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South Africa: Human Rights and Genocide

Leo Kuper

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Hans Wolff was born on April 6, 1920 in Mainz, Germany. In 1934 his family went to Spain where he remained until 1937 when he immigrated to the United States. He attended Queens College, New York from 1939-1941 and then transferred to Indiana University. From 1942-1946 he served with the Military Intelligence Corps. After the war he returned to Indiana and in 1946 obtained the B.A. magna cum laude in Linguistics. In 1947 he was awarded the M.A. in Linguistics and in 1949 a double doctorate in Anthropology and Linguistics (one of the first to be given by that department). In 1949 he was appointed to the faculty of the University of Puerto Rico where he taught for eleven years. His early work was in Amerindian languages, especially in Siouan studies, and in the teaching of English as a second language. While still at the University of Puerto Rico, he was invited in 1953 to visit Nigeria, and from that time his interest in Africa and African languages grew. He published widely on the languages and language problems of Nigeria and at the time of his death was one of the leading authorities on Yoruba. In 1960 he accepted an appointment at Michigan State University in the African Studies Center where he taught for three years. While at Michigan State he helped to found and to edit the Journal of African Languages. He also assisted in the early development of the West African Language Conference and for several years served as Chairman of the African Linguistics Committee of the African Studies Association. At the time of his death in September 1967, he was Professor of Linguistics at Northwestern University.

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PART I

SOUTH AFRICA: HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENOCIDE

by

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The theme of my talk tonight is a reappraisal of South African apartheid in the light of an attempt within the United Nations to equate the South African Government's race policies with genocide. The attempt throws some light on the nature of apartheid, as well as on the procedures and outlook of the human rights sections of the United Nations.

The attack on apartheid as genocide was to be expected. South African apartheid and the United Nations organization extend over virtually the same span of history. The United Nations Organization was inaugurated in 1945, three years before the Afrikaner Nationalist Party instituted apartheid as the ideological blue-print for South African race relations. Since that time, there has been a more or less continuous involvement of the United Nations in the race policies of the South African Government. Indeed this involvement preceded the apartheid regime. During the period of the Second World War, Indians had been the target of a virulent campaign, particularly in the largely English-speaking province of Natal, and this campaign culminated later under the apartheid regime in the enforced segregation of South African Indians with appreciable expropriation of their properties. The issue was raised earlier, however, in the General Assembly of the United Nations on a complaint by the Government of India; and during its very first session, in December 1946, the General Assembly passed a resolution recommending that South Africa treat Indo-Pakistanis in conformity with international agreements and the United Nations Charter.

In many ways, apartheid was a challenge and an affront to the United Nations, representing the absolute antithesis of its ideals. It constituted an almost point by point denial of the Declaration of Human Rights. The policy was not simply one of racial separation, but also of racial domination, guaranteed by the systematic deprivation of human rights. And this linking of separation, domination and denial of basic rights remains the core of apartheid to the present day. To be sure, the ideological oratory changed first to an emphasis on separate development for

each group along its own lines, and now to a promise of independence for a cluster of satellite Bantustans, which would have the effect of making Africans foreigners in the industrialized and developed regions of South Africa.

The circumstances of the founding of the United Nations were such as to direct attention to the policies and practices of apartheid. Horror at the extermination of whole peoples by the Nazis, and revulsion at the disclosures in the Nuremberg trials, found expression in the determination to outlaw genocide. On 11 December 1946, only three days after the resolution on the treatment of Indians and Pakistanis in South Africa, the General Assembly passed a unanimous resolution which affirmed that genocide was a crime under international law, and which set in motion the framing of an international convention on genocide. In the debates which followed, one of the issues was the nature of the relationship between National Socialism and genocide. The ideology of National Socialism had been quite explicit in its doctrines of racial domination and of racial hierarchy, and these doctrines ultimately embodied sentences of extinction, or of survival as a subject race, or they conferred the right to enjoyment of equality with the master race. And apartheid resembled National Socialism in its ideology of racial domination and hierarchy. Of course, in apartheid the ideological ordering of races was not a ranking on a scale of extermination, nor was it initially a scale of extermination for the Nazis. But nevertheless, apartheid practices imposed radically different life chances on the racial groups, affecting infant mortality and life expectation in general.

The implication in Nazi doctrine that non-Aryans were inferior to Aryans aroused resentment in other nations, imposing the need to present Nazi race doctrine in more acceptable form. German missions abroad sought to meet this need by explaining the German policy as distinguishing between the types of races, rather than the qualities of races. "According to this view, each race produced its own social characteristics, but the characteristics of one race were not necessarily inferior to those of other races. In short, racial 'type' comprised physical and spiritual qualities, and German policy attempted no more than the

promotion of conditions which would permit each race to develop in its own way" (Hilbert, 1961: 45). The South African Government later faced a similar problem of attempting to render its policies more acceptable, which it sought to solve by the identical public relations formula.

There were other significant resemblances, extending beyond doctrines of racial domination, as we can see from a brief examination of the early legislative and administrative actions of the Nazi and apartheid governments. In September 1935, the Nazi Government framed a decree under the title 'Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor'. This prohibited marriage and extra-marital intercourse between Jews and citizens of German or related blood, and it also prohibited the employment in Jewish households of female citizens of German or related blood under the age of 45. A decree limiting citizenship to persons of German or related blood followed immediately. It now became necessary to provide a clear definition of Jews, so as to avoid conflicting definitions in different laws, and as a basis for systematic persecution. The First Regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law met this need. It defined Jews largely in terms of ancestry, and it established at the same time the category of mixed Jewish blood, the mischlinge. The handling of these mixed Jews became a continuous problem for the Nazis in the movement toward the Final Solution.

Meanwhile, the expropriation of Jews had been set in motion. It took the form of exclusion from occupations and the forced transfer of businesses and property. Jews were expelled from the civil service and from commercial and industrial enterprises, they were ousted as musicians, artists and writers, they were denied the right to practice as lawyers and doctors (though permits might be issued to Jewish doctors restricting their practice to the treatment of Jews), and they were reduced to the level of forced laborers. As for the expropriation of their property, it ultimately extended to underwear, gold teeth and women's hair.

The whole process was accompanied by systematic social isolation and physical segregation. There was control of personal relations, segregation in schools, restrictions

on movement and use of public transport, confinement to special houses, and an unambiguous means of identification in personal documents, and in the outward marking of persons and apartments by the Jewish star. An extraordinary and modern feature of this whole process of social exclusion, expropriation and segregation was the concern for legality and for bureaucratic efficiency, resulting in the elaboration of administrative procedures and agencies.

The parallels in the early apartheid laws are striking. The basic apartheid laws, all passed in the first two years of Afrikaner rule, are the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), the Immorality Amendment Act (1950), the Population Registration Act (1950), the Group Areas Act (1950), and the Suppression of Communism Act (1950). The first two acts recall the Nazi laws for the protection of German blood and honor against Raschenschande. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act prohibited marriage between Europeans (whites) and non-Europeans (non-whites), while the Immorality Amendment Act extended an earlier prohibition, so as to render criminal 'illicit carnal intercourse' between Europeans and non-Europeans. The Group Areas Act laid the basis for physical segregation, and for the general separation of the activities of the different racial groups. It also provided machinery for the expropriation and forced transfer of properties. This was directed primarily against Indians, and there is an interesting comparison to be made in the steps taken by the Nazi and apartheid governments to secure a share in the profits of spoliation.¹ I recall also regulations to forbid the employment of European women by Indians.

These laws were part of a totalitarian plan to effect the maximum racial separation possible in an appreciably integrated economy. Ultimately the controls extended from the intimate physical contact of sexual relations to the intellectual (in the segregation of schools and universities), and the political (in the disenfranchisement of Africans, Indians and Coloureds, the relegation of African affairs from politics to administration, and the prohibition of participation in racially mixed political parties). They included the reservation of public amenities for particular racial groups and the reservation of occupations. In some

occupations, as for example social work, there was the requirement that the social workers should be of the same race as the people they served. And the nation-wide blueprint for physical segregation was carried out by a vast relocation of Africans, Coloureds and Indians, accompanied by the elaboration of institutions for the separation of African tribal groups.

The implementation of apartheid depends, of course, on a clear system of racial identification. Here the problem was different from that faced by the Nazis. The racial groups are physically identifiable, so there was no need for badges or other visible identifying marks. The only ambiguity was in relation to the Coloured people, because of the great intermingling between whites (mainly Afrikaners) and Africans; and there has been an ambivalence in the policy toward the Coloureds somewhat reminiscent of the Nazi dilemma in the relationship to the mischlinge. The Government's solution to the problem of racial identification was the Population Registration Act, in terms of which the population was racially classified and issued with certificates of racial identity.

The radical restructuring of the society, and the rigidity of the new dispensations, naturally called for an effective apparatus of repressive laws, and this repressive apparatus has been perfected over the years. One of the foundation laws, the Suppression of Communism Act, instituted the most severe penal sanctions for the 'crime' of communism. The South African Government used the threat of communism as a rallying point for the white electorate in a manner quite reminiscent of the Nazis. But anti-communism also served other functions in South African society, namely the control of social change. The monopoly of political power guaranteed the control of legal, parliamentary change. The challenge to the government would lie then in the use of illegal means to bring about change, and the Suppression of Communism Act was, in part, a response to that challenge. It defined the newly constituted 'crime' of communism first in Marxian terms, and then as any doctrine to bring about any political, industrial, social or economic change by illegal means.

We should note one further point of resemblance, the concern for legality, in the form of the 'rule by law' rather than the 'rule of law', and for bureaucratic administration and elaboration. Indeed, the South African Government has carried these principles into a far more extensive and systematic structure of laws and bureaucracies.

The resemblances are too close to be accidental, particularly when one recalls the strong pro-German, Nazi-type movements within Afrikaner nationalism. But a word of caution is necessary. The same forms may serve quite different functions. I am sure that the South African Government in its borrowings from the Nazis did not contemplate genocide, even against the Indians, toward whom it expressed a special anathema. But then too the Nazis did not initially contemplate genocide against the Jews.

With the entry of many African states into the United Nations, and the more vigorous prosecution of the campaign against apartheid, there begins to appear in United Nations' documents an identification of apartheid with Nazism and with genocide.

Genocide is, of course, an ancient crime. However, it remained nameless until the publication in 1944 of Raphael Lemkin's book on Axis Rule in Occupied Europe. In this book, he coined the word genocide to describe the destruction of a nation or ethnic group. It appears in the indictment of the Nazi war criminals in the Nuremberg trials, and was given currency by the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly in 1946 to outlaw the crime, and by the framing of the Genocide Convention in 1948. The Convention defines the crime in the following terms:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring

- about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
 - (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The initial indignation in the United Nations at the crime of genocide, and the determination to stamp it out, seem rapidly to have dissipated. The primary responsibility for investigating charges of genocide lies with the Commission on Human Rights, and it usually proceeds with great secrecy under rules of confidentiality. Hence there are difficulties in uncovering United Nations' proceedings in response to these charges. Still, a good deal of the record has emerged, and I think it is fair to say that for all practical purposes the Commission in particular, and the United Nations in general, condone the crime of genocide. The United Nations is, after all, an organization of governments, and it is generally governments that commit genocide. Therefore, it is perhaps not altogether surprising that the United Nations should take a protective stance towards governments engaged in genocide. The public investigation of South African apartheid, and the coupling of the regime with Nazism and genocide, represent a radical departure from normal UN practice.

