

more blacks to move into higher earning brackets, and therefore giving them greater leverage for stimulating 'progressive' political change. In the last count these changes are seen to demonstrate the erosion of apartheid by the *de facto* absorption of blacks into higher socio-economic categories in S.A., and changing their structural position of subservience in the society to a position based on merit.

These claims are surely much exaggerated, if not grossly erroneous. They view education purely in terms of the 'social engineer' approach and assume that **more** education equals something that is in itself better and more desirable for everyone, and that it is unquestionably a 'progressive force for change'. But if it cannot be proved that increased expenditure on education necessarily entails increased development, economic growth or social mobility for all the people in the society (see above), equally it cannot be argued that educational expansion is an index of the economic or socio-economic advance of any particular group.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, the growth of educational facilities amongst the poor may well suit the needs of ruling groups, without it entailing that they relinquish any of their power or control. As Freire has argued, it is **the nature of the education** that provides the index of its potential for development, not the number of people schooled or the amount of money spent.

The denial of the possibility of a conflict of interests over access to goods and services lies at the centre of this view and it seems to me that this is an assumption that cannot legitimately be made in the light of our current understanding of the economics of education or radical educational thinking.

The degree of sophistication of the BAD system of 'education for subservience' and manipulation can hardly be questioned, yet many liberals still claim that it provides the key to the future of black development!!□

THE BENT PINE

the trial of Chief Langalibalele by Norman Herd

(The Ravan Press Braamfontein R6,90)

reviewed by Ged Martin

In 1873 the Natal government, concerned at the influx of guns into the colony from the diamond fields, decided to make an example of Langalibalele, whose small amaHlubi tribe had been settled on the Bushman's river as a buffer against raids from the Drakensburg. Langalibalele evaded government attempts to bring him in, claiming later that he recalled an attempt by John Shepstone, brother of Somtseu (Theophilus) to kill Matyana, another chief, by a similar ploy in 1858. The amaHlubi began to make plans to withdraw into the Drakensberg, and colonial forces, supported by African levies, set out in a carefully drawn pincer move to pen the retreating tribesmen within Natal.

Unluckily for the grand strategy one half of the pincer was ordered to march through a pass which did not exist, while the other, under Major Durnford, lost its way and arrived, hungry and exhausted, after a gruelling detour. At the Bushman's River Pass they found the amaHlubi making good their getaway, with the younger men of the tribe exulting and taunting the Natalians. Mindful of the order which was soon to brand him as "Don't Fire" Durnford, and apprehensive of their discipline under restraint, the Major began to withdraw his men. Some of the amaHlubi fired on the tail, killing five men, two of them Africans.

Colonial revenge was speedy and brutal. Langalibalele's tribe was hunted down and smashed, and several hundred lives

lost in the process. For good measure, the nearby amaPutini, whose main offence had been to avoid the fray, were similarly scattered. For the fugitive chief himself a remarkable dragnet was cast by British, Boers, Blacks and Coloureds throughout south-eastern Africa. Five weeks after the affray at Bushman's River Pass, Langalibalele was led into exactly the trap he had feared, by the Sotho ruler Malopo.

Then followed the most bizarre pantomime of all, episodes which form the main part of Mr Herd's book. The Langalibalele affair had already fractured the twenty-year friendship between Theophilus Shepstone and Bishop Colenso. While most of white Natal stood amazed and not altogether happy at its restraint, Colenso and Durnford himself were horrified at the bloodlusting incompetence which had forced Langalibalele into an untenable position. The governor, Sir Benjamin Pine, decided to put the captured chief on trial. However, he could hardly be tried by English law, partly because the only offences which could be proved against him were minor, such as failure to enforce gun registration laws, but more pertinently, because Langalibalele's guilt had already been affirmed by proclamation, and his followers, real and imagined, severely punished. The trial was thus held under "Native Law", which was codified only in Shepstone's head. In practice however, "Native Law" took no cognisance of disputes involving Europeans, and the 'trial' was conducted with a confused mixture of English and

African procedure, the switches being made whenever one or other seemed to offer some help to the Chief with the long name. Mr Herd's book has many pungent phrases, but none more telling than his summary of this curious and devious charade: "The crime had to fit the punishment". Pine, who had taken command of the punitive expedition, appointed himself Langelibalele's judge in his capacity as Supreme Chief. The bench was a ragged affair, including one magistrate who had taken part in the action, and the whole of the Executive Council in an undefined consultative function which hardly qualified them to become a court of subsequent appeal—quite apart from the small point that among the Councillors was Durnford's second-in-command and the father of one of the dead Carbineers. Predictably this 'Kafir' (or more accurately, kangaroo) court, urged on by Shepstone's tame tribal assessors, majestically upheld the Shepstone system on African management, as Shepstone himself had stage-managed it to do. Just to rub the point home, Theophilus secured the appointment as prosecutor of his brother John, whose treachery against Matyana was the alleged inspiration of Langelibalele's defiance of the law in the first place.

