament passed the Natives Land Act, which condemned the African people to be landless, and led in part to the black flight to the cities, which today is seen as a social problem of the first magnitude.

Merriman never became the first or any other Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa. Before the Anglo-Boer War he had to contend with the hostility of both Rhodes and Milner, and earned for himself the reputation of being the worst renegade Englishman in all South Africa. After the War he had to contend with the overpowering influence of Botha and Smuts. It was becoming abundantly clear that the British Government wanted Botha as the first Prime Minister, largely because they wanted to make reparation to the Boers for their defeat in a war of which the British people were growing more and more ashamed. In 1908 Merriman became Prime Minister of the Cape Colony and the next two years produced ample evidence of his outstanding ability. But it was the Transvaal, not the Cape Colony, that was becoming the dominant power in the country.

Merriman could well be called South Africa's leading liberal of the time. He reached this state of emancipation as so many other liberal white South Africans have done, by a process of painful evolution. Sixty years later a man like Beyers Naude was to reach it, but the consequences of emancipation in the sixties had become much heavier to bear. J.H. Hofmeyr never really reached the state of emancipation, but he also went through a period of painful evolution. In 1982 it is clear that unless a great many white South Africans experience these changes, the future will be tragic and violent. The times call, not only for a change of machinery, but also for a change of heart. Do human beings, except as individuals, ever experience a change of heart? By the end of this century, we ought to know the answer to that question.

Was there any other reason why Merriman never became our first Prime Minister? Did he have some character defect? If such a question seems too extreme, let us ask whether he had some defect of temperament. He was what one might call a noble man, upright, and devoted to the cause of justice, yet he could hardly be described as a **warm** man. His deepest affection he kept for his wife and his mother. Mrs Lewsen is a very scrupulous biographer, and has not gone in for speculation. But I would like to have had her speculations on this particular subject. I agree that excessive speculation is not proper in a biography, but I don't favour total abstention either.

May I as reviewer point out an error. On P. 362 Mrs Lewsen quotes Merriman as giving certain figures to show the enormous gulf between the wages of white and black mine workers: 24,000 white miners earned £ 800,000 and 200,000 black miners earned £ 5,962,000, but in fact this means that all earned more or less the same. I think a zero has gone missing somewhere.

I have really only one criticism to make of this splendid book. Merriman died on August 1st 1926 at the age of eighty-five. General Hertzog and his National Party, aided by Labour, came to power in June 1924. Mrs Lewsen makes almost no mention of this historic event. Was Merriman past caring, or was he past making penetrating observations of the times? In any event we are not told of his own reaction to Hertzog's accession. I found this omission, if it was an omission, somewhat strange.

Mrs Lewsen has made me question the stature of one of my heroes. When I think of Louis Botha, I recall always the tribute paid by Smuts at Botha's graveside - "the greatest, cleanest, sweetest soul of all the land, of all my days". But Mrs Lewsen portrays him otherwise. According to her he was capable of being sulky, stubborn, bad-tempered, and he was very ambitious. She does not show him as the bluff and charming personality seen by Engelenburg. The truth is that no good biography of Botha has ever been written. I shall have to suspend judgement.

Students of South African history, if they have not already read this book, have a treat in store for them. □

KANGWANE AND INGWAVUMA THE SWAZI VIEW

by John Watt

The land deal issue has shed an interesting side-light on an important aspect of Swazi society - the power of paternalism in this tiny kingdom.

When the initial bare details of the land deal were made known here early this year the reaction of the man in the street, possibly vaguely aware of the traditional Swazi claims to land currently across its borders, but probably quite unaware, was of surprised pleasure, but not much more. As the implications of the deal - such as the addition of 800,000 new citizens to the present 550,000 population - became apparent, debate developed.

The local newspaper, the Times of Swaziland, published comments from Swazi and expatriate businessmen operating here, and the doubts began to emerge. There was no questioning of Swaziland's main claim to the two areas of land on historical grounds. But doubts were expressed about the development of the two areas of land involved in the proposed deal. One Swazi said of the Ka-Ngwane area: 'I have looked at the map and I can see nothing but rocks and mountains there.....' Other Swazis questioned the exclusion in the admittedly speculative maps published of towns such as Barberton, Carolina and even Nelspruit.

The hard-headed response of an experienced businessman here was: 'I don't know how much development has been achieved in those areas. But I think it's far less than we have achieved here. With the 800,000 new people, the nature of the whole country could change overnight. Unless there is a sizeable dowry, it's going to lower the standard of living in this country.'

A university student brought up the obvious point that South Africa was establishing a neat buffer area between the Republic and Mozambique.

At this point the firm hand of paternalism fell. Foreign Minister, Mr Richard Velapi Dlamini called senior members of the newspapers, radio and television and reminded them in strong terms that when 83-year-old King Sobhuza had informed the Nation of the land deal in March, his Ministry had issued a statement saying: 'The general public is warned that the subject of border and boundary adjustment is handled by His Majesty the King advised by his government. through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The public is, therefore, warned that nothing outside the official statement made by His Majesty at Lozithehlezi Palace on March 19 through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, should be said in this regard.' The point was taken, and from that time the media refrained from publishing or broadcasting comments critical of the deal from within Swaziland, although critical comments from outside the country were and are still published.

Internally, the official mood was reflected recently by the Times of Swaziland again, when it published a panoramic picture of Kosi Bay on its front page, accompanied by the headline: This Will Be Ours.

The media also covered meetings, arranged by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with refugees from the Ingwavuma area who explained that they had fled because of harassment in KwaZulu, and a desire to pledge their allegiance to King Sobhuza. Estimates of the numbers of these refugees from the Ingwavuma area vary, but the Representative of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Swaziland would probably agree to a figure of 12 to 13,000 some of whom have been in the kingdom since 1976, when South Africa formally declared the Ingwavuma area part of KwaZulu. The distress and poverty of the Ingwavuma refugees is indisputable and their stories of harassment appear genuine to observers.

Within government itself, feelings are not clear. The 'No discussion' warning by Foreign Minister Dlamini applies to Cabinet too, and no Minister has made any comment on social implications, although the Minister of Health, for example, faced with the possibility of 800,000 extra Swazis, must have some apprehensive thoughts on the matter. Apart from Foreign Minister Dlamini, spokesmen authorised to pronounce on the land deal are Dr Sishayi Nxumalo, highly experienced politician, back-bench Member of Parliament, and Roving Ambassador for King Sobhuza, and Dr George Msibi, a back-bench MP who has been closely involved in the land deal talks since they began. Both stress the historical justifications for the inclusion of these pieces of land into Swaziland, but say little about the social implications, or the political connotations.

Similarly, little mention has been made of any economic disadvantages or advantages of the deal, apart from a tentative suggestion by Dr Msibi that at last Swaziland will have, in Kosi Bay, its own outlet to the sea.

The fury of the Zulu people, and of a large number of South Africans, has somewhat surprised Swaziland. It has been suggested by the powerful triumverate authorised to speak on the issue, that this reaction is being fuelled by the English language Press, which, a recent statement said, has a vested interest in opposing any major move proposed by the Nationalist government. The explanation is plausible, but academic to most Swazis, who are probably more concerned with the wrath of four million Zulus.

Nonetheless, the approach chosen by authority in Swaziland appears to have been successful within the kingdom. There has been little discussion on the issue, which, it has now been established, is a matter for King Sobhuza, advised by his traditional councillors and governments, to decide. The Swazi nation has been urged to be united on the land deal, and there is no doubt about the stand on which it should be united. The power of paternalism, that vital thread in Swazi society, has thus far prevailed. □

CULTURE AND RESISTANCE

by Marie Dyer (Pictures in this and the following article by Joe Alfers)

South Africa is a country in which the police attack and shoot school children, communities have their houses bulldozed and wrecked and are dumped on the veld, thousands of migrant workers live out their lives in almost total isolation from their families, hundreds of people are imprisoned without trial, many of them die . . . . . What are painters, musicians, photographers, theatrical workers, writers, to make of all this? What are their roles? How can they engage with these conditions through their art, relate to the communities in which they occur, and prepare for a future without them? These were the questions that the festival and symposium 'Culture and Resistance' and the exhibition 'Art towards Social Development' sought to respond to.

Wilson "King Force" Silgee

Many months ago some South African artists, musicians and writers in Gaborone had conceived the idea of bringing together into the town first a collection of socially-directed South African fine art and photography, then, as the project expanded, the artists themselves as well, and then, even more ambitiously, workers in other cultural fields, for a major series of displays and discussions. In the final achievement of these aims the exhibition was on display from June until August 1982 with the symposium and festival taking over the University campus – and much of the town – from the 5th to the 9th of July. No single institution arranged it all: the organisers emphasised the collective nature of all decisions. Seven international donor and volunteer agencies had provided financial assistance.