The identification of apartheid with Nazism appears in a number of UN documents, as for example, in the following provisions of a General Assembly resolution regarding Measures to be taken against Nazism and racial intolerance:

The General Assembly,

Profoundly disquieted by the fact that not all the States concerned are responding to its appeals, with due regard to the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to outlaw and prohibit Nazi and racist organizations and groups and to make membership in them a criminal offence,

1. Renews its strong condemnation of racism, Nazism, apartheid and all other totalitarian ideologies and practices; (2545, XXIV,

11 December 1969).

The identification is even more close in the resolutions condemning apartheid as a crime against humanity. This was one of the crimes in the indictment of the Nazi leaders at the Nuremberg trials. The Commission on Human Rights, in its Study concerning the question of apartheid from the point of view of international penal law, gives a list of resolutions affirming that apartheid is a crime against humanity, and it provides a point by point application of the Nuremberg principles to the apartheid regime (E/CN.4/1075, 15 February 1972).

There is implicit also in some of these resolutions and reports the charge that apartheid constitutes genocide, as for example, in the following preambular paragraphs to a General Assembly resolution dealing with Measures to be taken against Nazism and racial intolerance:

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 2331 (XXII) of 18 December 1967 on measures to be taken against Nazism and racial intolerance,
Reaffirming that racism, Nazism and the ideology and policy of apartheid are incompatible with the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and other international instruments (2438, XXIII, 19 December 1968).

But there is also a quite explicit examination of this issue by an Ad Hoc Group of Experts appointed by the Commission on Human Rights in 1967. Its mandate was to investigate the torture and ill-treatment of persons in South Africa, but it extended its mandate into a sort of preparatory examination of the South African Government on charges of genocide. This did not always yield the evidence sought by the Ad Hoc Group of Experts. Here, for example, is an extract from the

evidence of Albie Sachs, a lawyer and an active opponent of the apartheid regime. He had been detained for interrogation on two separate occasions, and held in solitary confinement, first for five and a half months, and later for three months.

Mr. Jankowic: As a jurist the witness was undoubtedly familiar with the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Did the witness believe that the application of the Acts to which he had referred was tantamount to genocide?

Mr. Sachs: "I would say that the combination of racial attitudes in South Africa, and the power the Government has, approaches the policies which led to genocide in Europe in recent decades. If by genocide one means the actual physical extermination of populations-- that is, the extreme form of genocide-- I would say that stage has not yet been reached in South Africa, and one hopes that international exposure and pressure will be sufficiently strong to prevent it from ever being reached. If one uses an extended definition of genocide to include humiliation of populations on the grounds of race, deprivation of facilities, of the fundamental human rights on the grounds of race, then I would say that not only is genocide carried on, but it is part of the official policy of the Government in South Africa, as experienced in its legislation." (E/CN.4/950, paras. 647-648, 27 October 1967).

Of course, the extended definition to which the witness refers, is a definition of systematic racial discrimination, and not of genocide.

The evidence of Dennis Brutus, another victim of government persecution, also did not yield unambiguous condemnation of apartheid as genocide. Dennis Brutus had been prominent in the attack on apartheid through the international sports associations; and he had suffered banning, an extreme form of social isolation, under the Suppression

of Communism Act, wounding by the police in an attempted escape, and imprisonment in the notorious concentration camp of Robben Island. Asked by a member of the Ad Hoc Group whether certain aspects of apartheid policy did not amount to genocide, he replied as follows:

Mr. Brutus: "Mr. Waldron-Ramsey has put forward a series of definitions which might fit under the general term of genocide; there are, of course, other, and even wider, definitions. I, myself, am reluctant to apply the term because I think my own definition is a narrower one, but I must stress that there are certain aspects of the apartheid society and the apartheid system which although not designed to kill off people, do, in fact, kill them off. And when the people die as farm labor, or as convict labor, whether they die in the prisons or whether they die as thousands are still dying, of starvation, of lack of food, because of the discriminatory practices and discriminatory legislation, I am satisfied that the South African apartheid regime is guilty of the killing of countless thousands of people. But I still guard myself against the use of the term genocide."

Later, under further examination, Mr. Brutus explained that his understanding of genocide was based on knowledge of the practice in Nazi Germany when there was a policy of extermination by mechanical means, when there was a declared aim to exterminate an entire section of the population, whereas in South Africa there was no openly declared aim of exterminating people, though many had died, and would die, as a result of the policy. Finally, he accepted the applicability of the term genocide in the following exchange:

Mr. Waldron-Ramsey read out articles I and II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the United Nations in 1948. Article II of that Convention defined genocide as any

of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group (Mr. Brutus had testified to the use of electrodes for torture and the "carry-on" procedure, as well as the mental disability of a prisoner); deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part (hence his own question about a Fascist police state); imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group (which would include the laws governing the movement of Africans in urban areas and preventing wives from visiting their husbands in those areas); and forcibly transferring persons of the group to another group (those reaching the age of eighteen were obliged to leave their parents). He wondered, therefore, whether a pattern of genocide did, in fact, exist in the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Brutus: "The definition as set out in the United Nations Convention is one with which I did have some acquaintance previously, but I must confess I had not appreciated how wide its provisions are. I think that in terms of the definition set out there, and in terms of what is happening in South Africa, the definition is applicable, if one uses this definition. I am satisfied." (E/CN.4/950, paras. 267, 281-283, 27 October 1967).

Other witnesses were quite positive in their denunciation of apartheid as genocide, and helped to make the case for the prosecution. Mr. A.B. Ngcobo, for example, was asked to explain his views on the question of genocide. He was treasurer of the Pan-Africanist Congress, he had taken part in organizing the campaign which led to the police massacre of Africans at Sharpeville and Langa, and he had served long periods in South African prisons.

Mr. Ngcobo: "I have consistently alleged-- and I am sure I will do so in the future-- that the whole set-up in South Africa, and not just the situation in the prisons, constitutes the crime of genocide. The prisons confirm this, however, because they are reminiscent of the hitlerite regime in that you get a philosophy of apartheid, reminiscent of the philosophy of Nazism. So you have an ideological basis which forms the springboard for such attacks. And then of course, if you look into the South African situation you find that deliberate malnutrition among the population kills 400-450 babies out of every thousand, which, in round figures, would mean for every two children born one dies. And if that is not really killing, you would be dreaming. Then there is the South African prison system itself. People get emaciated and the life-span of any person who has spent five years in South African prisons is so short that it will take him another two years and then he dies."

Mr. Ngcobo also referred to the effects of child labor, and to birth control directed against Africans, though in the latter case, it is not clear whether the reference is to actual or projected programs. (E/CN.4/950, paras. 949-950).

At the end of the hearings, the Ad Hoc Group of Experts concluded that the intention of the Government to destroy a racial group, in whole or in part, was not established in law. However, the evidence revealed certain elements corresponding to the acts described in clauses (a), (b) and (c) of the United Nations' definition of genocide, and these might establish the existence of the crime of genocide. They, therefore, recommended that a thorough study be undertaken to ascertain whether the elements of the crime of genocide exist in the South African system (Ibid., paras. 1137 and 1151). This line of investigation was approved by the Commission on Human Rights, and the Experts proceeded with their prosecution of the South African Government.

Two of their key reports deal respectively with the relationship between apartheid and genocide (E/CN.4/984/Add 18, dated 28 February 1969) and with the question of apartheid from the point of view of international penal law (referred to above, E/CN.4/1075, 15 February 1972). In the first report, the Experts arrived at the conclusion that in the present state of South African legislation, it could not say that the South African Government had expressed an intention to commit genocide, but members of the political groups who had testified did consider that certain elements of genocide exist in the practice of apartheid (para. 36). The conclusion reads strangely. Did the Experts really expect the South African Government, on the opening of its parliament, to declare "We have now decided to exterminate such and such a race"? In any event, regardless of their conclusion, the Experts recommended the revision of the Genocide Convention to make the apartheid policies, as practiced by the South African authorities, punishable under that convention (para. 39).

The second report is the one that deals with the systematic application of the Nuremberg principles to apartheid, including crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Under the heading of crimes against humanity, the Experts refer to the following practices as constituting elements of genocide:

- (a) The institution of group areas ("Bantustan policies"), which affected the African population by crowding them together in small areas where they could not earn an adequate livelihood, or the Indian population by banning them to areas which were totally lacking the preconditions for the exercise of their traditional professions;
- (b) The regulations concerning the movement of Africans in urban areas and especially the forcible separation of Africans from their wives during long periods, thereby preventing African births;
- (c) The population policies in general, which were said to include deliberate malnutrition of large population sectors and birth control for the non-white sectors in order to reduce their numbers, while it was the official policy

- to favour white immigration;
- (d) The imprisonment and ill-treatment of non-white political (group) leaders and of non-white prisoners in general;
 - (e) The killing of non-white population through a system of slave or tied labor, especially in so-called transit camps (para. 122).

I think that the intention of the Experts was not to deliver a judgment that the members of the South African Government have committed the crime of genocide by reason of the policies listed above, but rather that these are the headings of an indictment for which there is prima facie evidence.

The Experts end by again recommending a revision of the Genocide Convention to make inhuman acts resulting from the policies of apartheid punishable under that Convention. They also add the recommendation that the Republic of South Africa should be asked to institute penal proceedings against persons who have allegedly committed crimes against humanity, according to the findings of the Experts (para. 164). This is decidedly bizarre, asking members of the South African Government to prosecute themselves.

The recommendation for the revision of the Genocide Convention was not accepted. With over 80 signatories, and governments, involved, it was quite impracticable, apart from other considerations. Instead, the United Nations framed a specific International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, and this has now come into force. A preambular paragraph links apartheid and genocide by observing that in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, certain acts, which may also be qualified as acts of apartheid, constitute a crime under international law. It is interesting to note that the enforcement procedures are much stronger under this convention than under the genocide convention. The explanation is clear enough. The crime of apartheid is so specifically a phenomenon of Southern Africa, that other governments would be assured of immunity, in contrast to the genocide convention which might readily expose members of other governments to criminal prosecution.

There is a good deal of ambiguity in the proceedings of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts. I am not even certain that I fully understand their position. They obviously wished to establish that the apartheid policies and practices of the South African Government constituted genocide, but they hesitated to draw that conclusion. They, therefore, fell back on the device of an amended genocide convention. This would dissolve doubt, and abolish ambiguity, by incorporating a judgment that the apartheid policies practised by the South African authorities, were punishable as genocide. The ambiguity must have derived from the South African situation, which did not readily yield the desired conclusion.

