

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT EDGAR BROOKES, SOUTH AFRICAN LIBERALISM, AND THE FUTURE

by Peter Brown

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INTRODUCTION

I have only two qualifications for coming to speak to you here tonight. The first is that, although he was nearly 30 years older than I was, Edgar Brookes was a friend of mine. The second is that I shared completely his dedication to those academic and human freedoms which this lecture was established to discuss and defend. This is the first lecture since Edgar Brookes' death, and I will not apologise for the fact that it will contain a certain amount of reminiscence. My point of reference tonight will in fact be his life and views — how those views developed and how they might still have developed.

Was what he stood for relevant to our future? This question necessitates some references to the role of the Liberal Party of South Africa, and how it might have developed — for it was to it that Edgar Brookes pledged his hopes for the building of a reasonable society here.

FIFTEEN YEARS:

It is now fifteen years since the Edgar Brookes Lecture was inaugurated. As the years pass fewer and fewer people will attend it who will know anything much about the man after whom it was named and whose memory it now honours. But one should know about the people after whom such things are named. Otherwise what is to prevent them from becoming occasions to pay tribute to principles quite foreign to those held by the person to whom they are dedicated? So I would like to tell you a little about my experience of him, this man after whom this lecture is named.

HIS QUALITIES:

Edgar Brookes had many qualities. To me, four of the most notable were his courage, his steadfastness, his flexibility of mind and his faith.

I first knew him as a schoolboy. When he was principal of Adams College I went there with a party from my school on an exchange visit. Such visits, between a white school and a black school, were a revolutionary concept in the Natal of 40 years ago. And my visit had on me the effect they were no doubt intended to have. It shattered the accumulated stereotypes about black people with which I had grown up. And it was of course to destroying such stereotypes, white about black and black about white that Edgar Brookes' life was devoted. The myth which has dominated our society for the past 30 years, and which is now being abandoned, here and there, by its protagonists — I hope before it has damaged us quite beyond repair — the myth that contact breeds conflict — he rejected totally.

I knew him next as a workseeker. I came to see him here in Maritzburg, after I had finished university after the war, to

ask him if he could find me a job. And he did. It wasn't the greatest job in the world, but it did one thing for me that not many other jobs could have done. It gave me an entry into Edendale. There I met some of the best people I have ever known, and out of contacts made there sprang the impetus which two years later helped found the Liberal Party of South Africa. And it is in his association with the Liberal Party that I came to know Edgar best and about which I will speak mainly tonight.

"LIBERAL":

I don't suppose any term has been more loosely used in South Africa than that of "liberal". According to where its abusers have stood on the political spectrum they have used it to accuse liberals of being either too far to the left, or too far to the right. If you were John Vorster you saw them as unwitting tools of the Communist Party, opening up the way for it to carry out its nefarious plans. And if you were the Communist Party you saw them as weak-kneed and wishy-washy because very often they would not play the part your plan had assigned to them. To have been denounced by authoritarians of the right and the left I have always regarded as a compliment.

It also used to be the practice in the past to smear liberals generally by branding as "liberal" individuals and organisations, left and right, which were never anything of the sort. There might have been some excuse for this before 1953, when all sorts of people did call themselves "liberals", but after that year, in which the Liberal Party was formed, Liberals must I think be judged on what the Liberal Party, the only avowedly Liberal political party they have had in South Africa tried to do, and came to stand for. It was to this Party that Edgar Brookes committed the political part of his life nearly 20 years ago. And I think it is worth examining briefly how both the Liberal Party's and Edgar Brookes's ideas evolved and developed over the years of its life and his. And to speculate on how they might have continued to develop had the Government not closed the Party down.

EDGAR BROOKES AND THE EARLY LIBERAL PARTY DAYS

Of course, although the Liberal Party was started in 1953, Edgar didn't join it then. In fact he didn't join it for another eight years. I suspect there were several reasons for this. At the time he was still the representative in the Senate of the African people of Natal and Zululand. I think he wanted to be able to continue to speak and act freely in what he felt were the best interests of his constituents, without

