

helpers at the "ashram") come across as fatuous inter-
polations in the script.

What then makes "Gandhi" a memorable and moving ex-
perience despite itself?

The film's greatest achievement is that it reminds us of Gandhi,
the man, at a time when we could do with all the reminding
that we can get. From all accounts Mohandas Karamchand
Gandhi was a placid, even a placatory man. His was not a
thrusting and aggressive personality. All too often such a
person can, over a period of time, implicitly condone a wide
variety of abuses. For Gandhi individual human life and
freedom were sacrosanct. Any diminution of human free-
dom had to be met with the greatest possible resistance
except violence, as violence automatically impugns the ideal.
From that position Gandhi would not budge. No amount
of physical duress could undermine his tenacity in this
respect. What to so many of us is the high ideal was, for
him, the bottom line. His insistence on human freedom
informed his life to the point where he believed that
oppressors would relent once shown the folly of their ways.
It is hardly surprising then that he radiated love and warmth
to those who imprisoned him for 2338 days of his life.

Gandhi's championship of Indian independence was always
bound up with his concept of human rights. His energies
were directed to combating the ugly products of frus-
tration, chauvinistic nationalism and sectarian conflict.

The Mahatma's offering of the premiership of India to
Jinnah was an act perhaps without parallel. Never, to my
knowledge, has the leader of the largest and most powerful
section of the population voluntarily offered political sway
to the leader of a less powerful minority.

The greatest quality of the man was his support of the poor.
Gandhi aimed at the closest possible identification with
them, particularly that most socially wretched and exploited
of peoples, the Untouchables. Renaming them "Harijin"
(children of God) Gandhi strove to arrest their plight. This
persistent striving became almost frantic towards the end
of his life. It is to Gandhi's credit that India has slowly
begun to move away from the horrors of caste and enforced
social deprivation.

Given his ideals it follows that Gandhi considered the 1947
India/Pakistan split as the crowning failure of his life. Given
the difference between the nature of the man and the nature
of the world he lived in, it is tragic, ironic but unsurprising
that he should be murdered in front of the people who at
his prompting, had embraced "Satyagraha".

Near the beginning of the film we see Gandhi being thrown
off a white train at Pietermaritzburg.

Noting the nature of South Africa some 80 years on one
need hardly add the dreary postscript that some things
never change. □

TOWARDS A CERTAIN FUTURE: THE POLITICS AND ECONOMICS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA –

By Robert I. Rotberg (David Philip, Publisher,
Cape Town, 1981)

reviewed by G.H. Oldham

Robert Rotberg's book shows the author to be knowl-
edgeable, perceptive and insightful about the problems of
southern Africa. The book is divided into three parts and
deals separately with South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe.
It is, perhaps, a little unfair to review the book so long
after publication because political developments and
other events have tended to outrun some of the authors
forecasts and predictions. For this reason the review
concentrates on Rotberg's analysis of South Africa.

His theme is, as far as South Africa is concerned, that
responsible and decisive leadership by the ruling oligarchy
which sets the country on an evolutionary reform path
may be sufficient to avoid racial conflict, or armed struggle
and eventual revolution. Time, however, is running out.

The next chapter examines the ascendancy of Afrikaner-
dom and the structure of domination. The latter depends
on control or distortion of State institutions, rigidifying
the enforcement of separation, control over information,
military spending and police organisation including security
apparatus such as detention and banning.

The point the author wants to drive home, however, is that

real power is vested in a ruling oligarchy — a small group of
men around the Prime Minister. The political system is
beyond the reach of interest groups, public opinion, the
parliamentary opposition, the press and other instruments
of change. Rotberg further alleges that local branches of
the Nationalist Party 'can rarely oppose the party hierarchy
effectively; few are sufficiently brave or assertive to try'.
He obviously did not anticipate the breakaway of the Con-
servative Party led by A. Treurnicht. In fact the existence
of a growing right-wing opposition seems to undermine the
theme that the oligarchy may have the power to become
a modernising force because of their independence from
the electorate. P.W. Botha has found unexpectedly strong
resistance to even the present proposed constitutional
changes.

The intention of separate development may be seen as the
maintenance of white prosperity and privilege. The response
of the underprivileged has taken a number of different
forms: non-violent and violent. After looking at some of
these responses in his third chapter, Rotberg concludes
that in the near term the A.N.C. is not strong enough or

sufficiently organised internally to promote a revolution. His sympathy obviously lies with people like G. Buthelezi who advocate negotiation. The problem is that the ruling oligarchy seem completely unable to accept the need for negotiation with black leaders other than within a separate development framework. Leading members of the cabinet have stated categorically that the present constitutional amendments will never be extended to include blacks. It is therefore difficult to see how an evolutionary process of change can be instituted when the majority of the population are not involved in any form of consultation or negotiation. Social change in the form of better housing, health and educational services in urban areas will not be sufficient to allay black anger and discontent.