Hundreds of participants and observers streamed into the town in early July, most of them accommodated in the economically – even austerely – designed but pleasant and comfortable environment of the University. The campus is a spreading complex of low concrete-and-whitewash buildings covering many acres and joined by colonnaded covered ways. The symposium discussions were held in the students, union - a large light hall with small gaps in the high louvred windows through which creepers dropped inside the walls and little birds occasionally flew in and out. Outside the hall one of the campus's many courtyards containing benches and alcoves covered with shadecloths and sheltered with creepers was continually busy with meetings, registrations, book sales, lunch-hour performances and heated discussions. The capacious university refectory, opening off the same courtyard, dealt efficiently and good-humouredly with the fluctuating hundreds who attended. It was an atmosphere very appropriately conducive to free and open contact and discussion.

The festival took place both in the University and all over town. Films were shown every afternoon in lecture theatres; and every evening concerts, musical shows and plays were offered at four or five venues on the campus and in the town. The scale and scope of all this were very impressive indeed.

The symposium consisted of papers, panel discussions and open debates in sessions devoted to separate media - Fine Arts, Photography, Film, Music, Dance, Writing and the Novel, Poetry, and Theatre. The panels were large and varied: nearly all members were South Africans, many living in South Africa but many exiles, all practitioners concerned with culture and resistance, relevance and commitment.

Discussions in all sessions were wide-ranging. There was continuing effort to define the significance of cultural work in the larger struggle; continuing consciousness of the temptations to believe on the one hand that the walls of Apartheid would fall, as it were, to the sound of the

Junction Avenue Theatre Company in "Marabi"

trumpet or the poem, and on the other that nothing but aggressive political action could have any substantial effect on events. Lines from Arthur Nortje quoted in the opening speech opened this theme:

> some of us must storm the castles
> some define the happening.

And speakers also reverted continually to the recognition that the major victims of Apartheid were the people 'out there' — the migrant workers, the squatters, the re-settlement-camp dwellers, the prisioners — in comparison with whose sufferings the difficulties and distresses of artists were inconsiderable. (The recent deaths of striking mineworkers in whose memory the meeting on one occasion stood in silence, were mournful reminders of this truth.)

Although discussions were usually respectful and even cordial, there were many evidences of differences and dissensions, sometimes partly or wholly submerged, between both panellists and participants, speakers and audiences. In her paper Nadine Gordimer suggested the inevitability of both the discord and its submergence in her description of the pass laws as 'grim unifiers.' The point that she developed from this — that the post-apartheid culture would have to be one which both blacks and whites actively chose and wanted to be a part of — was perhaps not given enough consideration in the symposium as a whole. There was a greater concentration on the present culture of the emergency — a concern rather with the ways of saying 'no' than with the description of what we were preparing to say 'yes' to.

The most insistently repeated theme, however, was that art must not be elitist; that artists in all media must come to think of themselves as 'cultural workers'. Thus, for instance, photographers and filmmakers were urged to share their skills with people in nearby communities — not so much to move into a neighbourhood and record its life, however impressively, as to give the people in the neighbourhood themselves opportunities and access to skills and equipment so that those with talent and interest could take their own pictures and record and interpret their own lives. (As an immediate result of these suggestions a photographic workshop was held on one of the symposium days in which photographers exchanged ideas, and more experienced exponents offered technical advice; and lists were made, for subsequent circulation, of all institutions, groups or individuals who could offer facilities to aspirant film-makers.)

There were queries and challenges posed about the cultural use and function of the big formal painting selling at a high price, as opposed to informal posters and prints with a more direct and accessible content for cheap exhibition and distribution among poor people.

With discussions on music we reached a medium which seemed to have the potential to unite the fragmented people of South Africa in a common experience; (but further complexities were revealed in the mention of a community whose own culture of resistance consists in a deliberate and calculated rejection of all Western influences and a strict adherence to traditional modes.) There was some debate about whether music — as distinct from its lyrics or its associations — could carry any intelligible message, and whether it could be used most valuably in combination with poetry and drama. There was discussion about the paralysing domination of the big recording and distributing companies (not to mention the SABC) who avoided any polemical material and thus effectively silenced progressive or radical composers or musicians. A practical suggestion was made by a worker from a radio station in Swaziland, who recommended that tapes instead of commercially produced discs be sent to the independent broadcasting stations who would play them if they were good. A determination to take cultural boycots seriously

was evinced by all participants (and a resolution to this effect was passed in the final session of the symposium.) Practical strategies discussed were first urging overseas artists not to come and local groups not to back them up if they did come, and then in the last resort arranging concerts with the most popular local bands available in competition with the overseas artists on the same dates.

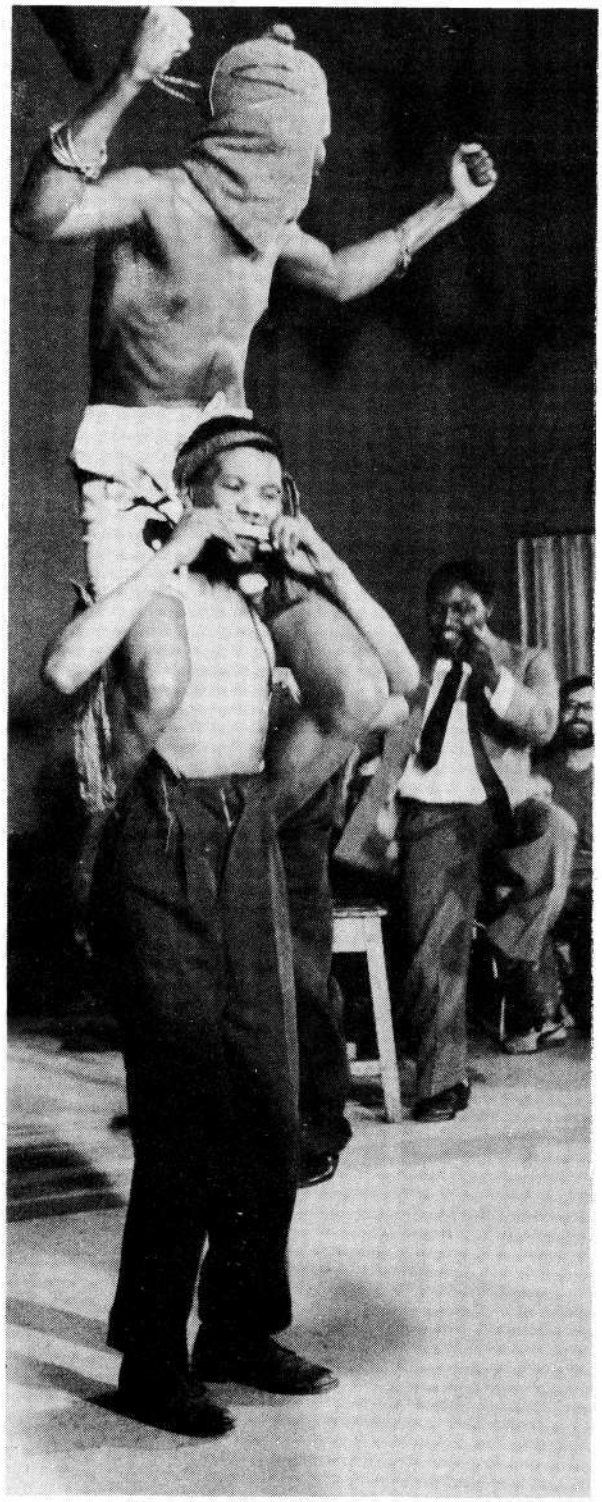
There was some criticism of the novel as itself an elitist form; but a panellist from Zimbabwe recalled that when writing had been censored in the previous regime 'subversive' novels read aloud from the back of vans had been very popular with audiences (and had created quite a reading public after liberation.) In the poetry discussions several poets made very humble literary claims for their own works and those of many fellow writers, suggesting that since they were directed at a very specific situation of crisis, few would survive; and asserting that after liberation poets would be proud first of having contributed to the struggle and only second of perhaps having written some pieces with enough eloquence and power to be memorable beyond the present. But the implicit suggestion in this assertion of the existence of absolute or universal literary standards was vehemently contested from the floor.

These exchanges perhaps revealed something of a pattern in the symposium. The emphasis in all discussions was placed heavily on the value of the social and political contents of the cultural works as opposed to their artistic forms. But the panellists themselves still seemed to accept as a major part of their task – perhaps even a definition of their activities – the effort to integrate these aspects. Uncompromising exhortations to neglect or abandon attention to form came usually from the audience.

