

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TT. 20 July '73 p. 17

Other reported massacres in Africa

From Mr Robert Harvey

Sir, Since March of this year the avowedly genocidal extermination of hundreds of thousands of Hutu tribesmen in Burundi has been under way. Last year between 100,000 and 200,000 Hutus were murdered by the dominant minority tribe, the Tutsis. This year outbreaks of rebellion became the excuse, as expressed by a government White Paper, for a policy of establishing "parity through elimination of the Hutu surplus", which, if carried out, would entail the massacre of some 2,400,000 people. A wave of 26,000 refugees to Tanzania in three months has borne witness to the horror of the present situation.

In examining the recent coverage accorded the Burundi massacres it is difficult not to feel the lack of a proper sense of proportion amongst the news media in general. Other more fashionable causes—South Africa, Greece, the Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique—have become focuses of moral indignation, rightly so, but this should not take place to the exclusion of vastly more serious situations. If ever protest demonstrations were called for, they are against this act of mass barbarism.

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT HARVEY,
37 South Eaton Place, SW1.

From Mr Richard Moore

Sir, it is strange that one so distinguished as Mr Philip Noel-Baker (July 17) should believe that "only Portugal" defies the obligations of Article 73 of the United Nations Charter to prepare colonies for self-government.

The Soviet Union has shown not the slightest intention of relinquishing those large parts of Asia colonized by Tsarist Russia between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries—(incidentally more recently than Portugal colonized Mozambique). Nor is Russia willing to withdraw from the Baltic States which she invaded in 1940 and where a ruthless policy of suppression has been followed ever since.

The persistence, through force, of both the Soviet and Portuguese empires is in striking contrast to the fate of other colonial regimes. It confirms the Liberal view that the central conflict in politics is not between the left and the right, but between those who struggle, through, of course, imperfect institutions and by the agency of fallible individuals, to establish societies based on the rights of man and those who, whether in the name of a socialist revolution or a corporate state, deny these rights, not because of the inevitable corruption of human nature, but as the logical consequence of their ideology.

What is deeply depressing is that Mr Heath's welcome to the Portuguese Prime Minister and Mr Wilson's declaration that the Soviet Prime Minister when visiting this country was "part of our way of life" are only among the more obvious indications that neither the Conservative nor the Labour leader understands this rather elementary principle.

Yours truly,
RICHARD MOORE,
Hancox,
Battle,
Sussex.

From Miss Mary Southern

Sir, The Foreign Secretary's success yesterday (July 17) in scoring debating points against Mr Wilson obviously delighted his fellow Tories. Some, at least, of those who care for this country's reputation—particularly those bereaved by the war against fascism—will not share their self-satisfaction.

Whatever his shortcomings in office, the issues raised by Mr Wilson were not answered by Sir Alec Douglas-Home's bravura performance. The charge of hypocrisy and double standards can be levelled with equal logic at the present Government.

I, for one, feel deeply insulted and humiliated by the royal welcome given to the Portuguese leader. In forcing it down our throats Mr Heath has shown once again his contempt for Labour and Liberal opinion—not forgetting that of the more intelligent younger Tories—which happens to represent more than half the electorate.

In yesterday's debate I know who spoke for the Britain I love—it was not Sir Alec Douglas-Home.

Yours sincerely,
MARY SOUTHERN,
Miramar Hotel,
Beltinge, Herne Bay,
Kent.

From Mr Graham Tope, Liberal MP for Sutton and Cheam

Sir, It is apparent that the extensive reports of massacres and atrocities being committed in Mozambique by Portuguese troops have aroused the concern of the British public. This concern will not be allayed without a fully impartial international investigation into the facts. The Prime Minister should announce publicly that the British Government would support such an investigation.

There are also immediate measures which the Government can take to try and uncover the facts. First, our Consul General in Lourenço Marques must be able to visit the area accompanied by some of the priests who have made the allegations. Will the Government demand that the Portuguese should allow and facilitate this tour of the region? Secondly, the Consul General must have full and free access to the two Roman Catholic priests imprisoned in Lourenço Marques. Will Mr Heath ensure that such access is granted?