There was further ambiguity in the replies of the witnesses who gave evidence before the Experts. These witnesses were, after all, enemies of the South African Government, hating its policies, outraged by its racism, and dedicated to its overthrow, and most had suffered brutally in its prisons. Why should any of these witnesses have resisted visiting on the South African Government the most extreme condemnation possible, that of genocide, particularly when invited to do so by a friendly committee? Again, there must surely have been ambiguity in South African practices, raising doubts in the minds of some of the witnesses.

This ambiguity is present also in the pattern of massacres of Africans under apartheid. These are carried out by the South African police. It is the police who are charged with the suppression of resistance to apartheid, and it is the police who engage in mass slaughter.

The 1950s were a period of protracted challenge to the government, starting with the May Day protests in 1950, and continuing, through the non-violent resistance campaign of 1952 and the Congress of the People in 1955, to the anti-pass law protest at Sharpeville in 1960. In the May Day protests, the police killed 18 Africans, and in four separate disturbances during the resistance campaign, they killed 34 Africans; there were 5 murders of whites by Africans. At Sharpeville, the police fired on a large crowd of African protestors, and murdered 69 (including 8 women and 10 children). Meanwhile, there were protests and revolts in the rural areas, with 16 killed by police at Witziesshoek in 1950, and 11 at Ngqusa Hill in 1960. In

South West Africa, in Windhoek in 1959, there were 11 African deaths in the suppression of a protest against removal from a location.² The most massive killings were in 1976, during and in the aftermath of a revolt, initiated by African school children against the government's proposed language policy for African schools, and more generally against apartheid. One of the South African newspapers published a carefully documented list of 499 identified victims in 1976 (Herbstein, 1979: 225). The official figure was 386 killed by police action. The United Nations Ad Hoc Group of Experts quoted the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa as having established beyond doubt that 617 persons died between 16 June and December 1976, "although the actual figure must certainly be over 1000 (some of the victims were barely five or six years of age)" (A/32/226, 10 October 1977, para. 19). For 1977, the Experts quoted an official figure of 149 killed, including 11 children (E/CN.4/1311, 26 January 1979, para. 51).

This is not a complete record of police massacre, and one would also have to allow for many deaths resulting, not from police action against demonstrating crowds, but from action against individuals in the course of the daily routine. But even making such allowance, I would have expected far worse from the apartheid government.

The record could hardly be more forbidding. Of the population groups in South Africa, only Africans can mount an effective challenge to Afrikaner domination, and they were subjected to continuous police surveillance and terror, and to a great bombardment of repressive laws, reminiscent of the early Nazi regime. Outside of the "independent" Bantustans, they are physically isolated, by systematic restrictions on social contacts, and by segregation in peripheral areas, and are denied the most elementary human rights—freedom of movement, of association, of employment, of political participation.

Conditions of life impose a heavy burden on African survival. One has only to compare the vital statistics for Africans and whites, the high incidence of preventable disease and of malnutrition amongst Africans, and their enormously high infant mortality rates. Yet, medical teams

in South Africa have demonstrated the ease with which African infant mortality rates can be rapidly reduced. African earnings are a small fraction of white earnings, and indeed hundreds of thousands earn hardly enough for a bare subsistence. The government not only tolerates these conditions, it adds to the hazards of survival, by brutally uprooting Africans-- redundant labor, dependents, "black spots". Perhaps as many as two million Africans have been forced back into the overcrowded tribal areas, often with little regard for their well-being. Some of the most horrifying episodes have been the destruction of long settled communities, and the removal of their inhabitants to be dumped into the bare veldt.

The record is surely one that justifies the comment I quoted earlier by one of the witnesses, "that the combination of racial attitudes in South Africa, and the power the Government has, approaches the policies which led to genocide in Europe in recent decades." Can one really suppose that a government, which systematically isolates Africans, discriminates against them in all spheres of life, subjects them to every conceivable humiliation, exposes them to extreme hardship in conditions of life, renders the exercise of basic human rights a criminal offence, and uproots and discards whole communities, would draw the line at genocidal massacre? Yet the killings fall far below the level of massacre in genocidal societies, and the South African Government does not engage in the root and branch extermination of whole communities, men, women and children. Clearly, there must be powerful restraints against genocide by the South African Government.

The two most obvious restraints arise from a combination of economic and demographic factors. There is an inner contradiction in the exploitation of labor. One cannot exploit labor to the extent of totally expending it, unless there is an infinite supply; and the dependence of the South African economy on African labor is a most effective restraint on genocide. Initially the government had hoped to reduce this dependence. But in fact, it introduced a more thoroughgoing, systematic exploitation of Africans, "canalizing" their labor to feed the needs of white employers, and in the process, it greatly increased the dependence on Africans. A

Manpower Survey of 1977 showed three million Africans gainfully employed (excluding domestic service and agricultural work), as against one million three hundred thousand whites.

The demographic restraint flows from the sheer disparity in numbers. At the time of the 1946 census, the population consisted of 7,832,000 Africans, 930,000 Coloureds, 285,000 Asians, and about 2,373,000 whites. The numbers were too large, and the disparity too great, for genocide to be a feasible policy. If we look at the elements of genocide listed by the Ad Hoc Group of Experts, they hardly address the disproportion in population in a meaningful way, apart from the forced removals into overcrowded bantustans. Certainly, the policy of the government was in no way calculated to encourage the growth of the African population; but at the same time, it was not directed toward genocide. And all sections of the population have multiplied during the apartheid regime, with whites a declining proportion. Africans now number about nineteen million, which is to say that they have more than doubled since 1946. The comparable figures for whites are 4,365,000, for Coloureds 2,400,000, and for Asians 765,000.

Instead of genocide, the government pursued a policy designed to control the threat of numbers by the fragmentation of Africans into manageable tribal segments. It sought to achieve this by fostering tribal identification and divisive loyalty through a system of Bantu authorities, separate education in tribal languages, territorial segregation and co-optation of leaders. Under pressure from the United Nations, international opinion generally, and African resistance, this policy has now taken the form of the establishment of "independent", but satellite, Bantu states. The new policy represents a recognition of the right of nations to self-determination, but of course, in the South African case, the self-determination is other-determined.

Now an essential feature of the new policy is the denationalization of Africans. Ultimately they are all to become citizens and nationals of the Bantustans. The policy was expressed in the South African parliament as follows:

If our policy is taken to its logical conclusion as far as the black people are concerned, there will be not one black

man with South African citizenship.... Every black man in South Africa will eventually be accommodated in some independent new state in this honourable way and there will no longer be a moral obligation on this Parliament to accommodate these people politically. (Dr. C.P. Mulder, as quoted by John Dugard in Independent Homelands - Failure of a Fiction, 1979 Presidential Address, S.A. Institute of Race Relations, p. 9).

Denationalization can be a precursor to genocide, as in the Nazi genocide against German Jews. And with the mounting pressure of population on resources, we may see this policy increasingly pursued as a preliminary to the expulsion of minority groups from their host countries. The intentions of the South African government are less diabolic. They are hoping that denationalization will solve in one fell swoop the problems of racial discrimination, exploitation and unemployment. In the industrial core of South Africa, there would be no black nationals with claims to economic or political rights. Africans would still be the foundation of the economic order, but with the status of foreigners, resembling the migrant workers in European countries.³ Conor Cruise O'Brien describes the policy as a metaphoric ritual which makes the blacks of South Africa disappear. And he adds the comment that "the ritual of the United Nations makes them reappear again. In this case it must be said, the ritual of the United Nations puts less strain on reality than do those of South Africa" (International Pressure and the Resolution of Racial Conflict, 1979:7).

I have not yet mentioned the restraint on genocide by moral values. My own view is that apartheid operates with such a dehumanized image of Africans, and with such inhumanity, that its agents would hardly draw back from genocidal massacre on moral grounds. And I think there is some confirmation of this view in the recent suppression of the school-children's revolt. But the moral restraints are present in the wider society, particularly in liberal thought.

It has become routine in much writing on South Africa to present contemporary South African liberalism as embrac-

ing the doctrine that economic development would dissolve apartheid. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, this doctrine was far more characteristic of United Party ideology and of radical ideology. Liberals vary greatly in their economic policies and beliefs. What binds them together is their concern for human rights, human equality, human dignity, and their passionate rejection of racial discrimination and racial exclusion. These liberal values have been a special target of attack by the government, but they survive in the society, and they continue to be vigorously asserted by such organizations as the South African Institute of Race Relations, English speaking churches, Christian Fellowship, and by the opposition in Parliament, as well as by the daily press, and above all by Africans, Coloureds and Indians. And they achieve additional significance within South Africa by reinforcement from the outside world.

The final restraint on genocide is the pressure exerted from the outside by international public opinion. There can seldom have been such unanimity as in the condemnation of apartheid. It is almost universally reviled. And the pressures are exerted at all levels, governmental and non-governmental, by national, regional and world councils, and in the economic, military, spiritual, academic and social spheres. The country itself is increasingly surrounded by independent African states. In the United Nations the pariah status of South Africa is one of the few areas of consensus. Apartheid policies are continuously exposed, and its atrocities openly and publicly denounced. The Security Council debated the Sharpeville massacres. The General Assembly denounced the Treason Trials. The Ad Hoc Group of Experts speedily investigated the massacres in the suppression of the school children's revolt, and reported to the General Assembly. The torturing to death of Steve Biko, the leader of the Black Consciousness movement became an international cause célèbre.

South African society combines, most curiously, the tyranny of racial domination with a certain openness to public inspection and criticism. As a result, developments in apartheid are immediately known. It is as if apartheid were being enacted on an international stage in the presence

of a hostile international audience. The effect must certainly be to inhibit the resort to massacre.

All these restraints seem massive. Yet the situation is so charged with genocidal potential as to call for the greatest vigilance, and for continuous international surveillance and pressure.

FOOTNOTES

¹See Hilbert, 1961: 86 ff., and Kuper, Watts and Davies, 1958:166. In Passive Resistance in South Africa (1957: Chapter 2) I have analyzed the early apartheid laws.

²I am following the figures given by Sachs, 1975:228.

³See the discussion of this policy by Dugard, op. cit.

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PART II

BIOGRAPHY AS INTERPRETATION

by

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BIOGRAPHY AS INTERPRETATION*

I am sure that everyone here has read a number of biographies-- stories about someone by someone else. Sometimes they have served as entertainment, sometimes they have also been a source of information, sometimes a biography has illuminated actions of others, sometimes it has give us added insight into ourselves. It is therefore not surprising that the biography, one of the oldest of literary genres, is also one of the more popular, meriting a special place-- somewhere between history and fiction-- in libraries and bookshops. It covers an enormous range of characters, most of them sufficiently well known for others to want to learn more about them.

