

## Reviews

**Africa Now: people, policies and institutions** edited by STEPHEN ELLIS  
Oxford, James Currey; Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann; 1996, in association  
with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS), The Hague. Pp. xxii + 293.  
£35.00/\$60.00. £12.95/\$25.00 paperback.

Written by 21 African and European scholars, this comprehensive and timely analysis of African politics, economics, and society is divided into 14 thematic chapters. There is no doubt that the continent is undergoing a profound transformation, and most contributors seem to agree that although external forces are partly to blame for many of the things that have gone wrong, Africans themselves bear most of the responsibility for the current malaise. There also appears to be general agreement that the weakness of the state is the major source, as well as a consequence, of many ongoing stresses and strains, and that Africa's extreme economic difficulties engender social crises, contribute to massive movements of refugees, and create crime and hopelessness, especially among Africa's youth. The end of the cold war was partly responsible for Africa's increasing marginalisation as the international community hastened its retreat from the continent. Almost concurrently the end of *apartheid* helped to focus attention on the problems of those African régimes that have been exacerbated by widespread corruption, ineffective leadership, and the 'softness' of the state.

*Africa Now: people, policies and institutions* is intended, as Stephen Ellis explains, 'to be as broad as possible in orientation' (p. xiv), albeit divided for the sake of convenience into three sections: States and Citizens, Institutions and Politics, and Africa in the World. That the continent's past continues to influence its present in a variety of ways is strongly supported by several contributors. Toyin Falola, for example, examines how the pre-colonial state and systems of political economy have played a significant rôle in contemporary African society and politics, as has the spread of Islam and European colonisation. Many African leaders use the past to legitimate their behaviour, much to the detriment of their people, and their efforts to create strong states have been hampered by ethnicity. Solofo Randrianja argues that ethnicity tends to encourage claims in favour of particular groups rather than universal values of human rights and quality among citizens. Despite the initial enthusiasm about spreading democracy in Africa, domestic realities have limited the realisation of this objective. In fact, Tiébilé Dramé believes that popular movements in support of democratisation have intensified the crisis of confidence between society and the state.

There is evidence that underdevelopment is linked to the growth of violence and the widespread disregard for human life. By examining the lives of members of gangs in Senegal, Algeria, and elsewhere, Ali El-Kenz effectively demonstrates that there is a direct relationship between poverty and violence by youths. They have found it relatively easy to obtain weapons in the absence or weakness of the state. Similarly, Lilia Labidi shows how the demographic

explosion, brought about partly by some social welfare improvements, has resulted in bleak prospects for the younger generation. She contends that in some societies a trade in human lives and organs is accepted as the ultimate solution for people in economic adversity. Developments in Nigeria, Rwanda, Congo/Zaire, and elsewhere underscore not only the decay of many African states, but also demonstrate a widespread disregard for human life and fundamental rights.

Several authors examine the rôle of the state and the private sector in economic development. Janine Aron, for example, stresses the need for effective constitutions to provide accountability of government economic policies to the people, and to signal the credibility of African leaders to a world that is now more competitive than in the past. As she correctly notes, revolutions in information and communications technology have far-reaching consequences for Africa. Apart from the inability of many régimes to develop institutions capable of dealing with these changes, the prospects for sustained economic growth are not encouraging given such low rates of domestic savings, stagnating private investment, and heavily indebted public sectors. The weakness of fragile states, their adoption of policies hostile to foreign capital, and their endemic corruption, as well as the lack of confidence exhibited by many inhabitants in their rulers, combine to reduce Africa's ability to be competitive in global markets.

While the era of structural adjustment has resulted in greater awareness of the need to liberalise the private sector, especially agriculture, many serious impediments to economic progress remain. Some governments continue to pay agricultural producers lower prices than they can obtain by selling their products across the border, while regional integration, widely regarded as an instrument of economic development, seems to have failed when compared to comparable efforts in Asia and Latin America. But Colin McCarthy is hopeful that democratic governance in Southern Africa will facilitate economic integration in a region with a long history of economic co-operation. However, sustainable growth will require competitiveness in world markets.

*Africa Now* might profitably have included a chapter on conflicts and their resolutions. Although several authors briefly discuss various disputes and clashes, realities in Africa demand greater attention to widespread violence. Nevertheless, this comprehensive approach to contemporary African politics and society must be warmly welcomed. Here is a well-written and straightforward presentation of important information about events that have taken place in the continent, especially since the end of the cold war. Its readability makes it suitable for upper-level undergraduate courses, while politicians and decision-makers in both the public and private sectors, as well as people in business and workers in non-governmental organisations, will find the factual details and careful analyses very useful.

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**Forests and Livelihoods: the social dynamics of deforestation in developing countries** by SOLON L. BARRACLOUGH and KRISHNA B. GHIMIRE

Basingstoke and London, Macmillan Press, in association with UNRISD; New York, St. Martin's Press; 1995. Pp. xiv + 259. £14.99 paperback.

Growing concerns about deforestation in developing economies have led to a great increase in studies into its causes and strategies for prevention. But as Solon Barraclough and Krishna Ghimire have recently shown, 'International initiatives to protect forests and livelihoods are doomed to be ineffective if they do not confront the fundamental social issues generating deforestation and non-sustainable inequitable growth' (p. 237). Their book ought to be read by all those interested in the social processes influencing the use and management of forests, not least because it is carefully based on case-studies in Brazil, Central America, Nepal, and Tanzania.

*Forests and Livelihoods: the social dynamics of deforestation in developing countries* reminds us that there is considerable confusion concerning the nature and extent of deforestation. The authors take this to include: '1. Depletion of forest biomass, not just tree cover. 2. Degradation of forests in all ecological zones, not only in tropical areas. 3. Conversion of forests to other land uses (both permanent and periodic), as well as the serious deterioration of the quantity and productivity of existing forests' (p. 11). This definition, which is broader than that adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), will help to impress policy-makers that deforestation is worse than originally thought. The authors rightly point out that there can be no clear distinction made between the ecological and social impacts of deforestation, and that the seriousness of the damage can be expressed in terms of its potential social costs.

The impact of colonialism is assessed in ch. 2, 'Deforestation in Historical Perspective'. Large-scale plantations for sugar, coffee, tea, and/or cocoa led to direct deforestation in both Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. In South and South-East Asia, however, the Europeans found it profitable to extract surpluses from traditional cultivators through land taxes and price relationships manipulated by market monopolies, and this indirectly contributed to deforestation. The introduction of bimodal agrarian structures with limited public support for subsistence agriculture resulted in the creation of landless peasants, and the rôle of hierarchical social relations in the depletion of natural resources is rightly emphasised. While other scholars have made similar analyses, the strength of this narrative lies in its ability to provide a comparison of the effects of European expansionism across a variety of social settings.

The findings of the field studies on the processes and impact of deforestation are discussed in ch. 3, where linkages are suggested with regional, national, and global social processes and institutions. In the Brazilian Amazon, the authors argue that clearance for cattle pastures and sometimes for crops was often preceded by commercial logging, and that the construction of roads and dams, as well as mining and urban growth, have also directly generated some deforestation. In Tanzania, declining agricultural prices and public policies

had harmful consequences, while government programmes of grouping dispersed rural people in villages in the early 1970s had a negative effect on forest management because it disrupted long-established social systems. The expansion of cash crops did not usually lead to massive expulsion of peasants from their holdings, because customary tenure systems assured everyone in the clan access to land.

The responses of local communities to deforestation are described in ch. 4, which identifies the need for concerted efforts to create alternative job opportunities in rural areas plagued by land scarcity. This is in contrast with the majority of studies which favour land reforms as a solution to forest depletion. There is no doubt that rural industrialisation can succeed, as also shown, for example, by W. P. M. Viverberg, 'Non-Farm Self-Employment and Informal Sector in Cote d'Ivoire: a test of categorical identity', in *Journal of Developing Areas* (Macomb, IL), 24, 1990, pp. 523–42, and by Kwasi Boahene, 'Rural Initiatives and Natural Resource Management in Ghana', Utrecht, 1997. Migration from densely settled rural areas can help reduce pressures on local lands and forests, as well as provide valuable remittances, but Barraclough and Ghimire argue that this strategy could lead to environmental damage because those left behind, often the elderly and the infirm, cannot effectively pursue sustainable agricultural practices such as terracing, tree planting, and water conservation. However, 'Organised collective efforts of forest-dependent local people to defend decaying livelihoods, and to construct improved ones, can be an important ingredient in altering the dynamics of deforestation in developing countries' (pp. 132–3).

Chs. 5–7 discuss opportunities for sustainable forest use, including national and international initiatives, and critically examine, among other things, the rôle of protected areas and reserves, agro-forestry, and land-use planning in forest areas. The authors make some challenging observations. By involving local people in the management of protected areas, the authorities could offer employment to local communities, while reducing the cost of policing. It should be noted, however, that village task forces have been successful in controlling logging and related effects – for example, in certain Ghanaian villages – where living standards are already high and there are alternative opportunities for work. Peasant ignorance about environmental risks is not considered as a hindrance to forest conservation.

