Consciousness could be seen in ANC President A. B. Xuma’s vision of a revived ANC of the 1940s. His rejection of white paternalism never included an exclusivist black racialism. The Youth League, welcomed by Xuma, reflected the same commitment despite its racial pride and consciousness. Rejecting PAC claims to the mantle of the Youth League, Meli argues that even ideologist Anton Lembede’s Africanism was essentially a ‘nation-building faith’ consistent with ANC values. Similarly, in the next generation Steve Biko’s rejection of white and black racism as well as class-conflict theory brought him parallel with ANC ideology. The ideal of a common democratic nonracial society thus continued to define African nationalism, a tradition reiterated in Mandela’s philosophy expressed in the early 1960s and repeated to the present day.

Meli’s conclusion argues for the ANC as the sole party of ‘all democratic forces’ in the present critical phase of mass struggle. He is at pains to incorporate historically the surging labour movement with Congress nationalism and to justify the alliance with the Communist Party cemented in the 1970s with ANC as the ‘senior partner.’ More than ever, he argues, the workers’ struggles are complementary to national liberation, and the ANC’s task is to educate the masses anew to their leading role in the struggle for a democratic society. Meli’s concluding discussions, however, seem somewhat inconclusive as historical arguments and may not satisfy his readers, depending upon their critical preferences. The grand question surely remains to be settled by realities to come: will the democratic nonracial united South Africa of the ANC, if now achieved, finally dispel the fatal connections between class, race and state which most critics have identified as the keys to South Africa’s baleful history? It is difficult to imagine any alternative. The value of Meli’s book is to have made the case for the ANC’s central role as South Africa’s historic movement for economic justice as well as racial and political democracy.

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THE PARTY IN MADAGASCAR


This is an important book, very well done. It is clear, well-written and formidable well-researched. It is the work of a fine historian in full command of his subject. It is hard to say whether it will appeal to scholars of parts of Africa other than Madagascar, such is the isolation both of the Great Island and of its scholarship. It certainly should do. Apart from having the virtue of being easy to follow for non-malgachisants frightened by long names, it makes many general points about the relationship between metropolitan and colonial politics in the French system, which was of course heavily centralized. It also contains much of interest on the manner in which the universal philosophy of Marxism-Leninism, then in its most Stalinist phase, could mean something quite different to the Europeans and their colonial subjects.

Basing himself largely on the files of the French colonial police and on Communist Party newspapers of the period, Dr Randrianja divides his story into several distinct parts. He starts with an examination of the antecedents of Madagascar’s Communist Party, the Secours Rouge International and the various socialist newspapers and then goes on to look at the formation of the Party as a section of the French metropolitan Party, in the climate of tolerance following the election of Léon Blum’s Popular Front in France in 1936. Next comes a study of
the social composition of the Party, whose leaders deliberately recruited along the lines of Malagasy society. This paid rich dividends in terms of membership, which reached a peak of as many as 15,000. This was followed by the Party’s rapid disintegration in 1938 under the weight, as a Marxist might say, of its own contradictions as much as anything else. It was arguably the largest communist party in Africa at the time. The story winds up with a look at the effect of the Parti Communiste de la Région de Madagascar on the history of the Malagasy nationalist and socialist movements, and notably the tragic insurrection of 1947. To cover all this path-breaking new ground in less than 200 pages is an achievement indeed.

Dr Randrianja has transformed our understanding of Malagasy nationalism in the middle years between the island’s 1895 conquest by France and its independence in 1960. Taken together with recent research on the Menalamba of 1895–9 and with Jacques Tronchon’s recently reissued book on the 1947 revolt, it shows a clear thread in nationalist history. Particularly relevant are Dr Randrianja’s shrewd observations on the conflicts between the nationalism of the Malagasy bourgeoisie and the peasants whose aspirations were rather different. It was these differences, as much as the disputes between the French Communist Party and its Malagasy younger brother, which caused the Party to break up after only a year of life. In reality, much of its structure and personnel lived to re-emerge in 1947.

Not the least notable aspect of this book is that it has been published in Madagascar: this is a most welcome development.

London

STEPHEN ELLIS

MEDICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY


This impressive bibliography will be of great value for students of medical and demographic history in West Africa, particularly, but not exclusively, scholars of the Senegambia region. The work cites and annotates 2908 numbered entries and includes several pages of unnumbered citations of bibliographies and official statistical publications. Coverage stops in 1960, the year of Senegalese independence, but historical and retrospective works published as late as 1987 are noted. Books, articles, theses, and some official published documents are included; non-published materials are not covered.

The majority of the citations deal with specific clinical conditions arranged by etiology, not by symptoms or organs involved. For example, one would look for references to cholera in the section ‘choléra’ in the chapter on ‘Maladies bactériennes’, publications on ascariasis are listed with ‘Nématodes intestinales’ in the chapter for ‘Maladies parasitaires.’ For non-infectious diseases, there is a large chapter with appropriate subdivisions for general medical problems ranging from anemias to endocrinological conditions, dermatology, and genetic diseases; and separate chapters devoted to pediatrics, cancers, and to venoms, noxious animals, and climate. Despite the prominence given to population in the title of the book, the vast majority of the entries are for ‘santé’; the chapter on demography has only 105 citations. There is no systematic coverage of pharmacology, medical entomology, or veterinary medicine.

Other chapters, some with relatively few citations, cover nutrition, physical anthropology, and therapeutics. Chapters with headings like ‘Généralités’, pre-