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BOOK REVIEWS

A Non-Racial Island of Learning: A History of the University College of Rhodesia from its Inception to 1966 By M. Gelfand. Gwelo, Mambo Press, Zambeziana Series No. 4, 1978, 376 pp., illustrated, Rh\$12,00 (p/b. Rh\$9,80).

The Future of the University in Southern Africa Edited by H. W. van der Merwe and D. Welsh. Cape Town, D. Philip, 1977, 302 pp., Rh\$12,00.

Professor Gelfand would be the first to admit that he is not a professional historian. His book is not easy to read, largely because he is not selective enough in distinguishing what should go in the text and what should be relegated to footnotes or appendices. The result is that the attention of the reader is distracted from time to time from the main thread of what is a fascinating story.

There is, however, no possible doubt that Professor Gelfand has written a very important book. He has meticulously tracked down a variety of prime sources, supplementing the printed and written word with recorded interviews of some of the *dramatis personae*. It is unfortunate that he did not have access to Government records in the National Archives of Rhodesia for the period after 1955. When they are available to scholars they may reveal that the College owes much to senior civil servants who managed to persuade their masters to keep their hands off what a Rhodesian business journal once called 'a political Trojan horse in the midst of a country fighting for its existence as a white state'. This was certainly the impression I formed from my visits in 1959, 1966 and 1969 when I chaired committees reviewing the financial needs of the College.

Another marked feature of the book is the author's detached approach to his account of events in which the most intense passions were roused and in which he must have been personally involved, at least to some extent. This 'dead-pan' attitude has of course its disadvantages. For example, I was actually staying in the Principal's Lodge on the night that Maluleke escaped from detention and made his way to the College campus. I saw at first hand how Sir Walter Adams wrestled with his conscience and finally the following morning decided to disobey the Emergency Regulations under which he should have reported Maluleke's presence to the police. The extreme tension of that situation is certainly not conveyed to the reader. Gelfand's treatment of the Birley Report of 1966 is rather non-committal though he does go so far as to say that Birley's criticism of Adams for not taking 'a sufficiently strong stand against [governmental] attacks on the academic freedom of the College . . . appears to be a contradiction' of other statements in the Report.

Professor Murphee, the Director of the Institute for Inter-Racial Studies at the University, contributed a very interesting paper on the University College to a seminar in Cape Town, the proceedings of which have been published under the title *The Future of the University in Southern Africa*. In it he points out that 'the autonomous university is a fiction. For the university there are only degrees of relative autonomy.' For example, the extent to which the College could attract African students was severely restricted by the paucity of sixth-form facilities in African schools, a matter outside the jurisdiction of the College.

There is no doubt that some people connected with the College genuinely thought that it ought to have been more politically motivated while others went further and really wanted to provoke the closure of the College in order to embarrass the Smith Government. But my vote has always been and still is for those who fought to keep the College afloat as long as its academic freedom, in the sense of that term as defined by Sir Robert Birley, and its non-racial character were not impaired. Subsequent events have vindicated their attitude and Rhodesia enters on self-government with a proportionally larger and better qualified cadre of Africans than any other newly independent state in the continent.

At the risk of being accused of bias, I must say that in my opinion the University of London played a more important part in the decision that the College should be non-racial than Professor Gelfand's narrative implies. I was present at the meeting in London when Manfred Hodson and his delegation were told categorically that adherence to the non-racial principle by the College was a condition precedent of Special Relation with the University of London and without Special Relation the College would never have got off the ground. It is no coincidence that the clause in the College Charter enshrining this principle is based almost word for word on Statute 4 of the Statutes of the University of London which traces its lineage back to its first charter in 1836.