Whilst the community-based approach emphasised in the book can contribute to the better management of resources, it must be borne in mind that the increasing poverty and disintegration of households makes it imperative for local and external systems of knowledge to be integrated. Powerful 'outsiders', such as corporate officials, large-scale farmers, saw-millers, and land speculators, are thought to be usually less aware of the importance of the local environment than the rural inhabitants. Certainly, evidence from Africa suggests that peasants will care a great deal about environmental problems if these directly affect their survival.

More micro-level data about efforts taken by rural households in dealing with deforestation might have been sought by the authors. Their lengthy anthropological analysis of the various processes of deforestation, and their seemingly objective treatment of such phenomena, at times made me wonder

where they stand on the critical strategies that ought to be adopted by African régimes. Moreover, it is difficult to identify the principal causes of deforestation if all the interrelated factors are equally emphasised. It might have been more beneficial if their book had been organised along themes rather than in a chronological perspective which tends to blur the key issues. Lessons have been learned in West Africa that given limited resources to address all related problems, a firm understanding of what needs to be done first and foremost is essential if programmes to boost innovations in forest management are to be successfully introduced.

Despite these criticisms, Barraclough and Ghimire must be thanked for their contribution to the current debate on sustainable development, especially since this is likely to be particularly useful for all those interested in the socio-economic complexities of the processes underlying deforestation. Planners, policy-makers, and practitioners can obtain information from *Forests and Livelihoods* that may help them not only to take appropriate decisions but also to adopt the most effective strategies to protect forests and advance the livelihoods of the inhabitants.

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**The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa** by ANNETTE SEEGBERS

London, I.B. Tauris Academic Studies, 1996. Pp. viii + 356. £34.50.

This book offers a major contribution to our understanding of the making of the South African state, stands at the forefront of studies of the South African military, and provides a convincing outline of the structure and rôle of the security forces leading up to and during the transition to the present democracy. It is by far the most comprehensive work on its subject, and will remain a major source on this most fascinating of political processes for years to come. It is compulsory reading for those who consider themselves specialists on South Africa, and it should become a standard reference on all respectable reading lists dealing with the politics of the sub-continent. Yet at the same time, written about monstrous things and deeds, the book is also something of a monster itself – but of this, later.

The first great virtue of *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa* is its comprehensiveness, notably in tracing the military from its informal origins under the Dutch East India Company, through the Boer War to the post-1910 creation of the Union Defence Force (UDF), and thenceforward to the formation of the South African Defence Force (SADF), and eventually to the establishment of the SA National Defence Force under the present democratic order. However, as Annette Seegers states in her conclusion, her objective is not to ‘periodize state development’ but to ‘relate state development to military factors and forces’ (p. 291). Consequently, the periods identified, the state of Union (1910–48), the state of *Apartheid* (1948–61), the Republican state (1961–86), and the Transitional state (1986–94), are used to organise the discussion, yet they do not identify ‘islands

with remote connections', for rather 'continuities dominate breaks' (p. 291). Monopolisation of force, she argues, is a case in point, for the *Apartheid* and Republican states were as committed to it as the state of Union. But interestingly, she goes on, the biggest break in the state's development – between 1986 and 1994 – occurs when the monopoly of force is broken: the homelands have access to guns, the armed struggle imports weapons to the unenfranchised, and the promotion of militarism by the state encourages whites to build arsenals.

The second great virtue is the highly skilful manner in which the author draws the large numbers of continuities she identifies together into a coherent web. She sets the scene in the first chapter, when *inter alia* she proposes that, in the early years of Union, the answer to the problem of security for the new state lay in its possession of superior firepower. Consequently, the fears of a Native Uprising did not require a political solution. Likewise, there was a blurring of police and military structures and rôles. The South African Police (SAP) were constituted in 1913, but the South African Mounted Rifles (which remained controlled by the Defence establishment) initially retained responsibility for maintaining law and order in the rural areas. Whereas policing implies use of minimum force against citizens, the state did not hesitate to deploy maximum force against its Native subjects.

Subsequently, Seegers notes that the continuous close association, if not imitation, of the military by the police meant that it was impossible to ignore the rôle of the SAP, which she had not intended to cover at the outset of her project. She observes how the military's involvement in quelling strikes on the mines (in 1907, 1913, 1914, and 1922) was to be backed up by the passage of anti-dissent laws and justifications of undemocratic behaviour by the state. It was all to become distressingly predictable down the years. It was not long, for instance, before a military-style operation was used to close down a strike by Clement Kadalie's Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union in East London in 1931.

Central to Seegers' story is her outline of the institutional and sociological development of the armed forces. Again, many will be drawn to coverage of the pre-1948 years. This saw, notably, the departure from the UDF of what she terms Afrikaner 'Republicans' during World War II; yet the UDF was none the less still 70 per cent composed of Afrikaners in 1945. Indeed, she cites a contemporary analysis which indicated that soldiers swung 11 key constituencies to Jan Smuts and against the Nationalists in the election of 1943. How could they not vote for a cause when by their involvement in the war they were openly proclaiming their willingness to die for it? Correspondingly, Seegers argues that the personnel policy pursued by the National Party (NP) with regard to the security forces after their victory in 1948 was not 'Africanisation' (for they were overwhelmingly staffed by Afrikaners already), but 'Republicanisation' (p. 94). Even so, this latter process occurred considerably more slowly in the police because (and this is a theme throughout) the poor pay and conditions in the SAP severely affected its status.

The richness of her text defies adequate summary in a review. But there are numerous details and insights which illuminate her broader themes; how, for

instance, the explosion of a bomb in Johannesburg railway station in 1964 by the African Resistance Movement, via the luckless John Harris (executed for his pains), enabled the state to treat white radicals – deemed ‘the most dangerous of all opponents’ (p. 130) – with a thoroughgoing ruthlessness. But more importantly, the event led to concerted infighting between the different intelligence agencies, and subsequently to the ascendancy of the police Security Branch, led by General Hendrik Van Den Bergh, over Military Intelligence. It also led to the creation of the State Security Advisory Council, as well as a new national intelligence agency, the Bureau of State Security, to which all other agencies were obliged to send information.

This leads on to what will probably attract most readers to the book – Seegers’ immensely detailed account of the state and its security apparatus from the 1970s onward. She has published much of this information previously, not least in this *Journal*, and the outline of this story is by now fairly familiar: how the National Security Council was formed in 1972; how the failure of the SAP to contain strikes and insurrection in Namibia, as well as closer to home, drew the army into counter-insurgency; how clandestine actions by the African National Congress (ANC) required covert actions in response and a massive extension of surveillance by the state, and so on. Information is provided about the development and working of the National Security Management System, and the battles between the different elements of the security apparatus. And whereas the ‘Racial Utopia’ of the *apartheid* period never gave wholesale licence to the security forces to deal with opponents mercilessly, the shift to ‘Total Onslaught’ did do so. Only extreme measures could prevent the demise of the state, but they bred fanaticism, and provided the ideological paradigm for the growth of operations by the so-called Third Force. One crucial question was never asked: ‘What will we resemble when we win?’

And so the author brings us to the Transitional state, which as noted above, she indicates as born in 1986 – and not in 1990, as many other analysts would claim. Accepting the broad notion that both sides of the conflict recognised the costs of continuing conflict and impending stalemate, she adds her own important gloss. The National Intelligence Service (NIS) made the running, possessing a longer-term perspective than the SADF, and as far as the NP Government was concerned, the battle was not between those who favoured politics rather than war, but over which agency should control the state *during* negotiations.

Success by the South African Defence Force in the late 1980s in Namibia delayed negotiations, but by 1989 the SADF saw these through the filter of its experiences in Angola and Namibia. By now, for instance, democracy had been conceded in Namibia, so the SADF no longer saw itself as opposing majority rule. The issue had become how to manage political change. The only difference after 2 February 1990, when F. W. De Klerk announced that the ANC and other political organisations had been unbanned, was that negotiations were now carried on openly rather than covertly. Seegers goes on to outline her view of how the President proceeded to weaken military influence, how he tried to control the various security agencies, and how he was impeded by a strong current within the SADF and its covert associates,

who saw 'third force' action as a necessary accompaniment of the negotiation process.

There is no doubt that Seegers takes us very much further than most other writers into the belly of the beast. Her work is certainly authoritative, and its influence and reputation will deservedly be long-lasting. Yet the devil is in the detail, and oftentimes, how very detailed it is! For instance, when dealing with the SADF's engagement in Angola/Namibia, Seegers provides a minutely detailed account of the various campaigns. These, doubtless, will be of value to particular specialists, but especially without the inclusion of any maps, will move beyond the patience of the average reader.

