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A JOURNAL OF LIBERAL AND RADICAL OPINION

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EDITORIALS

1

STEVE BIKO AND FRANKENSTEIN

In this issue we carry a tribute to Steve Biko by his great friend, Donald Woods. The tribute has already been widely published, but we make no apology for publishing it again, so that it can reach those of our readers, in South Africa and overseas, who have not yet seen it, and can be read again by those who have. It is an eloquent and moving statement from somebody who really knew Steve Biko, the man. Anything we might try to add to it would sound trite. It introduces those who did not know him to a person very different from the ogre the South African authorities would have Steve Biko be.

Steve Biko died in the hands of the Security Police on the night of September 12th. Almost exactly fourteen years before, on the 5th September, 1963, Looksmart Ngudle became the first person to die while being held incommunicado, in detention, by the Security Police. There was a public outcry at his death. Other occasional deaths followed in those early years, and were followed by an

outcry. But the outcry didn't stop the deaths. In fact one could say that, during the last few years, deaths in detention have become commonplace. Indeed, one could go further, and say that, during the past eighteen months, there has been an epidemic of them, an average of more than one a month. And as the deaths have become more frequent the public reaction to them has become more muted. Is this fear of the consequences of protest, or has familiarity bred indifference? Whatever the answer to that question the harsh truth is that, if it had been somebody other than Steve Biko who died on September 12th, most of the world and South Africa wouldn't even have noticed it. Which raises the pertinent point, what have we let happen to us here? How have we allowed ourselves to drift from a position where any death in detention would raise an uproar to one where most go unnoticed?

It is not as if the official explanations which have been given for these deaths have been reassuring. People are said

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to have died as a result of falling down the stairs, of slipping in the shower, of falling over a chair. They are said to have committed suicide, or died of natural causes. It is difficult to escape the feeling that those 'natural causes' people die of in detention wouldn't have killed them if they hadn't been there. For the other side to the story of deaths in detention is the repeated allegations of torture which have been made by witnesses and accused in cases brought under the various security laws. These allegations are almost invariably dismissed by the judges. How else is it likely to be when one man stands up and says "I was tortured!", and six or eight Security Policemen stand up and say "It's all a pack of lies! We were all there, and not one of us laid a finger on him!" On the sheer weight of the evidence presented to him, what judge is likely to find against the police? And yet — people go on dying . . .

Have the repeated successes of the Security Police in refuting accusations of torture in Court convinced them that they have nothing to fear from the law and that their position is inviolate? After all, a great many people have now died while in their care, and not a single Security Policeman, to the best of our knowledge, has ever been convicted of having done anything to any of them.

If a potential security police torturer has nothing much to fear from the Courts, has he much to fear from his boss, the Minister? Or should we perhaps ask another question first? Who is now the boss, the Minister or the security apparatus he has created? We think that, if it isn't the apparatus yet, it very soon could be. It is true that, after the death of Steve Biko, the Minister told a newspaper that some Security Police "heads might roll", but for all we know that may simply have been an attempt to draw attention away from his own miserable part in the whole matter. Certainly prior to that the impression was growing that the Security Police had come to operate with impunity, secure in the

knowledge that nothing they did would earn one word of condemnation or a single rebuke from the Minister. If that is the point we have reached then Frankenstein is alive and well in South Africa and doing exactly as he pleases.

If the death of Steve Biko halts white South Africa in the drift to moral anarchy on which it seems embarked, where anything is permissible in the name of "security", some good may come out of it. Otherwise it will have been an unmitigated tragedy and disaster. His death under any circumstances was a loss that South Africa could not afford, but that he should have died in detention is something which South Africa will, we are convinced, live bitterly to regret. That Mr Biko stood for a radical re-ordering of South African society is not in dispute, but that he believed that that re-ordered society should be non-racial in concept everyone who knew him well is emphatic about. Everybody who does not have his head buried in the sand of apartheid ideology knows that radical change in South Africa is inevitable, and when it comes, how desperately we will need the kind of steadying hand that Steve Biko could have provided.

Mr Kruger told the world that Steve Biko's death "left him cold". Well, it leaves us cold too — cold with apprehension for the future to which Mr Vorster and Mr Kruger and the Frankenstein security machine they have created are leading us all, not least the people who gave them power. For one thing is quite certain, that security machine, no matter what methods it uses, has no prospect of winning a permanent home for Afrikanerdom in Africa. That will only happen when Afrikanerdom can persuade Africa that it should give it such a home. This, given the chance, Steve Biko might have been able to help do. Without him — and Albert Luthuli — and Robert Sobukwe — and Nelson Mandela? Who knows? □

2

RED HERRING

Mr Vorster has called a surprise general election almost eighteen months early. Why? Is it because the white opposition parties are in particular disarray? Does he want to show the outside world that, in the face of all its pressures, his electoral support stands firmer than ever? Did he want to divert attention from the death of Steve Biko and give his own doubting Thomases something else to think about? Does he want to crush his more reactionary critics once-and-for-all, claim an election victory as an endorsement of his new constitutional proposals, and go on from there, with the new powers with which it will invest him, to introduce changes which his own supporters won't much like?

These are some of the theories which have been put forward. There is probably something in all of them, but it is only the last which we would like to discuss here, and, as far as it is concerned, we would like to ask this question. Even if the white electorate gives Mr Vorster a more massive vote than ever before, and he takes that vote as

an endorsement of his new constitutional proposals, what prospect is there that those proposals could form the basis for a new South African political dispensation to which most people of all races could give their support? Unfortunately we think the answer to that question is — none!

The manner in which the new proposals were worked out was typically Nationalist. An all-Nationalist Committee was appointed and for months it worked in secret not talking to anyone else, hatching its plan. This Committee represented the views of, at the most, 10% of the population, and it was all-white. As a last-minute gesture to "consultation", Indian and Coloured leaders who work in apartheid institutions were called to Pretoria to be told what it was all about. At that late stage there was small chance of their views influencing the form of the proposals in any important respect and, as far as we are aware, no changes were introduced before the proposals were presented to the top councils of the Nationalist Party and, after them, to

its four Provincial Congresses. There they seem to have been swallowed without a murmur. Not one African person, urban or rural, was at any stage considered as having a view worth canvassing.

It is therefore not surprising that this new scheme has been rejected by every African leader of any consequence. It has also been rejected by the majority party in the Coloured Representative Council and, we have no doubt, is regarded as irrelevant by that large body of Coloured people who refuse to have anything to do with the CRC. Indian leaders have either rejected the scheme or are non-committal.

The proposals, as we see them, are a simple device to draw the Indian and Coloured communities into a white-dominated camp, in which they will be given a semblance of power-sharing, and in which their participation will commit them to support white South Africa in any future conflict which may develop with black South Africa. No doubt there will be some Indian and Coloured politicians who will be drawn by their own fears or the lure of high salaries and big motor-cars to climb on to this bandwagon, but we hope there won't be many, for the whole scheme seems to us to rest on a series of untenable propositions.

The first is that, by putting more power in the hands of one man, the President, our problems will somehow be more

easily resolved. This is a dangerous delusion, especially when that President is destined to be the nominee of that 10% of the population which has drawn up the constitution. The second is that a white-dominated Cabinet Council will continue indefinitely to control 87% of the land area of South Africa and a comparable proportion of its developed wealth. The third is that it is possible to postulate a solution for South Africa's future political shape in which 80% of its population, the African people, have had no say whatsoever.

Mr Vorster will no doubt win the election easily and then tell the world that this means that South Africa stands firm behind him and his constitutional plans. He will probably also tell white South Africa that its future is safe in his hands, for we assume that he will be the President. Both claims will be nonsense. Will he and his supporters never face the simple and, to us, so obvious fact, that the only sure foundation for white survival and acceptance here is by persuading the black people of our country and the continent that a white presence here will be an asset to them both. These new proposals, so contemptuous of African opinion, will not help one bit to do that. All the constitutional contortions that man can dream of will not save white South Africans from one, hard, basic fact of life in Africa. That in the end they will only stay here if Africa wants them to stay. □

3

STOKING THE FIRES

As we have noted often enough before, the Nationalist government seems bent on leading South Africa to disaster and Afrikanerdom to suicide. What other conclusion can one come to when one considers some of the things done recently by its officials in the sacred name of apartheid?

In Soweto, where pupils, parents and teachers have surely made it more than clear that they have had enough of Bantu Education, the sensible thing to do, one would think, would be to sit down with the representatives of these groups and work out with them how to phase out Bantu Education and bring black schools into an integrated education system. Unfortunately what is obvious to everyone else is too often anathema to the Nationalists. So their answer to Soweto's cry for change has been to close down the schools, take them under direct government control, and tell all children they must register again for admission. The result has been that less than 3 000 out of 27 000 secondary school pupils have registered, a mass resignation of teachers has occurred, and another area of conflict has been aggravated.