having the encumbrance of a party label round his neck. But later on, after he had given up the Senatorship and was back here teaching at the university, he still did not join. By that time, although I think the maintenance of his independent political position was still an important factor, I think there were at least two others. The first was that, at its second National Congress in 1954, the Liberal Party had adopted as its goal a common-roll universal suffrage. The second was its practice of cooperating with other political organisations on agreed issues. The first created a problem for him because he had not yet come to believe in it. The second because cooperation, as often as not, was cooperation with the Congress Movement, and although Edgar had many close friends in the ANC, he knew that there were Communist Party members in the Congresses, and he had difficulty, at that stage, in associating with them at all, even in a good cause. In fact it was for this same reason that he did not support the Treason Trial Defence Fund when it was formed in 1956 to help with defence of the people charged in that famous trial and relief for their dependants. But curiously enough, I think it was largely through the influence of two of the Accused in that trial, Chota Motala, Chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Branch of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), and Archie Gumede of the local branch of the African National Congress (ANC), when he met and came to like and admire them very much at the Natal Convention, 5 years later, that this particular reservation of his was abandoned. Anyway, whatever the reason, for nearly 8 years, the relationship between Edgar Brookes and the Liberal Party remained a sort of arms-length friendliness.

THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

Then came 1960 and the State of Emergency, and all that changed. In one night hundreds of people disappeared into detention, amongst them Liberals who were close friends of Edgar's, two of them colleagues of his on the staff of this university. Although he did not do it immediately, I am sure that that was when he decided to join the Liberal Party.

COURAGE

I have already said that one of his principal qualities was courage. And it was typical of him that he should decide to start identifying himself with the Liberal Party when it had become more dangerous than it had ever been to do so. Just as it was typical of him again that, at the age of 67, four years later, he should, without a hint of hesitation, take over the National Chairmanship of the Liberal Party, when hardly a day seemed to go past without some member being banned or detained.

STEADFASTNESS

If courage was Edgar's first quality, steadfastness was his second. And he needed plenty of it when he took over that Chairmanship. Because it soon became evident that many of the Liberals in detention had been involved in the sabotage activities of the ARM, and that one of them had let off the bomb on the Johannesburg station. Under these circumstances who could have blamed him if he had felt that he had accepted the Chairmanship under false pretences and had decided, there and then, to give it and the Liberal Party up. He never even seemed to give it a thought.

Nor was it only in the face of such a situation that this steadfastness showed itself. Whatever difficulties he may have had in coming to terms with the policies of the Liberal Party, once he had accepted them his commitment to them was total and unwavering to the day of his death. And it is perhaps worth mentioning that it was not only universal suffrage that he had accepted. For instance, amongst other things, the Liberal Party had advocated a policy for the redistribution of land and wealth which must have seemed pretty radical to somebody of his age and rather conservative upbringing.

FLEXIBILITY OF MIND

So, having accepted Liberal Party policy, Edgar's support for it did not waver. This determination not to be deflected from what he had come to see as the best solution to our situation might suggest a certain inflexibility of mind — and I have already said that, to me, one of his most obvious characteristics, was his flexibility of mind. He was a man who was quite prepared to change his views if he could be convinced that it was the right thing to do. He certainly wouldn't do it easily or quickly, but he would do it, — which is more than you can say for most people in politics. And he would not change backwards.

The evolution of his political commitment was a progressive movement forwards — so that he could graduate from considering a segregationary solution in the 1920s to accepting a common society, integrated at every level in the 1960s. And in all his 82 years he never gave up fighting. Which might give those radical students who would decry Edgar Brookes' life and achievements pause for thought.

Radical black students complain that radical white students are only radical for as long as they are students. After that they disappear into the respectable maws of money-making and domesticity. The accusation is only partly true but it is, partly true. Make sure you're not going to be one of those before you start decrying Edgar Brookes. It's also true, of course, that quite a lot, even if not so many, black students go the same way. There was no question of Edgar Brookes ever going that way.

COULD THE LIBERAL PARTY EVER HAVE BEEN A VEHICLE FOR CHANGE?

Could the Liberal Party, to whose programme Edgar Brookes was pledged up to the time of his death, ever have become a vehicle for change in South Africa? The answer, I think, is, under normal circumstances, yes! It is, of course, a hypothetical question. The circumstances are not normal.

