

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**‘Does the Daily Paper rule Britannia’:<sup>1</sup> The British press, British public opinion, and the end of empire in Africa, 1957-60**

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from a reader’s letter to the *Nyasaland Times*, quoted in an article on 2 February 1960, front page (hereafter fp). All newspaper articles which follow were consulted at The British Library Newspaper Library.

## **Declaration**

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the role of British newspaper coverage of Africa in the process of decolonisation between 1957 and 1960. It considers events in the Gold Coast/Ghana, Kenya, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, South Africa, and the Belgian Congo/Congo. It offers an extensive analysis of British newspaper coverage of Africa during this period. Concurrently, it explores British journalists' interactions with one another as well as with the British Government, British MPs, African nationalists, white settler communities, their presses, and African and European settler governments, whose responses to coverage are gauged and evaluated throughout. The project aims, firstly, to provide the first broad study of the role of the British press in, and in relation to, Africa during the period of 'rapid decolonisation'. Secondly, it offers a reassessment of the assumption that the British metropolitan political and cultural context to the end of empire in Africa was extraneous to the process. Thirdly, it aims to contribute to a growing literature on non-governmental metropolitan perspectives on the end of empire.

## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

### Prelude

When Anthony Sampson set foot in Cape Town in the middle of 1951, he was embarking on a personal and professional journey that would forever change his life.<sup>1</sup> Describing himself as ‘shy and awkward’ as a boy,<sup>2</sup> with ‘an incurable mania for writing’,<sup>3</sup> he felt different in the environment in which he grew up, yet at the same time very English, and though he described himself as un-academic, was fortunate enough to win a scholarship to Westminster School, from where he followed the traditional route on to Oxford University after a two-year stint in the Royal Navy in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> His experience, whilst in the Royal Navy, of living with arrogant British officers in occupied Germany, began to chip away at his sense of pride in being English, and helped to stimulate a personal intellectual interest in power and powerlessness,<sup>5</sup> which would, arguably, inform his later writings.

Yet it was Africa, which he first glimpsed through the darkness across the ocean as lights twinkling and a magnificent flat-topped mountain, that would give him the gift of personal freedom he had always yearned for, and would transform that existing interest in power and its mainsprings into a lifelong passion.<sup>6</sup> Sampson travelled to Africa on the invitation of Jim Bailey, a South African friend he had met at Oxford, to edit and to help transform the ailing fortunes of *African Drum*, a four-month-old South African magazine for Africans. In the paper’s offices, Sampson worked alongside black South Africans, who inspired and energised him, and in his spare time he immersed himself in the life of the vibrant Johannesburg townships, gradually distancing himself from the staid white South African society with which he had at first expected to identify. He returned to Britain four years later, was approached by a nephew of Lord Northcliffe of the *Daily Mail*, but held out for a career at David Astor’s *Observer*, with which he had first come into contact through

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Sampson, *The Anatomist: The Autobiography of Anthony Sampson* (London, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-16.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-14.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 17-42.

*Drum*.<sup>7</sup> Sampson would work there for the next four decades, writing prolifically on Africa, and returning there frequently. In the mid-1990s, Nelson Mandela commissioned Sampson to write his authorised biography.<sup>8</sup> Sampson had first met Mandela in a print shop in Johannesburg in the early 1950s, but confessed that he found the encounter hard to recall.<sup>9</sup>

This is a short overview of part of a life of one of the men at the heart of producing British newspaper coverage of Africa at the end of empire, drawn from sections of his autobiography. It is condensed and deficient for that. Yet even in its shortened form, it illustrates some of the themes and complexities which run throughout this thesis, and which, it is hoped, will seem worthy of investigation. As a journalist, Sampson was influenced by his personal experiences, allying himself to the cause of the Africans, and seeking out a newspaper which would allow him to write in accordance with his personal truth. Yet the overture from the right-leaning *Daily Mail* points to the importance of avoiding describing the role of the British press in or in relation to Africa during these years solely in terms of the story of an individual. Sampson's path from England to South Africa to England, and the role of Bailey, also indicates the significance of transnational links and information flows, personal connections and fortune in conspiring in such a way as to produce a certain kind of press coverage in both Britain and Africa. His interactions with black South Africans, including Mandela, suggest that there were links between British journalists and African nationalists during this period. Yet Sampson's hazy memory of his first encounter with Mandela must also point to the fragility of these connections and remind us that there was nothing preordained about the course either of these relationships or of the process of decolonisation.

