



JOHN PEPPER CLARK is having a very busy time these days, what with all the teaching he has to do at Lagos University, a job he accepted at a time when some academics felt it more honourable to resign because of the then troubled atmosphere of the university politics, and Mr. Clark's recent visit to Paris as UNESCO consultant on the cultural problems in South Africa. Recently Mr. Clark has been so busy trying to establish trends in African poetry that in an effort to show the sterility of this particular form in South Africa he was driven to scraping the bottom of the barrel: taking a song written for a story by Richard Rive, a poem by Ezekiel Mphahlele and a poem and a blues song by Bloke Modisane. (Not one of these three has ever pretended to be interested in writing poetry as such.) Out of these meagre examples — Mr. Clark reads no Afrikaans which perhaps explains his neglect of the coloured poet Adam Small — the Nigerian poet-critic felt confident enough to offer his judgement on South African poetry. God knows what else Mr. Clark told UNESCO specialists in Paris about the strains and stresses on South African culture; but apparently the people he was advising thought it necessary afterwards to consult South Africans — just to make sure, they said. Why hadn't they done so from the beginning? One hears it said that they feared that South Africans themselves would be less impartial! Considering the absence of South Africans even in Dakar there seems to be some relationship between political subjection inside the country and the meagre cordiality and respect with which South Africans are treated in the councils of world politics and culture. As for Mr. Clark it is enough to quote from his paper, especially that part dealing with South African poetry, to demonstrate something of his sensitivity with both words and feelings about situations.

"Comments like mine," Mr. Clark writes with some insight, "will naturally provoke angry retorts to the effect that they stem not so much from ignorance of the facts and indifference to the sufferings of fellow human beings as from the annoying habit of mind that will want to ask, for instance, what efforts the victims are themselves making and what the drink and sex inclinations of their leaders are like."

I hope no one ever has the temerity to ask Mr. Clark what his "drink and sex inclinations" are like though if his book, *America, Their America* is to be believed he had a time of it at Princeton trying to maintain his virtue. What is particularly galling about the above quote is that it has nothing to do with Mr. Clark's subject and it is only thrown in after a comment on Brutus' poetry, a man who was at that very time in hospital with a police bullet wound!

PART OF THE PLEASURE derived from "South Africa Week" in Gottingen, Germany, was seeing capable black South Africans whose relaxed warmth mingled so happily with an angry sense of responsibility about home. Surprisingly — perhaps simply because unusual for us — they spoke good German and conveyed a better mastery over their predicament than some uprooted South Africans elsewhere. For some reason most of them belonged to the Pan Africanist Congress.

In Gottingen itself is Tseliso Masela, president of one of the South African student groups there. Quiet, self-assured, Tseliso displays a fond casualness with both Africans and Germans which perhaps conceals a real seriousness of purpose. Philip Mokgadi, who claimed to have "hitch-hiked" to Gottingen for the cause, came from another German university. He is studying engineering. In his spare time he devoutly goes through the mush of South African propaganda in order "the better to understand the enemy". Undoubtedly most seriously committed Mokgadi ably took on a pair of German professors — the apologists for the Verwoerd regime — during a symposium. Sobukwe is his hero.

THEN THERE were the Molepos from Hanover and the Marengwas from Hamburg. It was a particular pleasure to meet Nomsa Marengwa, Bennett's wife. With a dark vivid beauty which seems to come more from a fierce intelligence, Nomsa has that forthrightness found mostly among Xhosa women. She takes on African men cheerfully enough, lashing away at their particular foibles without any concession. She and Mrs. Molepo seem possessed of their own inviolate sense of integrity and jovial candour.

South Africa Week which took place in May strangely divided the Germans who were for from those against apartheid, or those simply incapable of taking a stand. The Mayor of Gottingen could not be present to open South Africa Week and instead sent his Deputy, who is a member of the Social Democratic Party, to open the proceedings. Anti-apartheid politics is suspect in Germany. Apparently Bonn has a Cultural Treaty with Pretoria.

Two German girls without whom South Africa Week could not have been much of a success were Elke Wiedenroth who as exchange student has participated in the Civil Rights campaigns in the South of the United States and Gisela Schlums, a student of literature at Gottingen.

A LUNCHEON ATTENDED IN FEBRUARY 1962 by Duncan Sandys (then Commonwealth Secretary), Sir Roy Welensky (prime minister of the Federation) and Lord Alport (British high commissioner) is described in *Rhodesia Accused* by A. J. A. Peck, published by Three Sisters Books, Salisbury. Mr. Peck (according to a South African newspaper review in which also is quoted the lines below) "accuses the West of attempting to hand over yet another slice of Africa to the Communists." Over lunch "Sir Roy remarked that with resolution and the firm exercise of authority it would not be too difficult to keep Nyasaland peacefully in the Federation. 'No Roy,' replied Sandys, 'you see we British have lost the will to govern.' Sir Roy suffered a severe migraine that evening. Lord Alport went home and vomited." It is arguable whether Lord Alport would have brought up his luncheon quite so readily had he realised that this same absence of the firm exercise of Britain's authority would mean that a slice of Africa would be given to the Fascists, not communists, when Smith declared independence on November 11, 1965. The end of Britain's empire is welcome indeed, but there are always losers. Britain's loss of the will to govern caused another, smaller, slice of Africa to be given away to the Fascists on June 17, 1966, when Chief Leabua Jonathan, prime minister of Basutoland, and Mr Fred Lee, British colonial secretary, signed an agreement allowing Basutoland to become independent on October 4, 1966.

ON THE ONE HAND, Colin Legum, in *The Observer*, called the granting of this independence "under a minority and unrepresentative Government . . . the most dishonourable transaction in the recent history of the handover of British power in her colonies." *The Times*, on the other hand whose African coverage grows daily more reactionary, found "unconvincing" the reasons for the walk-out by Mr. Mokhehle of the BCP and Dr Seth Makotoko of the Maramatlou-Freedom Party. It admits that if the opposition (which won 59% of the votes in the 1965 elections and has the support of the head of state, Moshoeshe II, on the independence issue) "make trouble (Chief Jonathan) will be tempted to lean on South Africa more than he should" but nevertheless manages to argue that "Britain has earned an honourable discharge." The fact is that Chief Jonathan's party "acts on the assumption that South Africa will last indefinitely (and thus) has a direct political interest in the (Verwoerd) regime's survival" as Ian Hamnett wrote here in April. The Basutoland Congress Party "has a whole continent in mind and can see that (the Verwoerd regime's) days are numbered. The Congress lost the battle, but they or people like them will win the war." Hamnett wrote, "Basutoland has never been defeated. The great Moshoeshe played off Boer against British to keep his country free. Britain has taken her discharge — honourable or otherwise — and Africa must be called in to save the people of Moshoeshe II from Verwoerd and people like him."

Offprints of "Lesotho Dilemma" by Ian Hamnett (April 1965) are obtainable from the Circulation Manager, Gransight Holdings Ltd., 60 Paddington Street, Marylebone, London W1.