

Lesotho High Commissioner talks at Dal

by Esther Dyckeman

A speech by His Excellency, Mr. M.J. Mashologu, the High Commissioner of Lesotho, riveted the attention of a gathering of Dal students and faculty last Tuesday, but there was good reason for their interest.

Among those especially interested was Edwin Qobose, a student of Library Science at Dalhousie, and also a political refugee from the homeland he shares with Mashologu. Qobose was forced to flee Lesotho in 1980 due to the threat of incarceration and interrogation because of opposition to the present regime.

A group of between 25 and 30 people gathered in the McMechan auditorium of the Killam Library to hear Mashologu deliver a lecture entitled, *Update on Lesotho*. The lecture was arranged by Dalhousie's International Student Coordinator, Oliver Lovesey.

In the lecture, Mashologu largely avoided discussion of sensitive internal issues, mainly addressing Lesotho's relations with South Africa.

Lesotho is a tiny country, surrounded completely by the Republic of South Africa, which became independent in 1965.

In a 1970 election, the Basotho National Party (BNP), headed by Leabua Jonathan, was easily defeated by the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP). Jonathan declared the election null and void, in Qobose's words, "simply because

he had lost".

Jonathan declared a state of emergency and replaced Parliament with an "Interim National Assembly" consisting mainly of selected members of Jonathan's own party. Since that time, there has not been an election in Lesotho, although according to the (suspended) constitution, there should be an election every five years.

In contrast, the spirit of Mashologu's lecture was one of hope and optimism. "In some respects, the reality of the fifteen years (since independence) has been generous and benign," he said. He illustrated this statement with facts that Lesotho is still independent, there is much less malnutrition, and there are more schools at all levels. As if extenuating Lesotho's internal turmoil, he states, "Just as a child has to crawl before walking, every country has to experience its political evolution for itself."

However, many of the African students who extended questions to Mashologu voiced disillusionment with African leadership rather than optimism.

Qobose says, "In the sixties, right after independence, there was a boom (of optimism). It has been declining ever since." In his own words, Qobose is becoming "more and more pessimistic" about the chances of his returning home.

Mashologu's main topic during the lecture was the relationship between Lesotho and South Africa.

Since independence in 1965, the

primary concern of Lesotho's government has been to prevent encroachment of, and incorporation by, South Africa, according to Mashologu. Although there is an attempt to maintain peaceful relations, and there are many economic interactions, Lesotho does not maintain any diplomatic relations with South Africa.

Mashologu believes that the problems encountered by his nation are compounded by its geographic position within apartheid South Africa. "The world tends to look at us through South African media, and they, for their own purposes, tend to magnify...our mistakes, perhaps with the interest of showing how black people mismanage their affairs."

To underline this, Mashologu pointed to South Africa's accusations that Lesotho provides assistance and military bases for South African terrorists, members of the South African Liberation Movements.

Mashologu accused South Africa in turn of supporting Lesothian dissidents in terrorist attacks on Lesotho. In particular, he mentioned a recent rocket attack on the Prime Minister's country home. Mashologu defines these "dissidents" as individuals who believe that "there should be no elections, that the government must be overthrown by force". He may have been referring to the "Lesotho Liberation Army" (LLA), a military offshoot of the Basutoland Congress Party.

There are also exiles like Qobose, students who used peaceful means to declare their objections to the political situation. Qobose, however, hedges at using the word "dissident" when speaking of himself.

With regard to the long-awaited election, Mashologu states that it will be held "hopefully early next year". Qobose, for one, does not seem to be expecting this to occur. In Qobose's opinion, the obstacle in the way of elections is the internal instability.

The last focal point of Mashologu's address was education. "The

management of our political institutions is also dependent upon the level of education of the public at large," he said. In 1965, there were probably "no more than 70 University graduates" in a population of 1,000,000. Now, the literacy rate is 65 per cent, and there is special attention given to equipping Lesothians with education and skills vital for development. Unfortunately, Lesotho may have to rely increasingly upon foreign teachers and students, as many native scholars, like Qobose, are electing or being forced to leave.

Survey reveals women afraid to walk at night

by Tom Morrison and Geoff Martin

A recent survey shows that most women at Shirreff Hall are not taking night courses because they're "afraid to walk alone on the campus at night", according to Erin Steuter of the Dalhousie Women's Committee.

At a recent meeting of Committee members and Residents of Shirreff Hall, problems in campus security were analysed. A number of solutions were proposed.

"On the Dal campus," says Steuter, "Shirreff Hall is isolated from many parts of the university. This causes women to resort to poorly lit and poorly patrolled areas."

The increased concern for women on campus is attributed by Steuter to recent security cutbacks. One solution to the problem is an escort service. Male and female escorts would be available, under the guidelines of the proposal, to escort women on-campus after dark.

Another plan tabled at the meeting was improved outdoor lighting and the creation of standardized routes of travel. Maps would be provided to all residents of Shirreff Hall indicating safe passages.

"If it is someone's job to escort a lone woman, then women need not feel embarrassed about looking for an escort," concluded Steuter.

Campus Activities

double decker at the SUB



and

EXODUS



Thurs, Oct. 14th, 9 p.m.
 Tickets \$5.00, on sale
 beginning Oct. 8th in SUB
 Lobby.