On the outskirts of Cape Town the demolition of squatters' homes has gone ahead despite all protests. In the middle of one of the wettest winters in memory hundreds of families have sat huddled with their possessions in the rain, watching their homes being flattened by bulldozers. Their offence? They had erected illegal houses on somebody else's land because they couldn't find anywhere else to live. Their other offences? That they had responded to two of the primary injunctions of Christian teaching. The first, that the honourable thing for a man to do is to go out and find work so that he may support his family — which is

precisely what many squatters have come to Cape Town from the Transkei to do. The second, that the right place for a woman and her children to live is with her husband — which is just why whole families have followed their migrant husbands and fathers to Cape Town. Most of these families, having watched their homes destroyed, then disappeared into other people's shacks somewhere else, or into the bushes of the Cape Flats. Some of them were given accommodation on Church property, where government officials again descended on them, usually in the night, charging them with being illegally resident there and chivvyng them on again.

In Natal a directive has gone out from the Department of Bantu Administration to African attorneys telling them they have a year in which to remove themselves from their offices in the centres of towns and set themselves up in the dormitory townships of Kwa-Zulu. Most of these attorneys have practised from their present premises for years. As far as we know this has never led to a single 'incident' of any importance. To the central areas where these offices are situated clients from all points of the compass gravitate, not just people from one township. The principal courts are easily to hand. Advocates and colleagues are close by for briefing and discussion. Reference libraries are available. None of this will apply in a township. The convenience of their clients and the livelihood of the attorneys is to be sacrificed on the altar of doctrinaire apartheid. *

So there you have it, from Soweto, from Cape Town and from Durban, a few more ingredients for a recipe for an explosion. □

* Since writing, this decision has been rescinded.

UNEMPLOYMENT

We publish in this issue three short reports on aspects of unemployment in three separate areas in Natal, one urban, one peri-urban and one rural. The people with whom the articles are concerned are all black. Nobody knows how many unemployed black people there are at present in South Africa because there are no statistics available. Estimates, all based largely on guesswork, range from hundreds of thousands to well over a million. Our three reports tell something of what these statistics mean in personal terms of suffering and frustration. In our next issue we hope to publish a more general article dealing in greater depth with the whole question of South Africa's present crises of unemployment.

1 Unemployment in Edendale

by Excell S. B. Msimang

Many people do not know the History of Edendale. When the problem of unemployment in Edendale is discussed, the public, especially whites in Pietermaritzburg, always say, but there is Pietermaritzburg next door, Edendale blacks should not suffer from unemployment and under-employment. The historical facts are as follows:-

Pietermaritzburg was established shortly after the Blood River Battle of December 16, 1838. About 22 years later — 1860 — The Rev. James Allison of the John Wesley Mission established Edendale with a handful of black converts comprising Zulus, Sothos and some Griquas.

From 1860 to 1968 when the Influx Control Act, creating Labour Bureaux came into force, Pietermaritzburg drew its labour from Edendale, and Sobantu Village, which was established in 1928.

The Sobantu population could not satisfy the labour demands of Pietermaritzburg, so Edendale residents continued earning their livelihood in Pietermaritzburg. Some of course, were lured to the large cities and gold mines.

It can be said, with pride, that the history of the growth and prosperity of Pietermaritzburg was greatly bound with the life and development of Edendale in the past.

In 1942 and 1965, the Ashdown and Imbali Municipal Townships respectively, came into being. One of the basic principles of the Influx Control Act, was to protect the Township peoples' privilege of getting the town jobs first, and only then could Edendale people be offered jobs.

These regulations were created to ensure that no municipal township resident would fail to pay rent because of unemployment. Gradually Edendale residents were elbowed out of Pietermaritzburg labour market, at the same time the population was growing fast and Pietermaritzburg industry and commerce growing at a slower pace — a natural phenomenon.

The original Town Planners of Edendale had planned for a christian-peasant community and not an industrial and commercial one. Hence no provision was made for industrial and commercial zones. No education system, formal or otherwise, was available to the black to acquire

skills that could enable him to create jobs in Edendale up to this day.

EDENDALE STILL LOOKS TO PIETERMARITZBURG FOR ITS DAILY BREAD.

At the time of writing, with the inflation "flue" all around the country, Edendale is hardest hit.

The average monthly work-seekers on the books of the Edendale Tribal Labour Bureau is 400.

The residents of Edendale carry a heavier burden of living than the townships' folks for the following reasons.

1. About 80% of the population here are tenants.
2. The tenants pay an average rent of R10 per month for 4m x 4m rooms, while the township tenants pay R13 for a cottage of two bedrooms, two 7m x 3m and one living-room 3m x 4m, a kitchenette and private toilet.
3. They travel a longer distance to Pietermaritzburg and pay more in bus and train fares.
4. They are rarely offered the best paying jobs when requisitions for labour are sent out to the Edendale Bureau, when these low paying jobs are refused by Edendale people, because their cost of living is higher than the township people's, they are said to be "choosey" or "lazy" yet there are hundreds of Edendale people who have given some Pietermaritzburg establishments long, fruitful service.

Edendale is particularly vulnerable in times of a depression because she has no industries of her own and must depend on job hand-outs from other industrialised areas.

The solution is creation of labour intensive industries in Edendale and as far as is possible, Edendale should aspire to be self-supporting.

What inhibits development at the moment is that, in 1965 sub-division of large tracts of land was frozen. It was only in April, this year, that sub-division was allowed and the proposed Town Planning Scheme has not provided zones for large industries like brickmaking or heavy industries. This must be looked into before all available land has been cut up into quarter acre lots.

2 The problems of unemployment among African workers

(As experienced by the Black Sash Advice Office in Durban)

by Solveig Piper

The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) (established by Act 30 of 1966) consists of the contributions of all contributors (irrespective of race), their employers and the State. However, vast numbers of people are excluded from enjoying the benefits of the Fund viz. Agricultural workers, casual and seasonal workers, foreign Africans, domestic servants in private households, African miners living in compounds, permanent public servants, provincial employees, SAR & H employees, Africans earning less than R10,50 per week and anyone earning more than R6,760 per annum. The fund offers the following benefits to those workers eligible:-

A. **ORDINARY BENEFITS** to contributors during periods of unemployment when suitable work is not available to them, though they are willing and able to work.

As already stated African workers only qualify for UIF benefits if they earn over R10.50 per week, whereas the other race groups do not have this minimum stipulation before being entitled to the benefits of the fund. Africans should be allowed to qualify as do other races. Regarding the "availability of suitable work", because of job reservation, Africans can in no way 'sell their labour' and have positively no choice as to whether a job offered to them is suitable or not. In fact an African workseeker has got to accept the employment offered regardless of its nature. This is especially the case with contract workers.

Workseekers on a 30 day limit permit do have much more of a choice, but they only have 30 days in which to make it and thus their choice is limited in terms of the availability of work. It goes without saying that job reservation should be scrapped both for economic and humane reasons, especially as the majority of African workseekers are both willing and able to work. However, in the present economic recession, even that occurrence will have little significance for black workers.

B. **ILLNESS ALLOWANCES** to contributors during periods in excess of three weeks when, by reason of a specified illness, they are unfit for work and have become unemployed or, though their contracts of employment have not been terminated, receive from their employers less than a third of their normal earnings.

The biggest problem affecting African contributors requiring illness allowances is the difficulty in obtaining their UIF cards in order that they may apply for these benefits. Invariably the employer has not applied for their UIF cards (this is usually done on termination of employment), and therefore they have little or no chance of receiving these allowances while they are unable to earn. The process of getting a card is tedious and decidedly long term. It offers extraordinary problems for the contract worker because he may only collect his UIF benefits in his Homeland area and not in his place of employment. It is

important to remember that contract workers make up the majority of the African labour force in South Africa.

C. **MATERNITY BENEFITS** to female contributors who are unemployed or who, though their contracts of employment have not been terminated, receive from their employers less than a third of their normal earnings during a period not exceeding 18 weeks prior to the expected date of their confinement and 8 weeks after the birth of a live child, or 4 weeks after the birth of a stillborn child.

In the case of African contributors, very seldom is their employment not terminated, and one of the main points of contention in this Act is that it does not cover domestic servants in private households.

D. **PAYMENTS TO DEPENDANTS OF DECEASED CONTRIBUTORS.** Dependant means the widow or invalid widower, dependant children under the age of 17 years, or any other person wholly or mainly dependant on the contributor for the necessities of life.

Here the biggest difficulties encountered by Africans are those of communication, distance and knowledge. In the case of the African widow/dependant of a contract worker, for example, she lives in the rural area, and only sees her husband once a year. More than likely she does not know anything about the UIF or that such a card exists and that she can claim death benefits. Enlightenment on this does not easily come her way.

The Act also specifically states that:

E. Employers are required to ensure that every contributor in their employ has a contributor's record card, which should be handed or delivered to the contributor without fail on the day that employment terminates, otherwise benefits from the fund cannot be paid.

In a large number of cases UIF cards are only applied for after employment has been terminated. Some companies employing large numbers of workers often use this fact as an excuse for their contravention of the Act.

