

Book Reviews

Shiraz Durrani, *Never Be Silent: Publishing and Imperialism in Kenya, 1884–1963*

London: Vita Books, 2006. 270pp. ISBN 978-1-869886-05-9. £21.99

There is already a considerable body of literature on Kenya's freedom struggle, and even with the recent additions by Elkins and Anderson, the subject is still far from exhausted. A lot more work still remains to be done, especially on the period of the Mau Mau war of liberation. The colonial government destroyed many of the records at independence; the British government is still keeping some records under wraps, while, back home, the Kenya government has not encouraged research in this area.

It is in this context that Durrani's book is a welcome addition to the literature. It seeks to show that the struggle was aided by a resistant press almost from the beginning, mostly managed by South Asians (Indians) in the early stages, and increasingly controlled by the Kenyans themselves from the end of the Second World War to independence in 1963. The publications coming from these presses galvanised people, and provided leadership and support in countering the propaganda from an equally vehement settler and colonial press.

Relying entirely on secondary sources, Durrani has attempted a reconstruction of the resistance presses from the Berlin Conference in 1884 to independence. The study itself is divided into three parts: from 1884 to the end of the First World War; from 1920 to the end of the Second World War; and thereafter to independence.

The first part is dominated by settler and colonial publications, such as *The Leader of British East Africa* and *The East African Standard*, among others. The early resistance press came from A. M. Jevanjee's *African Standard*, *Mombasa Times* and *Uganda Argus*. Later, another paper, *The East African Chronicle*, by M. A. Desai, appeared on the scene and is largely responsible for initiating Harry Thuku into radical journalism.

Part two starts around 1920 when Kenya is

declared a British Colony. During this period, the number of African presses increases dramatically and both Asians and Africans start working closely together. The arrest of Harry Thuku in 1922 and the massacre of innocent people draw world attention to the Kenya problem, and help to strengthen the emerging trade union movement.

The major African resistance presses during this period included *Mwigwithania* (Jomo Kenyatta), *Mumenyereri* (Henry Mworira), *Inoorria Agikuyu* (Bildad Kagia), *Gikuyu na Mumbi* (Gakara wa Wanjau), *Ramogi* (Achieng Oneko), *Mualimu* (Francis Khamis). The Asian presses supported the struggle with such publications as *The Democrat* (S. Acharia), *Kenya Daily Mail* (Pandya and Patel), *Colonial Times* (Vidyarthi) and *Daily Chronicle* (H. Ahmed), some of which provided printing facilities to their Kenyan counterparts. The colonial government replied by adding *Kenya Weekly News* and *Baraza* to its arsenal.

The third part deals with publications after the Second World War. By this time, the trade union movement is strong and African political parties can no longer be ignored. There is a powerful European press, of course, but the number of Asian and African presses has also increased. Some of the African newspapers that had previously relied on their Asian counterparts for printing services have by now acquired their own presses.

New publications such as *Forward* (C. Singh), *The Kenya Worker* (Makhan Singh) and *African Samachar* (H. Ahmed) were launched so that, during the 1950s, there were 12 Asian-owned and 26 African-owned vernacular papers circulating in daily or weekly editions. After declaration of the state of emergency in 1952, the colonial government changed tactics and resorted to banning vernacular presses and

