

REVIEWS

PROFESSOR DRASCHER'S *SCHULD DER WEISSEN?*: A PROTEST AND AN APOLOGY

The Editors of the JOURNAL OF AFRICAN HISTORY have received the following letter from Professor O. F. Raum, B.A., Ph.D., Professor of Social Anthropology at University College, Fort Hare, protesting at the review of *Schuld der Weissen? Die Spätzeit des Kolonialismus* by Wahrhold Drascher that was published in pp. 346–9 of vol. II, no. 2, of the JOURNAL:

University College
Fort Hare, C.P., S. Africa
14 February 1962

To the Editors,
The Journal of African History
Sirs,

May I crave space in your pages to protest against the review of Professor Drascher's book, *Schuld der Weissen?*, on p. 346 of the JOURNAL OF AFRICAN HISTORY, vol. II, no. 2? I presume, rashly perhaps, that it is a reviewer's duty to tell readers what a book is about. Your reviewer certainly fails in this respect. We are not told that Professor Drascher gives in his book a survey, praised in many and called masterly in not a few reviews, of the history of Colonial areas in Latin America, Africa, South-East Asia, and the Far East. Nor are we told what the author's main thesis is, to wit, that the Colonial era was by no means an unmitigated tale of acts of suppression of the indigenous population by the Colonial Powers, but on the contrary a not unsuccessful attempt (i) to draw these areas through pacification, economic undertakings, and modern means of communication closer to the European countries and thus to introduce them to the comity of nations; (ii) to prepare them through health services, educational efforts, and political apprenticeship for co-operation with the mother countries and ultimate independence? The achievements of the English in this respect come in for special and well-argued approbation.

About these matters (which may sound commonplace in this summary, but which are fascinatingly described by Professor Drascher) your reviewer keeps your readers completely in the dark. Instead he takes great pains to tell them that Professor Drascher's book is worthless. He does so on three grounds: (i) He alleges that the book is badly documented. But surely no such survey could have been written without the most extensive and diligent preliminary studies. Moreover the range and reliability of Professor Drascher's scholarship is testified to by innumerable and balanced reviews from his pen in leading German historical journals. (ii) Your reviewer points out certain errors in the book. The few that he gives on recent African events are certainly not damaging and could easily be corrected in the third edition. (iii) Your reviewer alleges that Professor Drascher's defence of colonialism follows 'racialist' lines. For this

sweeping accusation, your reviewer relies on a book which Professor Drascher wrote twenty-five years ago, but he fails to mention that this book was banned by the Nazis as being contrary to their racial doctrine and for being too favourable to the English. Surely it is not a sound principle to judge the merits of a book by the alleged demerits of another!

In fact Professor Drascher is not at all interested in the racial (i.e. biological) differences of the various populations whose development he surveys. What he is interested in, and succeeds in developing convincingly, is that Latin Americans, Africans, and Asiatics differ widely as to their social institutions, cultural values, administrative experiences, and achievements on the road to independence. Recognition of the existence of such differences does not clash with the recognition of full legal and political equality. In fact this recognition is exactly what Professor Drascher proposes in his final chapter, in which he eloquently pleads for the admission of the newly emerging peoples into world partnership. Surely, if Professor Drascher's basic assumptions were 'racist', he would have arrived at a different solution!

Your reviewer somewhat shamefacedly does in the end say that Professor Drascher's book has 'quite a few passages which are acceptable . . . gives an intelligent account of the . . . two main blocs of power . . . and some interesting information on Chinese, Japanese, and Latin American developments'. Surely the average reader is entirely unprepared for this surprise! And when your reviewer continues that 'the book looks like an altogether serious and well-done piece of work', he by then does owe it to his readers to explain how with 'worthless' methods and a 'poisonous' evaluation of race, such a creditable book could be written. May I plead that your reviewer revise his estimate of Professor Drascher's book on the basis of the 'essential demands of accuracy and academic honesty' to which he refers so fervently?

Yours faithfully,

O. F. RAUM

Receipt of Professor Raum's letter has led the Editors of the JOURNAL carefully to reconsider the review of *Schuld der Weissen?* It has become apparent to them that the publication of the assertion that Professor Drascher owed his academic promotion in Hitlerian Germany to his earlier book, *Die Vorherrschaft der Weissen Rasse*, was unjustifiable and wrong. They greatly regret this publication and wish therefore to apologize to Professor Drascher both for its appearance and for any damage done to him by it.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN GHANA

In the review of Dr Oliver Davies's *Archaeology in Ghana* (JOURNAL OF AFRICAN HISTORY, III, 2, pp. 154-5) attention was drawn to the fact that one whole-page block appeared upside-down. The publishers, Messrs Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd, have now written to inform us that this fault occurred only in a few advance copies of the book that were specially bound up for review.