

Perspectives in

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This summer I visited the universities and capital cities of six African countries from Addis Ababa to Gaborone. I was struck, of course, by the almost insuperable obstacles to the publication of academic books by African scholars. Even in Nairobi, in the midst of unparalleled expansion of secondary and university education, publishers are aiming only at the school text-book market and the flow of subsidized historical monographs which once made possible an internal Kenyan historiography, independent of and indifferent to the Euro-American

academic world, has dried up. It is no solution for universities to establish their own presses — the University Press in Dar es Salaam has a back-log of over 140 accepted manuscripts. Moreover, when academic books are published in one African country, they are impossible to obtain in the bookshops of its neighbours. Only in Gaborone, with Botswana's internationally traded currency, do the bookshops offer material published in Nairobi and Harare alongside that published in Botswana and South Africa.

But despite all this, the obstacles are not, in fact, insuperable. Determined academics can and do publish, sometimes forming their own companies to do so. The radical libertarian Faculty of Law in Dar es Salaam maintains a flow of publications; new journals spring up, even if not all of them survive. Pampered Western academics can only admire these triumphs of perseverance, this urgency to communicate. Yet we get all too few chances to admire. Books published in Africa are seldom advertised or reviewed in Euro-American journals and few

Western libraries subscribe to African journals.

This review endeavours to draw attention to some of the material published in southern Africa over the last two years. It does so, admittedly, mainly in relation to the most flourishing of African academic publishing settings, Zimbabwe, where a large English-speaking audience, educational development, and the competition between established and new publishers have combined to stimulate a relatively large flow of books.

One of the impulses towards publication in southern Africa is to set the record of struggle straight, to name the heroes. I found this in Zambia, where nearly 30 years after the events authors are anxious to claim honour for unsung heroes of the independence struggle. I was shown an unpublished manuscript which posed the question: 'Who were the first stone-throwers?' and allocated the honour to the people of Chisanzu village. Nephas Tambo's *The Lilian Burton Killing*, published by Apple Books, describes his book as 'just the beginning of the work in compiling the full list of freedom fighters . . . I promise to unravel more facts and names and add them to the book as they become available'. In his foreword Hyden Dingiswayo Banda gives this listing a contemporary significance:

I am delighted to record that UNIP, the Party which Nephas tirelessly helped to build to what it is today, won independence on 24 October 1964 and is still in control. The 64 million dollar question, however, remains: Is the Party after dedicated and devoted supporters or mere numbers? Put it another way: Is it after quality or quantity, conviction or convenience? . . . Whatever happens, the Party will do well to keep a list of its stalwarts.

An ironic note to this foreword records that in the October 1983 General Election both Banda and Tambo lost their seats. This leaves a tantalizing ambiguity hovering over the book. Is it an attempt to remind the young of the revolutionary legitimacy of those who run the party and the state? Or is it the lament of a defeated Old Guard, replaced by technocrats and managers?

No such ambiguity hovers over the books arrayed in the bookstall at Jan Smuts airport in South Africa, where I was compelled to spend some hours while waiting for a connection to Botswana. The bookstall is exclusively devoted to accounts of the Rhodesian war of the 1970s. There one can buy in paperback narratives of the heroic deeds of the Selous Scouts or the SAS, and more expensively, accounts of the heroism of the white population of Umtali under bombardment, or picture-books illustrating how to deal with land-mines. These all carry an unequivocal message for South Africans: that heroism is not