## 1. Focus and argument

This thesis is about British newspaper coverage of Africa between 1957 and 1960. It speaks to historiographical debates on the role of the British press at the end of empire, the significance of British low politics or British public opinion to the process of decolonisation, the cultural impact of the end of empire in Britain, and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

decolonisation as ‘lived’ experience, a term taken from the title of Jan-Bart Gewald et al’s edited collection, *Living the End of Empire: Politics and Society in Late-colonial Zambia*, in which the contributors explore how the end of empire was experienced locally, in Africa.<sup>10</sup>

The thesis focuses on seven main features of British press coverage and discusses their wider significance, in addition to the significance of other subsidiary or more peripheral characteristics, whilst also drawing distinctions between different papers or sections of the press.

The first central feature, discussed in Chapter One, concerns the British press’s very swift, negative portrayal of Ghana under Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah during the first few months of independence in 1957. The second central feature, the subject of the second chapter, turns on the press’s diminution of the issue of British colonial misconduct in Kenya and Nyasaland during 1959. British journalists’ characterisation of African nationalism as organic, muscular and all-powerful, and the white settler response in Central and South Africa as mad or dangerous are the third and fourth features, which form the focus of chapters Three and Four on Harold Macmillan’s ‘wind of change’ tour (1960). Chapter Five uses the lens of press coverage of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa in 1960 to explore the nature of the press’s views on apartheid, which it concludes were disapproving, but also highly ambiguous at times and conflicting, particularly concerning the question of how Britain should respond to the issue of white violence, a fifth, twinned, characteristic of coverage. Chapter Six explores a sixth main feature, which centres on the British press’s support for Belgian action in the Congo following independence in 1960. A further characteristic, which runs throughout, concerns the press’s positive portrayal of Britain and British involvement in the decolonisation process.

The thesis makes three central arguments concerning the overall effects of press coverage, whilst striving to acknowledge differences dependent on the countries, regions and moments under scrutiny. Firstly, press content influenced the British Prime Minister and the British Government on matters of policy. Press coverage also functioned as an irritant and an obstacle in the path of the British Government’s claim to sole authorship of ‘Britain’s view’ overseas. Secondly, in

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<sup>10</sup> Jan-Bart Gewald, Marja Hinfelaar and Giacomo Macola (eds.), *Living the End of Empire: Politics and Society in Late-colonial Zambia* (Leiden, 2011).

Africa, press coverage fomented a mix of anxiety, conflict and division among competing social and political groups. Thirdly, it may have mitigated feelings of loss, regret, weakness and decline on the part of British readers at the end of empire. On the issue of why British press coverage had the first two sets of effects, the thesis highlights the significance of the specific ways in which British newspaper articles interlocked, on the one hand, with the different contemporary and historical concerns of separate reader groupings; and on the other, with those groupings' assumptions regarding the relation between British press content and British public opinion; or content, public opinion and Government policy.

On the subject of the production of coverage, the thesis underscores the significance of cultural, ideological, political, personal, experiential and institutional factors influencing British journalists, locally, in Africa, as well as in Britain. In their precise articulation, these were highly specific to the region and events under scrutiny. Yet some common factors included the efforts of the British Government, the British Labour Party, African nationalist parties prior to independence, African opposition parties following independence, and separate white settler groupings to influence British journalists; journalists' local experiences; editorial imperatives; and the personal perspectives of British editors and journalists.

Further crucial, yet in a sense secondary,<sup>11</sup> influences were paper's narratological and visual or contextual 'frames', which this thesis defines as factual or ideological assumptions or preoccupations within which subsequent events were processed by journalists and viewed by readers. The term 'frame' is drawn from the field of Media and Communications, specifically Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), because it seems appropriate for what I wish to describe.<sup>12</sup> However, this thesis does not employ a CDA approach, strict or otherwise, to the analysis of newspaper texts, chiefly because the method is far too restrictive and too teleological, operating in its most fundamental sense to confirm the view that discourse re-produces not only existing patterns of power within the society of which it is a product, but existing patterns of power as already understood. Rather, this thesis favours an historical approach to the study of the production and the significance of press content.

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<sup>11</sup> These functioned as a repository of influences, as accumulated over time.

<sup>12</sup> Two works in this field which I have found particularly useful are: Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London, 1995); and John E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (Basingstoke, 2007).