Perhaps in conclusion a few more personal comments are permissible. The book contains a striking portrait of Manfred Hodson, the driving force behind the acceptance in Rhodesia of the need for a university institution. Even more vivid is the picture of Walter Adams who shines through the pages of the book like Mr Valiant in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Less successful is the delineation of Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders who played a dominating role in his dual capacity as Chairman of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas and the University of London's Committee on Higher Education Overseas — but this is not surprising since I know from personal experience what an enigmatic character he was. Perhaps a little more stress should have been placed on the contribution of Professor C. T. Ingold, who succeeded Sir Alexander as Chairman of the Committee on Higher Education Overseas. Without his staunch advocacy in the troubled years following U.D.I., when the extremists in London were demanding the immediate termination of Special Relation in complete disregard of the interest of both students and staff of the College, the proper and orderly phasing out of Special Relation would have been impossible.

For those interested in the early years of the College, Professor Gelfand's book is prescribed reading and, when the definitive history of that period comes to be written, the author will be eternally indebted to Professor Gelfand for the magnificent preparatory work he has done.

University of London

SIR DOUGLAS LOGAN

Umendo By B. C. Makhalisa. Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977, 136pp., Rh\$0,70.
Umhlaba Lo! By B. C. Makhalisa. Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977, 80pp., Rh\$0,60.

The author of these works, Mrs Nkala, writes under her maiden name of Barbara C. Makhalisa. When she wrote her first book, *Qilindini* (Longmans

Rhodesia, 1974), she was only the second female writer in Ndebele (now there are three and about the same number in Shona).

Umendo (Married Life) is a novel portraying the story of love and marriage, and the lives of the three main characters in the book. Gugu, the girl, is torn in her choice between two young men, Thulani and Ndaba. She ends up marrying Ndaba, and this choice results in an unhappy marriage. Central to the theme of the book is a Ndebele proverb: 'Ukwenda Akuthunyelwa Gundwane' (lit. No mouse is sent when one is to marry, i.e. troubles which may be in store for one (in married life) cannot be predicted). But there is hope for Gugu in the end, when her drunken and irresponsible husband is stabbed to death by a gang of young people, and a revival of her former relationship with Thulani is possible.

Umhlaba Lo! (What a World!) is a work of drama, a play which looks at the life of a country girl who passes Form VI, but fails to get a place for further education or any form of professional training. In desperation, she goes to the city to look for any type of job. First, she is forced by circumstances to live with a very cruel aunt (her maternal uncle's wife) who vents a family vendetta on the unfortunate girl. In an effort to escape from this, she lands in the company of morally corrupt friends — and her eventual triumph, despite these trying circumstances, makes very interesting reading.

Miss Makhalisa is good at using dialogue to add variety to her style, and to make her narrative vivid. This technique makes her characters come alive. In places, she employs good figurative language: imagery, simile and metaphor, as well as an effective use of ideophones, all of which combine to give a colourful, vivid and picturesque narrative. Her words abound with typical Ndebele aphorisms and telling proverbs.

Her books are interesting and relevant to our times, in that they deal with contemporary problems that people face in their day-to-day lives. She has won a number of Rhodesia Literature Bureau awards (First Prize for *Qilindini* in 1970; Second Prize for the manuscript of *Umendo* in 1972; and First Prize for the manuscript of *Umhlaba Lo!* in 1976) and in 1978 the Kingston's Literary Award, organized by P. E. N. International (First Prize in the Ndebele section).

She is a keen observer of human character, and her main characters are well drawn. But the minor characters suffer from a certain neglect and at times seem to get lost somewhere in the middle of the scene. They fail to play an effective supportive role to the main characters in her works, and this detracts from her otherwise promising work. She also has a rather too simplistic view of life's complexities. Her works invariably have a happy ending. A couple of people die now and then, but the main people always seem to survive to the end; thus, her works have a very predictable ending. At times her plots rise in tension, and they approximate the height of tragedy, but she brings them down to a 'happy ending', creating an anti-climax in the reader's mind.

University of Rhodesia

C. M. SILEYA

Trekking in South Central Africa 1913-1919 By C. M. Doke. [Johannesburg], South Africa Baptist Historical Society, 1975, 188 pp., no price indicated.

