

"We Swallow Pallid Grief and Gape at Black"

LEOPOLDVILLE, CONGO

*We swallow pallid grief and gape at black,
tyrannise the torturers, newly singing
of the terror and the poisoned blood;*

*gather the armies caked hard with blood
where they pulled down the rage of black;
command the children now done singing,*

*to take pistols and tears, squeeze the singing
bullets through the air to hustle blood
from peace, from wounds once only black.*

PAUL THEROUX

The Hindoo Crematorium

MOMBASA, KENYA

*The huge roof on posts crouched
over pits and patient stone, groined
arches stained with soot and greasy
smoke; the assistants squatting*

*on the steps, passing a thin cigarette;
and lush below the fire-pits, arches,
flowers, grass, even trees receiving
the ashes supposedly flushed to the ocean*

*The only movement: me following two
children; whole fistfuls of ribs
they gave me, burned teeth, innocent
gifts, the chalky lumps of jaws;*

*the three of us scooping the cusped
skull-scrap caught in heaps near
the sea on the bunches of flowers;
crunching through the ashes, going among
the bones.*

PAUL THEROUX

At the inaugural Conference of the Pan-Africanist Congress, where he was unanimously elected President, he postulated the basic policy of the P.A.C.

"Politically we stand for government of the Africans, by the Africans and for the Africans, with all those who owe their only loyalty to Africa and accept democratic rule of an African majority being regarded as Africans."

In the same vein, he continued,

"We guarantee no minority rights because we are fighting precisely that group exclusiveness which those who plead for minority rights would like to perpetuate."

He continued,

"It is our view that if we guaranteed individual liberties, we have given the highest guarantee necessary and possible."

This is the sort of man the South African settler authorities incarcerate and hold in prison without trial.

YOUR PETITIONER HAS THE HONOUR to be the last person outside prison to have been with Sobukwe. My sojourn with him in Pretoria Prison for the greater part of two years was a period of learning, which I shall never regret.

To work with him is a pleasure and to serve him is an honour. His presence in prison animated us and boosted our morale.

A humble and unassuming man. Although whilst a lecturer at Witwatersrand University, he could have had a life of comfort, he did not. He led a simple life—travelling third class by train every day.

When he was arraigned before the courts in 1960, he refused to enter a plea, thus refusing to recognise its authority over him. "The law I am charged under is a law made by the white man and administered by him." He refused to associate himself with white man's dirty work. "If the white man wishes to do his dirty work, let him do so, but he must expect no co-operation from me—my hands must be clean of it," he protested.

He was taken from Pretoria to Robben Island and when asked what he felt about it he said stoically, "If you want freedom, you must be prepared to suffer for it".

This man is the conscience of my country—without him we are a people whose conscience is wanting.

It is over five years that he has been in prison. Since 21st March 1960, he has been behind prison bars. He has been in prison the longest period to date for any politico in South Africa.

He has a family—a young courageous wife, Veronica Zodwa, and four children. One girl Thoko (Joy) 12, a boy, Dinilesizwe (sacrifice for the nation) 10—what a prophetic name. Then there are the twins, 8, Dedanizizwe (give us a breather ye nations) and Dalindyabo (creator of plenty).

This is his family and if they were here, they would associate themselves with the prayer of your petitioner that Sobukwe must be released.

The South African Government suspended the "90-day" clause but left clause 4, which affects Sobukwe.

Some people thought the suspension of the "90-day" clause was a sincere manifestation of good will on the part of the South African Government. Why then did they not release Sobukwe—a man who like the "90-day" detainees has never been brought to trial?

How long, O Lord, holy and kind?

Coming to grips

LEWIS NKOSI reports on the September 1965 Conference on Race and Colour at Copenhagen

PERHAPS THE CHOICE of the venue was the first indication of the lack of urgency or immediacy which was to characterise this Conference on Race and Colour. Sponsored by the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences and by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the conference took place at Copenhagen's plushy Hotel Europa, far from any sound of racial battle of Los Angeles, Manchester or Johannesburg, nor does it appear that Dr. Verwoerd's theoreticians were ever approached to attend and contribute their accumulated intelligence on the subject, something that might have made the conference seem a little relevant to the troubled times we live in.