From 1960 onwards the Government set out on a deliberate programme to kill the Party and finally, with the Improper Interference Act of 1968, did so. But by the beginning of 1960 the Party had quite a lot going for it. By that time the great majority of its membership was black, which meant that its policies increasingly reflected what most people in the country wanted. Its relationship with the PAC was good, certainly better than anyone else's. Its relationship with the Congress Movement varied, but here in Natal it was good, and marked by co-operation in a number of fields, two of the most important of which were the fight against Group Areas removals and the destruction of the Blackspots in the province. Blackspot being a nasty-sounding name coined to describe an area held in freehold by a black individual or a black community, the original purchaser, or purchasers, having been told, and having believed that their freehold title gave them security in perpetuity. There are many of these in Natal and there used to be many more. However, that is another story.

The Party had also accepted by then that it had an extra-Parliamentary as well as a Parliamentary role to play and had already been engaged in campaigns outside the realm of normal political activity, which were designed to bring about peaceful change. In Capetown it had developed a close relationship with the infant SWAPO. That close relationship was possible because both organisations wanted the same kind of society for their countries, non-racial democracy — and they wanted it to come about by peaceful means. If things in Namibia have changed, don't blame SWAPO. Blame those who wouldn't talk to them or listen to them 20 years ago. I certainly blame them, as I do also for what is called the deteriorating security situation we face right here.

MOROKA

Not long ago, after the attack on the Moroka police station, the Deputy Chief of the Security Police was reported to have appealed to the public to become his eyes and ears in the battle against terrorism.

"It is time the public started heeding the warnings that have been directed to them over a long period from the police, from the army and from the Ministers of Defence and Justice," he said.

I find this kind of injunction a bit hard to take. Long before they started issuing their warnings the Ministers of Justice had themselves been warned on countless occasions, not least by Edgar Brookes. They had been warned that unless they woke up to the effect their policies were having on those to whom they were being applied, those policies would lead one day to just such an attack as the one in Moroka — and that would almost certainly be the harbinger of worse things to come. The extraordinary thing about the attack at Moroka was not that it happened, but that it didn't happen sooner. It didn't because of the phenomenal self-control of black South Africans and their hope, which was a very long time in dying, that white Governments would one day start practising what they preached. That, to take one example, one day, in what claimed to be a free enterprise society, every person would be free to take on any job for which his talents qualified him.

LUTHULI AND SOBUKWE

It was in November, 1952, nearly 27 years ago, that Chief Luthuli was forced by the Government to choose between his Groutville chieftainship and his membership of the ANC and, in choosing the ANC, made his famous statement:

"In these past 30 years or so I have striven with tremendous zeal and patience to work for the progress and welfare of my people and for their harmonious relations with other sections of our multiracial society Insofar as gaining citizenship rights and opportunities for the unfettered development of the African people (goes), who will deny that 30 years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately and modestly at a closed and barred door? What have been the fruits of my many years of moderation? Has there been any reciprocal moderation or tolerance from the Government, be it Nationalist or United Party? NO!"

And on March 18th, 1960, when he launched the PAC's anti-pass campaign Robert Sobukwe said that members were being called upon to leave their passes at home and to surrender themselves for arrest at the nearest police station. Should the police refuse to arrest them, their instructions were to go home and return to the police station later in the day PAC members had been instructed to conduct the campaign in a spirit of non-violence. He had written to the Commissioner of Police informing him of the campaign and appealing to him to instruct his men not to make impossible demands on Africans. If the police were interested in maintaining law and order they should have no difficulty at all.

There they are. Two men who wanted peaceful change. And if you read the accounts of all the famous political trials of the 1960's, from Rivonia to the Namibian trial of 1968, the same theme keeps recurring:-

"We tried everything to get you to listen to what we wanted, and you wouldn't. Are you surprised that, in desperation, some of us have turned to violence?"

But the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Defence turned deaf ears to all the pleas and all the warnings and now they are confronted by what could be the beginnings of a civil war. And they do seem surprised — as if they had never read any history, not even their own. They should not be surprised at what is happening, and they should not be surprised, now that they have created the situation against which many of us have been warning them for most of our articulate lives, if we don't come running to help them prop up the system which has caused it.

I come back to the question: Could Liberals, through the Liberal Party, have provided a vehicle for change to a new society which could have satisfied the aspirations of most South Africans? Given the chance I think it could have. May-be not the only vehicle, but certainly one of them.