## 2. The British press and the end of empire in Africa

The primary justification for this thesis is that there is no comprehensive existing work devoted to examining the role of British newspapers in, and in relation to, Africa during this period, and yet, as the short discussion of Sampson indicates, the British press was a group which interacted with the main political protagonists in the process, and experienced decolonisation ‘at first hand’. Its products were also extremely widely-read. Between 1947 and 1961, paid circulation figures alone for British national morning papers stood in the region of 15 to 16 million.<sup>13</sup>

A number of smaller or specific case studies have greatly enhanced our understanding of the subject. Yet there is no single work which ties the topics, themes or conclusions together, probes them further, and in doing so, provides a uniform approach to the material across a range of case studies. Relevant existing works include a section in Susan Carruthers’s *Winning Hearts and Minds* (1995) on the British Government’s efforts to influence British media coverage of Kenya during the Mau Mau war;<sup>14</sup> Tony Shaw’s work on the British Government’s relations with the right-leaning British press during the Suez crisis (1995);<sup>15</sup> small sections of James Sanders’s *South Africa and the International Media* (2000);<sup>16</sup> Joanna Lewis’s chapter on British popular press coverage of Kenya during the 1950s in E.S. Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale’s *Mau Mau and Nationhood* (2003);<sup>17</sup> a chapter on the relationship between the Colonial Office and the British press during 1959, written by Joanna Lewis and Philip Murphy for Chandrika Kaul’s *Media and the British Empire* (2006);<sup>18</sup> and sections of Håkan Thörn’s book on the international media and the transnational anti-apartheid movement (2006).<sup>19</sup> Additional studies,

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<sup>13</sup> Colin Seymour-Ure, *The Press, Politics and the Public: An Essay on the Role of the National Press in the British Political System* (London, 1968), p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> Susan Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds: British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-Insurgency, 1944-1960* (London, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Tony Shaw, *Eden, Suez, and the Mass Media: Propaganda and Persuasion during the Suez Crisis* (London, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> James Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media 1972-1979: A Struggle for Representation* (London, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Joanna Lewis, “‘Daddy Wouldn’t Buy Me a Mau Mau’: The British Popular Press and the Demoralization of Empire” in E. S. Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale (eds.), *Mau Mau and Nationhood: Arms, Authority, Narration* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 227-50.

<sup>18</sup> Joanna Lewis and Philip Murphy, “‘The Old Pals’ Protection Society”? The Colonial Office and the British Press on the Eve of Decolonisation’ in Chandrika Kaul (ed.), *Media and the British Empire* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 55-69.

<sup>19</sup> Håkan Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (Basingstoke, 2009).

such as Richard Rathbone's article on Ghana's independence celebrations (2008),<sup>20</sup> Joanna Lewis's chapter for L. J. Butler and Sarah Stockwell's *The Wind of Change* in which Lewis discusses Harold Macmillan's visit to Northern Rhodesia (2013),<sup>21</sup> and Howard Smith's article on BBC reporting of the Sharpeville massacre (1993),<sup>22</sup> speak to the role of British newspapers at the end of empire, yet this is not their primary focus.

Concerning emphasis and approach, the above works might be characterised as falling into two main categories. First, would be those by Carruthers, Shaw, and Lewis and Murphy, which draw on British Government documents as a means of investigating Government relations with the media. Second, would include those by Lewis and Thörn, which focus on press content as a means of identifying press attitudes. A third approach, unique to Lewis, is that of using journalists' observations as a lens through which we might begin to interrogate the validity of certain accepted historical narratives.<sup>23</sup>

This thesis operates on the basis that only by combining and extending the first and second approaches, is it possible to arrive at a full understanding of the significance of British newspaper coverage.<sup>24</sup> Press content alone cannot tell us definitively about how it was perceived by outsiders or the extent to which it influenced them, and thus important aspects of its relevance. Similarly, studies which work in from the key-hole of a specific reader group's interactions with the press or its perceptions of press content, to an assessment of coverage and its significance, can miss both the full profusion of other influences bearing down on British editors and journalists as they composed their articles, and the opportunity to draw out the significance of any disjuncture between outsiders' strategies and perceptions, and content as a whole.

The thesis aims to build on the existing literature by marrying these previously distinct approaches to the study of the press, one focusing on newspaper

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<sup>20</sup> Richard Rathbone, 'Casting "the Kingdome into another mold": Ghana's Troubled Transition to Independence', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 97: 398 (2008), pp. 705-18.

