

BOOK REVIEWS

A Non-Racial Island of Learning: A History of the University College of Rhodesia from its Inception to 1966 By M. Gelfand. Gwelo, Mambo Press, Zambeziana Series No. 4, 1978, 376 pp., illustrated, Rh\$12,00 (p/b. Rh\$9,80).

The Future of the University in Southern Africa Edited by H. W. van der Merwe and D. Welsh. Cape Town, D. Philip, 1977, 302 pp., Rh\$12,00.

Professor Gelfand would be the first to admit that he is not a professional historian. His book is not easy to read, largely because he is not selective enough in distinguishing what should go in the text and what should be relegated to footnotes or appendices. The result is that the attention of the reader is distracted from time to time from the main thread of what is a fascinating story.

There is, however, no possible doubt that Professor Gelfand has written a very important book. He has meticulously tracked down a variety of prime sources, supplementing the printed and written word with recorded interviews of some of the *dramatis personae*. It is unfortunate that he did not have access to Government records in the National Archives of Rhodesia for the period after 1955. When they are available to scholars they may reveal that the College owes much to senior civil servants who managed to persuade their masters to keep their hands off what a Rhodesian business journal once called 'a political Trojan horse in the midst of a country fighting for its existence as a white state'. This was certainly the impression I formed from my visits in 1959, 1966 and 1969 when I chaired committees reviewing the financial needs of the College.

Another marked feature of the book is the author's detached approach to his account of events in which the most intense passions were roused and in which he must have been personally involved, at least to some extent. This 'dead-pan' attitude has of course its disadvantages. For example, I was actually staying in the Principal's Lodge on the night that Maluleke escaped from detention and made his way to the College campus. I saw at first hand how Sir Walter Adams wrestled with his conscience and finally the following morning decided to disobey the Emergency Regulations under which he should have reported Maluleke's presence to the police. The extreme tension of that situation is certainly not conveyed to the reader. Gelfand's treatment of the Birley Report of 1966 is rather non-committal though he does go so far as to say that Birley's criticism of Adams for not taking 'a sufficiently strong stand against [governmental] attacks on the academic freedom of the College . . . appears to be a contradiction' of other statements in the Report.

Professor Murphee, the Director of the Institute for Inter-Racial Studies at the University, contributed a very interesting paper on the University College to a seminar in Cape Town, the proceedings of which have been published under the title *The Future of the University in Southern Africa*. In it he points out that 'the autonomous university is a fiction. For the university there are only degrees of relative autonomy.' For example, the extent to which the College could attract African students was severely restricted by the paucity of sixth-form facilities in African schools, a matter outside the jurisdiction of the College.

There is no doubt that some people connected with the College genuinely thought that it ought to have been more politically motivated while others went further and really wanted to provoke the closure of the College in order to embarrass the Smith Government. But my vote has always been and still is for those who fought to keep the College afloat as long as its academic freedom, in the sense of that term as defined by Sir Robert Birley, and its non-racial character were not impaired. Subsequent events have vindicated their attitude and Rhodesia enters on self-government with a proportionally larger and better qualified cadre of Africans than any other newly independent state in the continent.

At the risk of being accused of bias, I must say that in my opinion the University of London played a more important part in the decision that the College should be non-racial than Professor Gelfand's narrative implies. I was present at the meeting in London when Manfred Hodson and his delegation were told categorically that adherence to the non-racial principle by the College was a condition precedent of Special Relation with the University of London and without Special Relation the College would never have got off the ground. It is no coincidence that the clause in the College Charter enshrining this principle is based almost word for word on Statute 4 of the Statutes of the University of London which traces its lineage back to its first charter in 1836.

Perhaps in conclusion a few more personal comments are permissible. The book contains a striking portrait of Manfred Hodson, the driving force behind the acceptance in Rhodesia of the need for a university institution. Even more vivid is the picture of Walter Adams who shines through the pages of the book like Mr Valiant in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Less successful is the delineation of Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders who played a dominating role in his dual capacity as Chairman of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas and the University of London's Committee on Higher Education Overseas — but this is not surprising since I know from personal experience what an enigmatic character he was. Perhaps a little more stress should have been placed on the contribution of Professor C. T. Ingold, who succeeded Sir Alexander as Chairman of the Committee on Higher Education Overseas. Without his staunch advocacy in the troubled years following U.D.I., when the extremists in London were demanding the immediate termination of Special Relation in complete disregard of the interest of both students and staff of the College, the proper and orderly phasing out of Special Relation would have been impossible.

For those interested in the early years of the College, Professor Gelfand's book is prescribed reading and, when the definitive history of that period comes to be written, the author will be eternally indebted to Professor Gelfand for the magnificent preparatory work he has done.

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Umendo By B. C. Makhalisa. Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977, 136pp., Rh\$0,70.
Umhlaba Lo! By B. C. Makhalisa. Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977, 80pp., Rh\$0,60.

The author of these works, Mrs Nkala, writes under her maiden name of Barbara C. Makhalisa. When she wrote her first book, *Qilindini* (Longmans