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FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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ANGOLA

For the record we reprint the following correspondence and comment from the Church Times, London. The original dates of publication are shown in brackets preceding each item.

(July 7, 1961)

From the EARL OF SELBORNE

Sir,—May I record my dissent from the protest that the British Council of Churches is making to the Foreign Secretary against the Portuguese methods of quelling the rebellion in Angola. And I do so on two grounds:—

1. The British Council of Churches has not the means of really knowing the true facts of what is happening in Angola.

2. It is no business either of the Foreign Secretary or the British Council of Churches to teach the Portuguese Government how to manage their own affairs. Every Government has the duty of enforcing its authority and of maintaining law and order.

It is common knowledge that the horrors and suffering caused by rebellions and civil wars tend to be even greater than those caused by wars between civilised States, which is, presumably, one of the reasons why St. Paul stressed so emphatically the Christian duty of obedience to the civil power.

The Mau-Mau rebellion and its suppression has been authoritatively estimated to have cost 31,000 African lives, and the death roll and human suffering during the emergency in Malaya was also terrible. The horrors and suffering during both the Spanish Civil War and the American Civil War are matters of recent history.

If it be asserted that the Portuguese Government have been brutal and unduly severe in quelling this rebellion (which has been stimulated from the Congo), let us remember that the British Council of Churches is unfortunately mainly a Protestant body, and depends for its information in this matter on information supplied by the Baptist Missionary Society.

The B.B.C. on June 26, put on a characteristically unfair and misleading "Leftist" broadcast which was a complete distortion of the situation in Angola. This was led by a Mr. Hamilton and supported by an anonymous "expert" on Angola, whose statements were a travesty of the facts. May I quote instead the testimony of a distinguished American soldier recently returned from the country.

General Frank Howley, former Commander of the American Forces in Berlin since 1950, who is at present Vice-President of the University of New York, has just completed a 5,000 kilometre tour of Angola and made the following statement to journalists (which has not been reproduced on the B.B.C. or in any British paper that I have read):—

"During the course of my extensive visit through Angola people often asked what impressed me most. Without any hesitation, I must state that I was above all impressed by the

courage and humanity of the Portuguese people. I am also astounded by finding that there is no possible connection between the false information I was given before my visit and the real truth of what I saw. The Portuguese are giving the best example I ever hoped to see of how to bring progress to an underdeveloped region.

"I feel sure that the terrorism in the north will be dominated, while the rest of the province continues to advance towards the constitution of a progressive and modern society of the greatest promise. Since my arrival in Angola, I have been in the north and north-east of the province, and I saw with my own eyes the determination, the courage and the confidence in the future of the Portuguese people, both White and Coloured.

"I am convinced that the excitement created in certain international circles was originated by Communist lies, which I consider abominable. After what I have seen, I consider that the humanity of the Portuguese in racial relations has no equal in the world. The friendly and brotherly relations which exist between Coloured and Whites assure the easy transformation of all the province into a civilised society.

"The cessation of the Portuguese policy in Angola would be tragic for all, but specially so for the Natives. I consider the news of atrocities spread by Communist propaganda exclusively intended to discredit before the eyes of the world the great and real work of the Portuguese in their persistent effort to better the social and economic conditions of all the Angolan people."

The "expert" was followed by a Baptist clergyman, the Rev. Clifford Parsons, from whose speech one would have gathered that all the missionary work in Angola was being done by Protestants! But even he admitted that the rebellion started by an invasion of Angola by Congolese organised from Leopoldville, who slaughtered several hundred Portuguese settlers, men, women and children. It is not unnatural that this led to reprisals from the Portuguese inhabitants and the Portuguese Government.

Everyone must applaud the splendid work that the Refugee Service of the British Council of Churches has done to mitigate the sufferings of the people who have fled from the fighting, but that is quite different to attacking the Portuguese because they have not given the natives of Angola a democratic Government. To listen to some good Protestants, one would imagine that there was an eleventh Commandment, "Thou shalt be democratically elected."

I suggest that the right course for the British Council of Churches would have been to seek to enter into brotherly

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“Supposed to be . . .”

The Times on September 14th, under the heading across two columns “Lord Russell on ‘Why we are in prison’” printed the following received from the “Committee of 100”:

He said: “To all, in whatever country, who are still capable of sane thinking or human feeling; friends, along with valued colleagues. I am to be silenced for a time—perhaps for ever, for who can tell how soon the great massacre will take place? The populations of East and West, misled by stubborn governments in search of prestige and corrupted by official experts bent on retaining their posts, tamely acquiesce in policies which are certain to end in nuclear war.