ECONOMIC STRENGTHS AND VULNERABILITIES

The next chapter deals with South Africa's economic strengths and vulnerabilities. The country's economic prospects give rise to a number of issues. First, is the economy capable of growing at a sufficiently fast rate to create employment and rising incomes for a rapidly expanding population? Secondly, how vulnerable is the economy to trade sanctions, a fuel embargo or disinvestment? On the other hand would the western industrial economies be severely damaged if South Africa withheld base minerals from world markets? Africans constitute some 70 per cent of the economically active population. Since 1976 economic growth has been slow and intermittent. There appears to be a rising pool of unemployed – however defined. There is an increasing lack of economic opportunities for blacks, particularly so in those areas far removed from the urban agglomerations. As far as manufacturing is concerned the limited size of the domestic market together with high capital and skilled labour costs make South African products uncompetitive internationally. Export earnings have thus become increasingly dependent on gold and other primary products. This makes the economy susceptible to world-wide booms and recessions. The mining industry depends heavily on migrant labour but by the end of the seventies some 70% of migrants were from South Africa itself or the nominally independent homelands. The mining industry has thus reduced its vulnerability to foreign governments which might intervene to prevent workers being recruited for South African mines. During the same time the white to black earning ratio was reduced from 17:1 to 6,2:1.

In terms of total energy requirements only 30 per cent of South Africa's needs have to be satisfied by imports. The transportation sector, however, is heavily dependent on oil inputs. South Africa has no regular or official supplier but an analysis of tanker movements suggested large amounts of crude oil are reaching the country from the United Arab Emirates. The completion of Sasol II and III, underground stockpiles, relatively high fuel prices and other conservation measures have made South Africa, in the short term, much less vulnerable to an oil embargo than in earlier years.

On the other hand, South Africa is ranked at least third in the world as a supplier of nine significant minerals including manganese, chrome and platinum. These minerals are vital to western industries but constitute only a small part of South Africa's gross domestic product. Faced with economic sanctions South Africa could threaten to withhold such base minerals from world markets. A policy of resource denial, however, would remain dangerous as the

political and economic consequences cannot be foreseen with any degree of certainty.

DISINVESTMENT

Rotberg also looks at the vexed question of disinvestment. Rather than dispose of their South African investments many foreign corporations have altered their operating practices and attempted to conform to codes such as the Sullivan principles. The application of these principles, however, will not placate opponents of investment and proponents of sanctions. It seems clear that a large volume of disinvestment coupled with trade or supply sanctions would have an adverse effect on South Africa's growth and development. The author questions whether the political impact would equal the economic impact. He suggests that the government may not give a high priority to affluence but rather be more interested in the maintenance of its power. The conclusion is that economic means are unlikely to provide the main motivating force in bringing about political change.

In the final chapter of this section the author questions whether or not policies can be devised which reconcile South Africa's future with its past. The key question is 'by what means, in what form, to what extent and how soon is the political participation of the majority to be achieved?' Rotberg wants P.W. Botha's government to be bold, imaginative and decisive and the white electorate to sacrifice privilege for security. He seems to be warning that Afrikaner Nationalism cannot in the long term continue to dominate and suppress African Nationalism. Whether or not this is the correct way to view South Africa's historical development may be open to question. Nevertheless, unless the ruling oligarchy is prepared to implement real change and grasp the central issue of political representation of Africans it faces a bleak future. There is likely to be a prolonged period of low-level violence, sabotage, industrial unrest and rioting. The hostility of the rest of the world may grow and South Africa is not invulnerable to fuel embargos, simultaneous external and internal conflict, disinvestment and white emigration.

What is not clear is how the process of reform and change is to be initiated and carried forward. A powerful executive president might be able to bring about policy changes by fiat but ultimately if reconciliation is to occur all parts of the population need to be involved in the process of negotiation and decision making. A new society should aim not to substitute new for old injustices, lessen the quality of life, destroy the economy or create new social and ethnic conflicts. The policy of separate development and the homelands as presently conceived cannot provide answers to the future problems of South Africa.

Rotberg sees some signs of progress in the removal of discrimination and attempts to give political expression to Coloureds and Indians but these initiatives are regarded as too restrained and too limited. He leaves the whole question of the future form of government open and argues that outright partition, confederalism, cantonalism and federalism should all be examined for their potential contribution to answers to South Africa's dilemma.

The book is well worth reading because of its objectivity, scope and the amount of information it contains. However, it does not contain much which is new or original but it does draw together a number of concepts and ideas which those in favour of moderate but progressive reform may favour. □