

prominent. Hierdie terrein van studie is betreklik jonk, en daarom word die bydrae van Feinstein verwelkom. Sommige lesers mag dalk teleurgesteld wees oor Feinstein soms meer op homself fokus ten opsigte van sy eie traumatiese ervarings, in plaas daarvan om 'n balans te vind tussen sy eie stryd en dié van sy pasiënte. Ook die ware traumatiese impak van oorlog in die psige van die soldaat is in *Kopwond...* ongelukkig verdoof. Dalk is hierdie leemtes die aansporing vir verdere studies oor die wesenlike geestelike skade wat oorlog aan mense in Suid-Afrika in die verlede aangerig het.

AB Xuma: Autobiography and selected works

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It can well be said that Dr AB Xuma, president of the African National Congress (ANC) from 1940 to 1949, is a very unfortunate figure in terms of historiography. On the one hand, much like the people he represented as a leader, his life was not documented in a fitting manner. Poor record-keeping of black South Africans was standard practice in South Africa at the time – and one that Dr Xuma, as a medical doctor, often deplored as an obstacle to proper health care.

However, there is another and probably greater reason why this interesting historical role-player has not yet been fittingly celebrated in South Africa. For just as young leaders and the old guard are at odds in the new South Africa, so it was when Dr Xuma was at the height of his powers. And it was the ANC's most famous struggle icon of all times, Nelson Mandela, who dealt the most damaging blow to how Dr AB Xuma would be remembered in our history books. To the young Madiba, Dr Xuma represented a conservative class, paternalistic in views, reluctant to act, and in a word – outdated.

It is fitting that there are now fresh insights and perspectives on the life of Dr AB Xuma. Whereas these texts have almost been lost forever they are now available for us to study at leisure. This publication is long overdue, and access to the words of Xuma himself informs a re-appraisal not only of his life and work but also of the ANC at that time.

Autobiography is, in itself, a controversial matter. Is it possible to reflect upon oneself objectively? The autobiography in this work is, however, very brief, and covers only forty one pages. “I do not intend”, Xuma notes in the first paragraph, “to boast about or praise myself” (p. 7) – a commitment to which he stuck firmly. Yet from the outset one is confronted with a certain charm in his words. For example: “I believe my life has been a mixture of successes and failures as the lives of most mortals are. I hope to bring out both” (p. 7).

In his selection, Peter Limb includes a number of Dr Xuma’s letters. Interpreting letters can be challenging, but fortunately for the reader, the letters are divided into sections, each of which Limb introduces with a background and other contextual information.

The bulk of the source material however, is grouped in section three under the heading “Essays, speeches and miscellaneous prose”. It is here that the reader is confronted with the most unsettling and grim passages of prose in this volume, as they reveal the realities that Africans faced well before the onset of apartheid. Dr Xuma’s writings touch on varied subjects, ranging from property rights, health and medicine, to crime and education. The writings on crime could be valuable in explaining how Union legislation had the effect of turning the youth to crime, perhaps setting in train a vicious pattern for years to come.

Xuma also concerned himself with the controversial issue of alcohol legislation. Alcohol consumption, like many aspects of African life at the time, was strictly controlled by the authorities. Legislation often resulted in over-consumption because individuals were not allowed to remove alcohol from specified drinking areas that held exclusive liquor-selling rights.

Of particular interest is a brief biography of the enigmatic Charlotte Maxeke. A sad aspect of our historical legacy is the neglect of the role of women. That he captures something of the life of Maxeke is fascinating, especially considering the image of Dr Xuma as a paternalistic leader. One cannot help

asking: was he perhaps not just a man of his times? And can we judge him fairly given our 21st century norms? Despite the brevity of this biography of Maxeke, it is insightful and stresses the significant role of education in the upliftment of people.

Dr AB Xuma played an influential role in the history of South Africa. He was instrumental, notes Limb, in rebuilding the “organisational structures of Congress... his hard work ironically placed it [the ANC] on the road to militant resistance, even if he did not take this road himself.” (p. xix). Against this background, “AB Xuma: Autobiography and selected works” is a significant contribution. It succeeds in providing the reader with a nuanced picture of Dr AB Xuma, and reconfigures the way in which he has been viewed in the past.