The problem of practical distribution of writers' works (a problem endemic to South African artists in all media since the money and the big institutions are controlled by the other side) was confronted again in the literature discussions. Although the sympathetic attitudes of several South African publishers were referred to (and mention was made particularly of Ravan Press) there were proposals and recommendations for informal co-operative ventures into publishing, with economical standards of printing and binding, to reach a larger local market.

This brief and perhaps arbitrary overview of some trends in the discussions doesn't attempt to do any justice to the quality of the formal papers presented to the symposium, by among others – Keorapetse Kgositsile, Gavin Jantjes, Barry Gilder, Muff Anderson, Dikobe Martins, Keyan Tomaselli, Peter McKenzie, Nadine Gordimer, Richard Rive, Chris van Wyk, James Matthews; and of the informal contributions made by among others, Mongane Serote, George Hallett, David Goldblatt, Bill Ainslie, Paul Weinberg, Lindiwe Mabuza. The organisers hope to produce a book about the occasion; we hope we will be able to read it.

After the symposium sessions every evening the festival began. Several films were screened every day. A highly professional BBC documentary 'To the last drop of blood' presented the background to, and accounts of, the military determination and preparedness of both sides in the South African conflict, containing interviews with Nationalist politicians and Defence Force officers and some with carefully anonymous commanders and soldiers from guerilla camps in the bush. In contrast to this, a very moving record of Neil Aggett's funeral had apparently been shot (largely



Junction Avenue Theatre Company in 'Marabi"

from the back of a motor-bike) by one cameraman with a Super-8. 'You have struck a rock' – an impressively well-researched film on protests against women's passes – included interviews and comments from surviving participants and an extraordinary amount of contemporary film illustrating and documenting almost every meeting, march and police charge mentioned in the commentary. There were films – one couldn't possible see them all – on the Freedom Charter, the destruction of Pageview, Student protests of the 70's, the SACC, South African musical groups, the life and achievements of Sol Plaatjie, and a version of Nadine Gordimer's short story 'Six Feet of the Country'.

The "live shows" were presented later in the evenings. There was a short formal mime on the subject of oppression and rebellion (equally effective on a stage and in the courtyard.) In contrast there were several 'workshop' plays, expansively constructed with superbly realistic character acting: it was positively alarming to sit across the breakfast table from a spruce young man whom one had actually witnessed in the last stages of meths addiction the previous night. In most plays there was the characteristic 'township' blend of comedy, tragedy and satire, so that, for example, a trade unionist whose single-mindedness and assiduity had been the subjects of jokes and ironic mockery through several scenes ended the play arrested, assaulted and hanging from his handcuffs. In another hall expressionist modern ballet shared a programme with perhaps rather too much South-African-Ethnic but splendidly performed traditional dances. We heard the Fulani poets, who, either in specific performances or spontaneously in a crowd, called out their lines sometimes individually, sometimes antiphonally, perhaps narrating some event of 1976 or expressing the loneliness of a worker in a hostel: 'Think of me when you are with your lover.....'

The high point for musical aficionados was the presence of Abdullah Ibrahim (formerly Dollar Brand). He appeared twice, opening his first programme with a poignant vocal lament for Solomon Mahlangu. A thousand people, including President Masire, attended his second concert; and distinguished South African musicians (including Hugh Masekela) from Johannesburg, Gaborone, and Europe played for them to dance all night. King Force, the leader of the Alexandra-based Jazz Maniacs in the 1940's, with his saxophone and benign white beard, was one of the favourite personalities of both festival and symposium.

The art exhibition was a sort of background to the whole: again enormous in scope, with the works of sixty artists and thirty photographers spread over two halls. (To visit it properly one had to miss at least one full symposium session.) The themes of resistance, social development, social protest were common to all works; but for the rest the range of approach, styles and techniques was immense: sculpture in several media, oils and water colours, collages, graphics, prints, posters, portraits, caricatures, urban scenes, expressionist designs, — and more. The experience of the exhibition was large, complex and disturbing.

For observers this was a mind-stretching week. To be free of the colour-bar was exhilarating for a start; to be in a country whose government has obvious care and concern for its poor rural people was another bonus; to be in a community with some of the best talents South Africa has produced, and to see and hear them in action, and in contact rare enough to be historic, was a perpetual pleasure and excitement. I can't speak for the participants, I would guess that the suggestions made and contact established for day-to-day practical action were immensely valuable. (Another resolution in the final session called for the division of South Africa into cultural regions in which artists could maintain contact with communities and with each other). More generally Abdullah Ibrahim's characteristically forceful description on the function of festival, symposium and exhibition may have found a response: "a de-programming centre intended to get rid of the century of junk with which imperialist culture has filled your mind."

Every pleasure had its obverse in its relationship to the abominable South African systems which we were temporarily free from or permanently proposing to resist, but for artists this temporary freedom must surely have been revitalising. Those who usually live within the horrors and constraints of Apartheid stayed for a little time with those who usually lived within the agonies and constraints of exile, and for both it must have been a tiny mutual glimpse of liberation. □

Jazz concert with Hugh Masekela

WRITING TOWARDS A COMMON FUTURE

by David Robbins

Richard Rive

Nadine Gordimer

What is the state of South African writing today? Is it essential to see it in strictly defined compartments, the one Black, the other White? Will it be possible, at some point in the future, to forge a common literature? These, and many other related questions, were dealt with in key papers delivered by two of the country's most prominent writers, Nadine Gordimer and Richard Rive, at the Culture and Resistance symposium held in Gaborone in July this year. While Rive confined himself to "the role of the Black writer in South Africa", Gordimer offered an often chilling overview not only of the current situation for White and Black writers but of the problems which will confront them, and the state of art generally, in the "post-apartheid" era of the future.

Both speakers agreed that the relationship between literature and the specific conditions and divisions in South African life defined the pre-occupations and dilemmas of writers, on whatever side of the colour line. "The nature of contemporary art here, in the aspect of subject-matter, is didactic, apocalyptic, self-pitying, self-accusatory as much as indicting. Apartheid, in all its manifestations....informs the ethos of what is produced," Gordimer said. Rive's opinion was that: "The position in which the Black writer finds himself prescribes a special role for him. He must explore his environment and if it is a discriminatory environment he must explore the origins, effect and consequences of that discrimination."

Or Gordimer again: "Innate creativity can be falsified, trivialised, deflected, conditioned, stifled, deformed and even destroyed by the State, and the state of society it decrees. It is from the daily life of South Africa that have come the conditions of profound alienation which prevail among South African artists. The sum of the various states of alienation IS the nature of art in South Africa." By "various states of alienation", she clearly meant that both Black and White writers were alienated, but in completely different ways. "The Black artist," she explained, "lives in a society that has rejected his culture for hundreds of years." But he is now using this alienation, in other words his own Blackness, as the "inevitable point of departure towards his true selfhood".

For the Black artist, social relevance is the supreme criterion, because it is only in terms of this relevance that

his work will be judged by other Blacks. "And they are the supreme authority since it is only through them that he can break his alienation." But Gordimer pointed out that relevance in this sense and "in the context of the absolutes placed upon the Black artist by the new post-apartheid society to which he is dedicated" had another demand. "Struggle is the state of the Black collective consciousness and art is its weapon. The Black artist accepts this as the imperative of his time. Weapons are inevitably expected to be used within an orthodoxy prescribed for the handling of such things. "There is therefore a kit of reliable emotive phrases for writers, a ready-made aesthetic for painters and sculptors, an unwritten index of subjects for playwrights and a list of approved images for photographers. But agitprop (agitation/propaganda) binds the artist with the means by which it aims to free the minds of the people. It licences a phony sub-art."

Rive expressed something similar when he warned that if the Black writer restricted himself to one viewpoint he could "skate perilously near to outright propaganda and dogma. He might be sacrificing HOW it must be said for WHAT must be said and not realise that the two are indistinguishable. If he confines himself to a viewpoint, his creativity must suffer." Yet Rive stressed that the Black writer could not remove himself from the realities of South African life and deal only with abstract universalities.

"If he ignores the society in which he functions and ignores the problems of that society, is he not open to the accusation that he has abdicated from his responsibility as a human and concentrated on his art?" Rive pointed out that Jane Austen had written novels during the Napoleonic wars, but "Waterloo was thousands of miles and centuries removed from the quiet of Austen's Mansfield Park and Northanger Abbey". Soweto, Guguletu and Bonteheuwel, on the other hand, are "in and around us and are happening to us at this very moment". The writer should use his writing to create and maintain a climate within which he hopes meaningful change will become effective, he said. "The role of the writer is to expose ruling class motives and give shape and direction for the future."

