

For Serowe: a capital city

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WHY DOES BESSIE HEAD [*The New African*, December 1965] think of Serowe as a little village without history? Surely this gives a wrong picture to all those who have never seen the sweep and spread of Serowe. It is called a village by the Government, as the capital of my own tribe, Mochudi, is called a village. But this is a piece of white supremacy nonsense. The much smaller white towns along the railway line are not called villages. Nor, of course is the new capital, Gaberones, although its actual population is smaller than that of Serowe.

In fact, Serowe is the capital of the Bamangwato, and for those who are interested in modern changes, it is full of history. There is the monument to Khama III, but for whose action Bechuanaland would have been snapped up by Rhodes and his adventurers and would now be suffering

the same fate as Rhodesia. Was it not history to go to England and insist that Bechuanaland should be a protectorate? Go back further — was it not history to resist Mzilikazi? Was it not history to make Christianity into something acceptable?

There is the house where the young white man lived who was so properly flogged in Kgotla for his misbehaviour, the case which brought a regiment to Palapye Road, and would have meant war but for the wisdom of Chief Tshekedi. Is that not history?

Or, if you like, is it not today's history when the young unemployed men are brought together in a builders' brigade, to build, not in mud but in bricks? Who brought them together? Patrick van Rensburg, whose conscience drove him out of a life of comfort and status in his native South Africa, to come with his Welsh wife and found a school at Serowe. It was history to have two whites living in a rondavel, teaching in a shed, the wife cooking and washing — and teaching. That bit of history has grown into a school whose pupils are likely to be the leaders of Bechuanaland. If, three years ago, anyone had said how wonderfully Swaneng Hill school would grow and prosper, nobody would have believed them. But history willed it.

LOOK AT THE CO-OPERATIVE store, based, as the first Rochdale Co-operative were, on meticulous honesty and good sense. It could

not have happened but for a feeling for co-operation, for working together, among Batswana. All over Bechuanaland there are co-operatives starting, not an alien growth but formalising something in people's minds, something which has happened because of their economic circumstances.

Bechuanaland has a history. It can be found, up to a point, in the dry records of the professional historians and anthropologists. But these can grow flesh on their old bones. The words to clothe them are in the thoughts and dreams of the old people. The gesture that was made, the actual words that were spoken, are still remembered and alive.

In a bad year men must leave their country to go to work in the gold and diamond mines. But they remember their own towns and speak of them. Mochudi, Kanye, Molepolole, Serowe, towns with somewhere between twenty and thirty thousand people living in them, not just villages to be swept out of existence, but capitals with a history and a life of their own: these are what they think of and long for.

Such towns will grow. Water and electricity, industry, amusement, these will not always be the prerogative of the whites. Already most of the bigger tribal towns have secondary schools; this is the beginning — education and the enquiring mind. People will look round for their own history. And they will find it. ●

To the Editor

Home and Exile

SIR,—As anyone who must have carefully read my book, *Home and Exile*, would have been certain to note, I did not criticise Bloke Modisane merely for exploiting his information of the underground life of the South African townships, as John Clare claims in his rather patronising review of my book (*The New African*, December 1965). It was the inadequacy of method which I attacked. I quote: "Yet without this power for so reordering experience, and for so transmuted the given social facts that we can detect an underlying moral imagination at work, it is difficult to see why we should give up the daily newspaper in favour of creative fiction..."

Needless to say I was distinguishing between creative fiction and journalistic fact. My own account of life in Johannesburg during the 'fifties, however incomplete, is fact not fiction. I am at a loss to know why John Clare considers me "diffident" in writing about it.

So the shebeen talk, "for all its passion, was aimless"! The only necessary rejoinder here is so what! Is there any aim in the Irish talk that can be heard in Dublin pubs? Why does this

kind of patronising white reviewer, presumably bleeding his heart out over the black man's suffering, always suppose that when the blacks talk there must be some high purpose to it. He cannot see the blacks as anything but ciphers in a vast scheme of social uplift. Their talk must be of politics and revolution perhaps, never just talk to sustain an evening, to amuse, and to recreate dramatic points in their lives.

Another small point: nowhere in my book is there a celebration of a Harlem jazz singer, though there is a fond portrait of a white Jewish girl who sings at a Village nightclub. The error is small but indicative, Bwana Clare.

As for my book being premature I shall take Mr. Clare's word for it. LEWIS NKOSI
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Revolutionary Youth

SIR,—Mr. Matthew Nkoana's article (*The New African*, October 1965), has to my mind answered the questions being asked by the revolutionary youth of South Africa, who have been waiting for a serious, bold, clear and correct leadership. It attempts to clear the confusion that has been dominating the liberatory movement in South Africa and outside, by raising a platform for a thorough discussion and exchange of ideas on the question of our struggle.

Its frankness and objectivity encourages the honest revolutionary youth who for many years have been stifled and never allowed to develop their revolutionary potential. Its boldness of approach fits the calibre of the revolutionary youth for so long a tool in the hands of old, useless, obscurantist and reactionary leadership

which had always trembled at the slightest radicalism, and who continually suppressed action. It opens up a new chapter in the struggle: a movement forward by the revolutionary youth whose role in other underdeveloped areas of the world is well known, in the struggle for national emancipation.

The revolutionary youth has long been in a state of inertia for lack of a theoretically clear leadership which itself depended on South Africa's minority groups for guidance. Its intellectual dimensions encourage the African revolutionary intellectual youth who for many years had been sceptical about the theoretical ability of its leadership.

Yes, if we were fooled yesterday, we can no longer be fooled to-day, for the politics of the day is clear-cut — the politics of revolutionary practical action. Theory whilst it is necessary or even essential cannot do without being blended with revolutionary practical action. The present phase of struggle therefore calls for the ability to master and combine the two — theory and practice. Armchair-leadership from Accra, Dar es Salaam, London, Washington, Moscow, Peking, can no longer work, and this our leadership must be careful about, for to-day is not yesterday. For morale, courage, inspiration, correct guidance and sustenance of our revolutionary struggle we need our leadership right in the forefront of struggle, i.e. on the terrain of struggle.

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