

HOLLEMAN, J. F. 1969 *Chief, Council and Commissioner: Some Problems of Government in Rhodesia*. London, Oxford University Press for the Afrika-Studiecentrum, XIX, 391 pp. 46s.

The academic world of Rhodesia has for many years been eagerly awaiting this work of Professor Holleman, which is based on his experience as a member of the Mangweni Reserve Commission of Inquiry, and as draftsman of the Majority Report published in 1961. This Majority Report has been out of print for several years, and only the Minority Report of one member of the Commission is still available through the Government Printer. Holleman's book, therefore, has become a necessity for students of African political tribal life in Rhodesia, as little of academic value has so far been published on this topic, although some works are now in press or preparation.

As Holleman states in his Foreword, his original intention was to recast the Report in book form at the suggestion of Professor Mitchell, at the University College of Rhodesia. Since then delay in publication has had the advantage that it enabled Holleman to bring his material forward to a later date, though by now more events have occurred which again date the material presented.

*Chief, Council and Commissioner* deals with the deposition of a leading Rhodesian chief which caused much more publicity than that of any other of the numerous African tribal leaders who have been deposed by Rhodesian governments since 1890.

The work is divided into three parts. The first part, which gives the background to the case history, is not so much valuable for the summary of early Rhodesian history, which has appeared in many publications, but for its description of the origin of the Native Affairs Department and the role of Native Commissioners in the lives of Rhodesian Africans.

In these introductory chapters Holleman lays the foundation for the concluding chapters, 'The Rediscovery of the Chiefs', which shows how a complete change of government policy towards African chiefs occurred in Rhodesia; during the early years of the European administration of Southern Rhodesia chiefs were deliberately replaced by Native Commissioners, whereas more recently chiefs have been incorporated into the civil service bureaucracy.

Holleman quotes and writes about the early years: 'The African "was accustomed to look to a chief" and he required a form of "personal

government"'. Therefore, Milner argued, the Africans should be accustomed to look to the local Native Commissioner "as the supreme authority in all matters in which they are concerned" (p. 16). These early Native Commissioners' powers were wide since they were the only civil servants responsible for the African population; and the African population, in the early years of this century, accounted for most of the residents of this new country because very few settlers had by then arrived. Moreover, Native Commissioners were the only official channels of communication between the indigenous population and the white settler community or, as Holleman puts it later on in the book, 'the outside world', for the African areas have remained until today 'to a large extent "closed" territory' (p. 169).

As a consequence of this key position of Native Commissioners, the Native Affairs Department soon became 'a government within a government' (p. 18). This is an important observation because the monolithic structure of this department, which later formed the backbone of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, provided the basis on which an eventual system of apartheid may be built. By analogy to South Africa, this body of civil servants may be seen as the future 'Bantu administrators' of Rhodesia; and the current government emphasis on covering all African areas with councils—105 councils have been established out of a potential of about 225—shows the form which the future administration of Rhodesia may take.

In the early days of European administration, just as today, Native Commissioners were prepared for their future work through an intensive service training, not through academic education (p. 26). Holleman's evaluation of the character type formed by this type of training is full of insight, and a recent study of District Commissioners shows that this early tradition has been preserved among these civil servants. Holleman's later analysis of a particular Native Commissioner, involved in the deposition of chief Mangweni, confirms the impression given in this earlier account.

The second chapter of the introductory part deals with legislation deeply affecting African life: the African Land Husbandry Act of 1951 and the African Councils Act of 1957. These Acts are seen against the development of African

agriculture and local administration so that the changes in government thinking are clearly revealed. Holleman's section on African agriculture is valuable for the data on income from agriculture of progressive and tradition-orientated peasants in the tribal areas (pp. 58-60). The low incomes indicate the extent to which Africans may be able to finance local services. The discussion of the Councils Act is directly related to the later issue of community development and the position of chiefs on local councils. Today chiefs are *ex officio* presidents of all African councils. This, however, is a situation which came about by overcoming opposition not only from the African people but also from those civil servants most concerned in the issue. In 1957, Holleman states, 33 per cent of all Native Commissioners were against a fusion of the traditional tribal authority with a modern form of democratic government and 24 per cent of all Native Commissioners outright objected to councils (p. 73). Holleman re-examines this issue at the end of the book.

In the second part of the book, Holleman goes into very great detail to document every aspect of the drama which culminated in the deposition of chief Mangwende in 1959. Again, he starts with filling in the background, this time of the tribal traditional system. He also illustrates the complexity of modern tribal administration through a variety of associations which participate in the running of rural African communities; the Kraal-heads' Association (p. 110) is one of these new bodies.