More serious is that although the author pursues broad themes throughout the book, there is a remarkable absence of an explicit theoretical framework. To be sure, the telling is rigorously organised, and each chapter has a summary. Yet, if overall, the story is about the militarisation of the South African state (too simple, admittedly), there is no systematic treatment of that process, although the liberal idea of civilian, parliamentary, and constitutional control of the military permeate without being allowed to become too explicit. The scene is set by chapter one's opening words: 'The focus of this chapter is on the period between formation of a South African Union in 1910 and 1924'. Bang! Wallop! Straight into it, without even the faintest nod in the direction of an organising idea. Worse, the conclusion is little more than a gathering together of chapter summaries, and alas, does not venture to speculate upon future continuities and the potential impact of the military on the democratic state. All this is a shame, and a surprise, not least because it is well known amongst her peers in South Africa that Seegers has a formidable grasp of theory.

Despite such grumbles, the author must be congratulated for a remarkable work. The research department of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will have a daunting task to better this in its eventual reports.

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**Namibia. The Wall of Silence: the dark days of the liberation struggle**

by SIEGFRIED GROTH, translated from the German by HUGH BEYER  
Wuppertal, Germany, Peter Hammer Verlag, 1995, distributed by David Philip Publishers, Claremont, South Africa. Pp. 206. R83.00.

**The Question of Namibia** by LAURENT C. W. KAELE

Basingstoke and London, Macmillan; New York, St. Martin's Press; 1996.  
Pp. xii + 218. £37.50/\$59.95.

Books and articles on Namibia are beginning to overshadow work done elsewhere in Southern Africa, with the notable exception of South Africa. To some extent this reflects the continuation, albeit in a different format, of the wide range of studies sponsored by interest groups which followed the course of the Namibian war of independence. Some of that literature, as well as the tracts produced by bodies enjoying the support of the National Party, was highly partisan and strident, satisfying the normative appetites of selected



audiences who saw hope and gloom in different proportions, depending upon whose ox was gored. Scientific rigour was occasionally abandoned in this rush to publication.

Now is the time for reflection and perhaps even iconoclastic reformulation, although it will not be possible to write much that is definitive until all the relevant documents become accessible. The National Archives of Namibia is attempting to enlarge its store of records which some South African officials regard as the private preserve of their state. Such an impediment, however, has not stopped Namibians from sponsoring a collection of materials as part of the Rev. Michael Scott oral records project, which began in 1985. The South Africans, in turn, have started to concentrate their attention on the military historiography of what they term the 'bush war' in Namibia. But still vast perceptual gulfs separate the two sets of research agendas, including, for example, the highly emotive May 1978 South African Defence Force (SADF) airborne raid on a camp for refugees – or was it a base for guerrillas? – at Cassinga in southern Angola. That semantic fog has yet to clear.

Two recent books complement one another, enriching our understanding of the decolonisation process in South West Africa, and alerting us to some of the unsolved mechanisms by which states arise out of a combination of violence, diplomacy, and popular mobilisation. When we come to assess the rôle, nature, and effectiveness of long liberation struggles, as Norma J. Kriger has demonstrated in her classic study, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: peasant voices* (Cambridge, 1992), there is evidence that many Africans were well aware of, and often internalised, the calculus of sloth and enthusiasm with respect to ministering to the needs of the armed fighters in their areas, and that the latter did not enjoy as much grassroots support as some of their academic partisans have claimed.

*Namibia. The Wall of Silence: the dark days of the liberation struggle* attempts to describe and explain the disillusionment and alienation that frequently affect refugees. The Anglican, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic churches and missionaries played a significant and often intrusive part in the decolonisation of Namibia, as Peter H. Katjavivi (now Vice-Chancellor of the University of Namibia) and his colleagues Per Frostin and Kaire Mbuende revealed in their co-edited collection, *Church and Liberation in Namibia* (London and Winchester, MA, 1989). Despite the relevance of liberation theology for the declared aim of complete independence by the South West Africa People's Organisation, Pastor Siegfried Groth saw another side of the rhetoric which sullied the reputation of SWAPO; namely, the maltreatment of its adherents in their trans-border camps. A number of those who fled to Angola (especially) and Zambia were unaccounted for when Namibians returned in 1989 under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, working in co-operation with the UN Transition Assistance Group.

Groth's revelations, based upon his work with Namibians in exile, raise questions about the treatment meted out to those who fell out of favour with their SWAPO leaders in Angola, who were anxious about what they regarded as the infiltration of hostile agents into their communities. This was of particular concern after the devastating Cassinga raid which raised questions about the penetration of SWAPO by South Africans. Members of the SADF,

as well as the Selous Scouts in Southern Rhodesia, had engaged in a number of pseudo-operations, posing as members of the enemy in order to divert hatred away from the perpetrators and onto their foes. Such fears surfaced in Botswana, for example, and became institutionalised in the 1986 National Security Act, which was largely prompted by the 1985 SADF attack on Gaborone. Nagging questions still persist: are such practices and moral costs absolutely unavoidable in long drawn-out guerrilla warfare? and might they be mitigated in some manner or other? Hence the importance of the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and the fact that national reconciliation has become an acceptable concept in Namibia.

As the recent debates in the National Assembly in Windhoek have shown, the members of the opposition have taunted those in power about the sensitive issue of the SWAPO detainees. According to President Sam Nujoma – see Lucienne Fild’s report, ‘Detainee Conference Now Likely “Next Year”’, in *The Namibian* (Windhoek), 24 July 1996 – Pastor Groth’s work was inaccurate. The validity of such a statement needs to be determined by scholars, not least since the investigations carried out under the auspices of the UN Transition Assistance Group were inconclusive on this point. The controversy over the alleged mistreatment/disappearance of some Namibians while in exile was not resolved during the 1989 elections for the Constituent Assembly, as explained in Lionel Cliffe et al., *The Transition to Independence in Namibia* (Boulder, CO, and London, 1994), while SWAPO-leaning churches seemed confused, embarrassed, and somewhat apologetic and defensive about the issues raised by Groth – see Philip Steenkamp’s illuminating chapter on ‘The Churches’ in Colin Leys and John S. Saul et al., *Namibia’s Liberation Struggle: the two-edged sword* (London and Athens, OH, 1995), pp. 94–114.

In the 1989 elections SWAPO secured a majority of the votes cast, but not the needed two-thirds to achieve a position of hegemony within the political system. The drafting of the constitution, in the glare of international publicity, was more of an exercise in consensus-building than straight party-voting, and since then SWAPO has gained in electoral strength, with the opposition becoming fragmented and somewhat dispirited. The Namibian Defence Force, remarkably, is a product of the reconciliation of former enemies – as in Zimbabwe and South Africa – thanks, at least in part, to political engineering by a British military team. Yet the burden of SWAPO’s past in Angola has continued to blot the ruling party’s copybook, and the translation of Groth’s evidence into English – now the official language of Namibia – will remind SWAPO’s past and present patrons and detractors that the controversy has not been resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. The US Government’s belated payment of reparations to those Japanese-Americans who were interned in the United States during World War II illustrates how long and drawn out acts of political contrition can take.

*The Question of Namibia* is more a work of synthesis than research based upon field work, and Laurent Kaela has provided essential background information for those who would like to know more about the prolonged search for a settlement to a regional dispute that involved the international community. This political scientist at the University of Zambia has focused on the goal of

self-determination to guide readers through the maze of conference diplomacy and political rhetoric that became such a prominent feature of the long struggle for independence. He is particularly helpful in explaining how and why SWAPO and South Africa saw and used different versions of the self-determination icon. Officials in Pretoria interpreted the application of 'separate development' (the sanitised term for *apartheid*) to South West Africa as the proper way to give the inhabitants their just deserts. Yet the whites never sub-divided their patrimony among the three different Afrikaans/English/German-speaking ethnic groups, and the logical inconsistencies and economic asymmetries in South Africa's strategy were there for all to see.

Kaela writes with insight, grace, and restraint that will appeal to general readers, as well as to those who are particularly interested in international law and diplomacy. His book is satisfactorily documented, and contains as many as 14 appendices, as well as six tables, a map, a useful bibliography of works in English, a list of acronyms, and an index. Groth's volume includes details of German and English language sources, two maps, a list of acronyms, and an extremely valuable chronology of nineteenth and twentieth century Namibian history.

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**Angola: promises and lies** by KARL MAIER

London, Serif, 1996. Pp. 224. £12.99/\$19.95 paperback.

Media coverage of Africa has often been criticised for its superficiality, its lack of historical perspective, and its Eurocentric or ideological bias. While this recent book reflects many of these journalistic tendencies (including the American preoccupation with anti-communism), it does provide a lively, colourful, and occasionally moving account of the lives of ordinary Angolans trying against all odds to survive the deprivations of war – above all, the poverty, hunger, disease, and displacement. For this unusual focus on the *povo* rather than the *chefes*, Karl Maier learned the national language (although few rural people speak Portuguese), and visited various outlying parts of the country not often frequented by the foreign correspondents based in the capital city, Luanda. After a decade of such reporting, beginning in 1986, he had accumulated a sufficient collection of anecdotes and stories of human interest to form the basis of his book. And told as it is mostly in the present tense, it retains much of the immediacy of his dispatches to *The Independent* (London) and the *Washington Post*.