Without these two elements the prospect of any meaningful result emerging from a British investigation will be very slim.

This week we have witnessed the sight of Mr Heath and Dr Caetano celebrating an alliance which, at the present time, should be suspended. The representative of a dictatorial regime which is desperately fighting to maintain itself in Africa should not be feted and accorded the privileges of friendship for those, like Lord George-Brown, who shout "Brezhnev" at this point let it be clear that there is the world of difference between fulfilling the absolute minimum of contact necessitated by the *de facto* existence of a government and going out of your way to applaud and celebrate its existence.

Yours faithfully,
GRAHAM TOPE,
House of Commons.

From Dame Joan Vickers, Conservative MP for Devonport

Sir, May I draw the attention of many of your correspondents to the fact that in the last war, 1939-45, the lives of thousands of prisoners of war in Germany were saved by the fact that the Portuguese Government allowed food parcels to be sent to Germany.

In 1941, Mrs Ian Campbell formed a committee of voluntary workers, who continued the supplies for the duration of the war. In 1944, I, together with a small team of Red Cross and St John members, were flown to Portugal to make arrangements for the exchange of civilian prisoners from German camps, with German prisoners who had been held in South Africa.

There were many difficulties created by the German officials, and the Portuguese did all in their power to facilitate the exchange. When the British eventually arrived, their physical condition was very bad, and the generosity of the people, especially the shopkeepers, is, I am sure, still remembered.

Furthermore, when the Swedish ship *Drottingholm* was about to leave for Britain, the Germans sent officials on board to say that there were more British than Germans in the exchange, and demanded that a number be left behind.

I had the difficult task of selecting those to remain behind, who were naturally upset and wondered whether they would have to go back to Germany. The Portuguese Government agreed to look after them, and arranged for them to be flown back to London, and they arrived before the ship docked in Liverpool, so proving a real friend in what was a difficult situation for the Portuguese, especially as many at that time were influenced by the German propaganda that the Germans would win the war.

Yours faithfully,
JOAN VICKERS,
House of Commons.

From Air Commodore M. W. Palmer, RAF (ret'd)

Sir, Perhaps some historian in the future, researching in your columns, may note that yesterday (July 17) there took place in London two luncheons. One was given by the Corporation of London at the Mansion House to the President of the Council of Ministers of Portugal; there were hostile demonstrations outside (and elsewhere during the day) and in his speech the Lord Mayor apologized to the chief guest for the accusations being made against his country.

The other luncheon was given by HM Government at Lancaster House in honour of the Ambassador of the Mongolian People's Republic; so far as one knows, it passed off pleasantly without a dissentient voice.

What on earth, in the light of history, will the historian make of that? Yours faithfully,
M. W. PALMER,
109 Clifford's Inn,
Fetter Lane, EC4.

From Mr J. C. James

Sir, In your editorial this morning (July 18) you state that Frelimo "works through terrorism—they specialize in the murder of the head men of villages. They, too, have been responsible for massacres and their heavy reliance on land mines kills both friends and enemy". You then go on to say that you do not condone such crimes and finish off by attacking Portuguese foreign policy.

Would it not be in order to attack the policy of governments, notably Sweden, and other political organizations including those in this country, who do condone such terrorist activity even to the extent of supplying the terrorists with the necessary funds with which to purchase the "mines", and other arms which kill both friends and enemy?

Yours faithfully,
JOHN CORAM JAMES,
The Pump House,
Stratford-upon-Avon,
Warwickshire.

From the Reverend Dr Tom Baird

Sir, In *The Times* today (July 18) it is reported that the Lord Mayor of London "prefers to believe" an "entirely different story" rather than what he reads in some of the press; obviously (from the context) referring to the recent allegation of atrocities in Mozambique. Is this phrase an example of cliché English or does it declare his position?

Yours faithfully,
TOM BAIRD,
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Lynn Road,
Downham Market,
Norfolk.