F. **APPLICATION FOR UIF BENEFITS.** When an African contributor becomes unemployed he should register for work immediately at the nearest labour bureau or at a magistrate's office. He will not receive any money unless he is available for and capable of work, has contributed to the UIF for at least 13 weeks in the year before becoming unemployed and that it is at least one week since application was made for benefits and the contributor is still unemployed. There are 3 reasons for termination of service, viz. (1) Resignation, (2) Reduction in staff, and (3) Other. For reasons 1 and 3 a minimum penalty of 6 weeks could be imposed from the date of application for contributions. If the contributor is still unemployed after these 6 weeks then he will begin receiving benefits.

This is where the contract worker could well benefit from the UIF. He must go back to his Homeland area to register as a workseeker, and there he could remain unemployed for some months, as is the case in Natal. The problem arises if he has not got his record card. He still has to go home, as it is illegal for him to remain in a prescribed area while unemployed. Consequently he returns continuously hoping to get his card which may by then have been applied for by his previous employer. This can, however, take up to 3 months to arrive from Pretoria. Meanwhile he should have been able to register for UIF benefits on the strength of a letter from his previous employer, stating that his contributor's card has in fact been applied for. This is another thing the employer does not do automatically.

In the case of a bona fide workseeker, i.e. someone who qualified under Section 10 (1) a, b, c, or d of the Urban Areas Act of 1945, he only has to apply to his local Bantu Affairs Commissioner for Unemployment benefits.

Now, should the contributor have a 6 week penalty imposed on him he does have 21 days in which to appeal. But as the penalty notice served on him is incomprehensible taking into account that a large number of Africans are unable to read English or Afrikaans or are illiterate, the chances of his taking action within the stated period are extremely remote. If a 6 week penalty is imposed on an urban worker, as he has to find employment within 30 days or lose

his rights by endorsement out, he obviously cannot draw UIF benefits.

The U.I. Fund presently stands at over R190 million, and there are close on 2 million unemployed Africans in South Africa. 11 000 out of 39 000 employable in Edendale alone, and 7 000 a month in Durban. These figures are indicative of the critical unemployment situation facing South Africans, (the majority of whom are black workers) and employers should immediately take steps to openly recognize the needs of the majority of their labour force, as for example Black Trade Unions and equal pay for equal work etc. Like it or not we have an unemployment problem that is very definitely getting out of hand and unless we tackle it objectively and constructively, it can and will only worsen. Working conditions should improve in such circumstances and not stagnate or deteriorate in the knowledge that people will accept anything just to keep their jobs.

African contributors besides being subject to the UIF Act, are also subject to Influx Control, which makes the UIF Act inoperable. Furthermore there should be a nationwide campaign to educate both employers and employees regarding their rights and duties.

Failure to do this leaves the Act as it is now in practice, blatantly discriminatory on racial grounds. African Foreigners, Domestic and Farm Labourers especially, should be included. It is calculated, not to relieve pressure on unemployed Africans, but by its malfunctioning, precisely to maintain the pressure in order to maintain a vast reserve labour pool of Africans obliged to accept any job at all no matter how low the wage. The UIF Act, as it now operates is part and parcel of the low wages forced labour system peculiar to Africans in South Africa. □

3 Msinga

by Creina Alcock

It has been Christmas for eleven months now. Men along the footpaths. Men along the roads. Men in courtyards drinking beer. Men in circles under the trees. Men with a holiday look about them, with city shoes and bright shirts and expressions of nothing-to-do-all-day.

At Msinga men are strangers, Christmas visitors who once a year pour into the valleys in a flash flood of skidding taxis and buses that sway to the FM's jive. Overnight the men come in loaded with parcels and bags; presents and treats loaded with excitement. For a month thousands of happy parties chase the echoes from the hills. Then the drums are silent. The flood is over and the men are gone.

The seasons have always happened this way so nobody was prepared when last Christmas the flood fell away leaving men stranded at Msinga. Every month since there have been trickles towards the cities, but every month a stronger current brings streams of workless back to this arid, rocky country. "No work," say the homecomers. "There is no work anymore."

It is impossible to make a statement on unemployment at Msinga. It is an area out of sight of authority, out of reach of welfare agencies, too wild and inaccessible for census with its 1 847 km of broken cliffs and hidden valleys. There may

be more than 100 000 people at Msinga but they are swallowed in the rough, bushy spaces. Without a town, without a railway, who is to count the jobless coming in?

You can guess there is something wrong by all the men at all the beerdrinks, all the men along the roads, all the men that knock for work; slickmen, city men. "Anything baas," says one. "Any work as long as it's work." He has a reference to say he is a qualified chef from a five star hotel and was only retrenched because of falling custom. What on earth can a chef do at Msinga?

"Sididile" says a man with a suit. "We are desperate. Work is finished in Goli. I'll have to start a garden though I haven't had a garden before. I bought this seed in town before I came back . . ." and out of the briefcase spills expensive small packets. Most will be useless at Msinga – asparagus, brussel sprouts, celery, kale. "What must I do to make them grow?" asks the man in the suit.

What else is there to do at Msinga but try to grow things in among the rocks, in the hot stony fields far from water? Some black youths fool about as they plant a hedge of aloes to enclose a garden on a windy plateau. "Kom, kom, kom, kaffirs!" bellows the leader. ("We learnt something in town," he grins). "Kaffir wat maak jy daar? Kom, kaffir,

hardloop!" The boys pause from their work, laughing at the mimic. "Any chance of a job?" they ask. Only a year ago they swaggered with the shine of their city experience. "You wouldn't work on a farm!" "Wouldn't we? Times have changed. Why do you think we are making this garden. We are desperate. Sididigile."

Our farm adjoins Msinga and for the purpose of this article we attempted a census of a valley community with 70 homes — 1 000 people. Thirty householders had answered questions before doors were shut against us. "Questions are dangerous," somebody told somebody. "Whenever the government is going to throw people off the land it first asks questions. Who's the kraalhead? How many in the family? Who is away working? Answer questions like that and the next thing you know the lorries will be here to take us away."

Ten of the 30 kraals which answered our questions had unemployed men sitting at home. There were some odd discrepancies in the information they offered. "You say there has been no money since you were sacked last December but every month you go to the store to buy mieliemeal? How do you pay for it?"

"That's none of your business."

"I don't know."

"There are ways."

"We just had the money."

Which means dagga of course. Msinga is subsidized by dagga, a high-risk but high paying crop that thrives in the

nooks and crannies of the steep, hot slopes.

While we could not offer jobs to all the jobless, we made an offer instead to help them grow food. Were there any volunteers to dig communal water furrows? There could be no payment for the work. Now **that** is the way to assess the unemployment problem. Twenty men came from one community. Thirty from another. Forty . . . Young men, middle-aged men, and a few who had been forced to retire early. They were neatly dressed, with city skills, and looked oddly out of place now that they were home. Yet for weeks they have been wielding picks and spades chipping hollows in the rocky earth.

One man on a dig asked for help with his unemployment insurance. "When I left, my company told me I must take this letter to my Bantu Affairs Commissioner to get my insurance but although I have been every month there has been no money yet." Soon we had a book of similar complaints. It is a one rand busride to the Commissioner's office and men have run out of busfare money. We got on the telephone on their behalf to an official who assured us that all the men had to do was come in with the letter from their previous employers and the insurance would be paid out. "Have there been more claims than usual lately," we asked. "Well yes," said the official cautiously. "Why do you want to know? Anyway we can't give you any figures."

Nobody will ever have figures for rural areas like Msinga. You are easily forgotten when you live among the hills. □

KEEP ON KEEPING ON

A Review of *A SOUTH AFRICAN PILGRIMAGE*, by Edgar Brookes (Ravan Press)

by Colin Gardner

I

This is a fine autobiography by a very distinguished man. It is, in several senses of the word, a modest book: it is fairly short (150 pages); it is consciously limited in its scope and aims; and the author's attitude is throughout humble and self-questioning. But it contains a wealth of human truth and some profound and moving meditations on society and politics.

There are different sorts of autobiography. At the one extreme, there is the book which attempts to give a full account of an era, almost a work of history; at the other extreme, there is the one which attempts to analyse many of the complex workings of the subject's mind and heart, almost a work of psychology. Edgar Brookes's book is both historical and psychological, as well as theological and to some extent philosophical; but essentially it focusses upon the evolution of the author's political views and upon his not inconsiderable contributions (the judgment is mine) to the life of South African society. From first to last Edgar Brookes has been a dedicated searcher: the title — *A South African Pilgrimage* — is exactly right.

II

The journey begins just after the turn of the century (Brookes was born in 1897). The picture that is given of Edwardian white Natal is quietly devastating, and yet one can't help wondering whether the attitudes to be found in Pietermaritzburg today are always so very different from those that are evoked. Of his schooling, for example, we read this:

At no time can I remember any study of African or Indian languages or customs, or of our relationship to the African or Indian races, nor even our relationship to our fellow white man of Afrikaans speech. We were not particularly anti-Afrikaans, anti-Indian or anti-African. It was just that all this was irrelevant to Cicero, England and real life. (p. 5)

There are differences now, of course: Cicero and England have largely disappeared. But what has taken their place?

