

# LUSAKA DIARY

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LUSAKA, the capital of Northern Rhodesia, has the same municipal area as Liverpool. But there the likeness ends. Lying at the junction of the Cape to Cairo and the Nyasaland roads, the town was at first centred on a limestone ridge above an enormous quantity of water, so that less than two years ago streams still ran through the back streets from pumped foundations. The architecture is colonially disconcerting, and a distinguished foreign visitor, being driven through the city on a Sunday, indicated the post office and asked why the prison was so central. Fortunately for civic pride, the post office will now be housed in a much larger building, one of several that have been erected on the marshy land that until recently separated the main road from the station.

Before Federation, Government staffs completely dominated the town, but since then departments have drained away to Salisbury, and the European shortage of houses has changed to a glut. Recently, however, an increasing number of commercial concerns has moved into the town, and a whole new housing estate is being developed with plots at around £900 an acre.

As everywhere else in Africa, non-European housing presents great problems and inspires great indignation. Locations are distant, roads to them are poor, bus-fares continually rise. Almost all the houses have a single bedroom and no provision for children apart from the kitchen, while adolescents are not considered at all, let alone separated. And elsewhere in the country, the position is no different. In some towns, no matter how many people are crowded into single quarters, the rent is the same for each of them. Not long ago, a night-school student asked to be allowed to stay on privately after classes; it was found he shared a single rondavel with three others—a man fond of beer, a man fond of women, and a man fond of jazz records—and all exercised their likings in the same small area at the same time, which was when he wanted to study.

An employer is bound to house his staff. Domestic servants still normally live behind their employers' houses and prefer to do so, but an increasing number have to live in the distant

Locations. A recent report has suggested an increase of pay to include a rent-allowance and the employers' obligation to cease. This may lead to responsibility, as is hoped, but is more likely to lead to exploitation. One provision which is made by the Mines, and in some cases the Education Department, is suitable housing for graduates and other highly paid Africans. Elsewhere, the £600 per year broadcaster is likely to live next to the £60 per year messenger and share his lack of electric light, communal water, sanitation and bathing.

This absence of better African housing is almost certainly the reason why inter-racial entertaining (what little there is of it), is almost exclusively carried on in the houses of Europeans, quite apart from the fact that Europeans are forbidden to make any visits to the Locations. Even these social contacts are few and likely to catch the eye of the Special Branch and the disapproval of superiors. Fraternization probably exists more in Lusaka than elsewhere, for it is the most liberal town in the country, returning as its Member to the Federal Parliament Dr. A. Scott, one of the very few Europeans whom Africans respect.

The Ridgeway Hotel, the most expensive in the country, has only an economic and 'decently-dressed' colour-bar. Both in Lusaka and elsewhere, there is hardly a restaurant where an African customer is accepted, though one in a large group of determined Whites might manage to get by. Most hotels suddenly find that they are full when a non-White seeks accommodation. The Ridgeway management also runs for the Government a hostel open to all members of the public. As it is close to two big Locations, its patrons are largely Africans (though 10/- per night for a single bed deters all but the wealthy); but members of other races have used it, and all are high in their praises of its good standard. One hopes that the experiment will be repeated in other parts of the country.

The United Northern Rhodesia Association's Club in the town is rather a bewildering place. It is housed in very fine buildings, the gift of a departing big company, a little way out of the town, but not too far. You can go one day and find it all but deserted, a solitary African hunched over the bar, as like as not one of the Special Branch detectives who are planted there, and the whole thing will seem a flop. Another evening there will be a party in progress, with something like forty each of the three main racial groups and a couple of dozen

others having a really enjoyable time, without hint of embarrassment. The main difficulty is that even for the most enthusiastic European members this is but one activity, whereas for most of the non-Europeans it is the only possible social outlet of its kind, apart from the Municipal beer-halls which are squalid and anyway close at 6 p.m. The Europeans treat it like any club, to be used now and then, the others as *the* club. However, it will probably weather its storms, and the idea has already spread on a smaller scale to other towns.

It needed a boycott to bring to an end the custom of only serving African customers through side-windows, and even now it continues in places, while nowhere is the 'first-come, first-served' principle observed. The Post Office is everywhere one of the worse offenders; clerks at completely empty counters will seldom do more than direct an African who wants a stamp to the seething mass at his 'own' counter, though there is no notice to indicate which counter is which, only custom, and technically there is no distinction. The Bill to set up Committees to investigate complaints was emasculated in the Legislative Council and is almost a dead-letter.