But it is seldom that we think about the author-- or even know his or her name except in rare cases, such as Plutarch, Lytton Strachey or Boswell. Then the author may be the dominating character. There is a distinction between biography as fiction and biography as non-fiction, i.e., factually verifiable. It is with this second type that I am mainly concerned tonight, and then largely in the role of anthropologist looking at people in a foreign culture. Whereas a biography is generally designed to cover the career and character of a selected person, I found myself as an anthropologist consciously adding the dimensions of culture. Of course, even in non-anthropological biographies this may be required, but there is a greater likelihood of a shared world of experience between biographer, biographee and reader who all speak the same language (a key to a common culture).

The biography is one of the less conventionally accepted styles of presenting the material of anthropological fieldwork. By definition, it is focused on the life of a particular, unique individual (specified by such factors as feature, ancestry, position) losing or finding herself or himself at different points on a road which is never straight or simple, and the end of which cannot be predicted in the beginning. Even birth and death, probably the only cross-cultural universals of human existence, receive different personal as well as social interpretations. Any

individual who appears exceptionally complex, contradictory, difficulty to comprehend and even more difficult to interpret has generally been relegated, not only by anthropologists, to the psychologist and his couch. Fieldwork, despite its individualistic approach of participant observation in the arena of a foreign community, is the special skill-- and it is no more than a skill, not a rigorous method of the socio-cultural anthropologist. But theoretical approaches influence the anthropologist's work in the field as much, if not more, than fieldwork influences theory.

Anthropological theories generally ignore individuals or treat them as epiphenomenal or as more or less typical, or produce them as "cases" to illustrate general trends or different life styles. Thus empirical structuralists in search of general laws and enduring systems of relationships dismiss the individual from their realm, following the lead of Radcliff-Brown who wrote:

Science (as distinguished from history and biography) is not concerned with the particular, the unique, but only with the general, with kinds, with events which recur ... (rather than) the actual relations of Tom, Dick and Harry or the behavior of Jack and Jill. (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952, p. 192)

Recent empirical structuralists have not diverged fundamentally from this approach by recognizing discrepancies between people's beliefs and expressed norms on the one hand, and their actual behavior on the other, (previously dismissed as special cases or exceptions), or by admitting the individual into a process of interacting and conflicting situations complicated by a range of choices.

We seek to relate the deviations from structural regularities to regularities of a different order, namely the interpretation of a social system in terms of

a social system in terms of conflicting norms. (Van Velsen, 1964: 141)

Deep level structuralists, following the lead of the arch-magician Levi-Strauss oppose nature to culture, and then fragment man, as the maker of culture, into scintillating sets of other sub-consciously structured oppositions-- raw and cooked, hot and cold, sweet and sour, left and right, etc.

General ethnography is equally cavalier in its approach to the individual. Conklin in an authoritative article in the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences defines ethnography as "an attempt to record and describe the culturally significant behavior of a particular society." Radin, whose book The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian dealt with an individual wrote that "the aim should not be to obtain autobiographical data about some definite personage, but to have some representative middle-aged individual of moderate ability describe his life in relation to the social group in which he had grown up (1920.384) .

Specialists in 'culture and personality,' an area which initiated recognition by anthropologists of types of personality, now include experts who, in an effort to make psychological anthropology more acceptable as a science, produce models in which human qualities are neatly coded, so that there is danger that the final product will be computerized interpretations of qualities for persons, of variables for individual variation.

Structure and culture are useful analytic constructs in the exploration of social life, but their builders of these constructs are themselves always and everywhere vital, elusive, and mortal; in the field itself individual characters with all their temperamental and physical peculiarities and the climatic incidents of everyday life, stand out in bold relief while the formal patterns, and different systems of kinship or stratification fade from view' (Richards 1939: 106). However, a constant current running beneath the main stream of anthropology emerges periodically as 'the life history . This is a current somewhere between an autobiography and the conventional biography. It is concerned with

a portrayal of the self (as in an autobiography) but it is translated and edited, and thereby re-interpreted, by the anthropologist.

Life history is sometimes distinguished from biography, as pioneered by historians, on the somewhat insubstantial grounds that it is the written version of the life of a person who is without knowledge of writing and who lives in a culture without written records. While it is true that historians usually write of the dead, and have access to a wide range of documentary material, and that anthropologists rely almost entirely on speech and observable behavior, historians also write of the living and have come to recognize the value of oral texts as evidence, and anthropologists increasingly appreciate, even if they do not use, archival resources as well as contemporary texts. Moreover, the extension of 'literacy' to the remote corners of the world has also made available a range of documents not only by officials and 'outside' specialists, but by an indigenous literati writing their own autobiographies and biographies, and rewriting their people's histories.

More significant than the difference between life histories and biographies, or anthropologists and historians, is the similarity in the relationship between a character, as the self, and the writer as the outsider, the other. There is a phenomenological element in both, affecting the attitude to reality as seen by the self in relation to others and of others in relation to the self. I think Historians, who have successfully refined techniques for evaluating 'facts' according to their sources, have been unable to agree on any fixed principles for the writing of biographies. (Garraty, 1957)

A biographer, whether anthropologist, historian, or political scientist, native or foreign, creates the image of another self in the process of literary production, but at the same time there are limits on free creativity. In contrast to the fiction writer, the biographer accepts firstly that there are certain verifiable facts in the life of another, 'real' (material) person; and secondly that no person exists, or can be perceived as existing, outside, or apart from, complex interactions between people in a social

context (society) with its own norms and customs (culture).

Since anthropologists, like historians and political scientists, deal with known people they are generally expected to stick to 'facts', but they are not equally obliged to state their assumptions, nor are they generally conscious of the bias underlying their selection of 'facts'. As biographers, they do not deliberately see themselves in their analysis of others and expose themselves only inadvertently. The interpretation in a biography thus depends on the qualities of both the central character and the biographer.

The choice of character is made by the biographer; it is obviously wider and easier for a biographer writing of the past, than for one writing of contemporary. Those who have lived out their full span of life cannot cooperate, but they also cannot be required to give their consent. The anthropologist working in the field has more limited freedom of choice and expression than a biographer doing only archival research. The characters involved are people, not 'subjects', and as often as not the main informants are those few with whom she/he has established ties of friendship so that information is given in an atmosphere of mutual trust; an anthropological interview is not an interrogation. Moreover, the person about whom an anthropologist writes may be not only a friend but a public and controversial figure, and information, given in confidence, cannot be published.

While it is now generally recognized that in each society there may be not one ideal personality type but several-- according to sub-cultures-- which may even conflict with each other, and that within the broader range there are also individual differences, it is less commonly acknowledged that within the discipline of anthropology, or other social sciences, crucial differences in the personality of practitioners as well as in theory, may affect interpretations of fact. This is perhaps reflected in the several ways individual anthropologists express their interpretation of the overall field situation. To some it is a confrontation and an ordeal; to others a series of encounters; and to others a transforming and humanizing experience.

The mutual relationship between the anthropologist and

a person who is the central character is well expressed by Freeman writing the life history of Muli, an Indian 'Untouchable.'

I would grant that Muli's life history might well have been recognizably different had it been collected by a different personal background and different categories of reference to guide his directing of Muli's narration and editing of Muli's account (1979:392).

A life history like Muli's does not exist as an external datum, independent of time, place and person, waiting to be recorded. Rather, it is the joint production of two or more persons with the right combination of personalities, interests, and biases who happen to come together at the right time and place for creating a life history.

Freeman is writing about an 'Untouchable'; more generally biographies are written about prominent individuals-- presidents, generals or kings. Probably the more prominent the person, the more controversial the biography, though the biography of any individual, however 'insignificant' in the public arena, may illuminate crucial social relationships as effectively, if not more effectively.

I will now illustrate some of the more general ideas by a few specific references. From a wide historical canvas I have selected arbitrarily three African leaders actively involved in the change from colonial domination to political independence: Nkrumah of Ghana, Kenyatta of Kenya and Sobhuza of Swaziland. Apart from Sobhuza, much has been written about these individuals by themselves as well as by others. In each case there are a number of basic facts that are not disputed-- though in two cases there is even debate about the exact date of birth and in one case the place of birth in relation to new boundaries, but there is general agreement on such items as names of parents, schools they attended, specific occupations, court cases, periods in prison, changes in constitution and other such information. It is the relationship between the events and

the meanings attached to them that may be controversial, or even contradictory. I will look first at the presentation of self by the central figure and the view of that self by one or two others. I begin with some bare facts in the life of Nkrumah, recognized as the first leader of a newly independent African state.

Kwame Francis Nwia Kofie Nkrumah was born in September 1909 or 1912 (according to whether one agrees with the Roman Catholic priest who baptized him, or with his mother who calculated the date by a traditional ritual held each September-- Nkrumah accepts the Catholic calculation). The name Kwame applies to all children born on Saturday. The birthplace was Nkrofula, a small village in the southwest of what was then the Gold Coast, an area inhabited by Nzima, one of the relatively small ethnic groups in the lagoon cluster. His father was a goldsmith. His mother was the senior wife, and Kwame was her only son. His early education was at an elementary school in the neighborhood and then at a teaching institute at Achimota. In 1935 he left for further studies in America. Having received a B.A. in economics and sociology and post-graduate degrees in philosophy and education he was appointed lecturer in Political Science at Lincoln University. There he was elected President of the African Students Organization of America and Canada. In 1945 he went to London, joined the West African Student Union of which he became general secretary, and was active in organizing the early Pan-African Congresses. He returned to the Gold Coast at the end of 1947 to become secretary of the United Gold Coast Convention aimed at increasing the participation of Africans in government. The idea of independence was still far ahead but their activities were seen as seditious and Nkrumah was one of those detained from the 12th of March, 1948 to the 3rd of September 1948.

In June 1949, having broken with the UGCC, he launched the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) demanding self government for the Gold Coast. He was arrested again on the 22nd of January, 1950, and sentenced to 3 years imprisonment, but was released on February 12, 1951 when the CPP won the elections. He became Prime Minister of the Gold Coast (1952-1957) and of Ghana (1957-1960), and President of

Ghana (1960-1966). In 1966 he was deposed by a military coup while in Peking on his way to Hanoi. During his years in office he visited many foreign countries, in the West and in the East, and travelled widely in Africa. After the coup he accepted the refuge offered by his friend Sekou Toure of Guinea who gave him the title of Co-President. He died on the 27th of April, 1972. (Current Biography 1972:468: Segal 1961:209-216)

Nkrumah is the accredited author of some nine books, though it is now known that he relied largely on ghost-writers who did not always express Nkrumah's ideas (Bretton 1966:30). In all, Nkrumah was presented as a radical, eager to unite Africa into a single continent, under a Marxist regime, liberated from colonial domination and free of imperialist or neo-colonial intervention. His earliest effort begun as a student in the USA in 1942 and completed in 1945, could find no publisher until 1962. Titled Towards Colonial Freedom, it was a passionate indictment of colonialism and imperialism, containing in essence many of the themes developed in later writings. In his foreword he states,

I was so revolted by the ruthless colonial exploitation and political oppression of the people of Africa that I knew no peace. (IX)

Pointing out that it is the "colonial peasants who suffer most considerably from this evil system (colonialism)", he argued that, "the only solution was the complete eradication of the entire economic system of colonialism, by colonial peoples, through their gaining political independence. Political freedom will open the way for the attainment of economic and social improvement and advancement." (p. 20) He concludes the booklet with the clarion call: "Peoples Of The World Unite: the working men of all countries are behind you" (p. 43).