However, Maier appears to have relied upon the reports of other journalists or US official sources for many of the incidents related in *Angola: promises and lies*. For example, he claims that the ruling *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA), 'supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba', drove its rivals – Jonas Savimbi's *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) and the now defunct *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA) – out of Luanda 'on the eve of independence from Portugal in November 1975' (p. 14). But in fact, this assault, which was in retaliation for the (unmentioned)

FNLA invasion from Zaïre organised by the United States and South Africa, occurred before the arrival of the Cuban troops, as Ryszard Kapuscinski, a unique foreign eyewitness of the battle for Luanda in July 1975, confirms in his highly acclaimed *Another Day of Life* (London, 1987), which appears in Maier's bibliography.

Also evidence of the author's reliance upon unsubstantiated reports are his claims that the South Africans 'admitted for the first time' in 1987 that they had intervened in Angola 'to save UNITA from annihilation' (p. 25), which they had also admitted after their 1985 invasion; that the MPLA régime had squandered an alleged (and unbelievable) US\$100 million on an unfinished mausoleum for Angola's first President, Agostinho Neto (p. 36); and that UNITA, instead of demobilising in accordance with the 1991 Peace Accords, built up 'its own special security force' because the Government had created an 'anti-riot police' (popularly known as the '*ninjas*'), also with 'numbers up to 20,000' (p. 58). But this force was 'created' (in the sense of trained) by the Spanish, partly in anticipation of the security requirements for the Papal visit in June 1992, and its 'numbers' at that time were a mere 1,500, as the UN Special Representative in Angola, Margaret Joan Anstee, revealed in her memoir, *Orphan of the Cold War: the inside story of the collapse of the Angolan peace process, 1992-3* (Basingstoke and London, 1996), p. 74.

While such errors or misconceptions are not likely to offend or even be noticed by most readers in the outside world, Angolans already suspicious or resentful of Western media coverage of their country would tend to regard them as further evidence of biased reporting. This is particularly the case for American journalists covering Angola because Washington had been supporting the UNITA rebels for nearly two decades, beginning with the abortive military invasion ordered by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1975, continuing with President Ronald Reagan's 'dirty wars' of the 1980s, and concluding with the support of the George Bush Administration until 1993. Consequently, these journalists have faced a real dilemma: should they follow the policy line of their government, however foolish, immoral, and counterproductive it might be? or should they condemn this and thereby risk official ostracism, with the accompanying loss of the privileges according to the mainstream media?

One way out of this dilemma, since any journalist with professional integrity would be hard-pressed to defend a rebel movement notorious for its gross human rights abuses, was to resort to the time-honoured practice of 'balanced journalism' which, in this context, meant declaring 'a plague upon both of your houses'. This was apparently the way out chosen by Maier, since he never misses an opportunity to criticise the MPLA (an American 'enemy' in the anti-communist crusade), thereby taking the heat off Savimbi and making UNITA appear only as bad as the MPLA, or only slightly worse. For example, he complains that in the 'standard MPLA charge' that UNITA restarted the war because it lost the elections, there was no hint that the victorious party could be 'even the slightest bit magnanimous' (p. 131).

Also a question of 'balance' is Maier's account of the crucial three-day battle for Luanda beginning 31 October 1992 based, as much of it is, on an interview with Savimbi's protégé, Abel Chivukuvuku, two years after

the event. In addition, the author was in Mozambique when the fighting broke out, and only returned to Luanda in time to count the bodies in the cemetery – allegedly victims of an excess of *poder popular* enraged by UNITA's lawlessness and unprovoked aggression – and dispatch his 'scoop' to London and Washington. Nevertheless, he dismisses as 'government propaganda' the possibility that UNITA intended to stage a coup on the grounds that 'only UNITA offices, residences and hotels', from which its supporters had fired rockets and grenades at other people's property, were 'destroyed' (p. 100). But UNITA soldiers had also attacked police headquarters, blown up the broadcasting tower, shot up the airport, sabotaged the armouries, and were poised to strike only 30 kms outside of Luanda. In addition, UNITA forces had already occupied most of the countryside, wrecked government installations, and killed countless MPLA officials and supporters in the provinces.

Also missing from Maier's book is any explanation for the tragedies encountered when he interviewed the victims at markets, refugee camps, missions, and hospitals. Who was responsible for their misery? Who benefited from inflicting such harm, and who kept the violence flowing for some 20 years? Unless such fundamental questions are at least posed, and considered in historical perspective, the Angolan conflict remains yet another example of the horrors of war, and the African propensity for engaging in them. But to do so would have upset the 'balanced account' praised by a UNITA publicist (Sousa Jamba) who complained in *The Times Literary Supplement* (London), 3 January 1997, p. 15, that most books on Angola tended to be 'highly partisan' because they 'usually blamed UNITA or its leader Jonas Savimbi for the enormous hardships the 10 million Angolans have endured'.

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**State of Emergency: crisis in Central Africa, Nyasaland, 1959–1960**

by COLIN BAKER

London, I. B. Tauris Academic Studies, 1997. Pp. ix + 299. £39.50.

Despite the debate on when it all started, there is wide agreement on the milestones in Britain's policy of withdrawal from Africa over the two post-war decades. They include, for instance, Arthur Creech Jones's 1947 package-deal in the Colonial Office (CO) and Harold Macmillan's Cabinet call in 1957 for a credit-and-loss balance sheet of Empire, culminating in his steering of Britain's interests towards Europe. Within each territory, too, certain defining events are readily recognised: the CO's reaction to and the aftermath of the 1948 riots in the Gold Coast and the constitutional breakdown of the Nigerian Cabinet of Ministers in 1953; and moving from West to East, the abandonment of multi-racialism in Tanganyika and the constitutional consequences of Mau Mau in Kenya. In Central Africa, it was the Monckton Commission which ultimately put *finis* to the ill-fated Central African Republic, while in

constituent Nyasaland it was the repercussions of the Devlin Report which, in the same year as the Fairn Committee revelations about conditions at the Hola prison camp in Kenya, concentrated the minds of British parliamentarians on Africa to a degree arguably unknown since the Boer War, and not encountered again until the Nigerian civil war of 1967–9.

*State of Emergency: crisis in Central Africa, Nyasaland, 1959–1960* is a superbly researched and exciting narrative of the colonial administration's interpretation of the crisis caused by the fateful decision of the Governor, Sir Robert Armitage, on 3 March 1959 to declare a state of emergency in Nyasaland, and the subsequent condemnation by Mr Justice Devlin that here was, however temporarily, a 'police state' – a stricture never pronounced on any British-governed territory before, not even over the Amritsar massacre of 1919.

The sequential story of the 'murder plot', Operation Sunrise and the detention of the leaders of the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC), the Report of the Nyasaland Commission of Inquiry, the angry debates in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and the Lancaster House constitutional conference, furnish an outline well enough known to historians of the end of Empire in Africa to require no revisiting here. It is the middle moments of the story, from the appointment of the Devlin Commission on 24 March 1959 (only E. T. Williams among the Cabinet's four first choices of Lord Morton, Sir Evan Jenkins, and Sir Donald MacGillivray, was eventually appointed), to P. Wyn-Harris's resolute refusal to sign the Report as first drafted, and on to Macmillan's stormy evening in Government House, Zomba, on 25 January 1960, which present the essence of Colin Baker's narrative (and half the whole book).

Some of the author's revelations are as breathtaking as the ruthlessness of his research, providing fresh insights and data on the Emergency. Among the conspicuous examples of what now emerges as proven fact are the details of the Commission's *modus operandi*, and the unconcealed hostility between Armitage as Governor and the new Secretary of State, Iain Macleod ('boorish', 'aggressive', and displaying 'cold indifference'), who had replaced Alan Lennox-Boyd. There is, too, the account of the British Government's high-powered weekend working party at Chequers, convened to draft a despatch from the Governor which would accompany the publication of the Devlin Report. Inevitably, the *damnosa hereditas* phrase 'police state' loomed large in the meeting, particularly from the incensed Armitage. Fresh light, too, is thrown on the Colonial Office's sacrifice of his Chief Secretary, C. W. F. Footman, which must have left the Governor then – as it still does the reader now – uncomfortably aware of just whose head was likely to roll next.

For all the concentration on the behaviour of the imperial *dramatis personae* throughout the period of the Protectorate's state of emergency, in both the Colonial Office and the territorial administration – and above all on the actions of the Governor – Baker salutarily and graphically reminds us that

behind all the events stands the short, mercurial figure of Banda, wearing dark spectacles, dressed in a British-tailored three-piece suit and carrying a fly whisk...determined, unbending, resolute yet, once the crisis had broken, patient – knowing that he could not fail to secure self-government for Nyasaland and secession from the Federation (p. ix).

