

Double standards over Mozambique ^{24?/7/73}

From Mr George F. Kennan

Sir, Anyone even remotely familiar with the situation in Southern Africa can hardly fail to be disturbed by the hysterical reaction of liberal and leftist quarters throughout Europe to the recent secondhand and unsubstantiated report of an alleged massacre of local inhabitants by Portuguese forces in Mozambique.

At this time of writing I do not know, any more than do others, whether there is anything in this report. The evidence offered to date seems distinctly unconvincing. But it is standard guerrilla tactics to provoke reprisals by the ruling power against local communities; and where this is the case, unpleasant things are always possible. My concern, in any case, does not stand or fall with the truth of the report. Whether it is accurate or otherwise, two factors remain disturbing.

The first is the double standard so obviously applied by European liberals to developments in that part of the world. Bloodshed and atrocities have been reported in recent years, on a scale far greater than that here alleged, from several other African countries. I seem also to recall that the war in Angola began, in 1960, with a sudden and unprovoked attack by guerrilla elements over the Congolese frontier—as a result of which some 7,000 people were slaughtered by the attackers just in the first week, the great majority of the victims, incidentally, being black. Perhaps I missed on those occasions the excited reactions and protests of the press organs, political parties, and others who have shown such agitation over the recent report; but I doubt it. If the principle is to be that injustice is injustice, and atrocity—atrocity, only when committed by people presumed to be western European or white—that when committed by blacks or by persons armed with the banners of leftist “revolution” such things are all right—then I think we should be told so, and the argument permitted to proceed on this point of principle.

This brings me to the second factor, which is the evident assumption that the destruction of Portuguese authority and the establishment of the power of the guerrilla leaders in these territories is desirable. I wonder on what this assumption is based. Surely not on any adequate evidence that a political change of this nature is desired by the mass of those who would be most affected; or that the resulting regime would

be any more humane or democratic than that which it would replace. Nor is there reason to suppose that such a change would lead to any more rapid advancement of living and educational standards than is now taking place. What there is some reason to expect, in the event of important military successes on the part of the guerrillas, is the fragmentation of one or both of these territories, portions becoming the seats of Rhodesian-type regimes based on local European elements, and other portions very likely falling to the South Africans.

It is the natives of these provinces, not the European liberals, who would have to live with the results of such changes. I marvel at the readiness of people ostensibly devoted to liberal ideals to consign great masses of other people, by implication, to fates so uncertain and so unpromising.

Yours, etc,
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Norway.
July 19.

From Councillor Tom Dale

Sir, Mr John MacCallum Scott is guilty of the fault he alleges against the Liberal Party when he writes in your issue of July 21 that it adopts the line that Portugal is “guilty until proved innocent”. May I quote the words of the Liberal Whip, Mr David Steel, speaking in the Commons’ debate of July 17?

“The Foreign Secretary will understand when I use the phraseology of Scottish legal terminology and say that the case is not proven. That would be the right way of putting it, I believe. Equally there is clearly a case to be answered. There is sufficient corroboration from different priests in Italy and Spain for a case to be answered. That is all we are saying.”

It is clear from this that the Liberals are anxious to discover the truth of these allegations. Mr MacCallum Scott is apparently concerned to smear those who believe that the testimony of priests should be taken as seriously as those of a dictatorship whose interests inevitably lead them to deny the truth of the Tete accusations.

Yours sincerely,
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July 23.