

Kenneth Kaunda. *The Riddle of Violence*. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1981) 184 pp. \$9.95.

Kenneth Kaunda, President of the Republic of Zambia, has become one of the best known African leaders for a number of reasons: his involvement in the non-aligned movement; his advocacy of “humanism”; his position as a front-line statesman intimately involved with the denouement of the anachronism of white supremacy and the successful emergence of Zimbabwe.

The Riddle of Violence, as the name implies, is supposed to be an account of his metamorphosis from an advocate of non-violence in the Gandhian mold to the realization that in the southern African context, the earlier non-violent commitment had become a chimera because the oppressor did not share it. Further, the oppressor could be said to have gone against all decency which would facilitate, if not centralize, peaceful resolution of the problem.

While the reader gets some glimpses into the thinking of Kaunda and his friendship and collaboration with Colin Morris, the book does not quite match its promise for very simple reasons. A disproportionate amount of space is devoted to personal musings to the exclusion of serious analysis. Had some attention been paid to putting things in an historical context, had footnotes and references been supplied, had a map been included to show the defunct central African Federation and present-day Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, not to mention the rest of Africa, had an attempt been made to identify individuals with a little more precision, this book would read differently. Given the fact that the work is published by a reputable house and appears to be intended for a readership unlikely to be on top of developments in Africa, these omissions are rather surprising.

The much-cited “humanism” also remains somewhat foggy. Is it a personal attribute? Is it something Zambian? Is humanism operational in both domestic and international politics? While it cannot be gainsaid that the cinema has played and continues to play an important role in the education or miseducation of Africans, Latin Americans and others in the Third World, President Kaunda seems to have put more faith in it than would be expected. One misses some of the lively discussions characterizing the period of Ian Smith’s unilateral declaration of independence, for example, the comment of the Zambian High Commissioner who labelled Britain “A Toothless Bulldog,” leading to his recall. It is not that President Kaunda does not touch on these, but that he touches on them ever too lightly.

As a document dealing with his personal internal and external debates on “non-violence at any price,” i.e., the maintenance of the status quo in Southern Africa, the book has some merit. However, it would appear to require a little more than a conviction of “goodness about men derived from reading the Bible as an antidote to corrosive cynicism” (p. 164) to deal effectively with the apartheid regime, which, after all, is right smack in the “Riddle.”

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