Thus the case dragged through what was to become an honourable pattern: executive interference, white hysteria, exile to Robben Island (which was no part of the domains of Supreme Chief Pine), and then evasions and defiance of legal redress of far grander scale than anything attempted by the amaHlubi chief.

For Mr Herd, a retired journalist and committed South African, Langelibalele was the victim of 'one of the earliest and most spectacular South African treason trials.' Mr Herd's message to his fellow countrymen is too clear to require spelling out: look at the injustices of your past, and then ask whether your present is any more decent and, in the not-so-long run, any less harmful to the true interests of South Africa. However much the academic historian may dissent from some of Mr Herd's judgements, surely no reviewer can fail to wish him well in his primary aim of alerting his fellow South Africans to the truth that present discontents have not been dreamed up overnight by flying squads of international agitators.

But the academic historian must also hope that **The Bent Pine** will so successfully arouse the enthusiasm of that mythical beast, the general reader, that he will be led to more scholarly, although by no means less lively, accounts of South African history. Mr Herd does not set out to follow all the scholarly conventions. His book has no index and a more obvious loss—no list of his very fine set of illustrations. Mr Herd's footnote references are sketchy. For instance, quotations from Colenso family correspondence are punctiliously given by writer, recipient and date, but with no clue to which of the scattered Colenso archives they are drawn from. Nor is it clear how far Mr Herd used the **Natal Witness**, the Pietermaritzburg paper which was close enough to events to become a lone voice of criticism. But the most striking omission is the lack of reference to the work of Mr W. R. Guest. Mr Herd does indeed twice cite Guest's 1962 B.A., thesis, and would without doubt cheerfully acknowledge its influence at other points. It is thus all that more regrettable that Mr Herd's book came too late to consult Guest's **Langelibalele: the crisis in Natal 1873–1975**, a revised and updated version of the original thesis, which has recently appeared in Natal University's Durban History department

research monograph series. Any reader of **The Bent Pine** who catches Mr Herd's enthusiasm for Langelibalele would be well advised to seek out Guest's work as well. The two are ideally complementary, for the two authors differ in focus as they differ in approach. The Durban history series is produced in a loose cover, offset type form which is easy on the eye, and if Guest's readable, sober but fast-moving narrative is any guide, none need to be deterred by the arid title of 'research monograph' from supporting this welcome venture in South African publishing.

Like most of us, Mr Herd finds it difficult to keep up with the latest fashions in African orthography, although it seemed strange to learn that in the tribal divisions of British politics in the 1870's were still between 'Whigs and Tories'. But a reviewer may more usefully disagree with Mr Herd's interpretation of events. First of all, it is difficult to avoid the impression that, however hysterical and absurd the charges made against him, Langelibalele may have been 'up to' something. The Kimberley diamond fields had made it possible, even easy, for Africans to get hold of guns in larger numbers than ever before—something we would now dub a destabilising situation'. Langelibalele certainly seems to have encouraged migrant amaHlubi workers to buy weapons. Then again, there is some evidence and certainly a general impression that Langelibalele was in touch with a number of African groups over a wide area before trouble broke out—perhaps conspiratorial, perhaps merely precautionary. Although the amaHlubi were a small tribe, their chief was no minor figure. "Langelibalele" was a name which bore tribute to his supposed powers as a rain-maker, and by extension one who could inflict drought—and as such he was held in general respect among Zulu and Xhosa people. Furthermore his alternative name, Mtwetwa, was an allusion to Dingiswayo, the pioneer at the art of building tribal confederacies on new military tactics. Certainly if Langelibalele had seen himself as a new African monarch and many Africans believed this was his ambition—he did not lack qualifications for the attempt. Mr Herd of course will have none of this: to him the simple solution would have been to have swallowed Shepstonian pride and let the amaHlubi take themselves off into the Drakensberg after a token rebuke. But, while we may regard with contempt Pine's attempt to argue that leaving the colony, which was no statutory offence at all, amounted to treason, it is legitimate to ask—what would have happened next? It is difficult to believe that Sotho country had an elastic capacity for absorbing new cattle-droving people, and Langelibalele's incursion might well have touched off a renewed power struggle in that sensitive area. Malopo's Judas-like betrayal of Langelibalele should not lead us to overlook the fact that he was the son of Moshweshwe, who knew more than most African rulers the price to be paid for peace. Notice too that when the Natal volunteers broke and ran at the Bushman's River Pass, it was the ba-Tlokwa levies, Sotho people, who put up the fiercest resistance, and subsequently rivalled the settlers in man-hunting. Perhaps then Langelibalele had more in mind than simple fear of John Shepstone's strong-arm tactics when he defied the government. Why did he sprinkle his men with *intelezi*—to repel bullets, as the government thought, or to strengthen their knees, as Colenso insisted? Mr Herd may provide the answer with his incisive comment that Langelibalele was 'two people'—the one a dignified leader, the other the crushed figure at the centre of Pine's Roman