Take an example. Long before most other people started talking about it the Party was committed to the holding of a new National Convention to chart the way to a new dispensation here. As a first step, largely through the initiative of its supporters, a Natal Convention was called at this university in 1961, in those very fluid times which followed Sharpeville and the Emergency. It was presided over by Edgar Brookes and was attended by a remarkable cross-section of Natal people, ranging from members of the United Party to members of the Congress Movement, who somehow, after 3 days of intense discussion, adopted, as far as I can remember without a single dissenting vote, a remarkably progressive document, which included an undertaking to extend the vote on a non-racial common roll.

This was a consensus decision if ever there was one, long before consensus became the fashionable term it is today.

It was hoped and planned that from this Natal Convention would come the impetus for a new National Convention. It didn't happen because those with power didn't want it to but how much better off would we not all have been today if they had had the sense to respond to that call 18 years ago? Or even if they had the sense to respond to it now? The point I am trying to make here, and to illustrate by this reference to the Natal Convention, is that the Liberal Party, and particularly a person like Edgar Brookes, did have a capacity to bring people of divergent views together and to get them to work together. It did have the potential to act as an agent for change.

ADEQUATE POLICIES?

But would its policies have been adequate to meet the hopes and aspirations of most South Africans? I think so. Edgar Brookes had a flexible enough mind to be able to move in his lifetime from being a segregationist to a total integrationist. So too the Liberal Party policies were not static, they kept evolving. The fact that black membership increased steadily throughout its lifetime was no doubt part the cause and part the result of this. It certainly meant that the Party was not likely to place the interests of white voters ahead of those of black non-voters in the hope that that might improve its vote-catching prospects. It just wasn't a conventional political party, as its acceptance for itself of an extra-parliamentary as well as a parliamentary role bears out.

WHAT ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN FREEDOM?

I suppose Liberals are more concerned about individual rights and individual freedoms and the institutions which society has evolved to promote and protect them, than almost any other group.

In South Africa the Liberal fight for such things, it seems to me, has had a number of stages. In the first place one fights to prevent rights already held being taken away and, if they are taken away, to have them restored. Second, one fights for the granting of rights never held. Third, one recognises that it often isn't enough just to give rights. There is often such a handicap carried over from the past by people who have suffered discrimination, that just to give them rights is meaningless. It sometimes becomes necessary to discriminate in favour of people who, through no fault of their own, have been at the bottom of the heap, if the rights they get are going to have any meaning.

There is a fourth stage, from which I am sure Edgar Brookes did not flinch, when one may begin to question whether the institutions and arrangements of society that one has always assumed to be sacrosanct, are in fact adequate to ensure the justice and freedom for which one is looking.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE COURTS:

It is a basic Liberal principle that the courts should be independent. Are our courts independent? Thirty years ago, when the Nationalists took power, it was a general assumption that they were. Then there began a series of infringements on that freedom, by Parliament, notably in the matter of sentences, and Liberals set about fighting for the return of that lost independence. But were our courts truly independent even before these obvious intrusions began?

Judges are subject to the laws of Parliament. All they claim to do is interpret them — rarely do they question the morality behind them. One is grateful when they do, but it is not common practice. But Parliament is the agency of white supremacy and by and large the laws which it passes are designed to ensure that that supremacy persists. Is it possible for the judiciary to take an impartial view of the situation with which it is increasingly confronted today, of a clash of interests between the white establishment, from whom its numbers are drawn and whose laws it is required to enforce, and the black majority to whom those laws are applied? The mere fact that all judges are white and are drawn from one segment of our society, and have grown up and, willy-nilly, been conditioned by the background from which they have come, must make true impartiality virtually impossible. Certainly that is how many black people would see it today.

Robert Sobukwe in 1960 and Nelson Mandela, in 1962, when they made two of their last appearances in our courts, refused to acknowledge the courts right to try them. Since then there have been other trials in which the accused have taken the same line. It is an attitude which seems bound to spread. And it is an attitude which shows a growing alienation within the black community from the system of justice which it is supposed to honour and obey, and should do if the stability of our society is to be preserved. But can it be expected to be any other way if you play no part in the making of the laws or the appointment of the judges and the magistrates or any of the decisions at all which relate to the functioning of that system?

