

makes soap out of the last drop of oil squeezed from olive stones. His wife is a second-generation Moroccan French *colon*. In 1954 as the French rats were leaving the Moroccan independence ship he said to his wife: "Now is the time to buy a bigger house than we have ever had before." And now more people than ever before can afford to wash their hands in Morocco.

One of the farmers who is staying in the Kenya no-longer-white Highlands described himself on the BBC Overseas service as 'hard-core'. He was confident enough of the new Kenya to be able to make this joke in front of Kenyatta.

And yet at the same time the book *Mau Mau Detainee* by Josiah Kariuki, which has recently been published by Oxford, has been condemned by many Kenya settlers before they have even had a chance to read it. "Why rake all this muck up again?" they ask. And the largest chain of book-shops in East Africa has refused to handle it.

But of course there are many lessons to

be drawn by everybody from this blow by blow account of life in the detention camps of Kenya. And one of the lessons has a relevance closer to South Africa. Clyde Sanger pointed it out in his review of Kariuki's book in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* written after the Havelock Mine strike:

"It is a warning to Britain to avoid the same mistakes. It could never happen again, you say? What about the hooded men who screened the strikers in Swaziland, and put them in three categories including "hard core"? The terminology and the "Little Sacks" were identical with those used in Kenya's past. Swaziland has 10,000 whites, and most of the settlers are South Africans and they own half the land. There are plenty of forests in Swaziland: and the Swazis, being descendants of one of Chaka's Zulu regiments, are every bit as brave as the Kikuyu. Mr. Kariuki's book is more timely than he could have imagined when he looked no farther than at Kenya's horizon."

Africa Diary

A WEEKLY RECORD OF
EVENTS IN AFRICA

Published by
Africa Publications (India)

AIRMAIL, WITH BINDER
PER YEAR R 20 (£10)

from South African Agents

INSIGHT PUBLICATIONS (PTY) LTD
P.O. BOX 2068 CAPE TOWN

A Gentle People

BESSIE HEAD

The warm, uncommitted

"Coloureds" of the Cape

WHEN I FIRST CAME to Cape Town in 1958, my friends told me that Cape Town would weave a spell around me and I should never be able to leave it. If I went away, they said, I would always come back. Their words have proved true. I have come back, again and again, not knowing what it is that draws me. Now I do know. I love the Cape because it can give me, a writer, a fierce individualist—a warmth, a love, a sense of something that is the opposite of isolation and a sense of belonging, if not to the country, at least to the human race. I have found all this among the Coloured community in the Cape.

Whites in the Cape, with the habitual arrogance of Whites, refer to the Cape as having a "liberal tradition"; meaning of course, "their liberal tradi-

tion". It would never occur to them that it is the basically gentle and un-aggressive personality of the Cape Coloured that has made them "liberal". Wherever the White has felt himself "threatened" he has never hesitated to clamour for the most ruthless army and police repression. He lives always with his fears. The fact that he is able to pride himself in the Cape on being "liberal" is because he does not fear the Coloured man.

Another fallacy of the Whites is that they are the preservers of White Western Christian culture in Africa. Culture is not limited to the West, or Europe or a White skin or Christianity. Culture, in its truest sense, in its universal sense is the expression of the *personality* of a people. The Cape Coloured has this personality and he expresses it in little gestures and habits that are unique and belong to him alone. In fact his sense of belonging to himself and understanding himself without desires to impose himself on

others gives him a wonderful sense of a relaxed enjoyment of living. In a country where the rest of the oppressed groups are hounded day in and day out, their homes broken up, their movements restricted, he has been able to live in relative peace and move about as freely as he wished. To do this he achieved a compromise with the ruling, dominant group. Superficially he has many outward mannerisms and speech similarities of the Afrikaner. But the Afrikaner did not want him and yet did not fear him so he has developed from a bit here and a bit there a personality of his own. He adapts and grows and absorbs, adding to himself all the time. He welcomes strangers, is curious and interested in them and with a quick wit and jolly humour puts on a bit of their garments. He even adopts Hollywood and all its quaint trash. Anything and anyone can live beside him: sometimes these mixtures make him a better man, sometimes they have a harmful influence. In a cold and loveless country like South Africa his warmth of heart and *genuine* friendliness is like a great roaring fire on the white icy wastes of the Antarctic.

IN SPITE OF THE ADVANTAGES, such as freedom of movement that the Coloured man has had over the other oppressed groups in South Africa, he has, either through an innate laziness,

BESSIE HEAD, a regular contributor to *The New African*, has worked as a journalist in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

lack of initiative or maybe even a sheer crazed honesty not made financial capital out of his advantages. He is on the whole perpetually poor, uncomplaining about his poverty and no trouble at all. On top of all that, he is that infuriating character—the uncommitted man. He has given his loyalty to *no one*. How can he when he cannot even agree with himself about what he is thinking?

