



—Howard Coster.

THE AUTHOR: "Consciously there is a part of me that is closely identified with Europe," Laurens van der Post has written in the introduction to "The Dark Eye in Africa," "but at heart I am indelibly and irrevocably in and of Africa." The popular conception of the white man in Africa is, at best, that of an employee in a gigantic adoption agency, but evidence of Colonel van der Post's deep association with the continent lies in practically every sentence he writes. Born in an Orange Free State village, of *voortrekker*, or pioneer, Dutch parentage, Van der Post's first language was Afrikaans, and he spoke no English until he was ten. His childhood travels took him from the interior to the Cape of Good Hope and Japan, and at the start of World War II, being in England, he enlisted in the Commandos as a private and emerged ten years later a colonel.

He served in Abyssinia, North Africa, Syria, the Dutch East Indies, and Java, where he had been sent at General Wavell's request to organize guerilla resistance and where he was taken prisoner by the Japanese. Since the war Van der Post has carried out a number of special missions for the British Government, the most recent being to the Kalahari Desert of South Africa. He lists his vocations as writer, explorer, and farmer, having farmed both in Africa and England, where he and his wife own a house in Chelsea and a cottage in Suffolk. But Africa and its (and the world's) problems of race can claim four of his five books and most of his thoughts. Several years ago, recounting in *Holiday* how a terrible mass despair had engulfed his Japanese prison camp after forced attendance at some brutal executions, Van der Post wrote, "Something had to be done, but what? Without any effort on my part the answer presented itself: 'Go and talk Africa to them.'" He did, for hours and with such feeling that the sense of final defeat never returned. He has been "talking Africa to them" ever since. —RICHARD LEMON.

AFRICA

What Is the African Soul?

"The Dark Eye in Africa," by Laurens van der Post (William Morrow, 224 pp. \$3), is a South African's attempt to answer some of the problems of Black and White in his native continent. Our reviewer is Stuart Cloete, author of "The African Giant."

By Stuart Cloete

ALMOST every week there are books about the problem of Black and White in Africa. Many of them very superficial and most of them with a strong anti-White bias, written by men who have never lived there and do not realize the difficulties of what I call the "African Transition"—transition from the early Iron Age to the terrible and complex period in which we live where man is utterly divorced from reality.

There have been several exceptions recently. Notable among these is John Gunther's "Inside Africa." Gunther is a trained observer. His book is important because it is so comprehensive. Minor errors are more than compensated for by the massive overall of the design. Now we have Colonel Laurens van der Post's "The Dark Eye in Africa." Like myself, Van der Post is a South African. Our ancestors were among the first settlers who landed in Table Land three hundred years ago. Our country is in our blood. All three of us agree that Africa is changing, that there can be no status quo. All three of us, at one time or other, have made our own separate contribution to the general picture which the reading public, ignorant of this vast continent, must paint in its own mind.

"The Dark Eye" consists of two main parts: the basis for discussion; and the discussion, or discussions. A series of questions are posed by an American lady, a missionary's wife, an Englishwoman, an Afrikaner, an English-speaking South African, and many others. Colonel van der Post answers in great detail in his inimitable prose.

Some of his answers I agree with. But the subject is so controversial that full agreement at all points in any group is almost impossible. But his most important message is that

the trouble in Africa is spiritual and not economic. That the African suffering from the general world unrest. We are all in danger of losing our souls, but the African, nearer to reality than we are, is fighting desperately for his. He is terrified of losing his past and failing to gain the future.

This is the key to the African door. I quote: "If you look at the African situation in terms of economics you will find yourself against a blank wall. Economically the African is better off than he has ever been before. . . . He has a larger share of the material goods of this world and what is called a 'higher standard of living.' It is true he still has far less than the European, but economically his life is on the upgrade. . . ." So good is his situation that one of the problems in the Union of South Africa is the influx of foreign natives from Portuguese East Africa and Rhodesia who come in to get work.

THE African trouble is spiritual. That is our trouble too, but we are already too far divorced from reality to know it. Two months ago I was on the veld in Africa. I could see no house, only the dry yellow grass, the blue mountains in the distance, and the sky. I could see nothing made by man. Today in New York I can see only concrete walls. I cannot even walk on the earth. The great sky is reduced to pocket-handkerchief size in which planes fly instead of birds. This is what frightens the African for his gods and the spirits of his fathers dwell in such natural things as the rocks and rivers and the ancient trees.

This is the aspect of the African's soul that Van der Post brings out in the "Dark Eye in Africa." It is something that must be understood before Africa, or the African, can be approached.



African Ill-Wind

"They Wait in Darkness," by George W. Shepherd (John Day, 308 p. \$4), is a young American's report on his two years' work representing an African farmers' cooperative in Uganda, the most Negroid of the three British colonies in Central Africa. John Barkham, our reviewer, is a native of South Africa and recently visited Central Africa to study conditions.

By John Barkham

IN ONE of its pamphlets not long ago the Foreign Policy Association made the point that "yesterday the interest of America was in Asia, but today it is in Africa." So far that interest has been chiefly journalistic, but "They Wait in Darkness" is a book about Africa by a young American who has given practical meaning to the aforementioned words. George W. Shepherd is not a novelist dramatizing race tensions or a traveler recounting his experiences on the Dark Continent. He is, on the contrary, an American who went out to live among the Africans for no other purpose than to help them develop their resources and raise their standard of living. This book is his report on his self-appointed mission.