It was comparatively easy, Gordimer suggested, to create a people's art during a period when the central experience of all was oppression by a ruling class. But what will happen when oppression is shaken off and "experience breaks up into differing categories of class-experience"? In answering this, Gordimer said that the avowed Black aim of creating a culture springing from the people, and not an elite, involved a rejection of European-based White culture which has been seen as an interruption in the progression of pre-colonial African culture. In the words of Rive: "Part of the colonialising process is to deny a subject people access to their past, either by cutting them off from it or by making them ashamed of it."

But unless Black artists can achieve "a strong organic synthesis" between the past and the technological present, "recognised as something distinct from the inherent threat of all-White culture", their art will be merely nostalgic, Gordimer said. "There will be an hiatus between modern life and art for them, and they will be in danger of passing into a new phase of alienation." Rive, too, touched on the same subject. Once the post-apartheid future had been realised, he said, the Black writer "would have other problems to face and other battles to fight".

And what of the present state of alienation and the problems confronting the White writer? Gordimer spoke of his "double alienation", the first from his own White-based society whose values he sees to be in an "unrecognised state of alienation" and from which, for a generation at least, he has rebelled; and second from Black culture which cannot accept him since it is consciously seeking to define itself "without reference to those values that his (the White writer's) very presence among Blacks represents". "For a long time the White artist assumed that the objective reality by which his relevance was to be measured was somewhere out there between and encompassing Black and White," she said. "Now he finds that no such relevance exists. The Black has withdrawn from a position where art, as the White saw it, assumed the liberal role of conciliator between oppressor and oppressed. If the White artist is to break out of his double alienation . . . if he is to find his true consciousness and express in his work the realities of his place and time . . . he has to admit openly the order of his experience as a White as differing completely from the order of Black experience."

Gordimer explained that this involved finding a different way, from that open to the Black artist, of reconnecting his art to the total reality of the "disintegrating present", and yet to attempt the same position his Black counterpart aims for in terms of his relevance to commonly-created cultural entities corresponding to a common reality – in other words an indigenous culture. Gordimer suggested that the White artist could perhaps take his place in an indigenous culture of the future by acknowledging that the implicit nature of the artist is as an agent of change. He should be "always moving towards truth, true consciousness, because art itself is fixed on the attainment of that essence of things." It was the artist's nature to want to change the world, she said. "The revolutionary sense, in artistic terms, is the sense of totality, the conception of a 'whole' world. Whether this 'whole' world is the place where Black and White culture might become something other, wanted by both Black and White, is a question we at this conference cannot answer; only pursue." □

THOSE THE GODS WISH TO DESTROY

A few comments on the current political scene by M.A. Tarr, M.P. Pietermaritzburg South.

Two important events overshadowed the 1982 session of Parliament. The first was the split in the Nationalist Party and the formation of the new right wing Conservative Party under the leadership of Dr. A.P. Treurnicht. This split has more far reaching consequences than any other previous split in Nationalist ranks such as for example the break-away of the Hertzog group and subsequent formation of the Herstigte Nasionale Party. Firstly there is little doubt that the Conservatives enjoy widespread support, particularly in rural areas. Surveys show this support to be in the region of 18 percent of the popular vote with potential for growth. As a result of this it has not been possible to expel or remove Conservatives from many organisations such as the Broerderbond and D.R.C. Churches who traditionally support the Government. The effect of this has been to reduce the political significance of these bodies. They no longer represent the rallying points for the Nationalists which they used to because they themselves are divided.

The second event was the long awaited report of the President's Council. These two events are of course not unrelated. The split was over the issue of power sharing and the P.C. report advocated a limited form of power sharing. Any form of power sharing however departs from the basic philosophy of the Conservatives and is thus totally unacceptable. Thus while the P.C. report and recommendations showed little change from the status quo for most South Africans what little progress there was in moving towards power sharing and a more just society was too much for the Conservatives. To a certain extent the split opened up the debate in Parliament. Government speakers showed a greater willingness to engage in constructive debate with the opposition. This was in marked contrast to previous sessions where speakers simply spoke past one another and engaged in pointless acrimony. Another effect was that the Government found itself looking at a mirror image of itself a few years ago. Hopefully this proved a sobering experience for some of the Nationalist members. The Government also found themselves being attacked from both sides. They in defending themselves against the Conservatives often had to put forward views in favour of ideas they themselves recently opposed (mixed sports clubs for example). On the other hand when attacked by the P.F.P. they were no longer able to find refuge in the racialistic ideology of old, now championed by the Conservatives. Increasingly they tried to justify themselves on rational grounds : a not very easy task.

THE BUTHELEZI COMMISSION REPORT

This report also saw the light of day during the current session of Parliament and also proved to be a historic document. The terms of reference of the Buthelezi Commission were to make recommendations relating to the future political and economic dispensation for Natal. To the extent however that their findings could also relate to the rest of South Africa it is interesting to compare the Buthelezi Commission and Presidents Council.

The first and most important difference between the two was representativeness. The Buthelezi Commission endeavoured to include as wide a spectrum of opinion and representation as possible. Bodies such as the Nationalist Party that did not serve or give evidence to the Buthelezi Commission did so of their own choice, not because they were not asked. On the other hand Black South Africans were specifically excluded from the President's Council. In addition most members of the President's Council were nominated.

There is little doubt that many of these nominated members cannot claim to represent the communities they are purported to. The P.F.P. also of course refused to serve on the P.C. just as the Nationalist Party refused to have a representative on the Buthelezi Commission. There is however a fundamental difference in the reasons. The P.F.P. refused because of the exclusion of the Black South Africans while the Nationalists refused because of their philosophy of finding different political structures to accomodate Whites and Blacks.

The second fundamental difference was the basic philosophy behind the two reports. The Buthelezi Commission started from the standpoint of full and equal citizenship rights for all South Africans. Having accepted this the problem was to design a Constitution which would ensure that the goals of full and equal citizenship rights for all were achieved and at the same time eliminate the possibility of minority groups being dominated in any adverse way. Consensus was finally reached and all the bodies represented on the Commission except the New Republic Party signed and accepted the report. On the other hand the P.C. does not subscribe to the principle of full and equal citizenship rights for all. This is apparent by the exclusion of Blacks and also equally apparent in their first report where for example the retention of the Group Areas Act and thus by implication the Population Registration Act is recommended.

It is thus hard to imagine how any constitutional proposals emanating from the P.C. can enjoy any legitimacy or chance of long term acceptance or success among Black South Africans. On the other hand constitutional proposals emanating from the Buthelezi Commission because of its composition and basic philosophy are far more likely to enjoy general acceptance and provide a foundation for a future legitimate constitution.

The only rational grounds on which it might be possible to exclude Blacks from the P.C. are if it would be possible to meet Black aspirations within the framework of independent homelands. This of course is National Party philosophy. Black people will have to exercise political rights through their respective homelands and cease to be South African citizens. This philosophy it could be argued may even possibly work if the homelands were economically viable and able to support their populations. This is clearly not the case. Most Blacks will continue to live and work outside the homelands. The homelands are totally dependent on grants from the S.A. Government.

Black labour is the backbone of our industrial economy and will soon make up the bulk of the skilled labour corps. Most Black people want full and equal South African citizenship rights. They are becoming increasingly militant in their demands and this will be expressed through all channels open to them legitimate or otherwise. The homelands, self governing or independent states, call them what you wish, cannot meet Black aspirations which, when all is said and done are no more that the right of every individual to enjoy full citizenship rights in his country of birth.

The exclusion of Blacks from the P.C. together with the fact that the homelands are not going to satisfy black aspirations represents an exercise in delusion on the part of the Nationalist Party. There are no rational grounds to expect their policy will work. The only grounds on which they are based are ideological prejudices and the problem faced by Nationalists is not one of constructing a new constitution but a logistical one. The question is simply; while we continue to adhere to the basic philosophy of apartheid, how long can we hold out? Smith held out for 16 years in Rhodesia. Pressures and forces for change grow at an exponential rate. It does not seem likely that the Nationalists in South Africa can hold out much longer.

THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS

The recent proposals by the Prime Minister seem to be a belated recognition that people of other colour must be included in the power structure. Looked at in isolation the new proposals do represent an advance insofar as Indians and Coloureds are concerned. Never before have these two groups been directly involved in the decision making process with Whites. The proposed new constitution has however been carefully structured to ensure that it is dominated by White Nationalists so in practice little has really changed. The fatal flaw in the proposals is again the exclusion of Blacks. The proposed new constitution thus has within it the seeds of sowing increasing racial polarisation between Blacks and other groups. This is the reason for the rejection of the plan by the P.F.P. In rejecting the plan the P.F.P. is not opting for an all or nothing strategy. It is also not unmindful of the problems being faced by the Prime Minister. Were he to have included Blacks in his proposed new dispensation on the same basis as Coloured and Indians it is unlikely that he would be Prime Minister today. Following from this the argument runs that in the circumstances the Prime Minister deserves support from the White electorate for his initiatives. This the P.F.P. cannot allow to happen for two reasons. Firstly it would represent an unacceptable compromise on its principles. Such a step would also destroy any trust which the Party has built up with other groups including its own White supporters. In the current climate in South Africa any links and trust that has been established between groups no matter how fragile must be nurtured. Secondly support for the Prime Minister now reduces the pressure for change which is so desperately needed. It reduces the pull from the bodies opting for change and makes him more mindful of the pull exerted by the Conservatives. It is thus imperative that the P.F.P. continue to exert pressure for change in the direction dictated by the best interests of all South Africans. We would be failing in our duty to South Africa were we to be seduced by the Prime Minister and his current initiatives.

REFORM OF SOUTH AFRICA

Recent years have been filled with much talk and rhetoric about reform. Newspaper reports give the impression that the current constitutional proposals are only the beginning of a process of reform. The same reports talk of the "hidden agenda" for reform which the Prime Minister dare not disclose at present for fear of losing support. He and his Government must apparently gradually "condition" Nationalist supporters to the idea of change.

This argument is one which is also swallowed by the more gullible. It is only necessary to study some of the legislation passed during the last session to dispel any illusions of a government bent on reform.

To start with the last session saw the passage of the Internal Security Bill. This Bill saw the consolidation of all previous security measures rather than any meaningful improvements or changes. Provisions for indefinite detention without trial, house arrests and bannings of individuals at the Minister's discretion still remain. Publications and organisations which the Minister deems are a threat to the security of the State can also be banned. Other legislation was also passed aimed at bolstering the position of the Government. One piece of legislation which was not passed in its original form was the Registration of Newspapers Amendment Bill. This piece of legislation arose out of the Steyn Commission Report and clearly illustrated the Government paranoia about imposing some curbs on the press. The Bill originally sought to establish a Statutory Body which would exert disciplinary measures over the press. Vigorous opposition from the P.F.P. and all sections of the press resulted in the Government back tracking and making certain amendments to the original Bill. The statutory body which the Bill originally sought to create is now a voluntary one and the immediate threat to the press from this source is over. The Government over the years has however passed numerous laws all of which restrict in some way the right of the press to report events. This obsession with controlling the press or forcing it to censor and discipline itself can aptly be summed up in the saying; Show me a country's press and I will tell you what sort of Government it has. The opposite is also true. Show me the Government and I will tell you what sort of press a country has. The Laws on Co-operation and Development Bill is another Bill which was passed and limits the public's access to knowledge. This Bill provides for secrecy in connection with matters dealt with by the Commission for Co-operation and Development. This Commission deals mainly with land consolidation and when one considers recent events in Ingwavuma it is easy to understand the desire for secrecy.

Many other Bills of a similar nature to the above were also passed during the last session. They were all aimed at either withholding information about Government actions from the Public or on the other hand restricting public opposition to the Government. Examples of such Bills are Demonstrations In or Near Court Building Prohibition Bill, the Intimidation Bill and the Protection of Information Bill. All these Bills contained measures which most societies would consider reasonable but they also contained other measures extending the discretionary powers of the Minister far beyond what most societies would regard as acceptable.

Yet another disturbing piece of legislation passed this session was the Defence Amendment Bill. Much has been written and said about this piece of legislation. There are certain positive features such as the more even distribution of the

defence burden among whites but the overall effect is to make provision for a drastic increase in military service. Obviously the Government are planning for the worst possible scenario. What the Government should do is to create a just and fair society. It would then not be necessary to have such a large defence committment and the defence load could be and would be gladly carried by all South Africans. The passage of the above Bills should dispel any illusions one may have of a Government bent on reform. One can only assume that increasing unrest is expected. The foregoing legislation is obviously designed to cope with the symptoms not with the basic cause of the problems in South Africa.

In support of this legislation South Africans have been subjected to the constant refrain about the total onslaught which is facing us. There is little doubt that such a total onslaught exists. What the Government will not or cannot appreciate is that the roots of the total onslaught lie in their policies. They provide the fuel on which South Africa's enemies thrive and which polarises South Africans. The Governments' inability to recognise this fact has led to passage of the above and all other repressive legislation in South Africa. The philosophy seems to be that; If the message is bad, kill the messenger. Legislation of the above nature is not the sort of legislation which a government bent on reform would pass. Rather it is the type of legislation that a Government bent on forcing through its policies would pass. It is the type of legislation to be expected from a Government which is losing the legitimacy to govern.

Envisaged legislation for 1983 does nothing to dispel this. The 1982 session saw the passage of the Black Local Authorities Bill one of the original Koornhof Bills that were withdrawn. This Bill is the first in a series of bills aimed at controlling and regulating the lives of Black people in White areas. The Bill was generally welcomed because for the first time Black Local Authorities have the same powers as White Local Authorities. In addition they are now able to have freehold land in White Areas. Draft versions of the other two bills (The Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill and the Black Communities Development Bill) have now been published and instead of making it easier for a Black to have permanent residence rights in a White area make it more difficult. These bills taken together strengthen the conviction that the Government will force through its policies no matter what. There are also no indications that the Government intends altering its policy on resettlement and Black spot removals. These policies have caused more human misery and suffering than any others. One wonders how many Nationalist M.P's for example have ever been to places like Thornhill in the Ciskei. Or it is a case of out of sight out of mind?

The Government handling of the Ingwavuma land deal with Swaziland is also a point in question. At no stage was there any consultation with KwaZulu. Their motivation seems to be two pronged. Firstly the proposed Ingwavuma hand-over is obviously tied to the Ka Ngwane deal. When Ka Ngwane becomes part of Swaziland nearly one million South African Swazis will lose their South African Citizenship. As a quid pro quo for accepting one million new citizens Ingwavuma was the bait. This is in line with Government policy of having no Black South African Citizens. The second reason appears to be, to provoke Kwa Zulu into accepting independence by showing them how little power they have at present and humiliating their leadership. This issue clearly illustrates the Government committment to its ideology.

At present we are thus faced with a Government which will not see the facts as they are in South Africa. Instead of formulating policies to deal with our problems and promoting a harmonious multiracial society they instead formulate policies that cope with the symptoms of our disease and policies based on their own fears and ideology. In the long run they will solve nothing. What is needed is a clearly defined acceptable goal towards which all South Africans can work. There is the old saying which goes; Those whom the Gods wish to destroy they first make mad. Let us hope that sanity prevails before the final madness overtakes us.□

DR K'S CLARIFICATION

I am a Christian.
I am Minister of Co-operation.
I obey my God and pray to him.
I see my position as one of great responsibility.
I regard all men as my brothers.
I insist on the implementation of my Department's policy.
I am a humble man: let no-one misjudge me.
I cannot tolerate exceptions to our regulations.
It is malicious to say that I do not live by my faith.
It is foolish to say that we should not move a million blacks.
It is illogical to use my actions as arguments against my faith and integrity.
The fact is that those people simply have to go.
My heart glows with love for my fellow men.
They have to go because it is our policy.
I thank God daily that I am not a hypocrite.
Our policy is Christian because it is logical.
I thank God that my belief permeates my life.
What are the small sufferings of some individuals against the beauty of a divine plan?
My Christian convictions comfort me.

Vortex

Thompson & Prior's SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS

(Cape Town, David Philip, 1982.)

Reviewed by Ralph Lawrence

Professor Leonard Thompson, a noted historian at Yale University, and Dr Andrew Prior, a specialist in South African politics at University of Cape Town, have collaborated to produce an interesting and informative survey of the South African political system. The authors (and their publishers) have succeeded in incorporating a considerable range of topics, discussed at a moderately sophisticated level, in a text of slightly less than 250 generously printed pages.

The unifying theme of **South African Politics** is the exercise of political power. This is analysed from the perspective of mainstream or orthodox comparative politics, suitably adapted to capture the character and dynamics of the political process in South Africa. A similar methodology shaped Thompson's earlier work, **Politics in the Republic of South Africa,** which first appeared in 1966.

