

month when despite spasmodic protests a boundary fence was started between his location and Qokolweni. Even before the fence has been completed there have been incidents. Last week a boy from Ntlangaza was found guilty and sentenced to R25 or 3 months in the local Court for cruelty to animals as it was alleged that he had struck a cow from Qokolweni with a battleaxe when he had found it grazing on his side of the boundary! Presently there is a feeling of animosity between the two locations.

Two weeks ago, on the pretext that there was a tribal fight (which is quite common in these parts) the Mobile Unit of the Police swooped down upon the peasants of Ntsitshana and Mgojo locations. There were about 20 armoured jeeps. Here peasants were picked up while either lazing in the sun beside their kraals or busy on their daily routine work in their fields. They were thrown into the vans, which were all full to capacity.

Nothing was said at the time of their arrest by way of charge or excuse for picking them up, until they were at the Police outpost at Kwaaiman. Here the whole lot was charged individually for failure to produce Reference Books. Those who, fortunately, had the Books on their persons were released. The others were sentenced to fines ranging from R5 to R10.

A man from the affected area says that he was driving an ox-sledge and had his Reference Book in the coat which was on the sledge. They told him that they were looking for *Dompas*. He told them that his was in the coat, but all the same he was thrown into the van and had to pay R10. His cattle (oxen) and sledge trespassed into someone else's land and he had to pay another R2 as there was nobody with the oxen while he was detained at the Police station. His location is one of those that strongly oppose the Government schemes.

In the meantime there is a craze amongst the chiefs for Tribal Authority offices. Some such offices are under construction like the one at Vulumhlaba Mrazuli's place and Bazindlovu Holomisa of the Gebe clan and his sub-chief Pandlindlela Mdunyelwa, are running around the district taxing the people 50c per adult male towards funds for putting up an office. Failure to attend meetings called for this purpose entitles the chief to an amount of R10 from each defaulter.

AS FROM LAST WEEK the Bantu Affairs Commissioner here is going round the district addressing gatherings at the chief's places. Amongst the routine matters he intimates that there is soon going to be a big Tembu meeting at Bumbane, the Great Place of the Paramount Chief, Sabata Dalindyebo, and that at the meeting Chief Sabata and a handful of his followers will stand against the Transkeian Constitution. But advises the people to reject this stand and accept the "Constitution" to avoid unpleasantness that may follow if they reject it as the Government will be reluctant to give them any assistance whatsoever in future. He also intimates that the people of Engcobo and Umtata districts are also being advised accordingly by their respective B.A. Commissioners. So far two out of three locations that have been so approached have indicated that before making a decision in the matter they would prefer leaving it open until they have heard what the Tembus as a whole have to say about the matter. ●

THE NEW AFRICAN JULY 1962

African Writing —African or Writing?

NEVILLE RUBIN

A CONFERENCE of writers sounds almost like a contradiction in terms. It is easy to imagine editors, or critics, or almost anyone else concerned with publishing, sitting at a table and deliberating with a view to deciding something. Not so writers, at least creative ones. Somehow they do not bring to mind the sense of hard-headed urgency which conferences—particularly international ones—normally require of those who go to them.

The Mbari Conference of African writers in English was held at Makerere College, Uganda, under the auspices of the Mbari Writers' Club of Ibadan, Nigeria and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Paris, from 8 to 17 June 1962. Neville Rubin represented The New African in place of Randolph Vigne, who was refused a passport.

Yet this was a conference, and an important one. True, it was not composed of delegates, anxiously fulfilling mandates, and it did not set out to decide anything. But it did bring together (and for the first time) a selection of novelists, playwrights, short story writers and poets from a number of English-speaking African countries, and it did provide an opportunity for discussing the works of African writers.

Thus they were able to come to grips with some of the problems of writing in contemporary Africa, to see them if not to solve them. They were able to criticise a whole range of writing—from that of the early romantic novelists, who dwelt on themes of a society that had already been made to undergo a complete transformation, to the excessive realism of the short-story writers dealing with situations rather than people in countries, like South Africa, where consciousness of social evil was an almost inevitable adjunct to literary sensitivity. They were able, too, to cock a snook at the latter-day romantics, glorifying an Africa that combined myth and mystique, and attempting to resurrect in Paris, London, New York and the West Indies a notion of racial self-consciousness which had not yet been born—at least in Africa.

More positively, they could point to the difference between the rounded West African novel, with its emphasis on the clash between traditional and modern cultures, and the socially committed, almost tendentious, narrative writing that has come out of South and East Africa.

