

## BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS AND LETTERS

### ON CENSORSHIP IN RHODESIA--REBUTTALS

Sir:

In their letter attacking part of a review I had written of Colonialism in Africa: 1870-1960, Vol. II (Cambridge University Press, 1970), Messrs. Gann and Duignan state that since 1968 "no censorship has been imposed on Rhodesian publications," hence implying that my information is not accurate and suggesting that I "might do some more checking."

When I wrote the review, I was aware of the formal withdrawal of "legal" censorship in 1968, but I also knew something of the subtle nature of the Rhodesian Government's suppression of dissent, which has repeatedly gone far beyond any rational definition of freedom of the press. However, since Gann and Duignan have chosen to attack my review (ignoring the pertinent fact that I praised several sections of their book) and have questioned my own documentation, I have looked further yet into the question of censorship.

Despite the repeal of the Emergency Powers (Censorship of Publications) Order of 1965, no unbiased observer could possibly claim that newspapers, as well as other publications, are not subject to censorship in Rhodesia. The Censorship and Entertainments Control Act, which is currently in effect and which was amended and tightened as recently as September 1971, contains a new provision permitting the Censorship Board to declare all editions of a publication to be "undesirable" if it has found six consecutive editions undesirable. According to Eileen Haddon (now a Professor at the Institute for African Studies, University of Zambia), a former editor of the Central African Examiner, "Innumerable publications have been banned under this Act, ranging from magazines such as Playboy and such clinical matter as R. von Kraft-Ebing's Psychopathia Sexualis to political matter like Nathan Shamuyarira's Crisis in Rhodesia and Rhodesian Perspective, edited by Theodore Bull."

The really effective censorship, however, lies in security legislation, about which I am sure Gann and Duignan cannot pretend ignorance. This legislation makes it necessary for editors to censor their own material for fear of arrest, deportation, or other harassment. A passage from Crisis in Color (Quadrangle Books, Chicago), another book

banned in Rhodesia, provides ample illustration of this point:

In 1960 the Whitehead Government passed the notorious Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, which has been amended and tightened constantly since but which, even in its original form, removed so many personal liberties that the then Federal Chief Justice, Sir Robert Tredgold, resigned in protest against it....The provisions of this Act, inter alia, include....Permitting the Government to ban any publication and making it an offence punishable by a year's imprisonment for any person to utter any words or do "anything whatsoever" without lawful excuse, the proof whereof lies on the accused, which is likely to expose the police or any public officer (which includes all civil servants and chiefs) to "contempt or disesteem"; Laying down penalties of up to five years imprisonment without the option of making "subversive statements" which inter alia are "Likely to excite disaffection against the Government or Constitution, or to promote contempt or hostility on account of race or colour"; Making it an offence punishable by seven years imprisonment without the option to publish any "false" report "likely to cause fear, alarm or despondency" unless the accused can satisfy the court that he took "reasonable measures" to verify the accuracy of the report.

As Prof. Haddon and Colin Legum have repeatedly noted, many actions have been brought for infringements of this Act. I shall cite a few. The Daily News, the only "commercial" newspaper (as distinct from Church papers) which tried to reflect African opinion, was banned in August 1964, and its editor charged under this Act. Eileen Haddon was charged as editor of the Central African Examiner for publishing as a reader's letter in correspondence columns "a rather bad sonnet," to quote Professor Haddon herself, "criticising the use of dogs by police in controlling African crowds; the author of the sonnet was also prosecuted and later deported." Father Traber, editor of the Catholic paper Moto was prosecuted for publishing a cartoon showing a white hand squeezing a number of black men from whom a few drops of blood were falling; he was later deported, as was his successor to the editorship. And Mr. Everson Chikwanha (see Africa Digest, June 1971), editor of Umbowo, the newspaper of the United Methodist Church, has been charged under the security laws with publishing "subversive statements." It is obvious, even to persons not equipped with the tools of the professional historian, that editors--if they wish to remain at liberty in Rhodesia--will suppress news or comments which might conceivably lead to prosecution.

Colin Legum, in personal communication to this writer, states, "The State Radio and TV are directly and tightly controlled by the Minister of Information. For anybody to argue there is no censorship in Rhodesia is equivalent to saying that Gann and Duignan are unbiased historians!" There may no longer be any formal de jure censorship in Rhodesia, but the evidence of de facto censorship, plus the effect of the extensive security legislation, resulting in a priori discouragement of news, or by arrest after the fact, is abundant and unavoidable. If these examples reveal the kind of "free" press allowed in Rhodesia, then most certainly my statement that the Government censors all newspapers will stand (regardless of legalities such as Gov. Notice Number 258).

