

another version of virile creation is close at hand—a new, non-traditional, African art. Again, it may lack in Latin softness. It is now concerned with the realities of life and death, with the drumbeat of a vast heart where warm blood flows and wiser spirits become incarnate.

Africa is that welcome other extreme to our unrelaxed inquietude and the robot 'Welfare' State. She exists for rhythm and imagination, expression, ecstasy and trance. She exists for the knowledge that dehumanising education has effaced in us and which mechanisation may temporarily obscure in Africa. Africa is the wide exchanging ground where our vaunted advantages mix with conceptions of art, religion and life which to us are unbelievably varied and obscure. But in this vigorous encounter a world of haste comes to learn things it had forgotten from Ancient Africa. And like all other human developments it was preceded by movements in art.

WITH INCREDIBLE VARIATIONS in style and meaning to an extent unknown elsewhere in history, African art is mainly expressionistic. Here Expressionism and Surrealism serve hallucinatory intensities of shock and feeling. But all styles were active in Africa from the linear purism of the Porianong or the Ogbom head-dress to the spiritually illuminated realism of fourteenth century life. When the European, hide-bound by Greco-Victorian academism, is confronted by this Ife work, with which he is unfamiliar, he is forced to see some 'good' in African art. But so many sophisticated modern Africans, divorced from their dynamic past, misunderstand equally well; chocolate-box and airport art sentimentality abounds while they even indulge in rock an' roll. At least one newly independent African nation, Nigeria, bursting with musical life of its own, has had its national anthem composed in Europe.

As time advances rapidly, significant facts of the controversial African affair will become apparent. It will be seen that Africa was the first in the twentieth century to make her contribution to the Western Humanities, to art, faith, music, enthusiasm. Her donations to the West were, however, discreetly, even unconsciously made. They were not paternalistically proclaimed by missionaries, freedom-riders or peace-corps. There was no hurried cashing in on all that was being done for the 'backward', 'underdeveloped', continents of Europe and America.

These gifts from Africa came before those obvious ones—gifts made by Africa in return for valuable medicines and machinery or such soul-destroying intrusions as sputniks, portable radios, jet travel to nowhere, not to mention the abusive use of movies and television!

AND NOW TO SUM UP, as the pendulum of opinion swings, this group of exhibitions of African, neo-African and new African art is made to prove some lesser known facts to all peoples alike, for joy and for meditation.

But the strange affair of 'give' and 'take' has several facets. One was our concern last August to show what European genius owes to the ancient genius of Africa. ●

"Love Finds a Way"

The opening pages of

ANTHONY DELIUS'S

comic novel The Day Natal Took Off

(Insight Publications, Cape Town)

LOOKING BACK ON IT NOW, it appears practically inevitable that the Immorality Act should have landed us in the gigantic barney that finally brought about the secession of Natal from the Republic.

At the time, the Act seemed just another one of those typical bits of lunatic legislation by which the Nationalists defied some law of nature, reason or just ordinary commonsense. Certainly down the years this attempt to stop people of different colours sleeping with one another had caused more fuss and embarrassment than any other law, even to the Nationalists themselves. Some prominent Government supporter was always being caught with his pants down in the wrong-coloured company.

Even so, never in a century of Sundays could anybody have imagined that it could have achieved the one big deal all Natal from the Berg to the Bay had been demanding periodically for more than a generation.

With a chap of my generation the word 'secession' was practically taken in with his mother's milk—or, at least, the first time he heard his father's voice. All through my childhood I can remember my dear old Dad coming and going with outsize Union Jacks and shouting angry words about 'Dutchmen' and 'Betrayal' and, of course, 'Secession'. He died of a stroke round about the time Smuts or Hertzog or somebody like that put through a bill to make it impossible for the Old Country to have any kind of say in South Africa any longer. "That puts the kibosh on everything! We're completely under Dutch Domination now!" were practically the old man's last words. Thank heavens he didn't live long enough to see them eliminate the Union Jack, stop the playing of 'God Save the Queen', turn the Union into a Republic, and then get us kicked out of the Commonwealth altogether.

By the time all this happened, even the English in Natal were in a fair state of bewilderment. They'd just got accustomed to blaming everything on 'Dutch Domination' when a new horror arose in Africa—'Black Domination'.

Everywhere you looked in Africa there were the British, the French, the Americans, and the United Nations putting the Whites under this 'Black Domination'. Cries of outrage and despair were reaching us from all sorts of oppressed Englishmen in Kenya and the Rhodesias, and thousands kept arriving with what they stood up in and car-loads of sunburnt kids. A lot

of them went back again later, but enough of them remained behind to remind us of the time when the British seemed to be selling out their flesh and blood to the Blacks like hot-dogs.

There was even a time when the word 'secession' wasn't used with the same panache as before, if it was used at all. We began to realise that if we really did secede, us half-a-million Whites would be left alone with half-a-million Indians and about two-and-a-half-million Zulus. When this was added to the doubts about whether we even wanted to be British any longer, it can be imagined what sort of state we had got ourselves into.

On the top of all these confusions were the activities—or, rather, the inactivities—of the Coalition Party.

The trouble with the Coalition lot was that they didn't suffer from a split so much as a shattered mind. They were torn between the English and the Afrikaners, the cities and the platteland, the timid liberals and the timid Nationalists, the give-it-a-go boys and the softewalkee addicts, even between the Whites and the Coloureds—everywhere they looked among their support it cracked into segments like a dam bottom during a deep drought. It would have taken a committee of geniuses to sort out a single policy to suit that little lot—and there were certainly no geniuses among the Coalition boys.

They were even split up between the three cities where the Nationalists had managed to lock up the vast majority of the Coalition supporters. There were the smug suburbanites of Cape Town ('I'm nearer my God in a garden'), the Rand Club regiment of Johannesburg ('Don't rock the boat, you might spill some of the cash'), and us lot in Durban and Natal generally ('Up the Life-Guards and at 'em'). Every time us Natalians got going and looked over our shoulders to see where the other English were, they'd either disappeared among

the hydrangeas or into the Stock Exchange. So you can see the Coalition Party had quite a headache trying to keep all of us together and happy. And the fact that Father Granite—the Rock of Ages—had been Prime Minister for 20 years by that time, didn't help to give anybody much confidence in them either.

Finally there was the South African Foundation, an inter-party alliance of major and minor tycoons, who, every time things got really sticky, rallied round to prove that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the country. Well, you just can't win against all this sort of thing. So what we used to call 'the main Opposition' gave up having any real policy at all. For a while they tried hard to compete with Father Granite in producing Visions Splendid. There were, in quick succession, the Group Senate, the Ethnic Confederation, the Multi-racial Alliance, the Consultative Condominium, and so on—all grand in scope but weak in detail. Eventually they hurled in altogether and simply called themselves the Coalition Party.

Everybody knew that there was only one party with which it would be worthwhile coalescing. The Progressives and Liberals were just disgruntled groups of woolly-minded intellectuals who'd lost their sense of balance and started demanding one man one vote and so on. As the late Provincial Leader remarked, "If you've got to bathe in a shark-infested sea, why take the coolies under your wing as well?" However, the Nationalists were doing very nicely, thank you, on their own. The harder the Coalition boys tried to coalesce, even when they outdid the Government in shouting about 'Black Domination', the less response they got. Strangely enough, the Nats seemed keen to keep them on as an Opposition, The Government even made them the only officially recognised Opposition—and this made the Coalitionists South Africa's one point of real constitutional difference from the rest of the One-party Continent. ●

Anthony Delius's First Novel . . .

THE DAY NATAL TOOK OFF

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