Brookes's criticism of the world of his childhood is not bitter or 'superior', however; he is too good an historian and too compassionate a man to indulge in the simpler

pleasures of hindsight. He records gently and accurately a view of things which was to be found at the time in many parts of the world:

When the First World War burst on us we were most of us uncritical of the world in which we lived. The strange structure of Africa in 1914 when there were only two independent states, Liberia and Ethiopia, each of which appeared to be something of a joke, was taken by us for granted. We could live among the humbled Zulus and the defeated Afrikaners, not indeed with prejudice against them, but with no ear to hear their heart-beats, with complacency and an unarticulated feeling that they were lucky to be in the British Empire.

My contemporaries were not villains. They were of their time. I by the grace of God have been awakened and helped to move with the times, and I rejoice for this because it shows that others can be similarly helped. (p. 14)

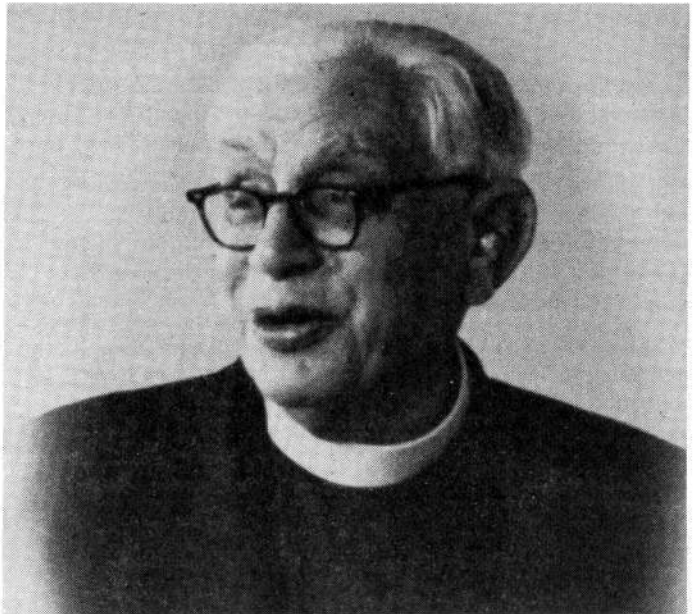
His parents being too poor to send him to the newly-formed Natal University College, Brookes worked in the Department of Customs and Excise for seven years, first in Durban, then in Pretoria. During these years, he spent a period in the army, and also studied as an external student at the University of South Africa. In 1920 he attained first an M.A. and then a lectureship at the Transvaal University College, later to become the University of Pretoria.

At the University he encountered for the first time what one might call the Afrikaner myth, and he fell under its spell. It is understandable that a sympathetic and imaginative young Natalian should have done so: the British record in the Transvaal, once one looked at it carefully, was not wholly impressive. He learned Afrikaans, became friendly with prominent Afrikaners, and began to be regarded by many of his English South African associates as a renegade. His PhD. thesis, **The History of Native Policy in South Africa from 1830 to the Present Day**, worried his publishers, and was brought out with the aid of funds secured by General Hertzog; and this is hardly surprising, for it propounded an early version of the theory of separate development. Brookes writes of this period in his life with simple humility:

Thus it came to pass that in my thesis I came down too often on the side of policies which I have spent much of my mature life in opposing. I could have been more extreme than in fact I was, but it remains true that I was on the wrong side in matters of vital importance. (p. 20)

In 1926, not long after the publication of the book, Hertzog put before Parliament some bills which were the forerunners of the famous 1936 bills; and Brookes supported him:

Over this period I should like to draw a veil, were this an honest thing to do. As far as I can remember one of the motives which led me to support the Bills was the exhilarating feeling of being a kind of power behind the throne since the Land Bill embodied a 'solution' of the land question put forward in my **History of Native Policy**. I am sure, too, that at this time political ambition was very strong in me. How grateful I am that General Hertzog did nothing to encourage my desire to enter Parliament, for if I had done so I should almost certainly have become enmeshed in Nationalist politics, and though I hope and believe that I should ultimately have broken away from them the process would have been harder



Edgar Brookes

Joe Alfers

and more painful than my actual change of opinion was.

Apart from the desire to be honest, and to undergo the penitential discipline of acknowledging my wrong actions, I feel that this fairly artless account of what happened over forty years ago may serve to show the changes which can take place in one man's life. The pilgrimage from supporting the Hertzog Bills to being National Chairman of the Liberal Party is a pretty long one. (p. 23)

That, certainly, is one of the most revelatory moments in the book. The theme of political ambition is one that runs through the whole narrative; so is that of religious searching. Later they almost merge, however, as ambition modulates into a desire to do the best thing in the circumstances.

But for the time being Brookes appeared to be riding the crest of a wave. In 1923 he has been made professor; in 1927 he was one of the South African delegates at the League of Nations.

A representative in the world's highest Assembly of a still respected South Africa at the age of thirty, what could I not expect to be at forty or fifty? But life turned out otherwise. I have once or twice in my life been quite markedly a coming man. Then I became an elder statesman. The intermediate stage of having 'arrived' was missing. And this is the mercy of God who knew what successful ambition would mean to my real self and saved me from success. (p. 32)

The inner tide began to turn very soon, however — indeed in 1927 itself, with a visit to America. What he saw and learned on that trip, together with the influence of Christianity which had always been a living reality for him, made him begin to revise his views. Within a year or two the direction of his political thinking had become liberal. In 1929 he was one of the founder members of the Institute of Race Relations. It is at this stage in the book that we find the first of many comments on the forlorn optimism of people like himself:

We who founded the Institute leant too heavily — it was in the years before Hitler — on the reasonableness of the average human being. We believed in the liberal principle, endorsed by the Fabian Society, of 'measurement and publicity'. Collect all the facts and let them be known, and all will be well. Plato in his

view that knowledge is virtue fell into the same error.
(p. 43)

From this point onwards the tone of the narrative is often sad, in fact tragic: in what other spirit could a sensitive liberal respond to the history of the last fifty years?

And yet that is not the whole of the picture. Interwoven with the main thread of the story are many strands of personal fulfilment: a happy marriage, five children, many friendships. At one point, indeed, the author declares that he is 'fundamentally a happy man' (p. 56).

With his new allegiances, life at the University became awkward. In 1933 he resigned, and, after a year and a half collecting funds for the Institute of Race Relations, he plunged — a little hesitantly — into a wholly new way-of-life by becoming Principal of Adams College at Amanzimtoti. Brookes describes his eleven years at this institution (a combined high school, teachers' training college and industrial school for Africans) as the happiest of his life; and the pages that are devoted to these years make it easy for the reader to believe this. They are full of vivid evocations, lively character-sketches and touching or amusing anecdotes. Even this, however, becomes in the end a part of the general desolation:

All these happy things have passed. Butchered to make an ideologist's holiday, the old missionary schools and colleges have, with a very few exceptions, gone. Adams celebrated its centenary in 1953: it was closed in 1956. (p. 56)

In 1937 Brookes became one of the new representatives of Africans in the Senate. It was an interesting, taxing, often frustrating job; and he describes it clearly and soberly. Some things the African representatives managed to achieve, unobtrusively; the author served on a number of important commissions; but he has come to realize that they were attempting the impossible:

I do not think that we can acquit ourselves of the charge of being too optimistic, nor can we be found innocent of the accusation of not knowing our own countrymen well enough. We did not fully realise the strength and extent of fear, prejudice, and the desire for self-preservation at all costs. (p. 91)

Like so many liberal whites at the time, they were kept going by the leadership and example of Jan Hofmeyr; but 1948 brought the victory of Malan and the death of Hofmeyr. After that, life in the Senate became steadily less tolerable. In 1952 Brookes suffered a coronary thrombosis, and resigned his seat.

The last part of the story I shall summarize briefly, as it is probably fairly well known to many readers of **Reality**. In 1954 Brookes became senior lecturer in History and Political Science at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, and in 1959 professor and head of the department; he discusses some of the problems of the universities in South Africa. In 1961 he was the chairman of the Natal Convention. In 1962 he joined the Liberal Party, and in 1964 (with the banning of Peter Brown) he became its National Chairman. Meanwhile he had been co-author of the **History of Natal** (one of his many books), and had also travelled, as visiting professor, to New Zealand, England and North America. After his retirement he taught divinity at St John's Girls' High School. Last (or most recently) but not least, at the age of 76 he was ordained as a priest of the Church of the Province.