The author wryly notes that Nyasaland's motto was *lux in tenebris*. His study amply confirms the paradox that Britain's smallest African territory ultimately generated one of its biggest problems – the story of Cinderella and the Godzilla.

Baker's dogged and meticulous scholarship are manifest in the fact that the notes, bibliography, and index amount to over 15 per cent of his book. The index, however, fails to measure up to modern-day requirements of scholarship, in that too often all it does is to list the pages where a character appears, without any attempt to supplement this by indicating the relevant event. The bald entries under Macmillan, Macleod, Lennox-Boyd, and Wyn-Harris – even Armitage himself – compare poorly with the more sophisticated and far more helpful entries under Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the NAC, or the Devlin Inquiry and Report. In one respect, however, the index has the edge over the text, for it at least identifies people by their initials, whereas the barrenness of Youens (p. 6), Finney (8), Footman (16), and even Jones (202) is of no help to the many readers unacquainted with the niceties of the *Nyasaland Staff List*.

*State of Emergency* is not only a first-class study of Colonial Office involvement and Protectorate administration, deeply researched and well crafted. It also reads like a cross between the best of investigative journalism, displaying a multitude of fresh evidence and original insights, and a new version of, say, the 1924 Mount Everest expedition. Even though the reader knows all along that Mallory and Irvine did not succeed, so riveting is the story that as it unfolds one cannot help feeling that there may perhaps, after all, in the end, just be a chance that the accident-prone (was there not unfortunate Cyprus before the fatal Nyasaland?) but compassionate Armitage will yet make it. But for him, too, the crevasse proved too deep, and, like the two Everesters, he was never 'seen' again. Like them, too, he nevertheless earned a place in the history books.

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**Oasi di italianità: la Libia della colonizzazione agraria tra fascismo, guerra e indipendenza, 1935–1956** by FEDERICO CRESTI  
Turin, Società Editrice Internazionale, 1996. Pp. xxxv + 298. L31,000.

The 1980s saw a proliferation of studies on Italian colonialism that covered, in particular, diplomatic, political, and military features. During that decade the debate amongst scholars became increasingly intense, with different approaches emerging, notably between those who consider Italian colonialism to have been the outcome of demographic and social pressures, and others who emphasise that this was primarily an expression of national prestige. Martin Clark claimed in *Modern Italy, 1871–1982* (London, 1984) that 'very few Italian historians wrote military or colonial history' (p. 6), and although this gap has been filled, some important aspects still warrant attention from academics. Hence the importance of a recent book by Federico Cresti.

*Oasi di italianità: la Libia della colonizzazione agraria tra fascismo, guerra e indipendenza, 1935–1956* opens with a preface by Salvatore Bono who, while recognising the important contribution made earlier by Claudio Segre (ed.), *Fourth Shore: the Italian colonization of Libya* (Chicago, 1974), reminds us that this Italo-American scholar's research was 'mainly based on Italian and foreign publications of that period'. For his study, Cresti has made extensive use of documents covering the demographic colonisation programme in Libya of the *Istituto nazionale fascista della previdenza sociale* (INFPS) – known as INPS, after the end of the fascist era – which began planning to participate in the settlement of Italians in their Mediterranean colony at the beginning of the 1930s, after the inhabitants had been 'pacified'.

Although Turkey abandoned Libya after one year of war, following the conclusion of the Lausanne Agreement in October 1912, Italian troops had to face fierce opposition from Libyan patriots. For nearly 20 years the colony was in a condition of instability until General Rodolfo Graziani captured and executed the main leader of the Libyan rebellion, 'Umar al-Mukhtar, in September 1931. New legislation for colonisation supported by the state had been promulgated in 1928 by Emilio De Bono, the governor of Libya, and in 1931 more than 50 per cent of the 220,000 hectares of colonial property was given in concessions, and by 1933 just over 500 of these supported about 7,500 members of 1,530 Italian families.

The share of Libyan land allocated to the INFPS at the end of 1935 was divided the following year into 110 farms that were nearly all allotted to Italian families. In 1937, after a visit from Benito Mussolini, the programme of colonisation was enlarged. Marshal Italo Balbo, probably the second most important figure of the fascist régime (and governor of Libya from 1934), launched a rural immigration scheme that would bring 20,000 Italians to the colony by the end of 1938. Although it was soon clear that such a project was too ambitious, hundreds of families applied for land concessions to settle in Libya, and the first six of Cresti's 15 chapters cover the period from 1935 to 1940 when their expectations of agrarian prosperity were not realised. Concurrently, Italian ambitions were being thwarted by the growing crisis in Europe.

Italy had begun to mobilise its armed forces during 1938, a year before the outbreak of World War II, but even so, it was not until 1940 that Mussolini decided to intervene on the side of Germany against France and Britain. Meanwhile, a programme of developments had been announced for Libya designed to exploit new lands, to create new settlements, and to absorb the vast private concessions that were in the hands of people such as Alessandro Chiavolini, who had been Mussolini's personal secretary. But in June 1940, two weeks after Italy joined the conflict, Italian anti-aircraft guns shot down Balbo's aeroplane by mistake, and following his death, in Cresti's words, 'the main engine of demographic colonisation' stopped. Farm productivity in Libya declined during the war between the nations of Europe; even spare parts for agrarian machines became increasingly rare, as did the generators necessary for pumping water.

As a consequence of the defeat of the Axis powers in North Africa, Libya was governed by the British Military Administration, which supported the



Italian colonists when their production was in danger, but did not commit itself to realising any improvements in existing agrarian structures. Given the uncertain future of the former Italian colonies, investments carried risks that could easily become losses. After the war, Italy tried to secure the return of the colonies it had before the advent of fascism: Eritrea, Somalia, and Libya. What happened was that although Italy only became responsible for the UN Trusteeship Administration of Somalia, even this proved to be an economic commitment that by the end of the 1940s it could not afford.

Nevertheless, the Government did not stop considering Libya as the natural and historically reserved place for the 'peaceful' expansion of the Italian labour force. Besides discovering different sources from those used by Segre, Cresti provides the first extensive study of the Italian presence in Libya following the end of World War II. Italian interests in the independent state were shaped by the treaty signed in October 1956 in Rome by the Italian Prime Minister, Antonio Segni, and the Libyan Prime Minister, Mustafa Ben Halim. Thereafter, the size of this 'Italian oasis' decreased constantly: by 1961, 68 per cent of the farms held by colonists had been sold to Libyans or abandoned, and by 1964 the Italian settlements had been restricted to approximately 120 agricultural families, a reduction of 97 per cent from 1942. By 1969, following Muammar Qaddafi's military coup, the Italian presence in Libya had virtually vanished.

*Oasi di italianità* reveals that colonisation was more a political commitment than an economic business. Prominent strategic and military interests were at the foundation of Italy's demographic policies for Libya in the late 1930s. After the end of World War II the Government felt the need to continue with various developments inherited from the fascist period, particularly as regards agrarian colonisation. Cresti emphasises that 'It was a consolidated position, at the beginning of the 1950s, that Italy had to stay in the country by any means' (p. 260). After the Kingdom's achievement of independence in 1951 the request for land by Libyans increased, while a growing number of Italian settlers decided to leave.

Cresti has made a significant contribution to the study of Italian colonialism and neo-colonialism, especially by focusing on the agrarian sector in order to obtain a better understanding of the policies that were pursued in Libya by Mussolini's régime. Yet he also gives a clear explanation of the attitudes taken by Italians after the collapse of fascism in dealing with their former colonies. And this is perhaps the main reason why Cresti's work ought to be warmly welcomed, not least since research into Italy's controversial neo-colonial era is still incomplete.

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**Les États-Unis et le Maroc: le choix stratégique, 1945–1959** by SAMYA EL MACHAT

Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996. Pp. 221. FF140.00 paperback.

**Les États-Unis et la Tunisie: de l'ambiguïté à l'entente, 1945–1959** by SAMYA EL MACHAT

Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996. Pp. 213. FF140.00 paperback.

**Les États-Unis et l'Algérie: de la méconnaissance à la reconnaissance, 1945–1962** by SAMYA EL MACHAT

Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996. Pp. 247. FF160.00 paperback.

The rôle played by the United States in the decolonisation of the Maghreb has been overlooked, save for a few exceptions, notably Elya N. Sangmuah, 'The United States and the French Empire in North Africa, 1946–1956: decolonization in the age of containment', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1989. A Tunisian historian has now closed the huge gap in scholarship on the subject in perhaps a conclusive way. In her trilogy, based on primary sources in France and America, Samya El Machat highlights the ambiguities, constraints, and shifts in American views and actions as regards North Africa since World War II.