The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah was published in 1957 when, after some ten years of struggle, his future, as well as that of his country, seemed full of promise. The name of the British colony of the Gold Coast has been changed symbolically to Ghana, an ancient and renowned African nation-

state. Nkrumah describes himself as growing up in a typical West African environment, surrounded by an extended kinship group, with the emphasis on the matrilineal line, as is the case of all people in that area. He mentions the ceremonies that drew the community together, the beliefs that guided moral conduct, and the dominant role of his mother with whom he had a special bond of affection. He considered himself a 'willful child' with perhaps unusual qualities, and one who received special attention but kept himself rather alone and at times fought savagely in defending his 'idea of justice.' During his childhood his mother converted to Catholicism and he was baptized, but as he grew older the strict discipline and dogma 'stifled' him so that he wrote, "Today I am a non-denominational Christian and a Marxist socialist and I have not found any contradiction between the two" (1957:13).

Though he refers frequently to those early years and to the continuing influence of his mother, his autobiography is essentially a political testament. He did not-- and indeed could not-- identify with the Ashanti, the largest ethnic group that dominated not only the northern areas but influenced colonial policy throughout the country. Instead, he saw himself as a unifying force overcoming tribal (ethnic) divisions, pursuing with firm dedication his own radical and political ideology of national independence until he achieved 'the hour of triumph'. He expresses his reaction when he learned that the exact day of independence was finalised:

Usually nothing can prevent me from sleeping-- during the very worst crises of my life I have always managed to escape from realities by laying my head on a pillow and drifting into a deep sleep. But on this night I lay awake until after 3:00 AM before I managed to get my sleep. During those hours the whole story of my life passed before me like some kind of pageant. I saw myself as a boy in Nzima, as a proud scholar at Achimota, as a struggling student at Lincoln; I saw myself in London where my studies gave way to politics; my return to the Gold Coast; the struggles

that ensued both from within and without; detention, positive action, imprisonment; my final acceptance as a politician-- events which were only the beginning of bigger and bigger struggles and intrigues. Then, after almost ten long years of it all, those words that represented the end of the road, the end of what had sometimes seemed to be a never-ending struggle-- just a few words on paper handed over to me quietly by the man who had both imprisoned and released me and who had since afforded me every encouragement in my arduous task. "The 6th March," I said to myself. "The 6th March. The 6th March...."

The book concludes with his vision of Pan Africanism:

I have never regarded the struggle for independence of the Gold Coast as an isolated objective but always as a part of a general world historical pattern...As a ship that has been freshly launched, we face the hazards of the high seas alone. We must rely on our own men, on the captain and on his navigation. And, as I proudly stand on the bridge of that lone vessel as she confidently sets sail, I raise a hand to shade my eyes from the glaring African sun and scan the horizon. There is so much more beyond. (1957:288)

His subsequent writings express his conceptions of the ideal, and struggles that lay 'beyond' and his rationalization for taking specific political actions. He wrote and spoke much of freedom; but freedom for him was not freedom for the individual to do as he pleases but freedom from outside oppression, requiring 'positive action'. In Marxist terms he analyzes contradictions within each situation and the necessary synthesis, or resolution. To validate his programs he sought to develop a philosophy

rooted in Africa, and different from that of the West. In Consciencism (1964) there is a lengthy discussion of his search for an ideology required as 'an inspiration and validation for action'.

His last book, Dark Days in Ghana, appeared two years after the coup that drove him into exile. It reveals anger rather than bitterness or disillusionment, an anger directed against those whom he felt had betrayed his ideals, and more especially against imperialism and neo-colonialism which he felt had contributed to his downfall.

How did the self as revealed in Nkrumah's writing correspond with the interpretations of this complex man by others. There is, as far as I know, no anthropological biography of Nkrumah though we have some fine monographs on the culture of the different peoples in Ghana. So it is to a few arbitrarily selected biographies on Nkrumah by biographers in other disciplines that I will refer. They range from the most extreme adulation (e.g., Rhona McKenzie-Rennie, whose book Nkrumah, 1977, is sub-titled The Greatest of Modern Philosophers) to critical and bitter denunciation (e.g., Peter Omari's Kwame Nkrumah: An Anatomy of An African Dictatorship, 1970). In between, giving a fuller and apparently more balanced, but inevitably subjective and selective interpretation, is Basil Davidson's Black Star: A View of the Life and Times of Kwame Nkrumah, 1974.

McKenzie-Rennie presents a hero entirely without blemish and puts as a rhetorical question "Who can contend that Kwame Nkrumah is not the Aseyefor (Redeemer)?". But even among the many tributes that constitute the second part of the same book are references to weaknesses that led to his downfall. More substantially critical is the work of Omari, a fellow Ghanaian, who does not inform us about himself nor set forth any special relationship to Nkrumah but, and I consider this a crucial clue to the understanding of Omari's vision, or portrayal, he dedicates his book to the memory of Dr. J.B. Danquah, and not to Nkrumah.

Danquah was a man of erudition and high repute as a lawyer; a spokesman for African dignity, liberal in outlook

and with courage to express his opinion. It was at Danquah's request that Nkrumah had returned from London to become secretary of the UGCC, but even then Danquah was a potential rival, a member of the intellectual elite with a middle class following. Nkrumah saw himself as a leader of the masses, a spokesman for the younger generation. When Nkrumah launched his CPP the rift between the two men widened, and the contrast in outlook grew as Nkrumah took increasing power to himself. In the plebiscite of 1959 for the position of First President of the New Republic of Ghana, they were the two contestants. Danquah was defeated. On January 8th, 1964 he was imprisoned under the Preventive Detention Act, introduced by Nkrumah in 1958, and which Danquah had on several occasions attempted to have declared unconstitutional. But he had failed. Danquah died in a detention camp on the 5th of February 1965. The following quotations indicate Omari's viewpoint:

Nkrumah and his political machinery could have had a lasting influence for good on the Ghanaian and African political scene, if he had been more sincere and less opportunistic, and tried less hard to entrench himself in power-- a characteristic of personal ambition and the immature reaction of the unseasoned politician to power and wealth. Having consistently bribed his way out of difficult situations, Nkrumah was often forced to close his eyes to corruption, which was the order of the day. (1970: 5)

Nkrumah was going to change Ghana and its institutions to his own image and likeness; but he had chosen to do it the 'legal' way, which was the way he had always done things; first, to undermine the foundations of existing institutions, and then quickly to offer alternative and apparently more realistic proposals. Within the constitutional and legal framework, he had isolated the following institutions for his assault: (i) the Party System; (ii) Parliament; and (iii) the

Judiciary. (Omari 1970: 58)

The time soon came when there was not much that the Opposition could do. For all the government's avowed concern for fair elections, they made it impossible for the Opposition to campaign effectively, for voting to be free, or the ballot secret. (Omari 1970: 63)

At independence, Ghanaians were hopeful of emulating British parliamentary institutions. But for the over-preponderance of CPP membership, and the repressive measures which were later taken against the Opposition, this might to some extent have been achieved. As it turned out, however, it was the trappings and little or nothing of the substance which was assimilated. The Legislative Assembly became a mill which churned out legislation, sitting after sitting. (Omari 1970: 67)

Omari's documentation is impressive. He lived through all the catastrophic changes-- the abolition of the party system which he associated with democracy, the interference with the legal system using the law itself as an instrument to pervert justice, the control of the press and curtailment of freedom of criticism. He does not ignore or deny the appeal of Nkrumah's aspirations, nor his organizational ability, but analyzes 'Nkrumaism' as a cult and 'consciencism' as a vast catch all, not a coherent philosophy of African socialism. He quotes with approval the denigrative description of the Nkrumah institute of ideology at Winnaba, and he treats Nkrumaism as the propagandist device of a personal political machine.

Implicitly, as well as by explicit references, Danquah is the model against whom Omari measures Nkrumah and finds him wanting. And at the time of writing (1969), Danquah was dead and Nkrumah in exile. Omari places the main responsibility for the situation that led to the coup-- the collapse of the economy, the corruption of the bureaucracy, the frustration of the students-- on the complex and

contradictory personality of Nkrumah as expressed in his policy and his ideology. The picture that remains is of a man adept at intrigue, driven by ambition, who conceived of the CPP as Ghana and Ghana as the CPP, and who did not differentiate between his person and the party. For all his ideals and achievements, Nkrumah remains in Omari's presentation a dangerous megalomaniac and a tyrant.

Let us now look briefly at the interpretation of Nkrumah by Basil Davidson. Davidson is a socialist oriented historian who treats history less as an academic exercise, with emphasis on detailed footnotes, recondite sources, than as a description and affirmation of values in the past relevant to action in the present. At the same time he opens his book with Othello's plea for impartial justice: "Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, nor set down ought in malice".

Black Star, published in 1973, is to some extent a personal memoir based on contacts with Nkrumah since 1952. In it, Davidson brings out what he considers to be the contradictions in Nkrumah's character. But it is in the occasional emotive word, and selective interpretations within the total situation, that Davidson's own self emerges. He does not accept the view of more hostile critics who denounce Nkrumah as "vain, corrupt and tyrannical", but concludes that Nkrumah "wanted above all to make life better for ordinary people". In Davidson's eyes it was pressure of circumstance that laid Nkrumah low.

Like it or not, he had become the sole decider of what was done in terms of policy and government action. Was he therefore a dictator? He was anything but a dictator by intention, or in his general attitude to those who opposed him or tried to kill him, or in his political and social beliefs. But he was terribly alone. (Davidson 1974:187)

Perhaps Davidson's sympathetic portrayal of Nkrumah as a man "terribly alone" is a mirror image of a dictator who has lost the support of the masses, and who, having discarded

or rejected his lieutenants was in turn deserted by them. Davidson agrees with Nkrumah's criticism of capitalism and shares Nkrumah's faith in something called 'African socialism'-- but this is a vague and not always consistent set of beliefs that can be used by people with different goals. To Davidson, Nkrumah remains a man of vision, whose main weakness is 'impatience.' So that "at least after 1962 he wanted to go too far too fast...His trouble was that he saw the future more clearly than he understood the present, not an all together rare case among prophets...his central problem came from the fact of being involved in the contradiction between what was practicable and what was desirable" (p. 215-216). Thus Davidson is able to de-emphasize the importance attached by others to Nkrumah's drive for power, his introduction of repressive legislation, and to omit certain tragic facts, such as the circumstances of Danquah's death. Perhaps for Davidson, Amilcar Cabral is the 'real hero.' Davidson has written in the highest terms of Cabral and quotes twice, with approval, from Cabral's memorial tribute to Nkrumah as "the strategist of genius in the struggle against classical colonialism," (p. 217)

How would the writers on Nkrumah-- including Nkrumah himself-- interpret another leader: Jomo Kenyatta? Unfortunately, we could only answer this by idle speculation. There is, however, evidence that though Nkrumah and Kenyatta met frequently in England and worked together towards the goal of independence, they disagreed on political tactics and were temperamentally incompatible. In his autobiography, Nkrumah mentions among other members active in organizing the 5th Pan African Congress, "Jomo Kenyatta, who was later held responsible for the Mau Mau movement" (p. 55). Basil Davidson was familiar with both men. But Kenyatta has attracted his own biographers.