The most striking pages in the final chapters are those devoted to an honest, patient, often pained analysis of the dilemma and the achievements of liberals. Were they right? Did they employ the right approach? What else could they have done in the circumstances? Was it all worthwhile? And what does one do now? What does the future hold? Should one leave the country? These questions are not posed in the abstract, as mere topics for some politics seminar: they have all the urgency and the poignancy of personal self-assessment. A scrupulous and wholly serious man, in old age, questions the very direction that his life has taken.

To most of the questions there are and can be no simple answers, and Edgar Brookes does not allow himself easy consolations. But two general conclusions stand out firmly for him and (I think) for the involved or sympathetic reader. One is that, for a Christian, what appears to be a personal defeat may nevertheless be in some sense a victory:

I am very grateful to William Temple for making it clear that Calvary was not a failure to be reversed by the victory of the Resurrection, but that Calvary was itself the victory, with the Resurrection as the lovely and sacramental confirming of it.

So I turn away as far as I myself am concerned from the Emperor Joseph II's description of himself as 'a prince who was full of good intentions but who failed in everything that he undertook'. This description has often, too often, seemed to me to be true of myself, but it is not God's word for me.

Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove:
As He pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.
(pp. 118-9)

The other conclusion is that one simply has to carry on struggling and fighting for what one believes to be right. In the first page of the book we are told that the author's father had been a soldier. One of the anecdotes from his days at Adams College shows Brookes on a long walk with his seven-year-old daughter, after they had lost their way:

She was sturdy and courageous, but it was a long walk for a child. I had to invent ways of amusing her, so I made up a song which we sang together as we tramped:

Keep on keeping on,
Don't go weeping on,
Don't go sleeping on,
Keep on keeping on.

This Shakespearean lyric, which I think is not a bad motto for life, got us to the beach . . . (p. 53)

Just before the end of the book Brookes offers us his own epitaph. It is taken from Matthew Arnold, and the military image is surely significant:

They out-talked thee, hissed thee, tore thee.
Better men fared thus before thee,
Fired their ringing shot and passed,
Hotly charged — and broke at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb.
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall. (pp. 151-2)

So Edgar Brookes is to be seen — and I think richly deserves to be seen — not simply as a South African pilgrim but as a Christian soldier too.

I have concentrated on what might be called the main story-line, but of course the book isn't all about Edgar Brookes. It contains, for example, numerous sketches of the people he knew and worked with. Sometimes one is disappointed by the brevity of these sketches; but this brevity seems to have been dictated partly by the author's clear sense of his main theme, partly by the modesty of the whole enterprise. Still, one must be grateful for the number and the variety of the portraits: C. T. Loram, Rheinallt Jones, Jabavu, Z. K. Matthews, Luthuli, Mrs Ballinger, Smuts, Hofmeyr, E. G. Malherbe, Peter Brown, Alan Paton, to name only those who are well-known.

It is a most valuable book.

III

What is the final impact of the book — of the life (so far) and the views of Edgar Brookes — on a person a generation or two younger than the protagonist? I ask this question because **A South African Pilgrimage** is no mere passive record: like all good books, it constitutes a challenge. What questions does it set in motion within the mind? Obviously the ones that it poses itself — but are there not others too? Hasn't the whole liberal (or liberal-radical) discussion moved on in some ways since the legalised murder of the Liberal Party nearly ten years ago?

Each person has his own way of looking. I can only offer my own — though at the same time I claim no originality for what I say.

It seems to me that all that Edgar Brookes has stood for is completely valid; one must desire a society that is non-racial, just and harmonious. But one must take cognizance of new analyses of our present problems and of new strategies to meet these problems. Certainly we must keep on keeping on; but — however profound the spiritual victories that lie behind worldly failures — we must find ways of achieving success in this world, in this country. The human suffering brought about by the present South African situation simply cannot be tolerated. Edgar Brookes would wholly agree with that.

But what analyses? What strategies? The proponents of black consciousness and various socialist thinkers have put forward the view that the liberation of South Africa's oppressed people can only really come from the oppressed themselves. The whites are so thoroughly the beneficiaries of the present socio-politico-economic system that it is

unthinkable that they should change through a simple act of self-conversion. Only a small minority is likely to be wise enough or honest enough to recognize the true needs of society. A 'change of heart' — that great event that liberals have worked and hoped and prayed for — is likely to come (if it comes at all) only as a result of pressure, and that pressure can be exerted only by those who have a deep communal desire to generate pressure. Black consciousness puts its main emphasis upon psychological self-realization among blacks; socialism stresses the importance of trade unions. The white regime has enormous unfair power: it can only be combated by those groups who have, potentially, an equal or greater power. And of course pressure from the outside (which the Government is experiencing deeply and justly at the moment) is distinctly helpful too.

This picture of one mighty force pressing against another mighty force is disturbing to a liberal. In the conflict violent emotions are produced and traditional liberal values are likely to be brushed aside. The danger is very real. But then the violent emotions and the brushings-aside exist already; no completely new situation is created by the application of the power of the oppressed. And besides, as I said earlier, something has to be done. What the liberal or the radical must do, it seems to me, is to accept the necessity of this conflict of powers, and try in whatever ways he can to keep it sane, civilized, rational, and to bring it to its proper, just conclusion. Confrontation can lead to understanding and reconciliation, or it can lead to chaos and bloodshed. It isn't likely that bloodshed will be wholly avoided in South Africa; indeed it is going on every day, in Soweto and in other places. But it may be possible to avoid the worst disasters of revolution and civil war. The role of the liberal or radical is surely to make the conflict as humane and as creative as possible.

White liberals and radicals find themselves to some extent on the sidelines; but they have a task. It is, as ever, to persuade their fellow-whites to change their attitudes, to keep on keeping on, then. But now they find that they are not so much inviting people to consult their consciences in a vacuum as attempting to show them the essential justification and reasonableness of the pressures that are being exerted upon them.

What I suggest sounds coherent, I hope. And I believe it to be truly liberal, and (if that is one's belief) truly Christian. But will it work? Is there any real hope that the white liberal or radical will be able to make a valuable contribution? It is my turn to follow the way of Edgar Brookes, and to be humble: I do not know. □

THE DEATH OF STEVE BIKO

TRIBUTE FROM A FRIEND

by Donald Woods



Steve Biko

Daily Despatch

**This article has been removed because of the banning
of Donald Woods**

**“Weep not for me, but for yourselves and
for your children”**

THE DEATH OF STEVE BIKO: SEPTEMBER

by Vortex

Blossoms, as ever, burst in joy,
Colours and scents, the season's pride;
But the heart has gone out of the landscape
Since this one man died.

He spoke with pride and insight
That all men might be whole;
But now that he's been put to death
The land has lost its soul. □

CLASH OF PARADIGMS

Review of Harrison M. Wright, *The Burden of the Present: Liberal and Radical Controversy over Southern African History.* (Cape Town and London) ¹

by John Wright

The writing of southern African history goes back to the mid-19th century, when English-speaking white settlers and missionaries began producing accounts of the founding and development of the Cape and Natal as British colonies. Their works were mainly narrative and descriptive, with little by way of analysis and interpretation, and tended to be written from a decidedly British imperial point of view. Later in the century, as the era of the 'frontier' started to fade, and the two colonies, together with the Afrikaner-established Orange Free State and South African Republic, came increasingly to question, or even challenge, the imperial presence in southern Africa, so locally written histories came increasingly to adopt an anti-imperial stance. This was reflected both in the emergent Afrikaner nationalist historiography of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and in the contemporary British settler history-writing, as exemplified particularly in the works of George McCall Theal and Sir George Cory. Of these two approaches, the Afrikaner nationalist one continued to develop as a separate 'tradition' to the point where it eventually numbered among its adherents the great majority of professional historians at the Afrikaans-speaking universities. The British settler tradition, on the other hand, though it has exerted, and continues to exert, a strong influence on the writing of popular history by English-speaking South Africans, has attracted few, if any, professional historians, and cannot be said to have given rise to a distinct school of historiography. The great majority of English-speaking historians who have worked in southern Africa can be categorized as belonging to the 'liberal' school, whose origins date back to the appointment of the first professional historians at South African universities in the 1920's, and which developed its own particular dynamic in reaction to many of the ideas enshrined in the settler tradition. The liberal approach has predominated in history teaching and research at English-speaking universities for half a century, and is likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future, though no doubt increasingly modifying its pronouncements to avoid antagonizing the increasingly anti-liberal South African Government.

Until very recently the main lines of dispute in the writing of southern African history were drawn between the Afrikaner nationalist and the liberal schools. An African nationalist voice, which began to surface in the 1950's and which was potentially inimical to both, was silenced by government action in the 1960's. In the last eight or ten years, however, yet another distinct approach to the study

of southern Africa's past has begun to emerge, as the standpoints and judgements of liberal historians have been progressively challenged by a growing number of scholars, so far working mainly in Britain and the United States, who operate from an entirely different perspective. Where liberal historians have been concerned primarily with relations between Africans, Afrikaners, and British, these revisionist, or 'radical', historians are concerned primarily with the historical impact of capitalist on non-capitalist societies in southern Africa, and with the 'underdevelopment' of the sub-continent's African societies. Although the full implications of the revisionist approach are as yet far from apparent, liberal and revisionist historians have shown sufficient hostility to one another's concepts, methods, and conclusions to indicate that the differences between them are not easily to be glossed over, and that a major new arena of disagreement is opening up in the study of southern African history.