“There are supposed to be two sides, each professing to stand for a great cause. This is a delusion. Kennedy and Khrushchev, Adenauer and De Gaulle, Macmillan and Gaitskell, are pursuing a common aim: the ending of human rights. You, your families, your friends and your countries are to be exterminated by the common decision of a few brutal but powerful men. To please these men, all the private affections, all the public hopes, all that has been achieved in art and knowledge and thought, and all that might be achieved thereafter is to be wiped out for ever.

“Our ruined, lifeless planet will for countless ages circle aimlessly around the sun, unredeemed by the joys and loves, the occasional wisdom and the power to create beauty, which have given value to human life. It is for seeking to prevent this that we are in prison.”

Now what is wrong with that?

It is, in our opinion, perfectly true that the “two sides” alleged to be in conflict in the world are pursuing a common aim: that there are not, in fact, two sides, and that “Kennedy and Khrushchev, Adenauer and De Gaulle, Macmillan and Gaitskell” are allies not opponents, and that the common

policy of them all (and of many others who would instantly take their places if these unaccountably disappeared) is the ending of human rights, if by ‘human rights’ is meant the right of every man to decide freely whether or not he will participate in the pursuit of a given objective, share to a just degree the proceeds of the exploitation of the common association and suffer to a just degree the natural penalties of standing aloof if he desires. That state of things is the prior condition of responsibility.

“Human rights” is a phrase which masks an abstraction

From one point of view, a Right which the individual cannot assert is not a Right; it cannot be; it is merely something which the individual may be deemed to deserve but doesn’t in fact enjoy; it is one of the ‘good intentions’ with which Hell is said to be paved. Elsewhere, it has no existence.

But to pass to the two sentences of Lord Russell’s ‘explanation.’ Are ‘your families, your friends and your countries’ to be exterminated? Is it ‘to please these men’?

These conclusions certainly do not follow logically from the sentence which introduces them. They, like the existence of ‘two sides,’ may be ‘a delusion,’ and we believe they are.

Assuming that Mr. Clyde Wilson, the Marlborough Street Magistrate, who quoted the Book of Job at Lord Russell—‘Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment’—was lacking in charity, what would be Lord Russell’s course of action if the sentences we have criticised adversely did indeed embody a delusion? Does Lord Russell think that helping to rattle the enemy’s sabre assists in consolidating a truly second side, when the two sides which are visible are revealed to be one?

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(continued from page 1).

consultations with the Roman Catholic Church, which is much more likely to be informed as to what has been happening in the ecclesiastical province of Luanda (where nearly all the fighting has been taking place) than we can hope to be.

To ignore the Roman Catholic Church and to rush off to the British Foreign Secretary, who has neither knowledge nor jurisdiction in the matter, may well be taken as a gratuitous insult to the Roman Catholic Church as being less humane than members of the B.C.C. Such a policy is not likely to assist either the inhabitants of Angola or the cause of Christian re-union.

In conclusion, I cannot help comparing the immense outcry against the Portuguese in the world’s Press and the British Parliament with the comparative silence on the subject of the appalling atrocities which have been going on in the Congo for the last twelve months, where thousands of people have been tortured and butchered and also, on occasions, eaten.

This leads me to suspect that the campaign against Portugal is being organised from Moscow, which apparently can always find enough liberal-minded and simple-minded people in the Western nations to believe any atrocity alleged against a “Rightist” Government and to make a hullabaloo about it, thereby causing dissension among the Allies, who are the only barrier against world domination by Communism.

SELBORNE.

77, Queens House,
St. James’s Court,
Buckingham Gate, S.W.1.

Comment from Church Times, "Summary of the News," July 7, 1961.

In a letter this week the Earl of Selborne seeks to justify Portuguese policy in Angola, where a revolution by Africans has been met by fearful reprisals inflicted by Government forces.

One may sympathise with Lord Selborne's desire that justice should be done to some aspects of Portugal's activity in her African colonies, and that both sides of the Angola question should be given a hearing. The rebels have perpetrated ghastly atrocities: there is no doubt of that. But there is also incontrovertible evidence to show that the Portuguese are guilty of equally horrible atrocities and on a far larger scale. Their conduct in massacring defenceless villagers is beyond the pale, and we can only express surprise that any Christian should attempt to justify what is seemingly unjustifiable.

Nor does Lord Selborne refer to the root cause of the tragedy in Angola. It is due to the long-standing Policy of refusing to many Africans any say in government, any responsibility, or any real freedom. The Portuguese are reaping a whirlwind from seed which their own folly has sown, and their conduct in fighting the present rebellion has rightly shocked the conscience of the world.

(July 14, 1961)

From the GENERAL SECRETARY, BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.