Holleman's description of the characters of the two antagonists, chief Mangwende and the Native Commissioner, and the evaluation of these men by the people and by each other, is of high quality. The author shows how their conflict was bound to accelerate and finally to end in the defeat of the tribal leader, in spite of the integrity of both men, because of the different frames of reference within which they operated. A patriarchal tribal ruler was bound by an ethical code different from that of a modern bureaucrat.

This second part, however, gives more than a historical account of a case history. Students of African nationalism will find factors explained which incline or disincline African chiefs towards a modern political movement. A careful reading of the Chief Native Commissioner's Reports throughout the 1950s and early 1960s shows how the Native Affairs Department strove to win the

support of the chiefs by increasing their powers whenever African nationalism seemed to gain greater influence among rural Africans. Gradually many chiefs, who at first had supported the new movement, firmly rallied behind the government because of the security and advantages derived from such a position. By the 1960s it was taken for granted that African chiefs sided with the European administration. Holleman writes that 'Rhodesia's self-declared independence (11.11.65) was brought about not least because of the loyal support of the tribal authorities' (p. 357).

Holleman shows that chief Mangwende did not follow this general trend of shifting attitudes among Rhodesian chiefs. Mangwende started off as a firm supporter of government because he believed in the authority flowing from the Crown. This he showed by his enthusiastic participation in the war effort. He also co-operated whenever his assistance was asked for by civil servants, and any new government policy was implemented smoothly in his chieftom. It was only when chief Mangwende saw that the Native Commissioner effectively weakened his standing among his own people that this attitude towards European authority changed. Holleman writes: 'It is therefore not surprising that Mangwende, in the early fifties, strongly resisted the overtures of the African National Congress in his area. Nor is it surprising that, in later years, when his powers were increasingly being challenged by the Administration and he saw the whole structure of his authority being jeopardized by his irreconcilable struggle with the local commissioner, his resistance to Congress weakened until he found himself in alliance with it' (p. 163). Later, chief Mangwende was said to have become a firm nationalist and at the time of writing this review he is no longer allowed to live with his own people in the tribal area but resides on mission land.

Holleman analyses the chief's shift of allegiance as follows: 'as the conflict evolved it tended to shift from a local to a national plane . . . He had chosen to oppose Government in order to assert his tribal leadership. As a result he had lost his chieftainship and had been removed from his people and the local scene. Almost unavoidably he thereupon aligned himself with militant African nationalism, a force and leadership unlike his own, but likewise opposed to white government. He thereby exchanged, in a sense, his specific tribal identity for a closer association with and loyalty to a

broader and supra-tribal front of black opposition to white political supremacy. In contrast, his successor . . . chose to align himself with the white authority upon which he so utterly depended. But in so doing he, too, lost in a sense his tribal identity' (p. 235).

This analysis also points to the dilemma of every African chief; is he, as G. K. Garbett put it (*Race*, 1966-7, 8, 113) a 'Government Officer or Tribal Leader?' The removal of any chief, whether by death or deposition, calls for competition among candidates for office. When Mangwende became chief in 1937 his greatest rival had been his half brother Enoch. Enoch fretted under his failure to gain the chieftainship and is said to have attempted the chief's assassination in 1940. When, therefore, government appointed Enoch as successor, this was, in Holleman's words, 'playing power-politics with a vengeance' (p. 224). Yet the new chief's earlier career deprived him of popular support and made him utterly dependent on the administration. Holleman writes that whenever he asked him for an opinion, Enoch replied that he first wanted to consult the District Commissioner, thus indicating his lack of self-confidence and authority. The new chief of Mangwende, therefore, drew his support not from his people but from the administration, and the administration supported him loyally. In 1962 he became a founder member of the Chiefs' Council, and when he died in 1967 he received a great obituary in the Rhodesian press where he was referred to as 'one of the most respected of African tribal leaders' (*The Rhodesia Herald*, 21. vii. 1967). The different fate of his deposed predecessor shows that the power basis of Rhodesian chiefs has changed: chiefs no longer need the support of their people, they need government support.

*Chief, Council and Commissioner* is, as its title indicates, not only a book about the relationship between traditional and bureaucratic authority, but it is also a book about a council; more important still, it is the story of a council whose investigation contributed towards the evolution of separate development in Rhodesia. Holleman writes in retrospect about the Mangwende Reserve Commission of Inquiry: 'The commission could not foresee at the time that, with these remarks, it had provided the Administration with one of the most useful slogans with which, not long afterwards, the new approach to "community development" was launched' (pp. 212-13).