Underlying all this serious literary dissection there was a distinct determination to avoid being patronised, to ensure that the same standards are applied to African writings as are used to judge writing anywhere else. As B!oke Modisane put it in an excellent critical paper on

East African short stories, "We must not write the sort of thing which they will say, 'For Africans, it's very nice.'"

Is there something ironical about the fact that this statement was made at a conference of 'African Writers'? I do not think so. True, several hours of debate did not succeed in defining 'African Writing'. The discussion showed a fairly sharp division between those who felt that there ought to be something specifically African about African writing, and those who believed that it should simply be seen as part of the general body of English literature. But underlying the disagreement was the shared view that the experience from which much of the writing derives its impetus, and often the idiom in which it is expressed as well as the imagery it uses, could only have been found in Africa.

South Africans (of all races) tend to over-react to the suggestion that there is something peculiarly African in writing, particularly in style. To them it smacks of a sort of literary apartheid, reminiscent of Bantu Education propaganda. Elsewhere, others regard it as a means of effecting cultural continuity—something best illustrated by the West African poet who told how his poems were conceived in English, mentally translated into a vernacular, and then written in English.

Whether this difference of approach will continue to exist depends, I imagine, on how rapidly changes in Africa lead to a greater fund of common experience, and on how soon nationalism turns from a stress on racial oppression to an emphasis on the cultures of individual nations.

Perhaps these are the subjects that will be discussed at the future Conferences of African Writers. ●

UPA + PDA = FNLA - MPLA...

Mistimed Angolan Quarrels

DAVID BAAD

DISCOURAGING REPORTS have been reaching the Western press in recent weeks on the progress of the nationalists' struggle in Angola. The military operation itself does not seem to have radically changed. As has been the case since shortly after the beginning of the rebellion in March 1961, the Angolans are grouped in small guerilla units. They continue to harass Portuguese military regiments sent to "pacify" North Angola. They dig holes and throw up obstacles on roads to disrupt Portuguese commerce. And they continue to sporadically burn plantations to further hinder the Portuguese economy.

The Angolans remain short of arms. They are ill-clad and their nourishment is found off the land. Communication among the guerilla units and between the guerilla units and the Congo, from whence come supplies and tactical direction, is still almost totally by runner. But the Union of the Populations of Angola (UPA) which has provided direction and support for the military action since its inception claims that some areas of Angola near the Congo border are under their control and, more important, it is clear that the Portuguese Government cannot bear for long the economic strain of a prolonged military action, involving more than 20,000 troops. Nor can it bear the serious reduction in exports (mainly coffee) from Northern Angola caused by the Angolan harassment and the mass exodus of Africans to the Congo. There are now more than 150,000 refugees in the Congo, almost all Kikongo

DAVID BAAD, *editor of Student, Brussels, has just visited the Congo, from where he made a study of the needs of Angolan youth organisations.*

speaking peoples from the Northern Angolan Congo Province.

WHAT HAS BEEN DISCOURAGING is the increasing evidence of pronounced disharmony within the Angolan nationalist movement. It is difficult to say how much effect this has had or will have on the prosecution of the guerilla action. Leaders of the UPA claim that it has had no effect. The disharmony is discouraging, however, in view of the apparently increasing possibility that the Salazar Government will soon give way, raising the hope of potential negotiations with nationalist organisations which would lead to independence. The recent student strikes and demonstrations in Portugal, the first in at least 35 years to have been prolonged for as long as two months in face of Government opposition, were for winning student organisation rights and university autonomy but they reflected at their base, according to observers, the rapidly spreading Portuguese popular dissatisfaction over fighting a drawn-out and hopeless colonial war in face of almost unanimous world censure.

At least eight different Angolan nationalist organisations are now operating in Leopoldville. Three of these organisations—the UPA, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and the Democratic Party of Angola (PDA)—are committed to winning independence by all means and all are engaged, in one degree or another, in the military action. The other organisations—the Movement for the Defence of Angolan Interests (MDIA), the Ngwizako, and the Nto-Bako and the National Angolan Front (FNA)—claim to be for Angolan independence but wish to achieve it by non-violent means. None of the four non-violence movements, two of which (the MDIA and Nto-Abako) believe in close co-operation with the Portuguese, is taken seriously by the FNLA or by MPLA leaders, who say that none of these movements represent anyone inside Angola. Other observers say the MDIA and Nto-Abako are essentially Portuguese puppet organisations. The eighth organisation, the Movement for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (MLEC) is an organisation only of the peoples of Cabinda; it reportedly has co-operated in the past with the MPLA and also with the PDA.