The highest proportion of African income is spent on clothes, which are at present not just things to wear, but have a tremendous 'status-symbolism'. This is hinged not to what the surrounding Whites are wearing, but to the artificial standards of the mail-order catalogues. In town at least, wine, women and song get much of the rest, though, with health services exhausting about 10 per cent. of the national income, it comes as a shock to see in sample budgets 10/- a month spent on medicines per family. Even so, ill-health is rife; a study of children suffering from malnutrition on one of the mines showed that the worse afflicted were those whose fathers were in the higher pay-grades. Money is sent freely to relatives, and most people pay for the clothing or schooling of children outside their own immediate family. Perhaps a form of insurance if one wants to go back to the village some day. European suicides have almost always financial backgrounds, African ones hardly ever, yet average non-European wages are around a twelfth of those of Europeans.

Most traders are Asians, and one hears constant complaints of how they are taking over the country's commerce, at least at trading-store level, and that soon "we shall be as bad as Kenya." It is true that more and more stores are owned or

backed by Asians, but there are no other outlets for them. The only Government posts offered are for a very limited number of school-teachers, and Asians are not allowed to fill clerical or technical posts in the Civil Service, or work on the Mines or Railways. Few farm on a large scale, so that only in trade can they make a living.

Miscegenation proves as popular a pastime as ever. No amount of indignation on the part of the old brigade can conceal the fact that the rural areas, especially in the Eastern Province, have a heavy sprinkling of Coloured families bearing names whose original owners reached high in the Administration's staff lists in later years. As always it is carried on at two levels: single quarters on the Railways and Mines represent the commercial aspect; while a minority of genuine affection and preference continues elsewhere, though the law prevents civil marriage and those few cases presented to the Churches have been side-stepped on technicalities. Although more common, it is by no means always the case that the White partner is male in such advances.

One of Lusaka's most flourishing institutions is the Theatre Club. The whole country is enthusiastic about amateur dramatics; there is an annual festival where the acting compares favourably with professional productions. Entrance to the theatre is non-racial, first come first served and the same price everywhere, but a special cheap performance is put on for African students who cannot pay full price. Mixed casts have been seen in the town, though not yet at this theatre, and there are plans for an inter-racial theatre group with its own theatre close to the Locations. This is a Mission-sponsored venture, with active help from many laymen and much self-help from students who have put on shows to raise funds.

Lusaka has the country's only inter-racial cinema, the one chance non-Whites have of seeing anything different from the third-rate cowboy films that constitute their diet in the Locations. The cinema looked at first as if it would founder on the rocks of censorship, but as the Board was sympathetic to its aims, they looked into their own constitution and, finding they could change their code, promptly did so. The result has been that far fewer films are stopped, and the venture should succeed.

Almost all newspapers aimed at the African population are published or backed by the Government. Recently, however,

a new paper, *The African Times* (remotely connected with a building society) has arisen, the editor of which, Elias Mtepuka,<sup>1</sup> made it a success from the first issue. He pulled no punches, attacking abuses on either side of the colour-line, with much encouragement for the country's only real multi-racial party, the Constitution Party. Unfortunately, he died suddenly a few weeks ago, and the cause of freedom and advancement lost a commanding voice. And now the paper has ceased publication, not for lack of support by readers, but, it is said, because people connected with the Press which printed it disapproved of some of its statements, particularly those on other newspapers. Further comment is not possible, legal action is pending, but there are hopes that the paper will resume its career soon.

The African broadcasting service, built up over the years in Lusaka, has become one of the best of its kind. Not only the great names of the entertainment world are heard from there, but anyone who thinks he can sing or play an instrument can go along and be patiently heard, and the recording vans go deep into the rural areas to collect material. There is a fear that the setting up of a Federal Commission may turn this entertaining outfit into a cog of the propaganda machine, and time will show whether it can withstand the onslaught. After all, few of the Whites know what the songs are about, anyway.