In the past few years several authors have commented in journal articles on the nature of these disagreements, but the book under review, written by an American historian who has studied in South Africa, is the first work to attempt a more comprehensive treatment. Though little more than an extended essay — the text runs to 100 pages — it has in the short time since its publication been both widely commended and widely castigated by social scientists in southern Africa and abroad and would, whatever its merits and demerits, on these grounds alone deserve scrutiny.

Professor Wright opens his work with a chapter summarizing the liberal and revisionist (or 'radical', to use his term) standpoints as he sees them. In his next two chapters he proceeds to give a critique first of liberal then of radical southern African historiography, and concludes with a fourth chapter which makes some general comments about the writing of history. Overall, his thesis is that the disjunction between the liberal and the radical view stems from the differing stances taken by historians of the two schools with regard to present-day human problems in southern Africa. Where liberals believe in the possibilities of social, economic, and ideological reform within the existing political system, radicals do not, and therefore seek to change it altogether. The faults of both types of history, as is implied in the title of Wright's book, are due to an overly great concern with the present. Both groups, in his view, tend to write history that is the poorer

for being too 'committed'. Instead of concentrating on trying to explain the past, liberals and radicals alike are too prone to use the past to fight the political battles of the present. In both cases this makes for a selective view of southern African history: the burden of the present weighs too heavily on historians of both categories for either to produce a satisfactorily broad interpretation of the past. If they were to take a more detached view of the present, they would not only be better historians but, the author implies, would understand one another better as well. As he sees it, the disagreements between them mask what are basic similarities of interests and premises. (p. 93)

This latter assumption, which underlies Professor Wright's whole argument, demonstrates the fundamental misunderstanding which in the end makes his book of little value as a historiographical critique. To see liberals and revisionists as approaching the study of southern African history with basically similar viewpoints is utterly to misconstrue the nature of the differences between them. The author sees them as basically alike in their premises because both: 1) have a common faith in reason, 2) are optimistic about the possibilities of the future, 3) tend to assume that 'where there is imperfection in this world there is somebody or something behaving reprehensibly', 4) search in the past for the origins of present problems, 5) presume to make moral judgements of individuals and groups, 6) are convinced of the superiority of their own views, 7) are concerned about the present and the future (p. 94). But these do not constitute similarities of premise: they simply represent superficial resemblances which are characteristic of the writings of historians and others of widely differing persuasions the world over. A premise is surely to be defined as a philosophical or ideological datum line, in which case it is impossible to see the liberals and revisionists as sharing 'basic' similarities, for their ideological starting points are diametrically opposed. At the risk of oversimplifying, the starting point of liberal thinking can be taken as the belief, sometimes made explicit, but more often simply taken for granted, that the existing order of things represents a 'natural' evolution from the past, and is more or less as it should be, even if it needs reforming in some spheres to prevent or eliminate gross injustices and inequities. Or to put it another way, that the capitalist system which structures every aspect of life in the western world has been, and continues to be, by and large a 'good' or at least acceptable dispensation. The starting point of revisionist thinking, on the other hand, is the belief, usually made more explicit, that the existing order of things is man-made, represents only one of a range of possible dispensations, is inherently unjust, and needs, not palliating reform but replacement by a more just and equitable order. Or to put it another way, that the prevailing capitalist system has been, and continues to be, a 'bad' and unacceptable dispensation.

If, as surely one must, one begins a critique of the liberal and revisionist approaches with an analysis of their respective ideologies, the conclusion is inescapable that in their basic concepts they are as far apart as could be. But nowhere does Wright attempt such an analysis: the result is that he fails to grasp the essentials of either viewpoint. His conception of characteristic liberal assumptions as being about 'the basic unity of mankind, the dignity of the human personality, the fundamental rights of the individual without respect to race or creed, the benefits of education, the power of reason, and the possibilities of reasoned progress' (p. 4) is ultimately superficial because of his failure to place the development of liberal thought in historical context. Thus he completely

disregards the close connection between the development of liberalism and the development of laissez faire capitalism, and can make the statement, 'South African liberals have been united in their concern for the best interests of the blacks as they have perceived them' (p. 4), without discussing whether South African liberals have not in fact been more concerned with producing and disseminating the sort of knowledge which serves to perpetuate their own conditions of existence than with promoting the 'best interests' of the blacks.

Similarly, Wright's conception of radical historians as being concerned primarily with 'proper analysis of economic realities' (p. 22), a view typical of the stereotypes held of the radical approach by many orthodox historians, fails to bring out the essence of this approach. As he points out, radical historians derive much of their inspiration from the marxist concept of historical materialism, but their concern with **material** realities, is not, as Wright implies, and as many liberal historians would maintain, simply a concern with **economic** realities. Historical materialism is concerned with far more than economics; it is concerned with the way in which human beings interact with their physical environment, and with one another, to produce the forces of cultural change which act as the motor of human history. This involves as much a concern with what are called 'political' and 'ideological' factors as with 'economic' ones, and Wright's failure to recognize this point leads him into the common stereotype of equating historical materialism with vulgar economic determinism. This is particularly clearly illustrated in his conception of the term 'capitalism'. Instead of understanding it as the radicals do, as denoting a particular life-system in its entirety, one which assumes not only a specific set of human economic relationships, but also all the social, political, ideological, and psychological relationships that are integrated with it and with one another, he sees it simply as denoting one of a range of possible economic policies which has been opted for by a number of human societies in preference to any other.

Wright's failure to understand the basics of either the liberal or the radical standpoint is due not so much to faulty reasoning as to the fact that his frame of reference is essentially a liberal one. Living as they do in a social environment where their own fundamental assumptions are an integral part of the accepted order of things, while those of the radicals are not, liberal historians have by and large been unable or unwilling to make the quantum conceptual leap necessary to enter the sphere of discourse inhabited by the radicals. In consequence they have generally failed to learn the language spoken by the radicals, and to understand that their respective premises are totally opposed. Liberals may be able to accept that, in theory, frames of reference other than their own can exist, but in practice they too often fail to recognize one when they see it. Hence, like Wright, they tend to see radicals simply as having 'another point of view' rather than as arguing from a fundamentally opposed set of premises. Radical historians though, as products of the same environment, have the advantage of understanding liberal thinking 'from within', and hence of being in a much better position to appreciate the disjunction between their respective standpoints. Whatever the limitations of the radical frame of reference, no radical historian could begin a historiographical critique from Wright's false premise.

It seems to us that Wright, and liberal historians in general, could usefully pay far more attention to a viewpoint which in his introductory chapter he glosses over as being 'extreme',

the viewpoint that (in Wright's words):

'the general radical-liberal conflict over Africa as a whole is, to borrow Thomas Kuhn's concept, a conflict between two separate intellectual "paradigms", between two concurrently co-existing, but at the same time separately encapsulated and self-contained, schools of interpretation that are not susceptible to rational debate' (p. 23).

The concepts which Kuhn has elaborated in his **The Structure of Scientific Revolutions**, though developed specifically from his studies of the history of western scientific thought, can usefully be applied to historiographical studies in general. On the historical development of different schools of scientific thinking, for instance, he writes,

What differentiated these various schools was not one or another failure of method . . . but what we shall come to call their incommensurable ways of seeing the world and of practising science in it. Observation and experience can and must drastically restrict the range of admissible scientific belief, else there would be no science. But they cannot alone determine a particular body of such belief. An apparently arbitrary element, compounded of personal and historical accident, is always a formative ingredient of the beliefs espoused by a given scientific community at a given time' (p. 4).

On the emergence of new paradigms:

'Because it demands large-scale paradigm destruction and major shifts in the problems and techniques of normal science, the emergence of new theories is generally preceded by a period of pronounced professional insecurity. As one might expect, that insecurity is generated by the persistent failure of the puzzles of normal science to come out as they should. Failure of existing rules is the prelude to a search for new ones' (pp. 67-8).

And on the clash of different paradigms:

'Like the choice between competing political institutions, that between competing paradigms proves to be a choice between incompatible modes of community life . . . As in political revolutions, so in paradigm choice — there is no standard higher than the assent of the relevant community' (p. 94).

It seems that Kuhn's concepts more nearly fit the existing state of southern African historiography than do Professor Wright's. The arguments between liberals and radicals are symptomatic, not so much of disagreements within the same paradigm, as Wright implies, as of the emergence of a new paradigm. The failure of liberal historians adequately to answer the questions that have been asked of them since at least the late 1960's is the prelude to the emergence of a revisionist school, to the accompaniment of 'pronounced professional insecurity' among historians of the liberal establishment. The views of the two schools are ultimately not compatible, as they seem to be in Wright's opinion, because, as has been argued above, their ideas are founded on 'incommensurable ways of seeing the world'. And debate between them will always ultimately be inconclusive because, for both, whatever claims they (particularly the liberals) may make about the importance of 'the truth', there is no standard higher than the assent of their own community.