That the courts should be independent is a basic Liberal principle on which there can be no compromise. But the principle goes a lot further than not being directly interfered with by the government. In its perfect state it would require from members of the Judiciary the ability to escape from the assumptions with which each of us has grown up and the social conditioning which is unavoidable for all of us. We are likely to have to make do with something less than perfect, but better than what we have today. This will come not only when our courts' discretion is restored at least to what it was 30 years ago, but when the system which appoints the judges and the magistrates has the active participation of all South Africans. Then no judge could be seen by anyone to be a member of a dominant group, but only as a representative of the whole society, and sensitive to all its nuances.

AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM?

As I am sure you all know the fight for academic freedom in South Africa dates from the legislation passed by the Nationalist Party to prevent the "open" universities from admitting students of their choice without regard to their colour or religion. The fight was aimed at having that right restored to those universities and for a while that was all the fight was about, to have the lost rights restored. And it is basic that universities should have the right to admit students without regard to those arbitrary criteria. Equally basic is the right of a student to go to the university of his choice.

Not so much fuss was made about this right in the past, partly, one suspects, because the open universities were not as open as they might have been and it wasn't as easy to get into them if you were black as if you were white. I hope I am right in thinking that that is the basis upon which this fight for academic freedom is being fought now; not only

the university's right to admit, but also the student's right to be admitted.

The student may of course not be admitted because he cannot make the grade academically, and this has always seemed an eminently reasonable standard to apply. But is it always? For he may not be able to make the grade academically because he comes from a deprived background or a rotten school system. In which case, although you may have achieved academic freedom in theory you still won't have achieved it in practice. And it may be necessary for a time to lower admission standards to accommodate people deprived in this way. Or to devise special courses so that they can catch up.

But real academic freedom will only come when every child can get into school at the lowest level and from there develop his full capacity in whatever direction his talents will take him. For us that means a complete overhaul not only of our educational system but of our society. And in the course of that overhaul we may find that what our schools and universities are teaching and the way they are doing it are not all they should be, and that there are other ways of doing things which are better, if young people are to realise their full potential in a free society.

EVOLVING POLICIES:

I have talked a little about the independence of the judicial system and academic freedom, two basic elements in a free society, to show that South African Liberals' thoughts on how to achieve and preserve these and other human freedoms have never been static, but developing all the time. And to squash the illusion that a man like Edgar Brookes was stuck in some 19th Century Laissez faire rut irrelevant to the problems of South Africa today. Or that in an open society Liberals would not have had a policy to satisfy everyone's aspirations quickly. I have always felt very strongly that the dangers of rapid change here are far less than those of no change or too slow change. That the survival of Liberal value has depended on rapid change.

NO CHANGE

There has been no rapid change, so will those values survive? Was what Edgar Brookes spent his life doing irrelevant? Will what he spent his life fighting for in no way influence the future of our country? I am not the only one to have asked these questions. He asked them himself. Suffice it to say that these are hard times for those who value Liberal values and institutions, who regard them as the most important legacy the West may have to leave to the world.

POLARISATION

For, the feature of the day is polarisation, and polarisation is not conducive to the survival of Liberal values. It is mainly, but not entirely a black/white polarisation, for the extremes of the pole are just as likely to take it out on what they regard as one of their own sell-outs — Chief Buthelezi, Harold Strachan, Rick Turner, Prof. van Jaarsveld, Colin Eglin — as they are to take it out on "the other side". Nevertheless, it is mainly a black/white confrontation, the extremes of which grow more extreme, both committed to violence, the one to retain power the other to get it. As the polarisation accelerates those who stand in the middle, working and hoping for a reconciliation of interests, get squeezed more and more. Yet those who want reconciliation far outnumber those who want conflict.

SOWETO AND WINDHOEK

If you were to talk to some of the dissident teachers of Soweto you would find that, while their rejection of government policy is total, and their insistence on majority government and a new order in society is unequivocal, they view with the greatest apprehension this polarisation growing round them. They see its logical end as an increasingly bloody confrontation between two armies, one mainly white, one mainly black, one mainly with uniforms, one mainly without, each made up of a growing number of unwilling

soldiers dragged along, by some terrible force on the coatstrings of their extremists.

On the one side their extremists being the kind of people who will throw a bomb into something as innocuous as a meeting of the freemasons in Windhoek. On the other a new, young, black leadership which is already saying things about white South Africans far more spine-chilling than the things that were being said in Soweto in 1976.

The whole process of polarisation was an agonising spectacle to somebody like Edgar Brookes, as it should be to all of us. Like us he wondered — where would it end? In the holocaust? And, if it did, would anything he had stood for survive?