The negative aspects of Cape Coloured leadership tend to stress the fact that the fate of the Cape Coloured people is the fate of the White in South Africa. If that were really true then the Coloured man is doomed. But it is not. The Coloured man knows he is oppressed, and he knows his oppressor. He of all oppressed groups in South Africa fears his oppressor most because he is closer to him and really understand the ruthless nature of his power. So, he complies. He is obsequious, just so long as everybody leaves him in peace. Instead he would rather expend his hidden rage and frustration in drink and acts of violence on his own people or else try to outwit and make fun of you with his shrewd sense of humour. Coloured men, like Dr. Van Der Ross, appear to be unaware of the tragedy that is the day to day life of the Coloured people. He, and a few others like him would give the impression that the Coloured man is working hand in glove with the oppressor. The real trouble with the Van Der Rosses and a number of others like them is that they have created a conservative middle class of their own which is but a pallid and watery reflection of White privilege. It is a treacherous, dangerous and deceiving reflection.

THE RACIALISTS IN THE SOUTH of the United States of America are making their last stand. The pro-tribalists are or will be making their last stand. We are told that the hard core of Afrikanerdom in South Africa will also make its last stand. A decisive factor for a man in all these strifes and last stands is for him for the sake of his self-respect to find out where his loyalty lies. A man who sees a country merely as a place where he can earn money is not loyal to that country; his loyalty lies some other place, and, as soon as he has collected enough will be a-

getting back to that place. Neither is a man loyal who values a country only for the privileged position he holds there. Colonialists dominated in Africa for so long only because there was no other force to counter their power. When they had to contend with the uncompromising force of African nationalism, they gave way; sometimes gracefully; sometimes with a fierce and bitter struggle.

There is often the cry of Non-White leaders in this country, and among Coloured leaders in particular, about the lack of unity among the oppressed people. Leaders, especially some sinister and unscrupulous ones which we have here, wish to use the people for their own ends; for ends that may have either a perpetuation of White domination or the introduction of something like Moscow rule. Africa and the awakened forces of African nationalism are against them and against all exploiters who do not admit a loyalty to a continent that has had its fill of exploitation. Future generations of young people in South Africa and Africa will be against them too.

WE ALL LOVE OUR COMFORTABLE grooves and somehow feel safe in patterns of living that have been imposed upon us; even though these patterns are unjust. A time of change is a time of upheaval that disrupts the status quo. It is also a time when violent passions rampage and terrifying acts of repression are perpetrated by those who wish to resist this change. The sane man will resist being swept into this cauldron of hatred. He learns to accept change as one of the inevitable consequences of life and prepares to adjust himself to something new, well knowing that the past was not good for him and looking forward with hope to the future.

Who knows what is ahead? But life has need of a people such as the Coloured people of the Cape. While they too are suffering at the hand of the exploiter and do not as yet know whether they are this or that or here or there, they are warmly human, generous with a word of greeting and a smile. For my part, they evoke the words of Stephen Foster, later used in a popular song—"dear hearts and gentle people." ●

REVIEWS

Reticent Keepers

Leonard Bloom

Langa: A study of social groups in an African township by Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje (O.U.P., Cape Town R2.55)

PERHAPS UNFORTUNATELY, *Langa* is likely to be read widely both by those professionally interested in Africa and by the interested layman. Many readers will feel warm and satisfied that now they *know* how, and what, Africans suffer from apartheid. Some readers will, I fear, feel vaguely and comfortingly that those quaint creatures in the Langa zoo are, it seems, becoming not too different from the keepers outside. It is, of course, the keepers who read the book.

Frankly, I was disappointed, irritated and baffled: both as a social psychologist, much concerned with the problems of urbanisation in Africa, and as a layman.

I was disappointed and irritated that in this "study of social groups", so much was treated so muzzily, and so much of significance was left out. It is quite astonishing that in 1960 in South Africa, a scientific study can omit an analysis of political and economic organisation, even on the most general level. Not one serious reader should be satisfied with the apology that "a very large number of the people of Langa take a lively interest in politics, and readers must make allowance for this fact". Later in the book we read that "the general leaders in Langa are the political leaders", but we search in vain for any account of *how* political leaders lead, and in what situations. Nor are we told what kind of social groups arise from this "lively interest in politics". This striking omission is in no way balanced by lists of names of dance bands, sports clubs and churches, and tedious descriptions of which clergyman quarrelled with which other.

THE BOOK CONCLUDES that "something new is growing in the towns: its mark is the intense vitality, the aliveness, that appears in dance and song, in the jiving of the *ikhamba* and the Merry-Macs band, in the