Colin Legum again puts it succinctly: "A situation has been created whereby the press has assumed a good deal of voluntary censorship for the price of withdrawal or censorship by the state. Any journalist in Rhodesia will tell that this is so." Among journalists excluded in recent years from entry into Rhodesia is Mr. Legum himself, one of the most distinguished and able journalists in his profession.

I have taken considerable time and space to answer the Gann and Duignan criticism. It seems to me that their attempt to discredit my review in this fashion (totally ignoring almost all the other points I made in an article eight pages long) only proves the point I originally made vis-à-vis their bias towards Rhodesia.

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Sir:

In the September 1971 African Studies Review Lewis H. Gann and Peter Duignan announce that "no censorship has been imposed on Rhodesian publications" subsequent to April 6, 1968, "hence an anti-government publication such as Centreport can be put out in Salisbury and can be ordered by American scholars...(p. 345). This conclusion, they say, results from having "tried to do some more documenting" in the wake of Prof. K. Wylie's earlier (April 1971) criticism of their Colonialism in Africa volume, wherein Wylie faulted it for neglecting "to mention the undeniable fact that the...[Rhodesian] government censors all newspapers."

Apparently Messrs. Gann and Duignan did not do appreciably more documenting. If they had, they might have discovered, for example,

that the outspoken African-oriented, Catholic-published Moto (Mambo Press, Gwelo) had undergone severe harassment from the authorities since late 1969, at least a year and a half after "repeal" of the Censorship of Publications Order. Its ordeal, ostensibly related to printing a "subversive" cartoon (opposing the proposed new Constitution) and involving first the trial and then deportation of Fr. Michael Traber, the Swiss-born managing editor, and later expulsion of another European staffer, Anthony F. Schmitz, together with massive confiscation of Mambo Press publications, has been fully detailed in the paper itself as well as in IPI Report, organ of the International Press Institute, Zuerich, and the London Times (see 16 February 1970, p. 5; 20 February, p. 8; 10 March, p. 7). Graphic, readily accessible evidence of the Moto-suppression campaign appears in a photo-complement to my own "African Magazines for American Libraries," Library Journal, Vol. XCV, No. 7 (April 1, 1970), p. 1292: a reproduced front page from the gutsy monthly tabloid featuring material on the Traber trial and seizure of "Bishops' Pastoral Letters," and so on.

Regarding their prize example of Centrepunt, the Centre Party vehicle, just how "anti-government" it is may be gleaned--in the words of Anthony McAdam, writing in Race Today ("Limits of Dissent in Rhodesia," May 1971, p. 152)--from the contribution of an African Centre Party MP to a 1970 issue in which he assailed the "[Smith] regime's policy of racial segregation" on the chillingly militant grounds that it "did not have the decency to treat Africans equally with Europeans by conscripting them into the army to fight the 'terrorists' on the Zambezi"! If Gann and Duignan regard that sort of grovelling Uncle-Tomism as genuinely threatening to the Salisbury Herren, they qualify as far less astute than the super-sensitive, rightly paranoid Rhodesian oligarchs themselves. Incidentally, McAdam, a former lecturer in political science at the University College of Rhodesia, grants that statutory government censorship--as Gann and Duignan correctly, if not also exuberantly, note--ended in 1968. He comments, however, that now the press has "'the right' to censor itself, which it does with a vigour and conscientiousness that makes formal government censorship superfluous" (p. 152). The eminent Hoover authorities must surely admit that the same end--repression of dissent--can be achieved by many means. It is not always necessary to ban a paper outright or delete offensive columns on a printed page. To deport an editor, "detain" a writer (for example, Judy Todd, a frequent Guardian contributor), monitor mail (it happened to Fr. Traber), and send police on "visits" to publishing houses--all these are equally efficient, albeit not purely classic, methods of censorship.

"Perhaps Prof. Wylie might do some more checking," Gann and Duignan acidly suggest. Excellent advice, gentlemen, but more appropriately directed to yourselves than the Professor. Your most recent effort--seemingly confined to "checking" Rhodesian Government "Notices" instead of Rhodesian Government practices--does not indicate that you "tried" very assiduously. Or maybe the Hoover Institutions's files

aren't the most propitious place to look.

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Readers of the African Studies Review will be interested to know that James S. Coleman's Nigeria: Background to Nationalism has been reissued in the University of California Library reprint series (March 1972).

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