triumph. This dichotomy of character certainly makes it harder to be sure exactly what motives were driving Langalibalele during 1873—was it panic, or ambition, or some muddled combination which defies category.

If Langalibalele may in part have been the author of his own misfortunes, what can be said of Pine? Mr Herd shows that the trial was aimed at two groups: the Natal Whites, who needed to bathe their pride in a little bullying after the humiliation of Bushman's River Pass, and the Natal Blacks, who had to be reminded of the penalties of challenging Theophilus Shepstone's system of divide and browbeat. (It is possible too that the show trial was also staged for the benefit of the Zulu: the decision to put pressure on Langalibalele followed an extended visit by Pine and Shepstone to the coronation of Cetshwayo, and perhaps they thought it desirable to follow up Zulu pageantry with a reminder of white power.) But in his emphasis on South African conflicts, Mr Herd entirely overlooks a third constituency, which may explain the bizarre ritual of Langalibalele's trial. Durnford was painfully aware of its existence, when he despairingly wrote: "What will England say?"

'England' of course was a good deal less liberal in its racial attitudes than it liked to pretend. British opinion had called for bloodthirsty revenge for the Indian Mutiny, but during the 1860's the tide had flowed the other way. The Maori wars in New Zealand had inspired widespread disgust at colonial landgrabbing, and in 1865 had come the Morant Bay rising in Jamaica, which electrified British opinion like Sharpeville in more recent times. The Jamaica rising was a small enough affair, in which nineteen whites were killed. In revenge, hundreds of Blacks were murdered, judicially or otherwise. Most spectacularly, a Coloured politician, G.W. Gordon whom the whites regarded as an 'agitator', was summarily tried by a court martial of junior officers and speedily hanged. In the outcry which followed, the governor,

Edward John Eyre, was recalled in modified disgrace, and subjected to attempts at private prosecution for murder by committees of indignant liberals.

It would not have taken too much imagination to see the similarities between Gordon's case and Langalibalele's. In Natal, as in Jamaica, a white minority outnumbered twenty to one, had reacted to the deaths of a handful of their number with massive and murderous retaliation. Like Gordon, Langalibalele could be accused of intemperate gestures, but could not be fairly held to have instigated violence. Pine, nearing the end of a long career, must have trembled at the thought of pensionless dismissal. A spectacular judicial process was necessary to avoid the furtive impression of the Jamaica proceedings. The use of 'Native Law' might help to appease humanitarian opinion in Britain. After the Gordon furore a hanging was unthinkable: hence exile was the severest possible punishment. Pine then had to tread a careful path, of impressing his African subjects while appeasing his British masters. Why did the Pantomime go so ludicrously wrong? Probably because once committed to the trial, Pine was in the hands of his master of ceremonies, Shepstone, for whom metropolitan outrage held fewer threats. Hence everytime there was a clash between fairness and firmness, Shepstone's local priorities carried the day. But Pine we may guess, was not so much out to make Langalibalele into a forerunner of Nelson Mandela, as to ensure that he himself did not become a successor to Governor Eyre.

To make these reservations about Mr Herd's view of the main characters is not of course to indulge in a complacent whitewashing of the Langalibalele affair. For Mr Herd the stuff of history is the wrongs inflicted by the bad on the good, and from this an inspiring and straightforward moral can be drawn for the present. It is more sobering to reflect that history is more often about interactions of misfortunes and ineptitudes of ordinary weak people. Sadly, this also offers less encouragement for the present. □

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