<sup>21</sup> Joanna Lewis, "'White Man in a Wood Pile': Race and the Limits of Macmillan's Great "Wind of Change" in Africa" in L. J. Butler and Sarah Stockwell (eds.), *The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 70-95.

<sup>22</sup> Howard Smith, 'Apartheid, Sharpeville and "Impartiality": The Reporting of South Africa on BBC Television 1948-1961', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 13: 3 (1993), pp. 251-98.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis takes this approach in "'White Man"'.

<sup>24</sup> The third does not speak to the role of the press at the time per se, although it might suggest that its significance lay with those of its narratives which diverged from the official record.



content, the other on outsider interactions with or perceptions of that content; and adding a third: journalists' own accounts of events published in places other than the press. It provides a discussion of outsider interactions with and perceptions of press content which moves beyond existing studies, moreover, by including an assessment of the African in addition to the British dimension. British newspaper readerships extended to African and white settler societies, very important, yet historiographically neglected publics. The thesis also strives to identify the internal, press, or personal influences affecting the production of coverage, which have not formed the subject of any previous study of the British press and Africa at the end of empire.

The arguments of the above works reflect the approaches adopted. In other words, the first set of works discusses the degree to which the British Government influenced the British press; while the second set of works explores the influence of the British press. Carruthers and Shaw present the role of British newspapers in relation to the Mau Mau war and Suez respectively, as essentially that of reproducing a conservative British Government-inspired narrative of events for those sections of the British newspaper-reading public which British politicians deemed it most important to influence.<sup>25</sup> Both think it important to address the question of the extent to which the British public absorbed these narratives, and thus the degree to which the Government achieved its ultimate propaganda aims. Yet although Carruthers senses a critical opposition on certain key issues, neither author reaches any confident conclusions.

Lewis and Murphy's study of the relationship between the British press and the Colonial Office during 1959 is comparable in the sense that it describes how officials and MPs successfully used British newspapers to achieve policy-related goals. Yet it differs from the studies by Carruthers and Shaw in its emphasis on the internal, governmental or parliamentary significance of British press content as opposed to the British press or public dynamic, and on progressive as opposed to conservative aspects, arguing, for instance, that the Colonial Office nurtured the British media as a stick with which to beat the Commonwealth Relations Office into confronting difficult issues concerning British policy towards the Federation.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Carruthers, *Winning Hearts*; Shaw, *Eden, Suez*.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis and Murphy, "Old Pals".

In contrast to these three works, Joanna Lewis's chapter on British popular press coverage of Kenya during the 1950s suggests that journalists' progressive perspectives may have influenced British politicians directly; whilst they also reflected and informed a growing British public disengagement from empire, which contributed to the country's relatively peaceful decolonisation.

The works of Carruthers, Shaw, Lewis and Murphy, speak of particular places, relations and historical moments. That they lay emphasis on different press roles does not mean that they simply 'cancel one another out', and therefore call for further investigation. Differences concerning place, time and relationships are highly important, a point which this thesis bears out. Nevertheless, engaging in a comparative, and fuller approach, assessing a range of press content and influences across time and place, not only enables us to add further important arguments on the role of the British press at these and other junctures, which form the subject of the previous section, but also permits us to engage with the existing literature from a different perspective, and thus offer some further views, which it is hoped will be valuable.

The second chapter, on 1959, agrees, for instance, that the British Government engaged in strenuous efforts to influence British newspaper coverage of colonial violence in Kenya and Nyasaland, and had some important successes, which, in the case of Kenya, also betrayed the extent of its earlier propaganda achievements during the Mau Mau war. Yet it also maintains that further factors, such as journalists' local experiences, settler-press relations, editorial pressures, and the political and other perspectives of editors and journalists were equally, if not more, significant to the production of coverage, suggesting that the press was itself a *de facto* conservative force on the issue of colonial misconduct and Britain's involvement during these months. In the case of the Colonial Office, and on the subject of Africa's future, influence is found to have flowed the other way, from press to politics. The thesis as whole places emphasis on press content as the embodiment of a range of different influences, including, but not limited to, the British Government. Further, it highlights the tenacity of the press, and its impact on government.

