

# Withdrawal of the White Fathers from Mozambique 20/7/73

From Dr David S. Rosenberg

Sir, I wondered if the following facts relative to the Mozambique affair might be of interest to your readers.

In June 1971 I was in Malawi, the guest of missionaries, and it was there that the news reached me of the total withdrawal of the White Fathers from Mozambique. The White Father Order, as you may know, is one dedicated purely to work in Africa and the withdrawal of their priests from an African country was totally unprecedented.

The background to this action was carefully set out in a document privately circulated within the Order and which I was privileged to see. Here it was stated quite clearly that for some time the White Fathers in Mozambique had been protesting to the Portuguese Catholic hierarchy about the maltreatment of and the injustice shown to their people.

As no response was forthcoming there came a time when it was considered that the situation had so deteriorated that the White Fathers could no longer see their presence in Mozambique as being in accord with the teaching of the Gospel. However great was their love for their people the White Fathers inevitably had to face the fact that if they stayed on their presence would appear to condone the tacit approval of the Portuguese Catholic hierarchy to Government terrorist policy.

Thus the painful decision was made by the Order, after frequent consultation with their priests on the spot, to withdraw from the country.

Arising from this appraisal of the situation comes the possible analogy between the reaction of the Catholic Bishops in Nazi Germany who were silent concerning the actions of the Nazi Government in its persecution and mass murder of the Jews and other minorities and the silence of the Portuguese Bishops in the face of their Government's actions. It is impossible not to compare the silence of the Vatican in not condemning what has been happening in Mozambique and Angola for years, to the silence of the Vatican on what went on in Nazi Germany for years.

As a Jew who is a Catholic the analogy is very real to me and it is extremely sad that my Catholic Church will be blamed for attitudes which are only shared by a few, but powerful, men in our hierarchy.

Yours faithfully,  
DAVID S. ROSENBERG,  
51 Woodhurst Road, W3.  
July 19.

From Mr J. H. MacCallum Scott

Sir, In your editorial of July 18 you comment, "No good reason for disregarding the evidence of the Spanish missionaries has been given". May I suggest a reason, not for disregarding it, but for treating it as highly suspect? By way of preface, let me make it clear that I am a strong churchman, and that I hold the whole priesthood of all denominations in deep respect, believing the overwhelming majority of them, including Father Hastings, to be in your own words "good and honest men" high above the average.

Members of all professions are shaped by their studies, their training and their daily practice. The discipline of theology lays little stress on what is called the scientific method, nor on inductive logic. Its outcome is belief and faith rather than knowledge. The priest's training brings him more closely into touch with the evils and miseries of life than most men, and tends to strengthen his trust in faith and to discount the apparent logic of facts. His daily practice in the priesthood intensifies these influences. For

these reasons, the priest rarely proves a sound guide to purely worldly affairs, except in the higher ranks where he must perforce engage in large scale administration.

Still less does the priest make a reliable politician however high his rank. He is not equipped to cope with the practical decisions between alternative evils which the politician must take from day to day. Nor is he well equipped to weigh the evidence of others, and very frequently the evidence he gives himself is highly coloured by faith as distinct from what he has actually seen and heard with his own eyes and ears. It is honest belief, but it is not necessarily hard fact. There is a strong case for weighing it very carefully before acting on it. The outstanding example is the terrible tragedy played out in London in the seventeenth century.

The profession of journalism on the other hand leads, or should lead, to a very necessary and proper scepticism in all matters of fact. There is a regrettable tendency in the press today to publish "stories" as if they were facts and in its editorial capacity to treat such "stories" as a basis for logical analysis. It is particularly noticeable that *The Times* appears to apply a double standard in this matter. The objectivity of your editorial comment on Watergate stands in stark contrast to your partisanship on the alleged Portuguese massacres. More regrettably you appear to have adopted the "guilty until proved innocent" philosophy of the Labour and Liberal parties, which is not in the highest tradition of British public life.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
JOHN H. MACCALLUM SCOTT,  
Bramley Beech,  
Little Easton,  
Dunmow,  
Essex.  
July 18.