The third part of the book takes up this policy of community development. Holleman re-examines the structure of the Native Affairs Department in the early 1960s, and shows how deficiencies in the administration, caused by an over centralisation of functions in the hands of Native Commissioners, led to apathy among the African people and an unwillingness to contribute to the advancement of their tribal areas. At the same time that the Mangwende Commission reported its findings to the Legislative Assembly, the Robinson and Patterson Reports were also tabled. These two Commissions made the same recommendation as the Mangwende Commission, and at so unanimous a finding government decided to decentralise the administration of African areas. The Native Affairs Department was submerged into the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Native Commissioners became known as District Commissioners. Various services rendered to Africans, such as agricultural extension advice, came under their respective ministries. But then an irony of fate occurred: the new policy of community development required the coordination of all services, just decentralised, so that within a few years all were reunited under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and centralisation once more characterised the tribal areas of Rhodesia.

Not only the structure of the administration, but still more government policies, affected the existence and vitality of African councils. To understand these problems in their larger perspective it is necessary to go further back in the history of Rhodesia's councils than the time of community development. In 1937 African Native Boards were replaced by councils; and in 1944 these councils were given limited powers of taxation and of passing by-laws. They were entitled to supervise primary education; and today the provision of primary education is thought to be the chief concern of African councils. The changes can best be illustrated by analysing the role of councils in African education, especially since the school issue was the focal point which gave rise to the conflict between chief and Native Commissioner and which led to the deposition of the chief and the dissolution of the Mangwende council.

In the 1950s and until 1962 the Rhodesian government was concerned about high standards in African education. During these years almost all rural schools were run by Christian missionaries who charged low school fees for the upkeep

and extension of these schools while the government paid the teachers' salaries. In urban areas government controlled most schools, and at these no school fees were charged. Many Africans desired the abolition of school fees in rural districts; and in some areas which had a council, like the area of chief Mangwende, people pressed for permission to open their own schools. Such permission, however, was only reluctantly given; in most cases it was refused because both the government and missionaries feared that in African controlled schools standards would fall. Thus, although councils were by law recognised as public bodies which could run schools, educationalists tried to restrict this right.

In 1962 the new government decided to make community development the cornerstone of its administration, and so official policy towards African primary schools and councils changed. Fees were now charged in all schools. From 1962 until the mid-1960s, government encouraged Africans to form local councils and promised that if they did so they could take over responsibility for local schools. The Mangwende case, which had flared up over the school issue, influenced government officials in their belief that this offer would lead to a rapid adoption of community development. By this time, however, Africans were no longer interested in running their own schools. They knew that they would not only have to pay school fees but that, if the missionaries relinquished the schools, they would have to raise more money than they had done in the past. Moreover, they were highly critical of the new policy of community development.

In the late 1960s and in the early 1970s a further development occurred, a development which took place after Holleman had published his book. Missionaries were forbidden to make any extension to their primary schools, and to open any new schools. When this pressure did not lead to a speedy adoption of community development, government announced that from the end of 1970 onward it would only pay 95 per cent of the teachers' salaries, and that this government contribution towards African primary education would in stages be further reduced

first to 90 per cent. If the missions were unable to make up the deficit of the teachers' salaries, they had to hand over the schools. The majority of missionaries declared that they were financially unable to pay an increasing share of their teachers' salaries, and prepared to hand over African primary education to those ready to take on responsibility for it. But few councils took over any significant number of schools; the parents still objected to council schools and so government declared itself ready to sponsor schools for a limited period until councils could be formed. In government sponsored schools parents have to collect money to pay the five per cent of the teachers' salaries and children whose parents refuse, or are unable, to pay, may not attend school except in cases of special concession. If no councils are formed within a period of five years, the schools will be closed. (African Education Amendment Act, No. 38, 1970). The fear expressed by missionaries and African parents and teachers that educational standards in African schools will fail under this policy, was declared unfounded by government officials.

This brief survey of the Africans' attitude towards running their own schools shows a complete reversal from the one current in the Mangwende chiefdom during the period studied by Holleman. This difference is entirely due to changed government policies. It would be interesting to know whether, if the deposed chief Mangwende were still the head of his people, he would now actively support community development. His people seem to do so for the Mangwende council, which was closed after the clash between the chief and the commissioner, was re-established in 1970 (Rhodesia Government Notice, No. 408 of 1970).

Holleman's book *Chief, Council and Commissioner* is a lucid exposition of a most complex and controversial situation in Rhodesian rural life, tribal history, and internal political relations between Europeans and Africans. It is written with great objectivity and deserves the careful study of every serious student of tribal politics in Rhodesia.

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