El Machat has chosen to publish her research in three books despite discovering that similar contradictions and dilemmas characterised US policy towards each of the Maghreb nations. Whilst the American Government adopted an anti-colonialist attitude during 1942–3, an outlook inspired by Wilsonian idealism, it reverted to realism following the emergence of the Soviet Union as a superpower with an antithetical ideology. In other words, the United States was torn between two forces: idealism and the pre-eminence of the East-West confrontation. The Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian nationalists, eager to prove their anti-communism, hoped that the United States, the true world power, would support their cause by exerting pressure on France to grant them independence. France, for its part, expected no less than complete support from its ally in the defence of the 'Free World'. Although Washington was fully aware that Maghrebi nationalism was free of communist influence, it continued to support France's position in the region, notwithstanding claims to the contrary.

The author demonstrates painstakingly the predominance of American security concerns, as well as the unease about France's repressive policies, which had the potential of radicalising the nationalist movements in the Maghreb. Further, the US could ill afford alienating the emerging Arab-Asian group at the United Nations. Yet, despite the care taken to avoid any moves that would alienate its European ally, the United States was constantly accused by the French of betraying them. The truth, however, is that the Americans did not want to see a vacuum in North Africa. What they sought was to help France introduce reforms which would either attenuate the radical demands of the nationalists or help them – when it became inevitable – to obtain their autonomy within the Western camp. The paramount objective of Washington was to prevent the Soviets from gaining influence in the region.

It is possible to read any of these three volumes without sacrificing the

arguments offered in the others, because the objectives being pursued by the United States in each country were similar, namely: (i) to encourage the French to introduce reforms; (ii) to avoid the alienation of the nationalists without providing them with any tangible support; (iii) to prevent the Soviet Union or its perceived allies (e.g. Egypt) from making any advances in the region; and (iv) to make sure the nationalists gained 'maturity' before obtaining their autonomy within the context of future co-operation with France. El Machat's purpose in dividing her study was clearly predicated upon the necessity of analysing the peculiarity of each North African colony and the specific US interests in each.

*Les États-Unis et le Maroc: le choix stratégique, 1945–1959* explains why the strategic location of the Kingdom figured so highly in the calculations of the United States, whose primary goal was to keep its valuable military bases there. Although the French were annoyed by the contacts that the nationalists in their Protectorate were establishing with the Americans, the latter had no intention of supplanting France in Morocco despite all the accusations levelled against them. However, the United States progressively saw that decolonisation was inevitable, and therefore encouraged the French Government to prepare for that transition by introducing reforms and by creating the conditions for future franco-Moroccan co-operation. It was the procrastination in Paris that led Washington to stop aligning its policies automatically with those of its European ally, a strategy that allowed it to establish economic and military co-operation with post-independent Morocco.

*Les États-Unis et la Tunisie: de l'ambiguïté à l'entente, 1945–1959* reveals that US policy towards the decolonisation of Tunisia suffered from similar contradictions. How could Washington support the nationalists without alienating France, a critical ally in the containment of Soviet communism? The US dilemma was increased because of the well-founded conviction that the Tunisian leaders were fundamentally anti-communist. Further, the United States was persuaded that the nationalist movement was 'mature' enough to gain independence – albeit in a slow process and within the context of franco-Tunisian co-operation. But, despite abstaining at the United Nations rather than siding with France, Americans were far from being in opposition to their ally. US policy-makers were convinced that French presence in the Maghreb was necessary to prevent Soviet penetration. Their ideal solution was a negotiated settlement whereby France would introduce reforms and co-operate with the Tunisian nationalists. Moves towards granting autonomy were supported by Washington, and the anti-communism of the nationalist leaders 'paid off' by allowing Tunisia to establish strong relations, especially in the military domain, with the United States.

*Les États-Unis et l'Algérie: de la méconnaissance à la reconnaissance, 1945–1962* reminds us that the situation in a colony 'legally' part of France created a more complicated predicament for the United States. The anti-colonial war during 1954–62 was long and brutal, and the Algerian nationalists, unlike their counterparts in Morocco and Tunisia, did not elicit as much sympathy from Washington. Indeed, though the Americans did not believe, as did the French, that the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) was a communist organisation, they had hesitations about its leadership. French reservations

about US intentions in North Africa were strongest in Algeria, where a variety of links had been established with the nationalists. Indeed, for the French, here was the place where US loyalty had to be tested, especially as the intensification of the war was tarnishing their image.

Given the international pressures being put on the metropole to grant independence to Algeria, the French needed as much support as they could acquire. Their suspicions as regards the real intentions of the Americans were unfounded, since the option preferred by Washington was for the French to reach the same kind of successful compromise with the leaders of Algeria as they had with those of Tunisia and Morocco. The two newly independent nations and the FLN hoped in vain that the United States would put pressure on France to conclude an agreement with the Algerian nationalist movement, and Senator John F. Kennedy's critique of US neutrality in 1957 did little to change American policy towards the ongoing conflict. This was only ended when General Charles de Gaulle decided to move towards negotiations in order to grant Algerians their independence.

Samya El Machat has written an outstanding trilogy. True, her analysis would have been strengthened if she had examined, even in outline, the rôle played by the Soviet Union in the region – see my 'US and Soviet Policies towards France's Struggle with Anticolonial Nationalism in North Africa', in *Canadian Journal of History/ Annales canadiennes d'histoire*, 30, December 1995, pp. 439–66. She could also be criticised for not having shown the implications of Washington's support for France on US relations with post-independent Algeria. But, despite these shortcomings, she has provided a well-documented diplomatic history of US policies and actions which no serious student of the Maghreb can ignore.

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**Ethiopia: power and protest. Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century** by GEBRU TAREKE

Lawrenceville, NJ, and Asmara, Eritrea, The Red Sea Press, 1996.  
Pp. xxi + 272. £13.99 paperback.

This paperback edition of Gebru Tareke's account of three major peasant revolts is an unmodified re-issue of a book first published in 1991 by Cambridge University Press. It was reviewed in several scholarly journals and generally hailed as a major study of rural resistance in modernising Ethiopia. There can be no doubt that now, five years later, this meticulously researched and densely written work remains essential reading, not least in helping us to understand some of the antecedents of the régime that has been in power in Addis Ababa since May 1991. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) emerged during the 1940s in the same region as one of the revolts described by the author, and his epilogue entitled 'From Rebellion to Revolution?' reflects on the ascent since 1976 of this guerrilla movement from the north, with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) at its core. Some readers might expect to find an added assessment of the

record of the EPRDF-led Government – but Gebru has perhaps wisely refrained from such an endeavour, which is not really necessary in the context of his subject matter.

*Ethiopia: power and protest. Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century* is a methodologically and theoretically convincing study of uprisings by rural Africans who were challenging the social and political order, although in *all* three cases discussed, they acted under the guidance or instigation of other groups: threatened provincial élites or nobility, or rural bandits, or disgruntled civil servants and students. The Ethiopian peasants have been the subject of many publications from a socio-economic, agricultural, or ‘developmentalist’ point of view, but rarely in their rôle as active social agents. The author has obviously been influenced by the works of Eric J. Hobsbawm, Eric R. Wolf, Jeffrey M. Paige, James C. Scott, or Theda Skocpol, although he does not directly ‘test’ their theories.

Gebru’s interpretative and insightful approach is neo-Marxist and shows a keen eye to the complex interaction of cultural/ideological and material/infrastructural elements involved, notably class antagonisms, surplus extraction, ethno-regional differences, and the rôle of kinship, as well as symbolic factors. An underlying theme of his analysis is that the revolts could arise because of the incomplete and unsuccessful efforts at centralisation and economic and administrative modernisation which Emperor Haile Selassie had started, but which led to systemic contradictions in Ethiopian feudal-absolutist society.

Notable in the three revolts discussed was their lack of urban linkages, their roots in local problems, and their ‘non-revolutionary’ character that harped back to a restoration of *status quo ante*, before the state’s efforts to assert its authority in tax matters and administrative reforms. They were, in a sense, protests against the loss of local-regional autonomy, threatened by a government trying to centralise its administration (taxes, system of justice, political authority), while characterised by unscrupulous exploitation and incompetence at the local level, often by people imposed from outside the region or by a locally dominant ethnic group. The author, of course, discusses ethno-cultural identity and conflict (the so-called ‘nationality issue’), but does not believe that this explains why the peasants became mobilised so effectively, albeit linked with politico-economic and regional problems. He emphasises the lack of national integration, which contributed to the revolts not going beyond local confines, not least because of a lack of organisational capacity.

There were both similarities and differences. In Tigray (1943), the element of resistance by the local nobility, traditionally accustomed to autonomy within the Ethiopian polity, was strong. In Bale (1963–70), the religious and ethno-cultural differences, articulated sharply in the wake of the late nineteenth century conquest, were unique, as was intervention by the Somali state. In Gojjam (1968), perhaps the most authentic grass-roots revolt was more directed (in contrast to Tigray) against the local gentry. The failure of Haile Selassie’s régime – despite containing these rebellions by a combination of armed force and minor concessions – was shown in the underlying contradiction, revealed by all three revolts between the often rapacious and grossly unjust local or provincial governors and the rural population,

exploited in a predatory and often humiliating fashion. They were irreconcilably pitted against each other. Even if the Emperor ultimately might have wished for honest and non-corrupt governance, he failed to establish the preconditions for this during his long reign.