This is not to argue that the points at issue between liberals and radicals are always clear-cut, or that there are no points on which they can agree. Nor is it to argue that individual historians of southern Africa can or should be easily

categorized as 'liberal' or 'radical': many, perhaps most, of them occupy positions somewhere between these two opposite poles. But it can be argued that it is important for the future health of southern African historiography for the distinction between the two poles to be clearly maintained. The present reviewer would disagree with the view put forward by Peires in another review of Wright's book that his use of the labels 'liberal' and 'radical' serves to promote a destructive schism among English-speaking historians of southern Africa.² If, as has been argued above, the liberal and radical approaches are in the end incompatible, to pretend that they are not could too easily lead English-speaking historians back into the comfortable conformity of views about southern Africa's past which the emergence of the radical school has broken down.

Wright's entire argument, then, is based on a false premise. From this stem the failures, not of methodology, but of understanding, which vitiate the whole substance of his book, and render his critique ultimately superficial. This misunderstanding is implicit in the very sub-title of his book: 'Liberal-Radical Controversy over Southern African History'. For all its heat, he sees the argument between liberals and radicals as merely an academic debate. Hence he can criticize the radicals for not confronting 'the mass of evidence produced by liberals to support liberal interpretations' (p. 72), and for not doing anything 'that is likely to persuade the not already converted to the validity of their line of argument' (p. 90). What he cannot grasp is that radicals are not interested in being drawn into a debate whose terms have been formulated by liberals. To do so would be to accept the liberals' own frame of reference, which is precisely what the radicals want to avoid. What they are concerned to do at this stage is not to engage in a fruitless argument over the minor details of history but to redefine the terms of the argument, to look at historical issues in a way which entails that the historian should state his basic premises as clearly and unambiguously as possible. This involves clarifying his own position within the society in which he lives, something which liberal thinkers are not particularly good at because they take the particular conditions of their existence so much for granted.

It is also this failure of understanding which allows Wright to categorize historians of southern Africa into three groups — liberals, radicals, and conservatives — without considering whether there are in fact any 'basic' differences between liberals and conservatives, and whether they might not be very much closer to one another in their premises than either group is to the radicals. This point has been made in a recent article by another liberal historian, Professor T. R. H. Davenport of Rhodes University, who distinguishes between 'liberal-conservative thinkers' on the one hand and 'political ideologists' on the other.³ Though Davenport's insinuation that liberals and conservative historians do not serve a political ideology seems dangerously naive, his grouping together of liberals and conservatives recognizes their basic similarity of outlook, even if he, like Wright, does not recognize that this outlook has as its basic premise the belief that the status quo, i.e. the capitalist system, in southern Africa should be maintained.

When it comes to the particular points of criticism that Wright makes of the various works that he looks at, he often has some useful and trenchant things to say, but in the end he always misses the substantive issue. Thus when he cites the conclusion reached in one article by Martin Legassick that the Union of South Africa was 'created as a formally independent polity to safeguard

the interests of the mining industry and to safeguard and promote the establishment of capitalist farming' (p. 84), Wright can only see this as 'a kind of gross reductionism that fixes on one particular motive, theoretically appropriate and plausible to today's radicals, which it is believed is sufficient to explain why certain actions must have taken place' (pp. 84-5). What he does not see is that Legassick has hit on an essential point. His statement may be oversimplified, but this does not mean that it is invalid, and to see it as fixing on one particular motive is totally to misunderstand the connotations of the term 'capitalism'. Legassick is not fixing on one motive; he is reducing a historical situation to its bare essentials, to a comprehensible generalization. Exercises of this sort, the stripping away of surface detail in search of the basic patterns of history, are always liable to make orthodox liberal historians uneasy. With Wright, they lay stress on 'that subtle sense of past complexity that is the essence of good history' (p. 58), 'the complexities of events' (p. 100), 'the extraordinary complexity of the South African past' (p. 105), 'the complexity as well as the directness that exists between past and present' (p. 107). But it can be argued that emphasis on complexity at the expense of simplicity leads not towards a clearer understanding of the past, but to a greater degree of confusion about it, and, more strongly, that this confusion has a political function to fulfil in obfuscating the processes by which present-day society has come to be what it is. Any active historian knows the past is complex; to stress the obvious hardly seems to be 'the essence of good history'.

Again, in his criticisms of another article by Legassick, one on the South African frontier, Wright does not perceive the main thrust of the article. (pp. 63-7) Much of his criticism is justified, but in the end does not affect Legassick's conclusion that, in seeking the roots of white race attitudes in southern Africa, historians should focus not simply on the racism fostered by frontier conflicts between black and white, but also on the attitudes fostered by master-servant relationships between black and white in the supposedly more relaxed urban settings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The implications of this conclusion for understanding twentieth-century South Africa are profound. Similarly, Wright's comments on a seminal article by Colin Bundy on the rise and decline of an African peasantry in southern Africa leaves Bundy's main thesis unchallenged. (pp. 77-82). Bundy asks why it was that, where white and black commercial farmers were competing on a more or less equal basis in the later nineteenth century, by the first decade or two of the twentieth century black farmers as a group had disappeared, while white farmers were going from strength to strength. His answer, that this was due to deliberate political repression of the blacks by whites fearful of competition and fearful of losing their supplies of black labour, stands firm against the irrelevant criticisms that Wright levels against it.

One could go on citing similar examples from Wright's book. When one turns to his own views on southern African history and historiography, one too often finds that his misunderstanding of the latter is matched by his insensitivity to the former. Thus he can make the comment, extraordinary for a historian, that because there is evidence to suggest that white racist attitudes developed in Europe before the sixteenth century, they 'need no special explanation in South Africa' (p. 48). Thus he can talk of 'the voluntary support generally given to the possibilities of the South African economic system by its black population' (p. 106), with no mention of the battery of laws and

administrative measures that successive South African governments have used since the late nineteenth century to coerce blacks into the capitalist economy, and with no mention of the long history of resistance on the part of blacks, as exemplified in a succession of wars, rebellions, separatist movements, strikes, riots, and lately, murders of officials and police. Wright's conception of 'the South African economic system' as something which has somehow existed separate from the black population, and which they have been 'free' to join, rests on the profoundly arrogant assumption, common among liberal-conservative whites, that the system is essentially the creation of whites. The integration of blacks into this system from its very beginnings is implicitly disregarded.

When it comes to making concrete proposals of his own as to how the study of southern African history should be approached, Wright can only make banal exhortations for historians to exhibit a greater degree of understanding of 'another individual's or society's way of doing things' (p. 107), or retreat into metaphysics. He writes of the 'impressive contributions' (p. 34) that liberals have made to the study of South African history; the 'real contributions' made by both liberals and radicals (p. 94); of putting the past into 'proper perspective' (p. 36); of the radicals' disregarding 'sound historical procedure' in handling evidence (pp. 83-4); of the 'impeccable' and 'first-rate' scholarship of the *Oxford History of South Africa* (p. 54); but nowhere does he make clear the grounds on which he is making these judgements.

All this is not to accuse Professor Wright of poor scholarship. He has obviously read widely in his subject; his annotations are comprehensive and meticulous; and in addition his work has the merit of reading clearly and easily. But in the end it has nothing substantial to say about the current state of southern African historiography. The writing of southern African history has received a galvanizing shock from the emergence of the radical school, and much the most stimulating work now being done in this field is the product of radicals or of writers influenced by radical ideas. Orthodox liberal historians will continue to do useful research and to produce good empirical studies of the sub-continent's past, but their ability to contribute new concepts to the study of history seems finally to have withered. In this sense they are adherents to a dying paradigm. There are signs — as in the recent appearance in the United States of the new *Journal of Southern African Affairs* with its explicitly 'African-centric' approach — that the main focus of argument among historians of southern Africa is beginning to shift from the liberal-radical confrontation into what will eventually be a confrontation between radicals and African nationalists.

As a new clash of paradigms starts to take form, liberal viewpoints will be less and less relevant, and the dispute between liberals and radicals will itself fade into history. If Professor Wright had tried to place this dispute in its historical context, he might have produced a worthwhile book. He has done neither. □

Notes:

¹ I should like to thank Sheila Hindson for reading and criticizing a draft of this review.

² Jeff Peires, 'On the burden of the present', *Social Dynamics*, 3 (1977), 63-6.

³ T. R. H. Davenport, 'Tigers in the grass', *Rhodes Review*, 3, 1 (1977), 26-7.

Review of FAREWELL TO INNOCENCE

(by Dr Allan Boesak – Ravan Press)

Reviewed by Mbuyisozwe Hector Tshabalala

The sub-title of the book is "A Social-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power". That the book is a study is borne out by the fact that in only 119 pages there are 451 footnotes which are quotations from almost every article, report or book ever written on Black Theology, Black Power or Black Consciousness. There are also quotations from Commission Reports ranging from SPROCAS to D.R.C. reports as well as W.C.C. studies.