Let me begin again with a few basic facts. Jomo Kenyatta's home name was Kamau. The exact day and month of his birth is known-- 20th of October-- but the year is uncertain, with 1891 as the most generally acceptable. His birth place was Ngenda; in the heart of Kenya, the area of the Kikuyu-- the most numerous ethnic group in what was then British East Africa. The Kikuyu were patrilineal, and polygamy the accepted index of male status. Kamau's father

was a small farmer, his grandfather a traditional doctor. His mother, one of several wives, died when he was young. His initial Western education started in 1909 in a Church of Scotland Mission School. In 1914 he was baptized and given the name Johnstone. In 1917 he took refuge with neighboring Maasai to escape being forced into war-time service in the Carrier Corp. His political activities began in 1925 when he joined the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). In 1929 he went to London to present the KCA's objectives to the British Colonial Office. Before returning to Kenya he also visited Moscow and attended a communist sponsored International Worker's College in Hamburg. In 1931 he again went overseas. He studied English at a Quaker institute in Birmingham (1931-1932), Politics at the University of Moscow (1932-1933), and Anthropology (under Bronislaw Malinowski) at the London School of Economics and Political Science (1934-1936). He remained overseas doing mainly political and educational work and also working as a farm laborer in England. On his return to Kenya in 1947 he was elected President of the Kenyan African Union (KAU) (which in 1961 became the Kenyan African National Union-KANU). On the 20th of October, 1952 he was arrested under the Emergency Act and charged with masterminding Mau Mau activities. He was found guilty and sentenced to concurrent prison terms of seven and three years. He was released on April 15th, 1959, but detained. In 1961 he received unconditional release. In 1963 Kenya received internal self-government and Kenyatta, as president of KANU, became the first Prime Minister. On December 12th, 1964 Kenya became a Republic within the British Commonwealth with Kenyatta as President. He died on the 22nd of August 1978. (Current Biography 1971:198-200)

Kenyatta's writings are few; his recorded speeches numerous. His first book Facing Mount Kenya (1938), is not a conventional autobiography, nor is it a conventional anthropological monograph. It is a book about the Kikuyu, based on his own knowledge and experience. In his preface he gives information on his credentials-- his identity as a Kikuyu, his education as a Kikuyu, the lore he absorbed from the elders, his familiarity with custom, his extensive kinship ties, his initiation as a member of an age-group, his apprenticeship to his grandfather-- 'a seer and a magician,'-- his knowledge of new religious cults and finally his special

expertise on 'the vitally important question of land tenure'.

He records that in writing this book he "kept under considerable constraint the sense of political grievance which no progressive African can fail to experience." Throughout, the point of reference is implicitly himself (i.e., the self of Jomo Kenyatta) trying to explain the meaning of Kikuyu life to strangers.

Kenyatta, unlike Nkrumah, made no pretense at theoretical analysis though he accepted a general idea of 'African socialism'. His short book, My People of Kikuyu and The Life of Chief Wangombe is in two parts: in the first (My People), he presents his ideal of human behavior in terms of development through different stages of government as revealed in Kikuyu legends. In the initial stage the government was in the hands of women who could have as many husbands as they pleased and were especially partial to young men. But they forgot their responsibilities and abused their power until the men could no longer stand it, and in their indignation, "they revolted against the women and overthrew their tyrannical rule." (1942:7)

When the men took over, they introduced chieftainship and reversed marriage rules; by introducing polygamy the chief and the elderly men (who used to be despised) became all powerful. Kenyatta points out the moral: "we see that in this earliest revolution the people who suffered most took advantage of the change to gain power". But then the chief himself became oppressive, restricting the marriage age of younger men and demanding more service for himself. Finally, the warriors revolted and "dethroned the despot". Then the elders and the warriors together deliberately planned a better government: instead of a monarchy they put authority into the hands of a council of elders supported by strong councils of warriors. This was still part of the Kikuyu system of government in Kenyatta's youth.

I have not the time to elaborate further, but from what I have shown his line of thought is clear: My People of Kikuyu is an allegory of the destructive abuse of political power. It is interesting to me that he makes no reference to Engel's Origin of the Family (in which each stage was

marked by changes in property and modes of production) though this might well have been a text in Kenyatta's Moscow studies and was definitely a topic discussed in anthropology seminars at the London School of Economics.

In the second part of the book (The Life of Chief Wangomba), Kenyatta projects an ideal self not as a Marxist revolutionary but as a non-hereditary African leader, on the model of Wangomba, a man who became chief through brave and noble deeds, a warrior of outstanding courage, ready to enter into a treaty of friendship with erstwhile enemies once he had evidence that they came in peace.

In the preface to the 1966 edition Kenyatta writes: "This book was first presented in defiance, as a tribute to those members of the Kikuyu-- and indeed of other tribes who had already spent or sacrificed their lives in the service of African ideals".

Kenyatta's writings contain political and moral precepts rather than abstract ideas. In 1966 he authorized the publication of Suffering Without Bitterness, a work partly autobiographical and partly biographical. In the foreword he provides an interpretation of himself:

If asked to define what causes have inspired my life and striving, I would say that I have stood always for the purposes of human dignity in freedom, and for values of tolerance and peace. Yet today, in our sophisticated world society, such simplicities are overwhelmed by complexities of ideology and power. I sometimes wonder who, among the humble men of great or struggling nations, can really benefit, when expediency obscures justice, or when cunning and force outweigh what is right.

Writing in 1961, his first biographer George Delf states that : "Leading African nationalist politicians often acquired contradictory reputations but few have attracted

such controversies as the Kenyan African leader, Jomo Kenyatta." Delf points out that in the fifties Kenyatta had many enemies including some of his own people, who worked closely with white settlers, and that one governor described him as "the African leader to darkness and death." The critical period of Mau Mau has not been forgotten and it is regrettable that the true record of the case has been less publicised than the horrors for which Kenyatta was held responsible.

But to develop my thesis, that the biographer leaves his own imprint on the central character, I will refer more specifically to Not Yet Uhuru by Oginga Odinga (1967), and to Kenyatta by Jeremy Murray-Brown (1979). Though Not Yet Uhuru is Odinga's autobiography, much of it relates to Kenyatta with whom he was in close association. Odinga was not a Kikuyu but a Luo, the second most numerous ethnic group in Kenya with its territorial base in Nyanza, in the west. However, he had served as vice-president of KANU and was one of the few who publicly upheld Kenyatta's leadership during his imprisonment and banishment, and persistently demanded his release. "Kenyatta was not only the leader, he was the symbol of the people's political aspirations or hope to attain them" (pp. 197-198). Odinga stated that to him it was vital that there should be no friction between the younger leaders who were growing up and the old guards of Kenyatta's generation and that for him (Odinga) the question of his Luo (ethnic) identity was subordinated to his national interests. But Odinga was also radical and outspoken, and during Kenyatta's imprisonment he visited Russia and China, giving his enemies the opportunity to intrigue against him for his 'communist affiliations'. Odinga argued that ethnic divisions were being exploited by anti-Kenyatta politicians including a number of white settlers and opposition parties (such as KADU). It is generally agreed that it was largely through Odinga's influence that in the first election, though fought without Kenyatta's presence, KANU polled 67% of the votes, KADU only 16% and four other parties the remainder. But at this point Kenyatta's support of Odinga weakened. Kenyatta had listed Odinga as Minister of Finance in his new cabinet, but when the colonial office vetoed this, instead of standing firm, Kenyatta removed his name from

the list.

Antagonism between them intensified as Kenyatta became increasingly conservative, and Odinga's criticism became more specific.

Everyone advocates 'African Socialism' but in the case of most party and government leaders this has become a cloak for the practice of total capitalism. These politicians want to build a capitalist system in the image of Western capitalism but are too embarrassed or dishonest to call it that. Their interpretation of independence and 'African Socialism' is that they should move into jobs and privileges previously held by the settlers. If Kenya started uhuru without an African elite class she is now rapidly acquiring one. Ministers and top civil servants compete with one another to buy more farms, acquire more directorships and own bigger cars and grander houses. (Odinga 1967:302)

Odinga reports that allegations were made that he was seeking to replace the president and undermine the government. Finally he was demoted and excluded from the inner council, whereupon he resigned and together with some other elected members formed a new party, The Kenya Peoples Union (KPU). Its expressed aims were winning the support of the peasants (through redistribution of land), of the urban workers (through reorganization of trade unions), of the government (through regulating wages); and of gaining greater recognition of Kenya through extending alliances with other countries.

Kenyatta responded to the program of the KPU with a threat, or as he put it, "a warning" in what became known as the "Speech on Dissident Activity" (26 April 1966). When Odinga's book was completed the foreword was written by Nkrumah, in exile in Conakry. According to Jeremy Murray-Brown, to whom we will turn next, a violent public

confrontation between Kenyatta and Odinga's supporters in 1969 led to the banning of the K.P.U. and the detention of Odinga and other leaders. It was after more than a year of imprisonment that Odinga was permitted to return to his home among the Luo.

Murray-Brown has received the highest acclaim for his biography of Kenyatta. Of himself the author, an Oxford trained historian, informs us:

I was born on the north-west frontier of India when it still seemed as though the sun would never set on the British Empire. My parents and grandparents believed unquestioningly in the civilizing mission and gave their working lives to its fulfillment in India. I have relatives and friends who have done, and are still doing, the same thing in Africa. I should like to think this book helped to promote understanding between those who still cherish the past and those who are looking for a new world order (1979: 13).

Murray-Brown's Kenyatta is a model biography presenting essential facts and events in the life of a selected individual in a social historical context, and it portrays the person in all his particularities. We are introduced to different aspects of Kenyatta-- in a particular homestead, in a particular mission school, running particular business enterprises, etc. With unusual thoroughness Murray-Brown penetrates the relationship of Kenyatta to the church, and the moral struggles, challenges, responses and conflicts it provokes. His own identification with church values acts as a filter behind his description. It is with similar insight that he examines Kenyatta's interaction with 'detribalized Kikuyu' such as Harry Thuku and with the Indians whose cultural differences added to the complexity and difficulties of life in East Africa. Kenyatta's friendship moved across the boundaries of creed or color, and Murray-Brown presents him in all his fullness. His interpretation to some extent reflects an enlarged image of Kenyatta's self-portrait. It also adds new material to the

original and greater depth, and shows vividly how unexpected circumstances influenced character and changed loyalties.