It is obviously fruitless to judge the revolts in terms of a moral 'good' versus what was 'bad', since this was not a fight between a completely depraved and evil government and a noble and just collection of peasants. Cruelty, looting, destruction of property, revenge actions of terror, and wanton killings were not exceptional features of the rebel movements (less so in Gojjam, however). There were also opportunists and traitors who suddenly went over to the régime in power. What Gebru describes is the violent political culture of Ethiopia in general, a country that harbours the paradox of having a well-developed and rich indigenous tradition of justice and law, but which has been flouted and travestied in an appalling manner during its problematic march to modernity under the régimes of the twentieth century.

Needless-to-say, some questions for further reflection remain. For instance, how and why did the peculiar combination of parties allied in the *Weyane* revolt emerge? The author mentions general background factors, as well as the tension between the leadership factions (from peasants, nobility, and bandit groups), but the precise causal sequence of events is perhaps not explained fully. The complex relations between the various ethnic groups (Tigray, Wajirat, Raya, Azebo) also need to be studied further. Although the information is equivocal there is reason to believe that the air support given to British forces still in Eritrea was not as vital as some scholars have suggested: without the 116 bombs dropped from the three planes, the Imperial army would have won anyhow, only it would have taken more time. It seems certain that the British over-estimated their own rôle.

The chapter on Gojjam is sub-titled 'a vendée revolt?', but the concept is nowhere elaborated, although the French precedent is known. This 16-month rebellion is yet another illustration of the substantial diversity between Ethiopian regions, even within what was seen as a largely Amhara-dominated, politico-cultural order of the old days: an exploited core-area refusing the predatory rule of an administration mainly based in the Shewa region. It may also show that *regional* identification, based on the original meaning of the Amharic word *behér*, was always more important than any other, though it sometimes coincided with ethnic or linguistic identification.

The most remarkable and important revolt described was undoubtedly in Bale. It simmered on for almost seven years, an example of what one would call nowadays a 'low-intensity' conflict: not a full-scale, intensive war, but a long drawn-out armed confrontation with relatively few casualties. Although generated by local, indigenous grievances (as in Tigray and Gojjam), the Bale revolt saw the decisive involvement of the Somali state, which provided military training, supplies, food, and weapons, thereby prolonging the conflict and not offering any constructive help towards a solution. It is not entirely clear whether this can be called a 'peasant revolt': the Arsi-Oromo may have been largely peasants, but the Boran-Oromo and Somali are mostly nomadic pastoralists, and this may have affected the nature and length of the revolt.

There is no doubt that the position of the central administration and its grip

on the country has been immensely strengthened since the fall of the Emperor in 1974, not least because of the virtual destruction of the landed gentry in Ethiopia after the decrees of the revolutionary régime in 1975. Land is no more a basis of power. This is hinted at by Gebru in his epilogue, and is probably why the present Government – contrary to expectations and to economic advice – has not instituted some system of private ownership of land (which is still the property of the state). The autonomy of action of the rural population has also been much reduced, the regional élites (of indigenous feudal nobility) who functioned as the local dominant class are gone, and no new groups have taken their place: there is no intermediary stratum. Moreover, the rôle of religious authorities, especially the Orthodox Church, has been greatly diminished.

Of course, the three guerrilla wars in Eritrea (1962–91), in Tigray and in parts of Oromo (1976–91), were prime examples of peasant-supported revolutionary movements against a repressive and exploitative central régime. But the Tigray and Eritrean rebellions (initially underestimated by Ethiopian leaders in Addis Ababa) took place in old core-areas of the Empire which had retained more autonomy than the conquered south, and where peasants still had some tactical leverage *vis-à-vis* a state that had not fully penetrated their life-world. Compared to the situation described in this book, the subsequent ideological incorporation and bureaucratisation of the countryside has progressed at a stunning pace: first under the *Derg* headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam, which by spreading its Marxist–Leninist principles and vocabulary, politicised the inhabitants to an unprecedented degree, and thereafter by the current EPRDF régime. But today's peasants in Ethiopia have been more co-opted within governmental structures, and their associations are continuing to function under official guidance or supervision, perhaps for their own benefit. Those in power at least claim to rule primarily in the name and interests of the peasants, while neglecting other, allegedly more 'privileged' classes or occupational strata. The supreme irony is that spokesmen at the national level have left the peasants with less autonomy of socio-cultural and political action than ever before.

The author may appear to be anachronistic in some passages – e.g. in judging the *Weyane* rebels to have had a low level of 'class consciousness' (p. 121) and lack of 'ideological clarity' (p. 123). He also tends to be overzealous in presenting various reasons to explain the underlying factors or causes – e.g. four are given for the revolts on p. 18, and then again at least four others on p. 22. But his overall presentation of the three revolts is very good and gives readers a rich insight into the historical and social complexities involved. He has made use of many interviews with protagonists, as well as a multitude of documents, although it is not always clear what those sources actually said, since they are more frequently interpreted than literally cited. It is likely that the Ethiopian archives contain even more materials that would enable us to understand better what was happening in the rural areas and their administration. Although Gebru has indeed unearthed much vital information, his book is probably not the last work on these revolts since other documents, including those in the Ethiopian Ministry of the Pen, may hopefully soon become accessible.

Nevertheless, *Ethiopia: power and protest* remains an excellent and very enriching contribution to our understanding of Ethiopian society and its dramatic processes of change, as well as a source for continued discussion of contemporary developments in the Horn of Africa.

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**Black Lions: the creative lives of modern Ethiopia's literary giants and pioneers** by REIDULF K. MOLVAER

Asmara, Eritrea, and Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1997. Pp. xix + 426. \$21.95 paperback.

**A Modern Translation of Kebra Nagast (The Glory of Kings)** compiled, edited, and translated by MIGUEL F. BROOKS

Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1996. Pp. xxxi + 193. \$18.95/£12.99 paperback.

The Ethiopian literary scene is not well-known to scholars, to put it mildly. Very few can speak let alone read Amharic, the national and official tongue of the state, which admittedly is a most difficult and 'challenging' idiom, as claimed by Professor Edward Ullendorff, to whom *Black Lions: the creative lives of modern Ethiopia's literary giants and pioneers* is dedicated by its Norwegian author. Further, hardly any Amharic works have been translated into world languages, which is most unfortunate, since not many African states can boast of a national literature in an African vernacular tongue. Scholars have been indebted to Reidulf Molvaer since he published *Tradition and Change in Ethiopia: social and cultural life as reflected in Amharic fictional literature* (Leiden, 1980), his doctoral dissertation that had been supervised at the School of African and Oriental Studies by Ullendorff, and his 1997 sequel is most welcome.

*Black Lions* presents the biographies (often even the autobiographies, suitably edited) of 32 of Ethiopia's leading authors, past and present, up to the year 1990. They include Hiruy Welde-Sillasé, the most prominent writer before the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, who is described as 'The Father of Amharic Literature'; Welde-Giyorgis Welde-Yohannis, 'The Father of Ethiopian Journalism'; Kebede Mikael, the country's first gazetted Prime Minister and 'The Grand Old Man of Amharic Literature'; Haddis Alemayyehu, 'Statesman and Ethiopia's Most Popular Author', who is widely appreciated for his monumental trilogy; and Abbé Gubennya, introduced as 'Ethiopia's Only Writer Who Almost Made A Living From His Books' (p. 181). Mention must also be made of Tesemma Habte-Mikael, Desta Tekle-Weld, and Girma-Tsiyon Mebrahtu, three outstanding lexicographers; Tesfayé Gessese, who has made an important mark on the theatre in Ethiopia; Aseffa Gebre-Mariyam Tesemma, the author of revolutionary Ethiopia's national anthem; Tseggayé Gebre-Medhin, 'poet, playwright, director, research historiographer and anthropologist in the art of black Ethiopian pre-classical and classical antiquities' (p. 269); Mengistu Lemma,



pioneer of Amharic comedy; Birhanu Zerihun, novelist, playwright, journalist, and stylistic innovator; and the late Be'alu Girma who 'might have become over-confident because of his close association with Chairman Mengistu' (p. 347), and who appears to have been executed by the *Derg* because of his very popular but critical novel *Oromay*.

The Marxist régime was still in control of Ethiopia when Molvaer wrote all these portraits and sketches, and as he explains: 'A society finds expression through its authors, and in this way it is the co-author of literary works... I do not pretend that a series of biographies of creative writers will explain Amharic fictional literature, but these life histories do throw light on the society, the surroundings, and the times in which Amharic literature was born and created' (p. ix). All scholars interested in Ethiopia will find much of importance in Molvaer's latest labour of love. May he continue ever onwards.