From the sixteenth floor window of the Europa one stared at the river and the island across and the massive drawbridge which lifted periodically to allow the barges to steam under. About twenty or more scholars, writers and observers, all carrying glamorous names some of which appear regularly on the covers of glossies, sat in the conference room analysing the whys and wherefores of racial hate. "If Mr. Philip Mason will take it upon himself to represent the whole of Britain, I'll be glad to leave him to answer. . . ."

No, Mr. Philip Mason, certainly does not wish to speak for the rest of Great Britain, though. . . . The light filtered through the

window; stared at the river and the island across and the massive drawbridge periodically lifting to allow the barges to steam under. "Because I'm Negro white people look at me and assume that I'm a good dancer. This always amuses me because I simply can't dance. I may be a Negro but I just can't dance very well. . . ." One knows the joke, if one may call it that; where white liberals are gathered solemnly to discuss the race problem such jokes are the stock-in-trade of the Negro intellectuals. Unfailingly, the joke, pale as it has become, always draws laughs. What is even more unendurable is that if one has attended the same parties with Mr. Louis Lomax, who brought the house down resoundingly with this particular one, it is impossible not to remember that he has told it before. Listening to speakers like these, witty, glamorous, certainly knowledgeable, one felt that an incalculable joke had been perpetrated upon us; for wasn't this being back at some school debate in which jokes were carefully planted at the right places, properly worked out and timed with split second precision!

THE QUALITY OF THE PAPERS was, to put it in a pleasantly ambiguous way, astounding! It was comforting to hear from the chairman on the very last day that he found the contributions of a very high quality, that the whole mess of pottage was going to be served up as a book. Accordingly if this conference seemed to me somehow irrelevant to the urgencies of the race question, (for instance the growing tendencies toward "Colour-Maoism" not only in the third world but among many American Negroes), this anthology will presumably have the salutary effect of presenting authoritative information on the subject of race: Mr. Ezekiel Mphahlele still serving up his favourite dish on *negritude*; Mr. Louis Lomax telling us all it needs to dethrone Dr. Verwoerd is that American Negroes should march in the streets of New York!

When the West Indian writer, Mr. E. R. Braithwaite, warned in a very passionate language that a racial storm was about to break in Britain, I followed this by a remark to the chairman, Mr. Robert K. A. Gardiner of Ghana during recess in which I suggested Braithwaite had done very well. Mr. Gardiner seemed very impatient: "I don't think he is right. We are not here to discuss tactics; we are only trying to understand the race problem." It was left to Colin Legum, an invited observer, and Dr. Edward Shils, the American sociologist, to express their misgivings about the failure of this conference to come to grips with urgent race problems such as Southern Africa, most likely to go up in flames in the near future. Legum expressed astonishment that a conference such as this one had presented no paper on Chinese intentions, their attitudes to colour and their successes or failures in the political field. Perhaps it was for this reason that the chairman of the day, Mr. Gardiner dismissed Colin Legum as "a self-appointed critic."

"Hairy fruit, subsiding water"

FOR JEREMY SENTILLI

*the yellow and fat chrysanths in the green bottle
are now naked and gray (the dogs are blind)
every poem begins like this about flowers about dogs
and tries to plant its symbol with my hands
symbols of my wizened heap of cells
dragged out of house and kneaded by the space around
to grin a mouth
— shrivelled into a little hunchbacked clay.
But it is not clay, nor is it dust
but bones blood veins and hair
and what had love, could laugh and copulate
into a body the pure scare of life,
that could howl and walk and then lie down
till this false light commandeered the eye
till chrysanthemums stank, till they were slimy
the water tight and green with mud
fold over, sweet water, not the guts of plants
fold to cover the watcher's pain
and damp this fear
this hairless angel that whites by the glass*

BREYTEN BREYTENBACH