From Mr Oliver Robinson

Sir, Your reporter was correct in saying that some of the guests attending the Anglo-Portuguese Society's reception for Dr Caetano looked "visibly shaken" by the shouts of "fascist scum", which were hurled by demonstrators outside the Savoy hotel on the afternoon of July 17.

Yet, the contortion of their facial features was not so much occasioned by fears for their personal safety as by disgust at the ill manners of a misinformed mob. The Anglo-Portuguese Society, of which I am a member, is a strictly non-political organization with no aims but to promote and strengthen social and cultural ties between Portugal and this country.

Besides, it should be pointed out that many of the so-called fascist scum had devoted five years of their lives or longer to fighting fascism in the last war while the rowdies outside the Savoy hotel were palpably too young to have made any comparable sacrifice.

Yours faithfully,  
OLIVER ROBINSON,  
46 West Kensington Court, W14.  
July 19.

From Dr A. B. Akinyemi

Sir, The BBC has just reported the Portuguese Prime Minister, Dr Caetano, as saying that he does not understand why Africa should be for black Africans only and that the view that whites should leave Southern Africa was completely unacceptable to him.

There has been no body of responsible opinion inside and outside Africa that has ever made the demand that any part of Africa should be reserved for black

Africans. The issue of who is an African was debated at the First All African Peoples' Conference held in Accra in 1958. That conference agreed with the statement made by the late President Nkrumah that an African "is anyone who lives in Africa".

Also at the Inaugural Conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), held in Addis Ababa in 1963, this issue was raised indirectly. When delegates at the conference were dealing with conditions for membership of the OAU, some delegates wanted the qualification for membership to be an independent African state headed by a black African. This was rejected and the delegates unanimously voted to accept any independent African state even if the black majority voted for a white head of state.

The demand which has and is being made on Dr Caetano is to grant the right of self-determination to all the inhabitants of her colonies. If they vote for union with Portugal, then that is their choice. What is unacceptable is the white-minority arrogating to itself the right to rule the black majority even if the rule is benevolent, which it is definitely not.

Now that Dr Caetano has shown that his African policy is based on a misconception of African demands, he would be well advised to hold a dialogue with the leaders of the freedom fighters in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. Hopefully, a change in policy will follow his education.

Yours, etc,  
A. BOLAJI AKINYEMI,  
President, Nigerian Society of International Affairs,  
30 Witley Court,  
Coram Street, WC1.  
July 18.

From Mr Donald H. Thomas

Sir, You should not have done it. I have lived 56 years, say 50 years aware, and I do not remember being more shocked. To wake up to find that *The Times* is a gutter newspaper; to read *The Times* describe hearsay as "evidence"; to realize that you have timed the matter so as most to discomfort the Portuguese Prime Minister.

You show yourself to be uncivilised and irresponsible. I cease buying your paper and will denigrate you wherever I go. I am a former central banker, now a merchant banker, and everyone I speak to in the City shares my views about you.

DONALD H. THOMAS,  
27 Sancroft Street, SE11.  
July 17.

From Dr S. D. Ibekwe

Sir, As an African, I find Mr Wilson's sense of outrage over Portuguese conduct in Mozambique absolutely incredible. Can he have forgotten Biafra so soon, or the role that he and the Labour Party in office played in that conflict? Two million people—mostly children—died there.

Yours sincerely,  
S. D. IBEKWE,  
86 Verdala Towers,  
Allerton Road,  
Liverpool 18.  
July 11.

From Mrs D. Bovey

Sir, If Mr Wilson ever comes back into power here, I will emigrate to Portugal.

Yours,  
DOROTHY BOVEY,  
Killock House, Laughton,  
Near Rugby, Warwickshire.  
July 18.