

SOLODOVNIKOV, V. G. 1971 *Ten Years of the Africa Institute: Scientific Achievements and Tasks of Soviet African Studies*. Budapest, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Center for Afro-Asian Research, Studies on Developing Countries No. 55, 52, X pp.

This pamphlet gives useful information on the development of Africanology (sic) both in Russia and Hungary.

When Russia became interested in political developments in Africa in the 1950s, the study of things African was not co-ordinated and indeed not greatly developed, although there was some tradition of research into history, ethnography and linguistics. In 1959 the Academy of Sciences created the Africa Institute as a centre for African research; seven years later a Scientific Council for African Problems was established to collect, assess and publicize information on all research in the Social Sciences on African affairs. It is on the reports of this body that this survey of the first ten years of the Africa Institute is in fact largely based.

It is not easy in an anniversary survey of this sort to sift what is of academic value from the propaganda; and the points that follow have been selected simply as ones of possible interest to social scientists in Central and Southern Africa.

Particular attention is given to the problems of South Africa where apartheid and partnership are simply equated as racist theories (p. 18); and it is interesting to speculate on the well established provision in Russia of instruction in Zulu (p. 22).

There have been several publications in history and ethnography, notably for our purposes *Drevnie i srednevekovye istochniki po etnografii i istorii narodov Afriki yuzhnee Sakary* (Ancient and Medieval Sources for the Ethnography and History of Africa South of the Sahara, 2 volumes

published so far, in 1960 and 1965). Inevitably even greater emphasis has been placed on political and economic development, and the most interesting of these works on political economy are Y. N. Cherkasov's *Ekonomicheskie problemy Yuzhnoi Rodesii* (Economic Problems of Southern Rhodesia, Moscow, 1966) and *Yuzhnoafrikanskii blok Kolonizatorov* (The South African Colonial Bloc, 1968).

The rest of the pamphlet is given over to reviews of recent work on Africa, the most interesting of which is the translation into English of the *History of Black Africa* by the Hungarian historian, Endre Sik (Budapest Akademia Publishing House, Vol I, 7th edition; Vol. II, 6th edition, 1970).

The real value of this section however is that it lists in full the publications of the Center for Afro-Asian Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, most of which are in English editions and are available from Blackwell's. The ones on African Literature Nos. 24 (1968) and 43 (1971), look to be the most useful by virtue of their wide bibliographical coverage; but most specialists will find something that takes their eye; for linguists, No. 5 (1969): a critique of Greenberg's classification of African languages; for educationalists and ethnographers Nos. 3 (1969) and 14 (1967): surveys of their problems in Africa; even the Rhodesian Ministry of Commerce and Industry may be interested in (Marxist) advice (No. 38, 1970) on methods of achieving import substitution.

R.S.R.

PEADEN, W. R. 1970 *Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923*. Salisbury, Central Africa Historical Association, Local Series, No. 27, 41 pp. \$1.20.

Nobody as yet, has given a clearer and more detailed picture of the clash between Christian culture and Shona traditional culture than the Revd. Peaden in his booklet. He uses material from various early documents to show that the attitudes of the early missionaries were, in the main, a hindrance to evangelization. These attitudes stemmed from the fact that the early missionaries were slaves of their own culture. As a

result, they made little attempt to understand the Shona thought-world. Therefore, they remained alien, at heart, from the people they were to evangelize.

Their basic premise was that all Shona cultural elements were indissolubly bound up with superstition and error, and had, therefore, to be scrapped. Thus Christianity was presented to the Shona in a European cultural context instead of

in terms of existing Shona preconceptions and beliefs. But sudden and complete changes in a people's way of life are unknown, except perhaps, during a military revolution, and consequently the missionaries failed dismally: 'The natural result of attempting to suppress by force deep-rooted customs held dear by the people was to drive the practice underground' (p. 21). The Shona converts finding it impossible to abandon their traditional religion, for instance, practised it behind the scenes.

Peaden shows that there were in fact a number of practices that were irreconcilable with Christianity such as the *kuzvarira* system, polygyny, divination and possession. The missionaries, however, thought all Shona culture anti-Christian. They, therefore sought to bring about the necessary changes through education. Schools and hospitals provided the means for this. Against this background, one sees the logic of the Shona resistance and resilience to Christianity described in this book.

Peaden is not alone in this. Hastings, writing on 'The African Church: from Past to Present' observes in the same tone, 'Christian doctrine can hardly be got across to Africans who have not received any appreciable amount of Western education . . . if the missionary has not first understood something of their own thought world . . . The only way to avoid this is by a deep understanding of existing African preconceptions and beliefs and by the explanation of Christianity in terms related to them, while at the same time making clear the absolute newness of Christian faith and life.'¹

I disagree with Peaden when he says, 'The Shona had no tradition of the Western practice of courtship as a preliminary to marriage'. The practice of courtship among the Shona is as old as the hills, and is well documented by J. F. Holleman in *Shona Customary Law*.

In conclusion one might pose two unanswered questions: What should have been done in the early days of early mission? What should be done now?

REFERENCE

1. HASTINGS, A. 1967 *Church & Mission in Modern Africa*. London, Burns & Oates, pp. 59-60.

Gwelo

REVD. J. C. KUMBIRAI

MAXWELL-MASON, W. D. and BEETON, D. R. eds. 1970 *Poetry at the Grahamstown Conference: UNISA English Studies*, 8 (iii), 56 pp.

'No age or condition is without its heroes, the least incapable general in a nation is its Caesar, the least imbecile statesman its Solon, the least confused thinker its Socrates, the least commonplace poet its Shakespeare' (G. B. Shaw, 'Maxims for Revolutionaries: The Revolutionist's Handbook', *Man and Superman*).

The poems chosen by the English Academy of Southern Africa to be read at its conference in July 1969 have now been published but without any critical comment from the editors:

Our purpose has been simply to provide a record of what was read. We have not seen it as our task to delete from, or in any way comment on, the work that has reached us. The people represented have all been acknowledged as writers of sincerity and standing by the fact of their invitation to Grahamstown (foreword).

As Professor Beeton has for some years been President of the Literary Committee of the English Academy of Southern Africa, the explana-

tion has a certain circularity, but is accurate enough. Certainly the seven poets sincerely believed they were writing poetry and that they achieved it. Equally it would have been hard to find better poets than those included, a fact which bodes ill for 'The Progress of Poesy' in South Africa.

The main general impression is the striking, and almost complete, abandonment of rhyme and metre: Free Verse is everywhere but most of the poets seem to have forgotten T. S. Eliot's dictum that no verse is free for the man who wants to do a good job. Most of the poets represented seem little concerned with the cadences of their lines or their appeal either to the sense or the eye. Chopped up prose, as we so often have here, is neither verse nor good prose.

One also notices a constant striving after metaphorical expression. It is an endemic fault in much of the latest poetry arising possibly from a fear of paucity in the poets' thought or an attempt to give that thought a profundity both specious