As elsewhere, the Church congregations tend to be apathetic towards the colour problem on their door-steps, but there is hope, since the loudest voices against discrimination are those of individual clergy. John Houghton of the Anglicans, Fr. Walsh, S.J., for the Roman Catholics, Bev Packer, Merfyn Temple and Colin Morris for the Nonconformists are always to the fore in inter-racial affairs and in calling attention to abuses, while trying to do something about them. Co-operation between the sects exists far more in the towns than the rural areas, where the Mission spheres of influence are jealously guarded, and where the social colour-bar, as between White and Black priests or teachers, is, with a few exceptions, as fixed as anywhere in the country.

The Northern Rhodesia African Congress has its headquarters in Lusaka in the midst of one of the Locations, which provide a constant flow of people and an arena for its work. While

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<sup>1</sup> See AFRICA SOUTH, Vol. I, No. 4: "Central African Federation—The Attack," by Elias M. Mtepuka.

Harry Nkumbula is the figurehead, it is not at all clear how strong his hold is on the party machine as a whole, though on the popular mind, especially in the rural areas, it is unrivalled. He was unable to control the Copperbelt hotheads when they broke out into violence over a beer-hall boycott; branch secretaries say things which he has publicly denied; but outwardly the façade remains unbroken. Kenneth Kaunda<sup>2</sup> was once described as 'the most dangerous man in the country'. Perhaps he is—to reactionaries—because he above all the others has sensed, and exercised in himself, the strength of the full Ghandian concept of Congress. He is an efficient organizer, but he is also a seer. He has been threatened by an extremist group recently. The Congress proposals for Constitutional changes were recently set before the Governor. They show more clearly than any recent statements the reasonableness of Congress leaders. They have asked for African parity in the Legislative Council and a 7 to 3 European majority in the Executive Council. Congress has never been anti-White, but if something is not done very soon to increase the political representation of Africans in their country's affairs, the xenophobes within Congress, now a small but vocal minority, will almost certainly gain ground.

Paternalism is the predominant trait of the Administration, especially in the rural areas. Many District Commissioners genuinely want to lead the people in their charge towards responsible self-rule, but not at the pace which events are going to force upon them. There is still a hard core of 'Saunders of the River' types, who expect a discipline close to adoration, and one or two like the one who was described to me thus: "Good chap, old X. Wanted some more labour for my brick-fields. Happened to mention it in the Club. Next morning he sent one of his messengers to pull in half a dozen of these Congress pests, gave them a month each, and had 'em out to my place next morning." The way in which an administrative officer can arrest a man one day in one capacity and try him the next in another, is worrying some people. So is the bullying by the African constables of members of a rival tribe. Similarly, the lack of impartiality of the Native Courts and the savagery of the fines they impose, which bear no relation to the earning capacity of the accused. The gravely understaffed body of

<sup>2</sup> See AFRICA SOUTH, Vol. II No. 3: "Northern Rhodesia and Federation," by K. D. Kaunda.

Resident Magistrates has recently come out with some decisions grossly unpopular with White opinion, especially the predominantly Afrikaans-speaking farmers (who are flooding into the country, backed by Union funds). A farmer was sent to jail recently for beating an allegedly cheeky employee. With farm wages still in some districts as low as 30/- per month, it is a surprise that any man has strength enough left to be cheeky.

Lusaka, with its first-class African Secondary School at Munali, its Hodgson Technical College, Teacher Training Centre at Chalimbana, and lesser departmental schools, has an atmosphere of brisk discussion amongst students which is lacking elsewhere. Opposition to Federation, which has always been nearly 100 per cent. among the entire African population, is also on the increase among Europeans, even Civil Servants, whatever those in high authority may state. Further disillusionment has come through the rejection of the complaint by the Moffat Committee against the proposed increase in the number of seats in the Federal Parliament. This, the first measure they have declared discriminatory, was not thought so by the quite unknown Governor-General who was recently wished on the country. It met in the British House of Commons with the sort of treatment that has left no doubt in the minds of most people that only a Labour Government, and perhaps not even they, can halt the imposition of dominion status by Southern Rhodesia and a further disregard for the treaty obligations of the Colonial Office to the people of the Northern Territories, which are already pretty mangled as it is. The increasingly vocal demands of the Southern Rhodesian Whites and the growing infiltration into Northern Rhodesia of Afrikaners have created fears and resentments that only a complete change of heart can allay, and that only within the next two years or so. The goal must be the respect due to a man because he is a man, a fellow human-being. No less can be of any avail. If partnership, a really fraternal sharing of everything—goods, time, money, emotions, cultures—does not take place, then the outlook is dark indeed.