This interesting book is infuriating to use — no details of where it is published, how or by whom it is edited, or what or where exactly its sources

are. It appears to be partly from the diary of the Revd Joseph Doke (Clement's father), partly diaries of Clement and partly his reminiscences, written in about 1973. This lack of professional editing is a pity because the book is valuable in its own right for its descriptions of missionary life in Northern Rhodesia and also useful for its glimpses of Clement Doke as a missionary (a relatively unknown period of his life which ended in 1921) and as a novice teaching himself Lamba.

R.S.R.

The Tonga People on the Southern Shore of Lake Kariba By A. K. H. Weinrich. Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1976, 109 pp., Rh\$1.80.

This work is essentially an exercise in descriptive ethnography on a limited scale. The field work on which it is based was conducted by the author during the month of June, 1974, and the wealth of material presented on these pages is yet another attestation of Dr Weinrich's well known ability for prodigious output under limiting circumstances, a point remarked on by Professor Colson in her foreword. The book is a valuable addition to Rhodesian ethnography since published material on the South Bank Tonga is sparse and fragmented. Dr Weinrich is incorrect in asserting in her preface that 'nothing has so far been published' (p.10) on these peoples; various articles have appeared in *Nada*, the *Zambesi Mission Record* and the *Proceedings and Transactions of the Rhodesia Scientific Association*, but this work is the most extensive and cohesive collection of data we have to date. In particular the volume is of value in presenting us with considerable material on contemporary aspects of Tonga culture under conditions of re-settlement after the building of the Kariba Dam forced a move of these people to new areas with consequent environmental changes.

Presentation of material is well organized, with chapters provided on history, changed ecological conditions, traditional and modern politics, kinship, religion and other cultural features. As a preliminary sketch of Tonga life the work gives an over-view not available to us previously. Of particular value and contemporary interest is Dr Weinrich's material on Tonga awareness of modern national political issues. A fondly held stereotype in Rhodesia of the Tonga is that they represent the archetypical isolated traditional African, pre-occupied with the mundane affairs of wresting a living from a harsh environment and with a political awareness that does not extend beyond the horizons of the remote areas of Tonga settlement. Dr Weinrich demonstrates that this is patently not the case; the effects of national and international political policies have impinged on Tonga society in various ways which have not escaped the attention and comprehension of the Tonga themselves. Their grasp of the implications of these issues, coupled with their pride and sense of ethnic independence, has led to a political assertiveness and maturity which compares favourably with that of other ethnically defined black groups in Rhodesia. Dr Weinrich also makes the interesting point that this political maturity has not been dependent on formal education or technological advance, items in which the Tonga have been relatively disadvantaged in the Rhodesian context.

Unfortunately the value of the work is vitiated at points by inadequate specification regarding sources, particularly in respect to survey data. Reference is made at various points (pp. 56, 64, 99) to sample censuses with

no indication of the sampling techniques used. This is important since the author imputes a representational nature to the results and makes a number of generalizations which have to be taken with considerable reservation. However, on balance I am glad that this work has been published. It usefully augments our knowledge of the Tonga; had more caution been exercised in the handling of the data my approval would have been without reservation.

University of Rhodesia

M. W. MURPHREE

Jubilee Scrapbook: 1952-1977: The Commandery in Central Africa of the Grand Priory of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem *Compiled by J. G. Storry.* Salisbury, M.O. Collins, 1977, viii, 87 pp., illustrated, Rh\$7,00.

Last year saw the centenary of the Order of St John in its present form and the Silver Jubilee of the Commandery of Central Africa which was separated in 1952 from its parent Priority in Southern Africa under which the local St John Ambulance Association and Brigade had operated since 1920. The break-up of Federation resulted in the Commandery of Central Africa being restricted to Southern Rhodesia and in the setting up of the St John Councils to continue the good work in Zambia and Malawi. Politics have not, however, changed the position of Sir Humphrey Gibbs who is Knight Commander — that is, the Governor of Southern Rhodesia, by convention.

The compiler has kept the history and description to a minimum in order to make his story more vivid by the use of illustrations and reports from newspapers of the time. It is to be hoped that this story of good will attract more people to support the Association and Brigade in these difficult times.

R.S.R.