Murray-Brown refrains from passionate denunciations but his own moral standards and convictions emerge in his presentation. His chapter on Kenyatta's trial at Kapenguria exposes with little personal comment, but in the selection, from the recorded interrogations, his own principles or reflections of the way in which 'justice' can be perverted in the name of 'law and order.'

Murray-Brown is closer to Kenyatta than to Odinga in general outlook. He, like Kenyatta in his later years, appears as moderate and liberal; his portrayal of the more radical Odinga is influenced by his own attitude towards revolutionary methods. Moreover, he interprets the conflicts in Kenya as being rooted in ethnic differences, while Odinga emphasized differences in ideology and action. Murray-Brown's preferences for the Kikuyu, who considered themselves an elite, emerge inadvertently. Having described the elections of 1969 in which the Kikuyu, though only 20% of the population, filled most of the important positions in government and administration, he remarks that, "This was in large measure justified by their natural abilities." The biography ends on a somewhat pious note in tune with his presentation of self: "To live under God in hope for the future, and not in regret for the past is Kenyatta's legacy to mankind". (322)

My third example is King Sobhuza II of Swaziland, one of the few rulers who has retained and even extended his power after 10 years of independence from Colonial Rule. He is in a different category from either Nkrumah or Kenyatta since his claim to leadership is based ultimately on pedigree by birth. Inevitably since the French Revolution a monarchy is a controversial institution. Monarchical systems associated with a wide range of institutions and offices, and with different levels of centralisation, developed in the African continent. The Swazi system, though in some respects unique, is basically similar to that of other African kingdoms most of which have not survived the period of post-colonial independence. Among the Swazi

kinship is hereditary in the male line of the ruling family of the Nkosi Dlamini clan but clan exogamy is the rule and polygamy is an essential component of the traditional system. A major principle influencing the choice of successor is the differential ranking of wives, as mothers. Mother and son together symbolize Swazi sovereignty; she is titled the Ndlovukazi (She-Elephant) and he the Ngwenyama (Lion). If the natural mother dies first a surrogate mother is appointed Ndlovukazi, but if the Ngwenyama dies first a new reign is inaugurated. Sobhuza II is the longest reigning monarch in Africa.

Again I will begin with a few undisputed biographical facts. He was born at Swazi ritual capital, Zombodze, in central Swaziland, on the 22nd of July, 1899, the opening year of the Anglo-Boer War. (The exact day was only 'discovered' in 1967, at his instigation. With the approach of independence he did not want the nation to celebrate the birthday of a foreign sovereign). His father, Ngwane V. commonly known as Bhunu, died when Sobhuza, then known only as Nkhotfotjeni, was five months old. His mother, Lomawa Ndwandwe, of Zulu stock was selected as main wife and future Nlovukazi. Throughout his minority, Bhunu's mother and a senior prince acted as regents. On the 12th December, 1921, he was fully installed with the name of Sobhuza II and the title of Ngwenyama, and Lomawa assumed the role and title of Ndlovukazi. Following the traditional installation, Sobhuza was publicly appointed Paramount Chief of the Swazi by the British who has assumed undivided control over the whole of Swaziland in 1903 and in 1907, under a Land Concession Proclamation, had granted whites possession of two thirds of the country with Swazi customary rights restricted to the remaining third.

From the time of his selection Sobhuza was trained in Swazi tradition and history. His formal Western education was limited to a local non-denomination, national school (1907-1915) three years of secondary education at a Scottish mission school in the Ciskei (South Africa, 1916-1918) and a tutor at home (1919-1921).

His public duties as Ngwenyama began in 1922 when he went with a deputation to England to put before the colonial

office the grievances of his people, more especially the violations of their rights to land and claims to sovereignty. In 1924 on behalf of the nation he brought a case ostensibly against Allister Miller and the Swaziland Corporation, but in essence against the British government charging that Swaziland has been illegally taken by the British and the rights of the Swazi violated. The charge was dismissed with costs. In 1926 the case went on appeal to the Privy Council in London; again the Swazi lost. In 1941 Sobhuza sent Swazi regiments to aid Britain and her allies, and that same year he petitioned for more land with limited success. From 1944 until independence in 1968, he and his council struggled for greater participation in administration and the recovery of Swaziland and/or mineral rights. In 1963 the British government imposed a constitution for the first Legislative Council. In 1964 he announced the formation of the Imbokodvo National Movement, to contest the elections. In 1967 Swaziland was granted self-government and from being paramount chief of the Swazi he was recognized as Ngwenyama and King of Swaziland. In 1973 he repealed this constitution. In 1978 he announced a new constitution combining traditional and modern principles of election.

Unfortunately, Sobhuza has written no books but he is an eloquent speaker and there is a rich archival documentation of his approach, his values, his concept of kingship, and his struggles as a traditional African king in the modern world. A number of books have been written about Swaziland, a few relating more specifically to Sobhuza. Sobhuza II: Ngwenayama and King of Swaziland is as yet the only full length biography. So now I must try to confront myself. But how to look at how one sees oneself in the description one gives of another is a complex process beyond the scope of this paper. I can only say that I doubt if any one knows the self well enough to fully interpret others, and every portrayal is both limited and biased. This was particularly so in this case. I had previously published monographs, articles, a novel, an ethnographic play and short stories, experimenting with different styles to convey the complexity of a monarchical system, the richness and quality of Swazi culture and also the tensions confronting individuals. My friendship with Sobhuza dates back to 1934; in 1970 I was granted Swazi citizenship by

kukhonta (allegiance). But, I trained as a functional-structuralist anthropologist; I had not contemplated writing his biography official or unofficial. When I agreed to undertake this task, it was with some hesitation. Where should I begin? What could I include? What should I exclude? What should be the cut-off point? I soon realized that an official biography carries inherent limitations. In my case it involved self-censorship as well as censorship by others.

In my opening chapter, An Essential Introduction, I state the unusual circumstances of my task and my credentials. Mine was a cabinet appointment and I was to be assisted by a high-powered advisory committee-- the King's private secretary, the Minister of Justice, Swaziland's first Ambassador and the Chief Archivist. Cooperation was stimulating but immensely difficult and Sobhuza made it clear that this was not his autobiography but the story of his role in the history of his country and it was we not he who were interpreting the events. A more formal element entered into our own relationship as we realized the political implications of the task. An official biography is explicitly selective; in other biographies selection is often implicit and unacknowledged.

I present Sobhuza's life in chronological sequence with major events as turning points and in relation to other prominent personalities. I recognize that this biography illuminates a period of history from a predominantly royalist perspective. Throughout I tried to express Sobhuza's viewpoint and his interests, while raising for his consideration other points of view. In the course of talks over many years, I had some insight into his character and his ideas in general, but while we had previously discussed virtually any and every topic, in his official biography I concentrated on more controversial national issues, such as his attitude to 'democracy', elections, private property, trade unions, missions, witchcraft, tourism, women. In writing the book I tried to combine a 'life history' with a biography, using the accepted techniques of participant observer as well as historical records. I listened to what he said and compared it with how he had acted in various crises-- the

strikes of 1963; the opposition of various individuals (among whom were close relatives); his dealings with leaders and governments outside of Swaziland.

There is a cryptic Swazi idiom "inkosi Kabili" (a king is king twice), explained as meaning that a king is king of both his family and of the nation. The two are interlocked, but their interests are not always identical. Nepotism is reinterpreted in terms of obligations. The domestic as well as the national dimensions of kingship received attention, but since this was an official biography, the personal element was dealt with only insofar as it had public recognition, or national implications.

Sobhuza's education was oriented to two worlds-- that of Africa and that of England -- and one cannot understand Sobhuza without appreciating the tension between the two. He was born into kingship but trained to be a king. The training he received largely through his paternal grandmother-- a remarkable woman who dominated Swazi politics throughout the reign of her son as well as throughout the long minority of her grandson-- was designed to inculcate in him a Swazi identity and cultural nationalism and at the same time to equip him with skills considered necessary to negotiate with foreigners in control of greater military force.

Generally speaking, the education of a king's son is conservative, but paradoxically the education that the leaders of his people required for Sobhuza was such as to equip him to challenge both the overriding authority of the British king and later, the peculiarly British system of government. (Kuper, p. 43)

Throughout the book runs a recurrent theme-- the importance to Sobhuza of custom as a resource in dealing with new situations-- social, political, economic. Tradition was, however, used by him "as a guideline in planning the future, not as a fetter to chain his people to the past." This helped explain his response to new technological developments (such as irrigation, afforestations and

mining), as well as to challenges of other political ideologies. I asked the question, "Could Swazi independence be treated as a revolution-- a radical shift in the power structure? Or as a rebellion-- a replacement of incumbents previously in power by others of the same type? Or as a revitalization-- the attempt to revive a previous and idealised system?" It is clear that Sobhuza does not see himself as a revolutionary-- but as a revitalizing leader, putting new life into old form, building new structures on deeply laid foundations, the described independence as a re-birth. He always stressed the danger of grasping at foreign ideas or material things because they belonged to those in power, and warned of 'the foolishness' of listening to enticing promises that could not be fulfilled. He is no theoretician; and does not pretend to be one, nor does he express himself in favor of any "ism"-- capitalism, socialism or communism. He expounds his thoughts (philosophy?) in parable and allegory (modes of speech open to different interpretations), at the same time that his approach is essentially pragmatic.

Sobhuza appears as both a statesman and a politician, struggling to adapt his people into the modern world without losing their Swazi identity or jeopardizing peace. Thus he deliberately selected his councilors from among the young and westernized ("the new men") and the old guard, and from different occupational and racial groups. It was typical that when in 1973 he finally introduced a modern army, he built it into the traditional system of age regiments and appointed as its commanding officer a man qualified by experience in customary service and also trained in rural development by the British.

I suggest that Sobhuza sees himself as carrying on the role of his namesake, Sobhuza I, better known as Somhlolo (the Worker of Wonders) who survived confrontation with Chaka of the Zulu and attacks by Zwide of the Ndwandwe. It was he who united the clans, and managed by use of traditional alliances and diplomacy to develop a nation in the midst of enemies, black and white. The form of government established by Sobhuza I became a model at different periods of the reign of Sobhuza II, particularly during the struggle for independence when he took a leading role in

the arena of modern politics, and again in 1973 when he repealed the Independence Constitution drafted by the British and assumed "supreme control". Unlike the rulers the decision was made in consultation with, and finally at the request of, both houses of parliament and of the Swazi National Council, the transition took place without violence, and much of the machinery of the former government was retained. Sobhuza also promised a new constitution more in keeping with Swazi traditions and aspirations. This task proved more difficult than he had anticipated; he likens his position to that of a man carrying a clay pot of such value that he himself has to be carried, lest he stumble and fall and the vessel break. (Kuper, 1978:139) In 1978 Sobhuza, as King-in-Council, introduced as "an experiment" a system of elections combining various modes of representation in a "no-party state" without a written constitution.

