

**AFRICA: The People
and Politics of
an Emerging Continent**

by Sanford J. Ungar
Simon & Schuster, 1985
527 pp. \$19.95

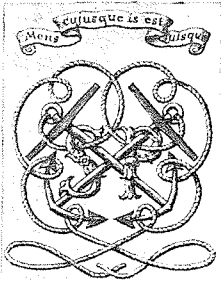
Nearly 500 million people live in the 52 nations of Africa. It is a continent of "rich, varied cultures, and enduring civilization," writes Ungar, a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Yet today most Africans share the same problems: inadequate nutrition and health care. According to the World Bank, 60 percent of all Africans currently consume fewer calories each day than are deemed necessary for survival. Little wonder, then, that five million Africans die each year from malnutrition and from other diseases, or that, in 31 nations, life expectancy is less than 50 years. Ungar makes clear that corrupt, inept, often repressive African governments deserve much of the blame. The 20 states that formed the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1963 pledged "to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa." But the OAU's history, says Ungar, "is a tale of empty rhetoric." Ungar's even-handed survey focuses on Liberia, Nigeria, Kenya, and the "white nightmare" of South Africa. He also reflects upon Americans' "childlike innocence about the second largest land mass in the world." That long-standing ignorance, Ungar believes, has produced inconsistent, crisis-oriented policies in Washington, most strikingly evident in U.S. dealings with Pretoria. American efforts to bring about change in South Africa will not be credible, the author warns, until they are "matched by a parallel concern for civil liberties and freedom of political participation everywhere else on the continent."

Arts & Letters

THE SHORTER PEPYS

selected and edited
by Robert Latham
Univ. of Calif., 1985
1,096 pp. \$28.50

Samuel Pepys's career as diarist spanned nine brief years, from 1660 to 1669. But what years those were for England! They encompassed not only the restoration of monarchy and war with Holland but also the Great Plague (which claimed as many as 10,000 Londoners a week during the cruel summer months of 1665) and London's Great Fire of September 1666. Of the former calamity, Pepys sadly observed: "But now, how few people I see, and those walking



like people that had taken leave of the world." Yet even during the bleakest of times, Pepys's optimism remained intact. He felt blessed, having risen from lowly origins (his father was a tailor) to a high administrative post in the British admiralty. A genius at organization, he was by no means a drudge. He loved city life, theater-going, conversations, political intrigue, fashion, the minutiae of everyday affairs. Whatever he observed or did (including the philandering that nearly destroyed his marriage), whatever he thought about a sermon or a play (he judged Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "insipid"), he dutifully recorded in his calfskin day-books, employing the Shelton method of shorthand. Eye problems brought the diaries to a premature close. (Pepys pressed on to the then venerable age of 70, dying in 1703.) Even so, the entire diary runs to 11 volumes in a University of California edition. Latham, a Cambridge scholar and coeditor (with William Matthews) of the complete edition, has brought the best of Pepys into the more manageable confines of this handsome single volume.

**DICTIONARY OF
AMERICAN REGIONAL
ENGLISH**

**Vol. I: Introduction
and A-C**

Frederick G. Cassidy,
chief editor
Harvard, 1985
903 pp. \$60

The DARE project was launched in 1965, not a year too soon. With each day's passing, radio and television make American English more homogeneous. Fortunately, this dictionary will preserve some of the local variations that once enlivened our national speech. In the introduction to their first volume, the editors describe their aims, scope, and methods. To read the text of the 1,847-item questionnaire used by the DARE fieldworkers, for instance, is to gain respect not only for the editors' thoroughness but also for the respondents' patience (sample question: "Any sign or trace: 'He left here last week and nobody's seen --- of him since.'"). The fruits of the editorial labor are informative and entertaining. Here one finds the idiom of "back people" and "city jakes," insults, epithets (an "ace boon coon" is a close friend in New York City black lingo), and names for the myriad tools and furnishings of day-to-day life. Even the most "conceity" (Pennsylvania patois for hard-to-please) will have trouble finding this rich word-hoard "boresome."