In the preface the author states that his intention is to react to what other writers in U.S.A., Asia, and Africa have said on the subject of Black Consciousness or Liberation. This is exactly what the book is all about: The author analyses and summarises reports, lectures, studies and books of at least fifty different people such as Adam Small, Ernest Baartman, Manas Buthelezi, David Bosch, Basil Moore, Deotis Roberts, James Cone, Albert Cleage jr., Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King, Bishop A. Zulu and many others.

The book was originally submitted for the degree of Doctor of Divinity which was awarded to the author in 1976 by the Theological Academy of the John Calvin Foundation, Kampen, the Netherlands. The book understandably is not easy to read. It needs to be studied and it gives interesting views, for the students of Christian doctrine on the doctrines of Salvation, History and Eschatology, looked at from a black point of view.

Most unfortunately the author is seldom felt in the book. He is buried under a lot of other writers. Now and again I found myself having to ask the question "What do *you* say?" The author reserves his judgement for the little sections at the end of each chapter, subtitled, "conclusion". But even here he still quotes other people's views and then either agrees or disagrees with them.

The book is highly academic and not intended for non-scholars despite the title which gives the impression that this is an easy book to read. I personally feel that it deals with ideals rather than what is actually taking place in the struggle for liberation. It theologises too much. To the author the black people are not the ordinary man in the street or Freedom Fighters in the bush, but sophisticated scholars like Manas Buthelezi, Alpheus Zulu, Adam Small etc. Not once in the book are views of ordinary South African blacks quoted. Non-Christian blacks are not taken into consideration. The sub-title of the book should in fact read "A *Christian* Social-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power". The author ignores the serious identity problem as to who the blacks really are. He seems to be

unaware that the Coloureds are divided amongst themselves on the grounds of length of hair and lightness of complexion, the Indians discriminate against each other on the basis of their ancient caste system and the Africans on language and cultural differences. Not to mention the friction between Coloured, Indian and African. But as I said, academically, the book is invaluable for students of Theology.

In the introduction the title of the book is explained: "When people face issues too horrendous to contemplate, they close their eyes to reality and make a virtue out of powerlessness, weakness and helplessness. This innocence leads to a helpless utopianism . . .". He says that it is absolutely imperative for the oppressor to preserve his innocence just as it is imperative for the oppressed to destroy it. The greatest ally of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. Getting rid of an implanted slave mentality is central philosophy of Black Consciousness. The affirmation of one's personhood is a powerful act that constitutes a farewell to innocence.

Chapter one deals with the basis of liberation theology- Yahweh is the liberator. Jesus Christ Himself said that He had come to heal the sick, free the prisoners, bring good news to the poor and generally proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. The author explains that the black's self-love does not mean that blacks have to hate the whites, but it means that the blacks will no longer accept a brotherhood "when the one brother" is master of the other. Black Theology means demythologizing white supremacy and humanizing white living from its own idolatrous absurdity and black living from its own blasphemous non-beingness. Slavery is not only subservience, but it is also idolatry. It means that one human being is degraded to a sub-human status while another must deify himself in order to justify his superior position. But Jesus Christ came and lives in this world as the oppressed. One who took upon Himself all the suffering and humiliation of all oppressed peoples. If God would be anywhere He must be on the side of the oppressed.

Chapter Two deals with Power, with an emphasis on Black Power. The central point in the power-over-others relation is dependency. Substitute the elements of dependency with the ability to create one's own resources or with the creative use of the resources one has, and the power-over pattern is broken. The author says that when power is abused, as blacks experience daily, it becomes a powerlessness, but a powerlessness of the powerful which will ultimately become manifest in its destruction.

Chapter Three deals with the relationship between Black Theology and Black Power. He defines Black Power as "power expressed in self-identification and self-affirmation, a power which seeks the transformation societal structures to accommodate the new humanity. In this chapter the Doctrine of History is discussed. The acts of God are not restricted to the Church only, the Work of Christ and His kingdom is discernible in the secular, social and political revolutions of our time and the Church's function is to discern it and to witness to it and to participate in God's work in changing the world. He concludes with the statement that "Black Theology realises that Black Power does not have the last word nor can it offer final solutions. In other words the forces of Black Power will never bring about the fullness of the Kingdom of God".

Chapter Four deals with the question of whether or not Black Theology is a mere ideology. He says that to have a political ideology is in itself not sinful, but to equate it to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is. He makes here a remarkable analogy between the ideology of the nation of Israel which was based on the demands of the times and majority opinion

and then equated with the will of Yahweh, on the one hand, and the Christian Nationalism of Apartheid on the other. He says that God will never allow himself to be claimed by one people nor will He be reduced to a mere symbol of nationalistic aspirations.

Chapter Five delves even more deeply into Black Theology and ends with an ethic of liberation as an ethic of Black Theology as proposed by the author. He says that the liberation of the oppressed is a revolutionary activity, it means a radical break with existing political, sociological structures, a redefinition of black life along the lines of Black Power and self determination. He says also that a good reason for not being racist is to observe what discrimination has done to the souls, minds and spirits of whites who hate blacks. To hate someone at sight without ever getting to know him is a form of sickness. Hate destroys the hater as much as the hated. A profound statement is made in this chapter: "The oppressor has not yet learned to know how to deal with non-violence. He still does not know how to deal with a man who has the moral initiative of love on his side". □

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A LUNATIC ACT

“Whom the Gods would destroy they first make mad”, “they’ve got a death wish” – we’ve said it all before, about the people Nationalist Afrikaners have elected to govern us, and we say it again.

What else can one say about the people who, on October 19th, within the course of less than 24 hours; banned the Christian Institute and four of its leading officials, Beyers Naude, Theo Kotze, Brian Brown and Cedric Mason; banned 17 Black organisations and either banned or detained an undisclosed number of their members and leaders, including Black People’s Convention President, Mr Hlaku Rachidi, and Dr Nthatho Motlana, Chairman of Soweto’s Committee of Ten; banned the Christian Institute publication *Pro Veritate*; banned the Black newspaper *The World*, the paper with the largest circulation in South Africa and the accepted voice of the people of Soweto; detained Mr Percy Qoboza, internationally renowned editor of *The World*; banned Donald Woods, the brave and brilliant editor of the *East London Daily Dispatch*; house-arrested David Russell, friend and supporter of the abandoned Africans of the Nationalist Government’s “resettlement” areas and of the defenceless squatters of the Western Cape? What more could they do in one day to move themselves along the road to national suicide?

The Christian Institute was about the only really effective non-racial organisation left in South Africa. Its banned leaders were some of the few white people who had maintained real contacts with the new wave of young black political thinkers. The black organisations banned represent the most important urban-based black organisations in the country, from the overtly political Black People’s Convention to the self-help orientated Black Community Programme. The Soweto SRC was the voice of the young students of Soweto. The Black Parents’ Association spoke out on their behalf. The Committee of Ten drew up a blueprint for a new dispensation for Soweto as a basis for negotiation with the Government – and the Government wouldn’t even talk to it. Percy Qoboza and *The World* presented the story of what Soweto was thinking and doing, not only to its own people, but to white South Africans – and that

was something they badly needed to know. Donald Woods wasn’t just Steve Biko’s friend, he was his friend who was determined to find out and get known just how he died. He wasn’t only Steve Biko’s friend, he was also the friend of black youth in general in its growing rejection of the system under which it is forced to grow up and live. As for David Russell, he, more than any other white South African recently, has tried to live his life in the spirit of compassion the New Testament demands – a spirit which, despite all their Christian pretensions, seems to have passed by our rulers completely. From October 19th all these, and many more, have been excommunicated from the body politic.

One might say that the banning list for October 19th represents a sort of Roll of Honour of the people principally involved in trying to lay the foundations for a new South Africa. Mr Kruger, speaking for the Government, justified his drastic measures by saying the people and organisations he had banned had “endangered the maintenance of public order”. The true explanation of why they were banned, we suggest, is not that they endangered the maintenance of public order, but that they vigorously opposed the maintenance of apartheid. And does Mr Kruger think that his bans will stop such opposition? Surely not!

Seventeen years ago his Government banned the ANC and the PAC. Did those bannings bring to an end resistance to the policies the PAC and ANC rejected? It certainly did not. That resistance is more widespread and intense today than it ever was. Putting the lid on the kettle again won’t help this time either. All one can say with assurance is that, with the changed world in which we now live, the time-scale between one upheaval and the next will be reduced from now on.

October 19th, 1977, will go down as a tragic day in the history of South Africa, not just for the lives and livelihoods and years of precious work which were destroyed that day. It may also go down in the history books as the day on which the Nationalist Afrikaner government of our country finally put paid to the prospects for race reconciliation here and signed away its own people’s future on this continent. □