Sir,—My first reaction to the letter on the subject of Angola which Lord Selborne saw fit to address to you was that sufficient answer to it had been given in your editorial columns, where you expressed surprise that "any Christian should attempt to justify what is seemingly unjustifiable."

No one would wish readily to draw further attention to an honoured Christian layman using such emotive terms as . . . the B.B.C. "putting on a characteristically unfair and misleading 'Leftist' broadcast"; the British Council of Churches "rushing off to the British Foreign Secretary" and ignoring the Roman Catholic Church, which "may well be taken as a gratuitous insult" to that Church; and the Campaign against Portugal being "organised from Moscow."

The references, however, to the British Council of Churches are so extensive that it may be necessary to give some answer on one or two points.

That Council can only be described as "mainly a Protestant body" if the Church which Lord Selborne has outstandingly served be held to come within that description. The Church of England is our largest member Church, and her three sister Churches elsewhere in the British Isles also play a full part in our deliberations. The Bishop of Chelmsford and Sir Kenneth Grubb were members of the deputation to Lord Home, and concern about Angola has been widespread in the Church of England, as was shown by the Archbishop of Canterbury's reference to it in his address to the Church Assembly. Far from ignoring the Roman Catholic Church, some days before the Foreign Secretary received the deputation I acquainted Cardinal Godfrey with the reasons which led to our action and the substance of what we proposed to say.

Christian concern over Angola is by no means restricted to non-Roman Churches or to British missions. The very first public resolution in Britain on this subject made refer-

ence to a pastoral letter of the Roman hierarchy in Angola which drew attention to the existence of serious social injustices and to the legitimate aspirations of Africans. A letter on the actions of the Portuguese Government has recently been addressed to the President of the United States by eighty prominent Roman Catholic and Protestant clergy and laymen in the U.S.A. and Canada.

The British Council of Churches has become recognised as the normal channel through which approaches to Government are made on matters of general Christian concern. It will be obvious that no deputation goes from this Council to hector any statesman. In this instance we went with three purposes.

We felt it our duty to make known the very widespread anxiety among Christian people about events in Angola, and to lay before the Foreign Secretary the evidence which had come to us both from the Baptism Missionary Society and from American Methodist sources and which appeared to give all too much ground for that anxiety. We further wished to express the perplexity felt by many Christian people about the apparent attitude of the British Government towards Portugal in the light of these events.

Between asking for the interview and seeing Lord Home, however, the Government had taken three steps which, in considerable measure, altered the situation. They were: new instructions in regard to voting to our delegates at the United Nations; the mission of the Consul-General at Luanda and another member of the Embassy staff; and the suspension of the export of arms to Portugal which could be used in Angola.

Our third purpose was, of course, to hear what Lord Home wished to say to us. We were received with more than courtesy, and Lord Home has promised to keep in touch with the Council as the situation develops.

The argument that the Churches' knowledge of such distant events can never be complete can always be used to justify callous inaction. There were not lacking those who, in the beginning of the destruction of European Jewry, argued that we did not know enough to protest; and, perhaps significantly, saw in Hitler's critics the tools, conscious or unwitting, of Moscow.

Such men as Eichmann were able to do what they did partly because of such arguments within and outside Germany. The one thing which has enlightened the gloom of recent weeks as the news from Angola has reached us has been the utter refusal of a great many Christians of every Church to allow such arguments to smother their consciences.

KENNETH SLACK,
General Secretary.

British Council of Churches,
10, Eaton Gate,
Sloane Square, S.W.1.

(July 14, 1961)

Sir,—I was exceedingly glad to read the letter from Lord Selborne on the subject of Angola, which brought a much-needed breath of sanity into an atmosphere far too long bedevilled by hysterical and ill-informed criticism. Are the protagonists of the Angolan rebels desirous of reproducing in Angola the chaotic conditions of the Congo—from which the whole trouble is being engineered? What do they imagine that the Portuguese settlers should do in the face of these conditions? Let themselves be mutilated and disembowelled without a murmur?

The Portuguese may have been slow in allowing observers into Angola to see the truth for themselves, but there has been some justification for their assumption that most of the outside world is so convinced of their guilt in advance that there would not be much hope of a fair appraisal of the facts. We should do well to suspend judgment until the report of the British observers, now in Angola, is to hand.

The B.B.C., for some reason best known to itself, has developed an anti-Portuguese complex which can see no good whatever in the Salazar regime, and has conveniently forgotten the sixteen years of republican incompetence which preceded it, when there was an average of one revolution and three Governments per year, while five hundred people held Cabinet office—the perfect democratic paradise!

We sometimes forget that we are bound by the closest ties of ancient alliance with Portugal. The Treaty of Whitehall, signed on June 23, 1661, and renewed so lately as 1900, stated *inter alia* . . . "that His Majesty of Britain . . . shall promise and oblige himself, as by this present Article he doth, to defend and protect all conquests or colonies belonging to the Crown of Portugal against all his enemies as well future as present."