Miguel F. Brooks has recently translated what is arguably the most outstanding work in all of Ethiopian literature. *Kebra Nagast* was compiled in Ge'ez by the *nebura ed* (prior and governor) Yeshaq of Aksum in the early fourteenth century, in particular to legitimise the recently re-established Solomonic dynasty of Kings in Ethiopia. It 'was also intended to make the people of Ethiopia realize that their country was specially chosen by God to be the new home of the Spiritual and heavenly Zion' (p. xxvi). It is based on oral legends and traditions long-known in Ethiopia that go back to Old Testament times, with numerous strands of influence that have been traced to a myriad of other sources – see David A. Hubbard, 'The Literary Sources of the Kebra Nagast', Ph.D. dissertation, St. Andrews University, 1956; Edward Ullendorf, *Ethiopia and the Bible* (Oxford, 1968), ch. 3; and James B. Pritchard, *Solomon and Sheba* (Oxford, 1974), and their references. This *chef d'oeuvre* has at its core the brief story about Solomon and Sheba that is to be found in the Bible (I Kings 10: 1–13, and, with minor differences, II Chronicles 9: 1–12). This romantic and tantalising tale of the meeting between the illustrious King and Queen had great vogue in the Near East and in North and Northeast Africa, and went through a long period of gestation involving many elaborations, confluences, ramifications, transformations, and metamorphoses not only in the Ethiopian version but also – and perhaps even more so – in neighbouring literatures and traditions: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian.

Indeed, *Kebra Nagast* (*The Glory of Kings*) is rather classical and restrained in tone, in contrast to the more whimsical and extravagant features of other, non-Ethiopian traditions. Very briefly put, it tells of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon; his wisdom and his riches; her conversion to Judaism and her marriage to the King; the birth of their son, following her return to Ethiopia; Menelik's visit to see his father in Jerusalem; the removal of the Ark of the Covenant from Israel to Ethiopia, the new Zion, and its enshrining in Axum, the second Jerusalem; the rule of King Menelik I, the new David, over Ethiopia; the Beta [House of] Israel, the new Dakika [Children of] Israel; and the establishment of a Messianic line of Kings for ever.

A full translation of *Kebra Nagast* exists in English – *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek* (London, 1922) by E. A. Wallis Budge, a Semitist and Near Eastern scholar who was keeper of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities in the British Museum. However, this has long been out

of print, and also understandably is now considered rather 'heavy' and 'old-fashioned'. The volume by Brooks is a more modern and popular edition of *Kebra Nagast*, albeit drawing heavily on Spanish and French versions, as he does not read Ge'ez. His translation is often smoother and more flowing than that published in London over 70 years earlier, and his English is frequently more idiomatic, not least since Budge tried to be as literally faithful to the Ge'ez original as possible. Brooks has, however, removed 'all the legendary and obviously fictional stories, which are of undoubted Arabic sources' (p. xxx), despite the fact that these are considered to be authentic and genuine by most *Éthiopiens* (including, of course, Budge). But although this move by Brooks may seem to be rather questionable, we must defer final judgement until the excised materials appear in their entirety as 'Legends of the Kebra Nagast', his promised next volume.

*A Modern Translation of Kebra Nagast* does not pretend to be a scholarly tome, and is not meant to replace Budge. Brooks is neither a Semitist nor an *Éthiopisant*. As explained on the final page, he is an 'ordained elder and lay preacher in the Seventy-Day Adventist Church...currently engaged in biblical and historical research in prophetic interpretation and Old Testament exegesis'. His knowledge of Ethiopian history is commendable, as is clear from his introductory remarks and two appendices, but appears to be almost entirely based on the secondary sources in his select bibliography and recommended reading, which at times are conflicting. Certainly he has succeeded, with the help of the Red Sea Press, in producing a most readable version of *Kebra Nagast* that should be of interest to a wide audience. But whether Brooks has proved that Ethiopia is truly the New Israel and that the Holy Ark still resides in Axum, thereby showing 'the majestic role that divine providence has set aside for the black race' (p. xxvii), is another matter altogether.

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**New Trends and Generations in African Literature: a review** edited by  
ELDRED DUROSIMI JONES and MARJORIE JONES  
Oxford, James Currey; Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press; 1996. Pp. xi + 186.  
£9.95 paperback.

*African Literature Today*, the journal edited by Eldred and Marjorie Jones, continues to provide a good overview of the current state of African writing. The series has time and again proved to be a most reliable source of information about ongoing issues, not least by focusing on different aspects of African literature with a view to conveying the multitude and complexity of the field, and Vol. 20 is no exception. It contains 14 articles on different novelists, poets, and dramatists, and deals with a 'new' generation of writers and critics, who not only see things in a different light but are also able to evaluate today's literary production in a larger post-colonial context.

*New Trends and Generations in African Literature: a review* reminds us that the continent is on the threshold of change, torn between the darkness of the

immediate post-independence era and the uncertain, yet hopeful visions of the future. What is clearly reflected in this volume is that Africans are struggling to cope with all sorts of problems and constraints, and also seeking to create a new social and political order. That this process has just commenced can be seen from the way the writers attempt to redefine some of the concerns treated by their predecessors. For, as Lilyan Kesteloot claims in her opening article on 'Turning Point in the Francophone/African Novel: the eighties to the nineties', the old common enemy has gone: 'all the points of reference have been broken' (p. 7). Political emphasis has shifted from writers opposing the presence of the Western colonial powers to those criticising the mismanagement of their élite rulers. The bulk of the examined writers and poets articulate one of the most profound predicaments for African intellectuals: the idealism and zest for independence and freedom that motivated many of them in the early stages of the decolonisation process have turned into disillusionment and frustration. As Eldred Jones says in his editorial, 'The targets of protest changed from the colonial invader to the inheritors of their power' (p. 1).

In other words, the liberation struggle continues at various levels, and this helps to explain why the recurring themes in this volume are war, the new rôle and position of women, and the complexities of commitment in contemporary theatre. South Africa is perhaps the country which has gone through the largest political transformation in recent years. New writers have emerged following the abolition of *apartheid*, and Eldred Jones believes that they must now embark on 'a closer examination of humanity in a "free" society' (p. 3). As Femi Ojo-Ade states: 'Whatever happens, one thing is clear, that South Africans themselves must determine their destiny' (p. 134). The plays in his study convey visions of a better future, and the expectations are that this will be achieved at the down-to-earth level where people in the different townships are prepared to struggle. One should note that these plays were all written by black South Africans, and according to Duma Ndlovu, 'have been created for township audiences, offering a vision of hope, contrary to white South African plays' tendency to "sound a note of hopelessness"' (p. 126).

Some of the contributors have sought to examine how hidden histories have been explored, and how past events have been rewritten which completely go against official records. What comes first to mind is Fírinne Ní Chréacháin's brilliant study of Festus Iyayi's *Heroes*, where established truths from the Biafran war are used both to rewrite the official history of Nigeria and to search for a new national unity:

The return to the past therefore serves something of the same purpose for Iyayi as it does for Achebe, albeit in a different context: retelling the tale of the war is a means of showing 'where the rain began to beat us' in terms of military rule. Reminding readers of the shortcomings of the military during the war is another way of inviting people to ask what the current crop of soldiers are doing to prove that they are any better than their predecessors (p. 21).

War is a central issue in much of Zimbabwe's literature too, according to Eldred Jones. He convincingly concentrates on texts which examine 'the meaning of the liberation achieved through the sacrifices of the combatants and the plight of the ordinary people, often caught in the middle, the inheritors of the victory' (p. 50). Land was what was fought over in the

liberation struggle, but 'The war has not solved even the problem of land; it remains to be divided up, fought over, worked and suffered with, all over again' (p. 61).

A number of writers have increasingly focused on domestic issues, including attempts by women to free themselves from tradition. Rosemary Moyana's article on gender issues in two works by Tsitsi Dangarembga provides a good insight into that Zimbabwean's female characters, who rebel against their expected social rôles: 'The women in both the play and the novel clearly undergo some struggle and they emerge as different persons at the end' (p. 26). What Moyana sets out to do is to analyse the changes they go through, and to show us how they develop into new and revolutionary females.

Eldred Jones predicts that African literature is destined to remain political for some time, and that writers 'are in the thick of the fight for the true liberation of their countries' (p. 3). The new generation has started a process which seeks to lay foundations for social and political renewal. It is therefore only appropriate that the final article in Vol. 20 is the apt and impressive "'New Worlds, New Wholes": Kojo Laing's narrative quest for a social renewal' by Pietro Deandrea, who discusses the hopes expressed by this Ghanaian novelist as regards the creativity of ordinary men and women, as well as the rôle of the local community in the 'new' nation-building. And this seems to be symptomatic for the whole volume, since most of the writers presented here seem anxious to rewrite the past in an attempt to create hopes of a better future.

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