Thompson and Prior begin by presenting the historical, demographic and economic context of political activity. Demographic trends indicate two factors of crucial political significance. First, the rate of increase of the African population far exceeds that of Whites; second, the growth of the urban areas. Given the wealth of the urban areas, the demand for labour and the inevitably high degree of social interaction between Whites and Blacks, these are the areas, the authors suggest, where South Africa's future political struggles will be waged. The hallmark of the South African economy is its strength and its inequality, which is primarily based on racial divisions. Political power and economic power sustain and nurture one another but political power predominates: economic strength serves political ends. There is little comfort here for those who hold that the growth of the capitalist economy will of its own accord erode racial barriers and lead eventually to the demise of the political structure of **apartheid.**

The next section of the book deals with the composition and processes of the major political institutions, national, regional and local, for Whites and for Blacks, including the 'independent homelands'. Their historical development is described to indicate how control of various provisions made for Blacks rests ultimately with the White Parliament in Cape Town and how Parliament enacts what the Prime Minister and his Cabinet decide. All this could be reinforced if the authors had indicated how power is actually exercised in decision-making on public policy and how the operations of the state distort the political process at the expense of the majority of the population. If the constitutional proposals unveiled by Mr P.W. Botha at the end of July do become law then this part of the book will need revision. Even so, the main theme holds. There is no evidence to suggest that the Nationalist government has any intention of sharing political power with anyone, although they are willing enough to shed territory and responsibilities. The retention of political power is pragmatic and the room for manoeuvre has been lessened even further by the defection earlier this year of some Nationalists to form the Conservative Party under the leadership of Dr Treurnicht.

In 'How the System Works' this country's political culture and organisation of political activity are examined. This reinforces the picture of how every resource is utilised to entrench political power in White hands in general and in Afrikaner Nationalist ones in particular. The explanation is based on a remarkably complicated interpretation of South African society. According to liberals, the main cleavages in our Society are racial; according to radicals, they are based on class, defined in economic terms. Thompson and Prior are closer to the liberal view. In their view, South Africa is a caste society, a pigmentocracy, with a rigid separation between the White caste and the African, Coloured and Asian castes. Each caste can be sub-divided in terms of class, based on socio-economic criteria, or in terms of ethnocultural criteria, which distinguishes between communities. The White caste is also an oligarchy with political power exercised by an 'inner oligarchy', the Afrikaner Nationalists. Little argument is advanced for this caste interpretation. In my opinion, greater accuracy and clarity of exposition would be achieved if this multitude of cleavages was explained by criteria of social class alone, with political power used to account for the ranking of classes.

The last quarter of **South African Politics** gives an overview of the internal and external pressures on the political system. This international dimension is valuable for all too often in comparative politics political systems are treated as if they operated in complete isolation from one another. I cannot go into detail here on the wide range of participants and forces striving to remake South Africa in their own image. Let me say, however, that no credence is given to the view that South Africa is facing the full blast of a 'total onslaught' carefully planned on a global scale by strategists in the Kremlin poring over maps with the aid of compasses and vodka.

Every South African political scientist is asked, 'How long before the Big Bang? Should I pack my bags or oil my rifle?'. Thompson and Prior almost resist the temptation to get out their crystal ball. But not quite. They forsee an ever-increasing reaction and counter reaction of Black resistance and White repression, expressed more and more violently. Sooner or later things will fall apart, but how, or when, or what the consequences will be, they do not say. Very wise.

If you want an almost brief, reliable guide to introduce you to the issues of South African politics, then this book is the best on offer at the moment. For those who desire more detail, there is no bibliography, but extensive references to further reading are incorporated in the footnotes. □

REALITY ON AFRICA

In this issue **Reality** begins a series of articles on African politics in which the authors will try to analyze the roots of politics in social and economic processes. There is so much loose talk about what 'experience in Africa' is supposed to 'prove' and so little understanding of what the problems are that are being addressed, of what options are available, and of what resources are to hand for pursuing social options. Moreover, the nature of conflict between groups about policy options and about the control of resources is so often obscure. And while pointing to 'tribalism' and 'corruption' as explanations may not be incorrect, it is usually not very illuminating. There are surely deeper layers of explanation which need to be unearthed. At least, if it turns out that the in-depth excavations themselves produce murky results, the added detail and the contextual descriptions produced ought to make behaviour appear more intelligible than it often does. Thus an attempt to analyze how 'tribal groups', 'classes', and 'regional populations' are related in Kenya (say) may bog down into serious conceptual and theoretical problems, but the attempt is likely to take one well beyond 'Kikuyu versus Luo' or 'capitalism in Africa'.

Of course all of this is easier to hope for than to produce. Scholars with detailed information are busy, and are accustomed to wider canvasses than we can offer here. In the nature of things deep excavations do not fit easily into short, pithy articles. However, we have been able to assemble some writers who are willing to start the series and we hope very much that others will come forward and offer to discuss countries they know well, or offer to redo countries or themes that have not been discussed satisfactorily.

We begin with a piece by Peter Wickins of the Department of Economic History at the University of Cape Town about some of the economic background to African experience in the last two decades. Dr. Wickins has recently published **An Economic History of Africa from the Earliest Times to Partition** (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1981), and his astringent comments are informed with scholarship. He opens up a series of issues which we hope will receive further treatment as the series develops.

Norman Bromberger

AFRICA'S ECONOMIC PROSPECTS ON THE RESUMPTION OF INDEPENDENCE: Constraints Inherited and Acquired.

by Peter Wickins

The decolonisation of Africa was compressed for the most part within half a dozen years. Such was the flamboyance, ambition and eloquence of Kwame Nkrumah that the independence of the Gold Coast (1957) is embedded in public memory as the opening of the floodgate. In fact this was not so. The year before colonial Gold Coast became the new state of Ghana, the French terminated their protectorate over Tunisia and Morocco and the British withdrew from the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. These, of course, were part of the Arab or arabised north, and their recovery of self-rule had been anticipated by the ending of British control of Egypt, a gradual process that began with the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 and reached completion under nationalist pressure in 1954. Libya was emancipated as early as 1951. By 1956 only Algeria among the Muslim nations remained in foreign hands, whose grip, however, was being bloodily contested in a conflict that was technically a civil war since the territory was administered as part of metropolitan France. Yet Ghana, though not the earliest beneficiary of European surrender of power, was the first black African state to be decolonised, apart from Ethiopia, which, as the last of the European conquests in Africa and the soonest liberated, experienced only five years of colonial rule.

The course of events that started with Ghana was virtually finished by 1961. After that there remained only the hard cases, countries with substantial European populations —, the Rhodesias (and their adjunct, Nyasaland), Kenya and South-West Africa — or countries with other pronounced racial or tribal divisions — Uganda and Zanzibar — or countries of small area or sparse population and of doubtful viability — the Gambia and the southern African protectorates. Then there were the colonies of Portugal, which displayed not the slightest intention of relinquishing them. The less intractable of these difficult problems were solved in the 1960's, leaving the really tough nuts to be cracked in the 1970's, notably the Portuguese territories and Southern Rhodesia. Now all that is left is Namibia, if South Africa itself is excluded from the category of colonial territories on the grounds of its substantial population of European descent, its three centuries' history of white settlement and its seventy odd years of self-government.

The newly-independent states of Africa — even the oldest still little more than a quarter of a century old — can be classified in more than one way for purposes of generalisation about their economic prospects at the dawn of independence. One way would be to differentiate between

those which began their new lives with a large European population and those which did not. Since, however, the rapid reduction of that group, or at least the substitution of temporary expatriate experts for permanently resident whites, was characteristic of the post-colonial developments in former colonies of European settlement, this is not an important source of difference in economic performance. It is more useful to distinguish the arabised north from black sub-Saharan Africa, not so much for cultural or racial reasons as on grounds of historical continuity. The Arab countries of the Mediterranean basin have a history of Muslim states lasting well beyond a millennium and, indeed, Egypt has experienced a history in which the Arab conquest itself was only one of a series of foreign dominations that began with the Hyksos in the 2nd millennium B.C. In such a perspective of time European rule was but a fleeting phase, scarcely more than a century even in the case of Algeria and much shorter in that of the rest of the north. Ottoman imperialism lasted a great deal longer. Thus, despite its prolonged and untypical struggle for independence, Algeria does not differ as much from the other Arab countries as they all differ from one another for quite separate reasons (e.g. in their political systems.) In contrast, the African states south of the desert were almost entirely the artificial creation of the clashes and compromises of European powers. Ethnic groups – the Somalis were a striking, but by no means unique, example – found themselves dispersed between two, or even among several, European colonies. So it was that, although there had evolved in pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. in West Africa, especially in the northern savanna) some powerful and efficient polities, there was no direct descent from them to new African nations. Some of the indigenous states were incorporated as administrative units into the European colonies subsequently endowed with nationhood (e.g. the emirates of Northern Nigeria and the kingdom of Buganda in Uganda) and a few retained a shadowy existence through the British practice of indirect rule, but their vitality had left them, submerged in the new heterogenous groupings.