The area of his choice was Uganda, the most Negroid of the three British colonies in Central Africa and the most advanced agriculturally. Because the young American was not a politician or a missionary or a reporter the British looked askance at him. In these days of African unrest colonial officials find it hard to believe that plain, old-fashioned idealism might be a visitor's reason for entering a colony. Yet Shepherd tells us—and there seems no reason to disbelieve it—that he went to Uganda because he believed in "the brotherhood of man and the essential ethical unity of all the world's great religions." This, of course, immediately made him suspect, but the British finally unbent and let him in.

With the problem of rising nationalism on their hands they were understandably reluctant to have an outsider come in to meddle. As a matter of fact, Shepherd meddled to good purpose for the African farmers' cooperative he represented. The two principal crops exported by Uganda are cotton and coffee, and he was able to win substantial concessions for African growers in the marketing of these crops.

It wasn't achieved without heart-

break and humiliation, as the book makes amply clear. Anyone familiar with colonial officialdom and, worse still, with white farmers, will readily appreciate the magnitude of Shepherd's achievement. Fortunately for him, the British governor at the time (1951-1953) was—and still is—Sir Andrew Cohen, an administrator of unusually enlightened outlook.

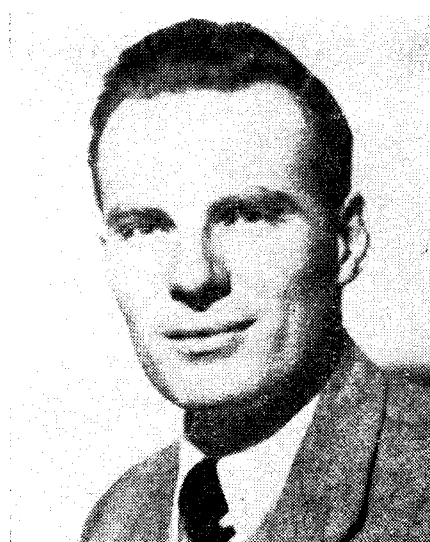
The author confirms my own recent impression in Central Africa that Uganda is much more likely to set the pattern for future African development than its sister colonies of Kenya or Tanganyika. Kenya may have larger towns (e.g., Nairobi, Mombasa), but they are the white man's towns. In Uganda the African peasantry farms its own land, and the whites play a secondary role, which is perhaps why the Mau-Mau rebellion never spread into Uganda.

In Kenya Mr. Shepherd saw what some visitors miss—huge highland farms in superb settings, owned by a relative handful of whites, while around Nairobi the blacks were squeezed cheek by jowl into minimal allotments. "Never had I seen such crowding of land before, even in populous China," he reports. "I have heard the bitter comment Africans make on this situation. 'When the white man came,' they say, 'we had the land and he the Bible. Now he has the land and we the Bible.'"

Mr. Shepherd feels that the British might have headed off the Mau-Mau rebellion by timely concessions on land and political representation. Certainly Britain has learned a bitter lesson in Kenya. One reason she survives as a colonial power is because she profits from such lessons, so the ill wind which blew in Kenya may bring benefits to Uganda.

The author goes so far as to suggest that the whole policy of white settlement in Central and East Africa was a mistake and urges that it be discouraged, if not prohibited, in the future. It's not too late for that now: Africa is being Westernized and the process cannot be arrested. What should be done is not to try and unscramble the egg but to work out a satisfactory basis of society for Africans and whites. You can play on the white keys of a piano, and you can play on the black, but to make real music you need both.

With Africa now awakening from its long sleep it makes good sense, from the economic as well as the humanitarian point of view, for the United States to extend a helping hand. George Shepherd was one young American who pioneered in this respect, and I hope his book inspires others to follow his example.



—Blackstone Studios.

George W. Shepherd—"plain idealism."

Notes

PATHMARKER OF THE DARK CONTINENT: For his contribution to the Teach Yourself History Series, a project designed to acquaint the reader with an area of history through the agency of a central commanding figure, Professor Jack Simmons has a natural combination in his "Livingstone and Africa" (Macmillan, \$2). To those who consider Livingstone symbolic of glamour-packed exploration the facts as given by Professor Simmons may prove somewhat unspectacular. Certainly it has moments of drama, is not completely devoid of humor, and discusses the problems and difficulties faced by Livingstone as an explorer and missionary with a quiet authority that is refreshing in its lack of theatrics.

The portrait of Livingstone himself is drawn not with a sentimental, but with a sympathetic pen that traces the angularities of his personality as readily as his nobler characteristics. The intimations of monomania, which are prevalent in Professor Simmons's analysis of Livingstone, are not a means of belittling his achievements but rather suggest how Livingstone could endure such ill health and yet accomplish so much in the field of geographic exploration.

Professor Simmons has produced a tightly-knit story, reflecting, I suspect, what he terms Livingstone's "astringent Scots manner" in his prose technique. Certainly the lack of proximity is not a subject for complaint—and, if one occasionally feels he is conservative in his anecdotes, considering the necessary brevity of the volume he does extremely well in developing Livingstone's work within the larger context of the opening up of