

NOTES ON THE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

SOME NOTES ON BLACK WRITERS AND ARTISTS

Miss Nadine Gordimer has expressed the view¹ that no fiction of any real quality by black South Africans has been published in the country since the early 1960's, when leading prose writers went into exile and their works were banned. Instead, black writers have been turning to poetry.

One of the noteworthy books published during the period under review, by Renoster Books, was a collection of poems by Mongane W. Serote, entitled *Yakhal' inkomo*.² Ravan Press and Ophir Publications jointly published *Sing for our Execution*, containing poems and woodcuts by Wopko Jensma (whose racial group was not disclosed). As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Publications Control Board banned a collection of poems by James Mathews and Gladys Thomas entitled *Cry Rage*, published by Spro-Cas/Ravan Press.

Oswald Mtshali of Johannesburg accepted an invitation to read some of his works at the Poetry International festival in England held during June. In July, paintings by Louis Maqhubela were exhibited in the London Arts Gallery.

The Institute of Race Relations (Natal Region), together with the S.A. Association of Arts (Natal) and the Durban Art Gallery, organized the sixth biennial exhibition entitled "Art: South Africa: To-day". An exhibition of paintings and sculptures by Africans was arranged in Germiston by the East Rand Bantu Administration Board in collaboration with the Katlehong Art Society. Another such exhibition was organized in December by the Montford Art Club in Durban. Sydney Kumalo held a one-man exhibition in Johannesburg of his sculptures and drawings. Other black artists have held one-man exhibitions and have also shown their works at joint exhibitions arranged by a number of galleries.

A donation from the Church of Sweden Mission made possible the opening of an exhibition hall at Rorke's Drift, Natal, to display the tapestries, carpets, ceramics, works of graphic art, and sculptures produced by Africans at the mission there. Impressive exhibitions of works from Rorke's Drift were held early in the year at the National Art Gallery in Cape Town and subsequently in other centres.

¹ e.g. *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 October.

² A rough translation is "the crying of a cow being slaughtered".

AFRICAN THEATRE

African theatre has flourished during the past year. Although few South Africans of other racial groups have been able to see performances, overseas audiences have delighted in them.

Welcome Msomi's *Umabatha*, a Zulu musical loosely based on *Macbeth*, was again presented by a company of 55 Zulu players at London's Aldwych Theatre. Shortly before, Alton Kumalo's musical, *Temba*, opened in the West End. Mr. Kumalo is an ex-South African who is now resident in England, and for some years was a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona visited London to act in a play which they had evolved, entitled *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. It received very favourable reviews in leading newspapers.

The Phoenix Players were invited to visit Japan to present *Meropa*, a song and dance revue. It was planned that, before leaving, they should give a performance before a multi-racial audience in a private church hall in Johannesburg. A few minutes before it was due to start the show was cancelled because plain-clothed policemen had gathered outside the hall, and the organizers did not want to jeopardise the cast's chances of going abroad, although they were convinced that the performance would have been legal. The Players made a highly successful tour of Japan, and then accepted invitations to visit the Philippines and Hongkong.

The cast of another singing and dancing revue, *Ipi-Tom-Bi*, made a popular five-weeks' tour of Australian cities. This show was devised in Johannesburg by Bertha Egnos and Gail Lakier. A long-playing record of its music was produced. Gibson Kente staged his musicals, *Lifa* and *How Long?* in Johannesburg; and a newly-formed theatre and jazz group called The People presented *Not His Pride* by the East London playwright and actor, Julius Mtsaka.

Under the wing of the Cultural Section of Johannesburg's Non-European Affairs Department, Mrs. Doreen Lamb has been running a dramatic society, teaching the theoretical and practical aspects of conventional theatre work. She has been assisted by Sam Mhangwane, a playwright and producer whose morality play, *The Unfaithful Woman*, has been running for the eighth year in succession. The society formed the Jubilee Theatre Group, which staged a suspense drama, *The Frightened Lady*, written by Mrs. Lamb.

In association with the Southern Transvaal Region of the Institute of Race Relations, Mr. R. MacLaren and Mrs. Bess Finney continue to organize an unconventional Experimental Theatre group. During October they presented *uNosilimela*, by Credo Mutwa.

A periodical called *S'Ketsh'* has been launched in Soweto to give news of black theatre and entertainment.

HOLIDAY RESORTS FOR MEMBERS OF BLACK COMMUNITIES

In a statement issued on 15 October, the Minister of Planning said that the Government had laid down policy guidelines for the development of holiday resorts, rest camps, and stopover facilities for members of the Coloured and Indian communities.

- (a) Inland holiday resorts and rest camps for members of these groups should (like beach resorts) be controlled primarily by provincial administrations and local authorities in consultation with the Departments of Planning, Community Development, Coloured Relations, and Indian Affairs, and with the aid of funds provided by the Government.
- (b) In Coloured or Indian group areas, rural Coloured areas, and predominantly Indian rural areas, facilities could be provided by the Coloured Development Corporation, or by Indians, or by any undertaking in which Coloured or Indian people had a controlling interest, as appropriate.
- (c) In controlled areas (not allocated to any specific group) facilities could, in deserving cases, be established on approved sites by private White entrepreneurs, or private Coloured or Indian entrepreneurs, provided that the necessary permits were obtained. Permits would be required from the local authority and the provincial administration concerned before application for approval was made to the appropriate government department.
- (d) In cases where White entrepreneurs provided overnight facilities for Whites along national roads or main roads, and wanted, "with the necessary guarantees", to provide similar but entirely separate facilities for Coloured and Indian travellers, this might be allowed, under permits specifying the conditions.

The Natal Parks Board announced in October³ that it was making a start with the provision of holiday and recreation facilities for black people. The first accommodation for Africans visiting Natal game reserves was to be made available at the Masinda Camp, in the corridor between the Umfolozi and Hluhluwe reserves. Chalets, camping sites, and a restaurant for Indians had been built at Midmar dam, and similar facilities were being developed at the new Hazelmers dam on the north coast. Holiday accommodation for Coloured people was to be available at Albert Falls.

(Facilities available at and adjoining the Kruger National Park and elsewhere have been described in previous issues of this *Survey*.)

³ *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 October.