He is acutely aware that his country is caught in the political cross-fire of the apartheid regime of South Africa and the radical socialism of Maputo, and that within its own borders new factions are preparing to struggle for power. He does not know whom to trust. It was inevitable that I, as official biographer, was asked not to discuss the issue that concerns us all: Can the monarchy survive the monarch.

I ended his biography as follows:

The problem of Sobhuza's successor is never openly discussed, though it lurks in the shadows of the minds of all interested in the future of his country and his people. No queen has been taken in such a way as to indicate publicly that she will be the Queen Mother, and no son has the right to claim that he is the Crown Prince. But who can replace Sobhuza?.....

Though the continuity of the nation does not depend on the living presence of a particular king, kingship has been the core of Swazi national identity. Times are changing and monarchies are generally

considered less secure than in the past, but is a monarchy necessarily less democratic than a Republic, a president preferable to a King. To this hoary question philosophers and political scientists gave no single answer. But this particular study runs counter to a self-satisfied and unfounded belief current in many circles, particularly in the west, that a traditional African King is a tyrant, that African monarchy is tantamount to African despotism, that an appointed monarch is less representative of the wish of the majority than an elected President. We find in Swaziland a king who built a modern nation within a political system in which leadership was not sought after, in which individual competition and rivalry were considered destructive, in which consultation at different levels was essential, in which national interests were considered more important than the freedom of the King himself. Power and privilege are inherent in the Kingship; but for Sobhuza, his inherited position spelt responsibility, self-restraint, respect for others, and also the courage to express unpopular opinions for unselfish reasons. He has filled his position with humility and dignity, and stands out in modern history as a good King, a wise statesman, a gracious man. (p. 347)

Other interpretations tend to be more critical and at times hostile. They represent a range of political viewpoints and implicit rather than explicit assumptions. To emphasize my point I will first select South African Hostages by Jack Halpern, a well known journalist whose book, published by Penguin in 1965, is widely read and often quoted. For many years Halpern wrote on race relations and the problems of Southern and Central Africa for leading papers in Africa and in England.

South African Hostages covers the three former High Commission Territories (Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland) in terms of their respective leaders, and policies and future directions. Sobhuza is not the focus, but a leading character in a broad historical context. The book is persuasive, well written and the 'facts' are there.

Much of the book is devoted to a political analysis of the power struggle between South Africa and Britain insofar as their joint and separate interests have affected, and could affect, the three territories. Halpern exposes the evil, and the danger, of the South African connection at the same time that he does not mitigate the past neglect and perfidy of Britain. In this framework he examines policies of local leaders and passes judgment on their character. There is remarkably little discrepancy between the historical data presented in South African Hostages and in Sobhuza II; and in both there is a critical approach to colonial policies and a condemnation of apartheid. But, and this is important for my argument, Halpern also puts forward practical suggestions as to how Britain can write a 'decent finis' to her colonial history in Africa.

Throughout the book, Halpern equates the progressive with the western interpreting Sobhuza's caution in following westernisation as frustrating "effective development" rather than as expressing a possible and viable alternative mode of development. South African Hostages is a testament of Halpern's commitment to his ideals and faith in western institutions of democracy... "While he does not openly reject a monarchy as such, his concept of an acceptable monarchy appears to be that of 20th century England in which a sovereign reigns but does not rule and power is vested in a parliament based on a secret ballot and free elections involving more than one political party. He does not accept the reality of restraints contained in a complex monarchical system in which the sovereign states that he rules as well as reigns at the same time that his freedom is restricted by his obligation to express the consensus of the people. Halpern's sympathies obviously lie with the opposition to the approach of a traditional African king.

Let me illustrate this a little more fully. In his

account of constitutional developments in the '60s, Halpern implicitly supports the viewpoint of British officials and others who opposed Sobhuza's decision to inaugurate the Imbokodvo National Movement by presenting them as enlightened and modern in contrast to Sobhuza-- a "tribal feudal king"-- who decided "to enter politics on his own account" and who "named the new political group 'Imbokodo', which means a grindstone which is hard, compact and difficult to break." Halpern attaches no value to the traditional modes of discussion and representation which preceded Sobhuza's decision and indicated widespread support for his action, nor does Halpern refer to the explanation given by Sobhuza for the name imbokodyo as a domestic utensil essential to every homestead is the preparation of the daily food by breaking the separate grains into the basic paste; and by adding that the full name should be Imbokodvo yem balambala -- the grind-stone-that-brings-together-different-colors'-- i.e., a unifying symbol.

In similar vein, Halpern states that "...whilst Sobhuza make good use with simple Swazi of the Ngwenyama's traditional title as 'the mouth that speaks no lies' others think he is better described by one of the names his father gave him: Mona, which means jealousy." But in fact the 'title' is more generally interpreted as a reminder of his obligation as a king to express a general consensus-- i.e., to act as the nation's "mouthpiece," and the name Mona, given him by his grandmother, refers, according to another interpretation, to the jealousy surrounding his father's sudden death and possibly threatening his own life.

Halpern also puts the worst interpretation on Sobhuza's attitude to South Africa, and alleges that, as late as 1964, there were grounds for believing that he and the Swazi National Council were attracted by South Africa's offer to take over the 'protection' of their tribal privileges and life. (p. 359) He does not mention Sobhuza's public denial of this allegation (see Kuper, 1978: 256-257) nor appreciate Sobhuza's skill in dealing with pressures from different groups. Halpern emphasises Sobhuza's consultation with "his South African Nationalist lawyer, Mr. Van Wyk de Vries, who is a member of the secret and sinister Broederbond Society dominating all aspects of South African Government." (p.357)

He does not, however, mention others lawyers of more liberal outlook whom Sobhuza also consulted, following his principle that it is always best to seek many opinions before making one's own decision.

Assessing Sobhuza as "the crucial figure in Swaziland" after his success in the first elections, Halpern writes cautiously "Traditionalist and patriarchal in outlook, he pays much attention to his ritualistic duties. But he has proved himself a shrewd and stubborn operator in his protracted and continuing political fight to control directly mineral and land rights and to stultify Swaziland's young political parties." (368-369)

Scattered throughout the book are more hostile statements, so that it is hard to reconcile the image drawn by Halpern with my own description. In South African Hostages he appears as avaricious; as an egoist "with a magnified idea of his own importance" as uncritical and surrounding himself with sycophants; as unprincipled and opportunistic-- in short as a leader unworthy of admiration or loyalty.

I suggest that Halpern's interpretation relies largely on interviews and documents critical of, and often antagonistic to Sobhuza, with whom he had little personal contact; my interpretation is to some extent weighted on the other side. Each carries its own political message, but in one case it is that of an outsider using his own standards of values, in the other of an outsider trying to express views from within.

Sobhuza will be 81 in July of the year (1980). His next biographer could well be a political scientist or a historian, able to write with the vision of hindsight. A political scientist, Christopher Potholm, is already equipped for the task. He has written several profiles of Sobhuza as well as a full length book, Swaziland: The Dynamics of Political Modernization (1972) in which he analyses with considerable skill the crucial period of party politics and the coming of independence with the monarchy in control. He presents a sympathetic protrait of Sobhuza but argues that his success was mainly due to the weakness and rivalries of his opponents. The implication

is that modernization and a traditional monarchy are incompatible in the long run.

In a later article, "The Ngwenyama of Swaziland," contributed to a volume titled African Kingships in Perspective (1977, pp. 129-159), Potholm deals specifically with the achievement of Sobhuza as a political animal. The analysis is made in terms of sets of specified variables and seeks to ascertain whether Sobhuza's success was ultimately due to (1) his advantages as a king and his political expertise; (2) the mistakes of the opposition; and (3) the factors inherent in the international subsystem of Southern Africa; or a subtle combination of all three (p. 140). Special attention is given to the resources available to him in the traditional institution of kingship and how he developed these to his advantage when confronted by "the thrust of modernity." Potholm concludes that Sobhuza demonstrated "a quick and resolute mind and a willingness to experiment and remain flexible in the face of challenges to his position and that of the Swazi nation" (p. 137). He also comments on Sobhuza's "skill and ability to generate consensus in the Swazi decision making process," and on how he served "as an agent of modernity in the socio-economic system." Potholm argues that, "In this dynamis context, the Swazi experience offers an interesting amendment to the widely held theory that economic and political modernity are inimical to the maintenance of traditional authority." (p. 140)

In contrast with the previous writers, Potholm scrupulously avoids any overt commitment, either personal (as in Sobhuza II) or ideological (as in South Africa's Hostages). His work falls squarely within the more generally accepted boundaries of academic objectivity. It is the approach of an outsider observing the strategems of players in a game in which the prize is power-- the measure of political success. He comments on the players, follows their movements, tries to explain the rules, count the score and predict the winners. But the rules are flexible, players are complex individuals who often hide more than they reveal, and since the game of politics has no fixed limit of time or space the field itself is open unforeseen events take place and unanticipated decisions are taken. Pure empiricism imposes its own limitations.

I began this paper with an examination of why the biography is not generally accepted or widely used by anthropologists, and I tried to show that it involves not only knowledge of a foreign society but a different approach to the individual, including the self.

In conclusion, we are left with the unanswered question: what is the truth, or more exactly, where does truth lie? For it appears to me that there is no single truth nor even different angles and perceptions of 'the but several possible truths according to individual experience and committment. A biography is not a case of six characters in search of an author, but of six authors in search of a character, and when they find him they might not recognize him, and in any case each will see him somewhat differently. In the process of this seeing, external facts are transformed into conceptualized experience with the observer (author) an active factor in representation, not a passive recipient of register.

A biography obviously does not fall into any restrictive definition of science but it is one way of moving across the narrow and more static boundaries of structure and the rigid formulation of custom. It is able to show, inter alia, how time is differently interpreted by people in the same life cycle, that the span of life itself is a changing perspective, that chance or accident may contribute more than "planning" (i.e., attempts at prediction), and that there is always an area of uncertainty.

The use of biography in the presentation of anthropological material adds a historical and a personal dimension to the more conventional, accepted anthropological monograph. It also raises in acute form fundamental issues of objectivity, the nature of evidence, the authenticity of translation, and the ambiguity of communication.

But, and this is my final point, biographies are not written in a vacuum. They reflect different levels of reality. At one level they are reflections of the self in complex interactions with others; at another level they are empirical data affecting real people. In the case of political figures the second level is the more significant,

revealing conflicting political currents with implications for future action in a world of events beyond the self, and far more powerful.

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*In composing this paper I drew upon a wide range of relevant literature and writers to whom I have not referred directly, but to add a long list of names would be out of keeping with the rest of the text. I would, however, like to acknowledge the help I received in its preparation from Gelya Frank and Michael Paolisso. My special thanks to James H. Freeman and Ronald Cohen for their helpful criticisms of Sobhuza II and for increasing my understanding of biography in general during our many discussions at the Center for Advanced Studies, Palo Alto, 1976-1977.

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