This thesis would not wish to contest the emphasis Lewis and Murphy have placed on the more progressive nature of British newspaper content by the end of the 1950s. It is not able to, given that it begins in 1957. Nevertheless, the conclusions

reached here do suggest that many sections of the British press continued to express highly conservative views on Africa-related issues throughout the period, that progressive views would ebb and flow, and that content which appeared progressive was not always very radical. In other words, what appeared as a reflection of a contemporary profusion of left-wing sentiment, often betrayed the continued presence of more conservative thoughts or anxieties such as the press's preoccupation with African threat and violence, which informed its critique of colonialism. Neither was coverage purely ideological in its inception, being also a question, and thus a reflection, of practicalities. British press coverage may still have performed the function of reflecting or informing critical public, cultural dynamics behind Britain's relatively peaceful domestic decolonisation, and in this, the thesis makes much of Lewis's argument. Yet it adds that this was also both for conservative and for non-ideological reasons.

### 3. British 'low politics', British 'public opinion', and the process of decolonisation

The thesis also speaks to debates on the impact of British low politics more generally or British public opinion at the end of empire. Again, there are very few existing studies devoted to the topic, but all except Lewis's chapter on Mau Mau,<sup>27</sup> suggest that the British metropolitan context to decolonisation bore very little positive relation to the process. Historians put forward two main interrelated reasons for this: first, that the British public knew little and cared less about Africa, empire or decolonisation; and second, that the primary protagonist in the process, regarded as the British Government, was not influenced by those of the public's ideas that did trickle out.

Some popular histories of sixties' Britain, such as Dominic Sandbrook's *Never Had It So Good*, forcefully argue the case for its marginality.<sup>28</sup> Sandbrook claims that 'the reaction of the general public to the end of empire was one of almost total indifference'.<sup>29</sup> 'Even at the 1959 election, at the height of the post-war

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<sup>27</sup> Lewis, "Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Mau Mau".

<sup>28</sup> Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good, 1956-63: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

imperial crisis', he argues, 'colonial issues were strikingly unimportant'.<sup>30</sup> In-depth studies of critics of empire, such as Stephen Howe's *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, and Nicholas Owen's piece on 'Critics of Empire', reach conclusions which are in some ways comparable to Sandbrook's in terms of emphasis, yet which relate specifically to the role of anti-colonial activists and intellectuals.<sup>31</sup> Howe argues both that the British Government was not substantially influenced by the views of anti-colonial groups in relation to its handling of decolonisation, and that anti- (and pro-) colonial movements were popular only with a small minority throughout the period under discussion. Although critics' aims were 'achieved', in the sense that the empire was soon no more, Howe suggests that this owed less to the efforts of activists and intellectuals than to global and colonial circumstances as well as to changes in Conservative thinking, which pushed towards the same conclusion. David Goldsworthy's *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, makes a similar argument.<sup>32</sup> Goldsworthy finds evidence of fluctuating degrees of political partisanship on colonial affairs in Britain. Yet he also states that during the course of his research, he came across 'few examples of obvious and direct influence (of domestic political activity) on policy-making'.<sup>33</sup>

This thesis's findings differ in a number of respects. The first has already been alluded to, and is that the British press, as an historiographically neglected institution partaking in politics, influenced the British Government on African-related issues throughout this period. In making this argument, it conceives of decolonisation in more processual terms than Howe and Owen, in particular, whose studies of the impact of critics of empire are, on the whole, limited to the question of the extent to which these groups forced the Government's hand on 'the idea' of ending empire.

The second conclusion pertinent to this literature concerns British public opinion and its effect on British politicians, which it also affirms. The supposedly ephemeral nature of this concept appears to have discouraged its scholarly analysis. Yet this thesis illuminates some of the ways in which 'British public opinion'

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 287.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993); Nicholas Owen, 'Critics of Empire in Britain' in A.N. Porter (ed.) *Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume 4: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 188-211.

<sup>32</sup> David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics 1945-1961: From 'Colonial Development' to 'Wind of Change'* (Oxford, 1971).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 382. Parenthesis and its contents added.

operated within historical processes by virtue of how it was perceived, and shows that outsider or reader groupings more often than not regarded British newspapers as important repositories of the public's views. While this author would expect a certain degree of elision between public attitudes and public opinion as represented in the press, the important point is that it is not necessary definitively to determine what the public thought in order to arrive at conclusions regarding the concept's historical salience.