The rawness of their statehood had two consequences for African states. One, the lesser, was that they were tempted to establish an identity by a spurious or at least doubtful link with an earlier, long vanished, empire: the Gold Coast with Ghana, Southern Rhodesia with Zimbabwe and Dahomey with Benin. In default of such pretensions, they saw advantage in demonstrating national status through expensive and sometimes vainglorious symbols of state prestige – auditoria for international conferences, air lines, extensive diplomatic representation and armed forces with the latest weapons. The more important consequence was that they were compelled to grapple with the problem – part of their colonial legacy – of welding into a single nation different tribes, often speaking different languages. Tribalism or regionalism is certainly not a problem confined to Africa, but it was presented in a particularly acute form. Europe itself, whose international and intranational conflicts (unlike Africa's) were not a sudden creation, but the product of centuries, has been far from successful in achieving harmony. Even the relationship between English and Scots remains delicate, while that between the Scotch Irish and the Celtic Irish is positively murderous. On the continent the Basques demand self-determination, the Walloons and the Flemings squabble, the Croats, Serbs and Jugoslav Albanians are held together in an unstable federation, and so forth. In many an African state tribes with a long tradition of mutual hostility were thrown precipitately into each other's arms, with sometimes the former dominant people (the Matabele, the Asante, the Baganda, the Watusi, etc.) cast in the subordinate role, and the problem of tribal dispute might well be aggravated by neigbourhood irredentism. If the colonial inheritance included any compensation, it was the gift of a lingua franca, French, English or Portuguese.

Among meretricious attempts at asserting national self-importance there was an objective that had more worthy, though mixed, motives. This was economic development, regarded as the second phase of progress towards true independence, as an exercise in state-building and as a means of improving living standards in conditions of rapid population growth. Development was not thought of simply as growth of national income or even as a rising per capita income. There was a strongly stated bias towards egalitarianism. The developed society was one without a gulf between rich and poor. Few African leaders, even those dedicated to the pursuit of personal enrichment in an economic free-for-all, could resist laying claim to socialist principles.

Of the brands of socialism affected with more or less genuine commitment one was indigenous, or purported to be. This was African socialism, which was supposed to afford a route to justice through the adaptation of traditional African institutions to the modern world. Like the Russian Narodniks of the 19th century, the African socialists looked forward to development that would escape the hardships of capitalist industrialisation and the patent injustices of the free market economy. Unfortunately the content of their ideology was ill-defined and too often ill-founded. It was as authentic as the Scottish tartans designed after the decline of the clan system had set in or as public notices in Gaelic in the Irish Republic. Sometimes it amounted to little more than the changing of place-names bestowed by European colonisers on towns that had never existed before annexation or of adopting fanciful dress that had little to do with the sartorial austerities of the mass of people before the introduction of European or Arab dress.

The most persistent and determined of the African socialists was the leader of Tanganyika (in 1964 rather loosely united with Zanzibar as Tanzania), Julius Nyerere. What his socialism amounted to was an amalgamation of the village community, purified of the insidious corruption of individualism and modernised in its techniques, and state appropriation of the alien part of the economy, the expatriate mining, industrial, commercial and financial enterprises. The "traditional" and "modern" sectors of the "dual economy" were in effect to be frozen rather than gradually integrated as envisaged by western economists, such as Sir Arthur Lewis, who anticipated the withering away of the "traditional" sector. African socialism was not a recipe for development or even just plain growth. Its aim was wholly admirable, to preserve all that was best in autochthonous economic arrangements. It was, however, an attempt to arrest a process set in motion by the inexorable movement of Africa into the world economy; even an attempt to put the clock back. Pre-colonial African agriculture, the overwhelmingly dominant economic activity, was characterised by inalienable family land-holding, family cultivation and unhampered access to new land. Allocation of land was within the gift of the tribal

authorities, but continued use guaranteed tenure. Faced by a constant threat of hunger posed by natural disaster, the prevailing economic concern was risk-sharing. Social obligations that were onerous, but also protective because duties were reciprocal, equalised the endeavour and spread the misery of harvest failure or rewards of success. All were entitled to land as their birthright and, though strangers could be accommodated on unused land, its sale or purchase had no place in law or custom. The stress upon the community and effacement of the individual, however, could not survive the spread of the money economy or the growth of population, neither of which originated with colonial rule, though both were accelerated by it.

In those parts of sub-Saharan Africa with early contacts with market forces – West Africa and South Africa – erosion of the pristine virtues of African communism predated conquest. Growing population led to pressure upon land, subdivision of holdings, over-exploitation and even landlessness; the increasing use of money and the emergence of opportunities to earn it (through the production of cash crops or through wage labour) subverted communal solidarity and encouraged individualism. Periodic allocation of new land upon the exhaustion of old ceased to be possible as all land was taken up. Family or even individual attachment to particular pieces of land weakened the sentiment of tribal ownership, developed (or degenerated) into family or individual aggrandisement and undermined communal obligations. A process analagous to land alienation took shape in some places. No society, however highly it values the virtue of sharing, can keep landlessness and economic and social differentiation at bay for ever. When land ceases to be freely available and becomes an avenue to affluence and status, inequality results. To the extent that African socialism sought to preserve the levelling effects of traditional arrangements when the conditions that made them possible, notably abundant land, were disappearing, it was a reactionary force, however praiseworthy in motive. In so far as it was effective it thwarted the development of a prosperous smallholding peasant class producing the surplus urgently needed for feeding a growing urban population and earning foreign exchange. Such a peasantry emerged in West Africa from the end of the 19th century, cultivating cocoa, groundnuts and oil palms. Whether such a class exhibits desirable social characteristics is a matter of controversy. What is irrefutable is that its destruction (as in Stalinist Russia) or its victimisation (as in Amin's Uganda) or its frustration (as in Nyerere's Tanania) has everywhere had a profoundly damaging effect upon agricultural output and efficiency.

There is little evidence that the social customs and arrangements native to Africa represent a chronic and inescapable constraint upon the economic growth rendered esssential by population increase and urbanisation. Like comparable social institutions in the European past, they are open to adjustment, however slow to begin with. Obligation to kith and kin are frequently said to inhibit those forces that have promoted the expansion of the developed economies. The family is commonly held to be the culprit in the stunting of entrepreneurship and the stifling of individual initiative because the rewards of enterprise have to be shared. Yet African history, pre-colonial and since, is replete with examples of successful businessmen, and the close-knit family can be as capable of mobilising capital for new undertakings as responsible for dispersing it amongst its members. More pertinent is that Africa in its quest for economic growth entered the struggle hampered by a culture that, whatever its other qualities, did not equip it for an economy based upon science and a constantly advancing technology. In agriculture, metallurgy and craft manufacture the pre-colonial achievements of Africa were impressive. None the less, there was a wide technological gap between it and Europe even at the time of the first contacts between sub-Saharan Africa and Portuguese expeditions in the 15th century. African ignorance of, unfamiliarity with or indifference to the wheel (whatever the explanation may be) has no doubt been laboured but it remains a fact of great significance. The wheel is, after all, the foundation of mechanical engineering, just as mathematics, another area in which sub-Saharan Africa made only slight progress, is the foundation of science. Indeed, it was only in Christian Ethiopia aand its predecessors and the islamicised parts of Africa that language was even committed to writing. Modern science and technology are approachable only through a foreign language, mostly English or French, and alien ways of thought. It would be absurd to suggest that traditional African behaviour was irrational. It was rather that explanations for natural phenomena (e.g. malice as a cause of disaster) led inquiry into a cul-de-sac.

Cultural differences are no doubt partly responsible for the dearth at the time of independence of skilled technicians at all levels, from motor mechanics to engineers of every sort, resulting in a reliance upon expatriate skills. Only medicine among the sciences has enjoyed popularity with the African educated, a profession which may well be considered an art as much as a science and to which (in its pharmaceutical aspect) Africa itself had a contribution to make. Frequently the paucity of trained personnel has been attributed to the failings of colonial education, mission and government, not only grudging, but also the wrong sort, academic not vocational, literary not scientific. It is arguable that, whatever colonial shortcomings were, the propensity of the élite to seek the profits of politics, administration and the law must furnish at least part of the explanation for the shortage of scientists, artisans and managers. On the other hand, the very process of decolonisation and africanisation and the enlargement of the public sector (and all the patronage that went with it) in the colonies made politics and administration (not to say the army) much more fruitful than commerce or industry.