We also forget that by Portuguese law Angola is an overseas province of Portugal (in exactly the same way as Alaska and Hawaii are States of the Union) and therefore that any attack on Angola is an attack on Portugal. This is the Portuguese idea of a Commonwealth. It does not exactly accord with our own pet ideas on the subject, but surely this world is large enough for different experiments in overseas government?

There is, moreover, no colour bar in Portuguese Africa such as exists in the Southern United States, whose representatives in the U.N. consistently vote, in company with the dictators, Nasser, Nkrumah and Krushchev, against Christian Portugal.

EDWARD TUCKER.

Fleet, Hants.

(*The Church Times*, 21st July, 1961)

Sir,—The basis of Lord Selborne's argument is that the Establishment is always right. This, be it known, is not the view of the Roman Church any more than it is of the Free Churches. Were he an inhabitant of Hungary, it is possible that he also would take a different view. So he can hardly blame Africans if they do not accept the official Salazarist claim that Angolan Africans are Portuguese. Legally they may be Portuguese-protected persons: but spiritually they claim the right to be loyal to their own cultural heritage.

In the criticised B.B.C. programme on June 26, Dr. Edwards, a Roman Catholic anthropologist who has lived in Angola, gave a series of quotations from statements by members of the hierarchy in Angola, revealing the deep concern at the abuse of Africans felt by the leaders of the Roman Church.

General Howley, who is so liberally quoted by Lord Selborne, is strangely out of step with his own Government—which, one may suppose, is better furnished with information on the situation within Angola than a visiting General making a conducted tour of the country in company with Portuguese officials. While I would agree that ten, even six years ago, there was a real opportunity for Portugal to ride the current storm of African nationalism that flows over Africa, and many of the common Portuguese people have had liberal attitudes towards the African, the increased repression of the past few years has made this outbreak inevitable.

If, in my own contribution to the B.B.C. programme, I spoke only of Protestant missions, that was because I was asked to speak to that particular brief. It is well known that Portugal is traditionally a Roman Catholic country; but it is less well known that there are nearly three-quarters of a million Protestants in Angola, and that Protestant Christians cannot therefore be uninterested in the present tragedy.

As for the "admission" that the rebellion was organised from outside the country, Lord Selborne omits to mention that those who organised it were Angolan Africans who had perforce to act from without, since no freedom of political expression is allowed either to Europeans or Africans either in Angola or in Portugal itself. Is he unaware that the Vicar-General of Luanda and a number of African priests of the Roman Church have been arrested for their part in the nationalist organisation behind the revolt? Or that the Bishop of Salford has made a public statement condemning the repressive nature of the Portuguese action in Angola? Well may we ask, What are the real facts?

As for the Congo, as a society with some seventy missionaries deployed throughout the land we would condemn the prejudice that places all responsibility for her continuing difficulties on the backs of Congolese. The allegedly Communist regime in Stanleyville has been paying two Baptist ministers to teach the Christian faith in Government schools in that city ever since last September.

Lord Selborne is not able to understand the revolution through which Africa is passing at the present time. It is not in essence Communistic, but the strong surge of African nationalism. The inevitably repressive measures that some Governments are adopting render our claim to being defenders of democracy and human rights a mockery, and will inevitably turn Africans towards Communism and away from the supposedly Christian West.

CLIFFORD J. PARSONS.

Baptist Missionary Society, 93-7 Gloucester Place, W.1.

From the EARL OF SELBORNE.

Sir,—Courtesy demands that I should answer the letter from the General Secretary of the British Council of Churches which you published on July 14, although this has been fully done by anticipation in the admirable letter from Mr. Edward Tucker that you printed alongside it. I would recommend Mr. Slack and his colleagues to read that letter again, and ponder every word of it.

My protest was against the action of the B.B.C. ignoring the Roman Catholic Church, which must be much better informed on Angola than we are, and approaching Lord Home on a matter which is outside his responsibility. Mr. Slack says that he notified Cardinal Godfrey after the deputation had been arranged. I find it significant that Cardinal Godfrey abstained from joining it.

At the end of his letter, Mr. Slack compares Dr. Salazar with Hitler. No comparison could be more unjust. Dr. Salazar is a devout Roman Catholic of outstanding integrity and piety, who has conferred great benefits on Portugal and has never persecuted the Jews or anyone else. But, because Dr. Salazar is not a believer in democracy for Portugal, he has been subject to a campaign of unparalleled vilification by those who apparently confuse Christianity with democracy.

SELBORNE.

Temple Manor, Selborne, Alton, Hants.