The more rapidly we change to a society most South Africans can support the less likely the holocaust, and the more likely that the values which Edgar Brookes regarded as important will survive. Fundamental to all other values is the value of human freedom. Not the freedom of licence, which Edgar Brookes abhorred, but the freedom to develop one's talents so that they can be used in the service of one's fellows and, in Edgar's case, of one's God.

But human freedom and Liberal values will not survive of

their own accord. It may one day be possible to build again a non-racial political organisation pledged to propagate and defend them. I don't know. In the meantime it needs brave and steadfast men like Edgar Brookes to stand up and fight for them. On such people now depends the relevance to our future of what he believed in.

And there is no automatic guarantee that when the present dispensation ends in South Africa it will be succeeded by one that likes the basic human freedoms any more than this one does. The best guarantee of that, as Edgar came to see, was that each person should have that vital asset, the vote. For only while they have that are men free to be governed by the men they want to govern them, and free to get rid of them when they don't.

Will the holocaust come, and with it the destruction of everything that Edgar believed in? I don't know. All I do know is that, had it come in his time, and had he survived it, he would, at the end of it all, have picked himself up off the ground and started to fight once again for those great freedoms we honour tonight, and which his great faith told him must one day triumph: that day when no man will be used, unwillingly, or unwittingly, as a means to another's ends. □

WHAT IS A MAN?

Fatima Dike, *The First South African*, Ravan Playscripts 4, R2,75

Reviewed by Tony Voss

As Ms. Dike's play opens a young man speaks a prologue on a stage lit only by an oil lamp. He begins with a conflation of the Genesis stories of the creation of man and woman and ends with a question: "Am I not a man then?" The question reverberates through the play, for this is Ms. Dike's hero, her first South African, Zwelinzima Jama.

Born to a black mother and a white father, he is brought up in Langa as a Xhosa, and undergoes traditional initiation rites. But his manhood is thwarted at every turn. When his girlfriend, Thembi, falls pregnant, her father rejects him as "a bastard". The "white chick" to whom he passes as a white discovers his secret, rejects him and causes him to be fired from his job. Zwelinzima ("the country is heavy") knocks around with Max the spiv (who calls him "Rooi"), falls foul of the policeman Mtshiselwa. The play is rich in the detail and sweep of township life. But such fulfilment as that life offers is denied to Zwelinzima.

In the second scene of the play, the white location superintendent offers to adopt him, but later when Zwelinzima applies for a pass (a reference book, not a book of life), he is refused. Eventually he can only make his way in the world by denying his family and his heart. Max reports:

I saw him the other day at Salt River station, in brown overalls. He was watching over a group of men working on the railway line. I couldn't have been mistaken even after 3 years, and he saw me. "Rooi...Rooooi...Rooi is ek, ou Max." His eyes looked right through me, and he turned away and spoke to one of the labourers. Ja, hy's 'n klein baas nou, he doesn't want to know us any more. But he can't deny I used to wipe his nose when he was so high.

This is a powerful play. The humour, and there is real humour in it, falters very occasionally, but the overwhelming impression is of lively writing and assured stagecraft. One of the most telling effects is achieved in scenes which involve a single character conducting a conversation with an unseen, unheard other: as in the confrontation of Freda, Zwelinzima's mother, with the superintendent. This text enables a small cast to bring to the stage a sense of individual action and personal relationships set in a wide and vivid context. Though mostly in English, the play in a sense requires a new South African audience, since it also uses Xhosa, Afrikaans and a mixture of all three.

Some of the most powerful writing is given to the mother. Her death is a most moving scene — and Ms. Dike has managed in Freda to give Mother Africa a new resonance without sacrifice of actuality. Each character, whether embodied in an actor or evoked only by the words of others, is clearly felt to be there.

Perhaps the most important fact about this play is that it has been published — in Ravan's very welcome and useful Playscript series. Like the other plays in the series *The First South African* has been performed. It was Ms. Dike's first play as resident playwright at the Space, Cape Town, where it was written and produced in 1977. It has been done before: now it can be done again. Zwelinzima's story is based on an actual case: one of the best ways of ensuring that it doesn't happen again is to act it again.

Ms. Dike's play should not be confused with A.P. Cartwright's book of the same title published in 1971, which is a 'life and times' of Sir Percy Fitzpatrick. □