The value or worthlessness of the colonial legacy is a contentious issue that will never be resolved. Yet to compile a dispassionate balance of advantage that recognises the benefits that came from the expansion of trade, the construction of towns and railways, etc. which occurred during the colonial period, it is not necessary to accept the morality of colonialism or to dispute the plundering and oppression that are an inevitable feature of foreign domination. Growth of population itself indicates a rising life expectancy. If anything, cynical as such an argument might appear, colonial administration was rather too successful in reducing mortality by its provision of hospitals, clinics, health education and medicines. Rapid population expansion is almost universally regarded as a curse, swallowing up the gains of improved productivity as soon as they are made, leaving everyone at the same level of prosperity as before. However, the demographic problem is not a simple one and there was a time when the British industrial revolution of the 18th century was

attributed to population growth. The conventional wisdom now is that 18th and 19th century Europe was much more favourably placed than the modern developing countries, with a population increase altogether more modest and with job creation in the early stages of industrialisation much cheaper.

The cost-benefit analysis of colonisation remains an emotive subject, and there are those who will never admit that colonial rule showed even the slightest redeeming feature. More than that, such harsh critics, who, contrary to common experience, see men and events as either wholly good or wholly bad and who pass moral judgments now fashionable upon the behaviour of those who accepted in good faith a rather different code of conduct, are not content with an implacable condemnation of colonial government, but regard that as simply a stage in a continuing process of exploitation. Colonial domination was followed by neo-colonialism – robbery through unequal exchange in trade, selfish monopolisation of scientific and technological information and, above all, manipulation of developing countries by all-powerful multi-national companies. These strictures no doubt have some justification. It could well be, however, that the curse of colonialism is not so much the damage it inflicted as its mere existence as a scapegoat for failure. "No memory is so deep and enduring," wrote J.K. Galbraith, himself by no means unsympathetic to Third World aspirations nor uncritical of the colonial record, "as that of colonial humiliation and injustice. But, it must also be added, nothing serves so well as an alibi. In the newly independent countries the colonial experience remains the prime excuse whenever something goes wrong. So, in this respect too, colonialism remains a lively source of myth. Once the myth was made by those who colonized. Now by those who were colonized." (The Age of Uncertainty, p.112.)

Muslim Africa resembles the rest of Africa both in blaming shortcomings on imperialism and in espousing a form of socialism – Arab socialism – as amorphous as the African variety. In other respects, however, the historical inheritance of Mediterranean Africa was different. As part of Islam the North African people use a language, spoken and written, that is one of the major linguae francae of the world. There was a time when it was Europe that trailed behind the Arab world in science and technology and, indeed, derived its knowledge of much of the scholarship of Graeco-Roman civilisation through Arabic sources. After, however, making a substantial contribution to the corpus of scientific knowledge and to technology, Arab culture turned in a different direction and its science atrophied, perhaps as early as the 12th century. Whatever the explanation for this – and religious fundamentalism is sometimes suggested – the gulf between the west and Islam widened in Europe's favour and the Arab countries are now only somewhat less dependent than sub-Saharan Africa on external technology. To religion also have been imputed other constraints upon economic development, such as the fatalism that is said to result from Muslim predestinarianism. The trouble with socio-religious explanations is that they are never of universal application. Calvinist doctrines of predestination are said to have contributed to the evolution of the Protestant work ethic, and yet the "poor whites" of South Africa were Calvinists. There has never yet been a convincing explanation of why modern economic development originated in western Europe and was successfully imitated in Japan and why there remain large parts of the world which have been stubbornly resistant to it. Plenty of plausible partial explanations are available, stressing social structure, religious beliefs or natural endowment, but none is generally accepted, still less any "theory of economic history". So often arguments become tautological, e.g. Britain experienced rapid economic development in the late 18th century because it was already, by the standards of the time, highly developed.

The debate about the British industrial revolution (if there was such a thing) still exercises the ingenuity, and even the passions, of economic historians and there is little prospect of a consensus. At least now the "models" are only tentative. Twenty years ago they were more facile and confident. In its small way the economic history profession contributed to that false optimism of the early post-colonial period which bred much mistaken policy. In 1960 W.W. Rostow published his **Stages of Economic Growth**, a work of great influence. Central to his argument of an economic "take-off" (when the economy escapes from the shackles of "traditional society" into the empyrean heights of "self-sustaining growth") was the role of capital investment. The take-off, in fact, consisted in, was proved by, a dramatic increase in the share of national income allocated to capital formation. Thus the rôle of capital was crucial. Rostow, however, was merely looking into history for the verification of current economic theories. The renewed interest in long-term economic growth which preoccupied economists after the Second World War had solved for them (at least for the time) the problem of unemployment, led to the revival of the classical economists' emphasis upon the capital stock as the key variable. Growth models, such as the Harrod-Domar model and its variations, gave pride of place to capital. The foreign development economists who converged upon Africa in the immediate post-independence period envisaged a rapid acceleration of capital formation. Their plans made industrialisation their principal target, particularly the foundation of producers' goods industries, which required substantial application of capital and long gestation periods.

Capital for industrialisation may come from one or more of three sources. Industry may meet its needs from its own resources, but only once the initial investment has been made, and naturally only if it is profitable. In the absence of a self-financing industry capital can come only from foreign gifts or loans or from squeezing the consumption of those sections of the nation that have least ability to resist a depression of their living standards. Foreign capital was in fact made available on a generous scale, much of it in the form of outright grants or low-interest loans,but the results were meagre. The domestic source of capital was principally peasant cultivators, especially, of course, those who enjoyed an income that could be raided, and they were the ones who were often the chief earners of the foreign exchange that could be used for the import of capital goods. Loose definitions of investment, to include the white elephants of national self-importance, and a misplaced confidence in capital formation irrespective of any adequate return on investment, blighted early economic prospects. Foreign aid was blamed because it was insufficient or because it was really a hypocritical device to extort advantage for the self-styled donor. The earnings of cash crop producers, accumulated by marketing boards in times of high raw material and foodstuff

prices, were squandered, leaving the producers themselves without the means of investment or reserves in the event of price collapse.

The mania for producers' goods industries, the belief in the value of capital accumulation as the essence of the development formula, the conviction that it was right for one generation to suffer privation for the benefit of posterity and proper for the burden to be borne chiefly by those destined to have no place in the economy of the future, together with unbounded faith in comprehensive, centralised planning, all these notions found support in the enormous prestige of the Soviet Union, the champion of colonial emancipation and the proof positive of the efficacy of scientific planning and the necessity of restricting the consumption of the "unprogressive classes". In fact, the example of the U.S.S.R. was of little assistance. Five year plans proliferated, too often founded upon hopelessly inadequate statistical information and drawn up by foreign experts insensitive to local customs and prejudices, overambitious and dependent for implementation upon the goodwill, understanding and efficiency of a bureaucracy ill-equipped for the tasks thrust upon it and in process of rapid africanisation. The partial, pragmatic plans of the colonial authorities, going back to the Guggisberg ten year plan for the Gold Coast after the First World War, were despised as mere "shopping lists". It is true that some colonial planning served as a ghastly example of what could go awry with half-baked plans, such as the post-war groundnut scheme of Tanganyika. The lesson of misdirected effort to achieve quick results was circumspection, not even greater ambition. The colonial experience of failure did not serve to raise doubts about the suitability of the Soviet example. On the contrary, the U.S.S.R. was the source of an even more disastrous error of judgment, an uncritical acceptance of "scientific socialism", with its class animosities and its assaults upon those very sectors of the economy that were producing the most wealth. Thus it was that Africa, emerging into an independence full of hope and promise, was badly served by both the economics of the west and the dogmatism of the east.

It is difficult to apportion responsibility for Africa's present economic backwardness between the constraints that originated in indigenous culture and those that were directly or indirectly the result of colonisation. The history of other parts of the world does not give much of a clue. Japan, able to ward off imperialism long enough to find its own road to economic power, adapted with conspicuous success, China, though subjected to humiliation and harrassment at the hands of imperialist states, also escaped partition, but did not adapt before first becoming a battleground for imported ideologies. How Africa would have proceeded if the partition had never occurred, is beyond the scope even of speculation. One has only the example of Ethiopia to go on, and that is too untypical (e.g in its landholding system) to be a guide. In economic history it is easier to pose questions than to find convincing answers. It is possible, however, that the questions are inappropriate. □

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