A third conclusion, which further underscores the significance of both British low politics and British public opinion to the process of decolonisation in Africa, concerns the emphasis this thesis places on reader groupings other than the British Government. These have not previously formed the subject of any study of the importance of the British metropolitan dimension to decolonisation. Reader groups included African nationalists, African opposition parties, and most conspicuously, white settlers, important constituencies whose levels of concern over British press content previous studies have obscured in their discrete, national approach to the issue of press/reader relations.

The fourth significant relevant argument concerns the British press's possible mitigation of feelings of loss, weakness, regret or decline on the part of British readers at the end of empire because it extends the issue of the impact of British low politics on the decolonisation process beyond the professional political realm to include an appreciation of the public aspect. This builds on Lewis's work on the British popular press's Kenya coverage.

#### 4. The cultural impact of the end of empire in Britain

The thesis therefore also speaks to debates on the cultural impact of the end of empire in Britain, which turn on the issue of the extent of its impact, and the nature. As noted, Sandbrook underscores what he terms British public 'indifference' to the end of empire, and Howe and Owen argue that anti- (and pro-) colonial movements were popular only with a small minority of the population, indicating that Africa, empire and/or decolonisation did not preoccupy the British public as a whole. Others, however, chiefly cultural historians or academics interested in culture, such as Stuart Ward, Bill Schwarz and Wendy Webster, maintain that the end of empire registered deeply among important sections of British metropolitan

society.<sup>34</sup> Ward, for example, thinks that the end of empire presented a ‘formidable challenge’ to the legitimacy and credibility of ‘key ideas, assumptions and values’ which had become implicated in the ‘imperial experience’, such as notions of duty, service and stoic endurance, and that therefore the imperial context ‘underpinned contemporary perceptions of national degeneration’.<sup>35</sup>

Lewis’s chapter on popular press coverage of Kenya is different from both of these sets of works because it suggests that the end of empire did not register deeply in a negative sense for the very reason that it registered deeply in other ways, which either cultivated or reflected particularly helpful public viewpoints on the changes afoot.<sup>36</sup> John Darwin’s work on the British domestic side to decolonisation might be classed in the same category as Lewis’s chapter because he has underscored the significance of Macmillan’s skilful use of notions or institutions such as ‘the Commonwealth concept’ in ensuring there was no fatal impact.<sup>37</sup>

This thesis’s argument that British press content may have mitigated the effect of undesirable feelings on the part of British readers, characterises decolonisation’s metropolitan impact as non-negative, an assertion which contrasts with the emphasis Ward, Schwarz and Webster have placed on the links between decolonisation and increased British domestic fears or anxieties. Instead, it sides with Lewis and Darwin in their discussion of the possible significance of certain notions or institutions in cushioning the domestic impact of decline. It strives to reach beyond their analyses, however, in the emphasis it also places on the conservative and non-ideological ways in which the press created or channelled certain of these helpful impressions. On the specific issue of whether or not the

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<sup>34</sup> Stuart Ward, ‘Introduction’ in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester, 2001), pp. 1-20; Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Volume 1: The White Man’s World* (Oxford, 2011); Bill Schwarz, “‘The Only White Man in There’: The Re-racialisation of England, 1956-1968”, *Race and Class*, 38: 1 (1996); Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-65* (Oxford, 2005); Wendy Webster, “‘There’ll Always Be an England’: Representations of Colonial Wars and Immigration, 1948-1968”, *Journal of British Studies*, 40: 4 (2001), pp. 557-84.

<sup>35</sup> Ward, ‘Introduction’, pp. 10-12. Both sets of views might be connected to historiographical debates on the cultural impact, or not, of the Empire in Britain, in works such as Bernard Porter’s *The Absent-minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004), and John Mackenzie’s *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, 1984) and his edited volume *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986). However, this thesis does not proceed from the assumption that being affected by the Empire was a prerequisite for being affected by the end of empire, nor that being unaffected by the Empire necessarily entailed being untouched by the nature of decolonisation.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis, “‘Daddy Wouldn’t Buy Me a Mau Mau’”.

<sup>37</sup> Darwin’s focus is on how politicians, particularly on the Right, managed or responded to ‘decline’. John Darwin, ‘The Fear of Falling: British Politics and Imperial Decline Since 1900’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5: 36 (1986), pp. 27-43.

Commonwealth concept helped to assuage Britain's 'fear of falling', this thesis would largely concur. Yet, at the same time, it throws into relief the often fraught nature of the relationship between the British press and the countries of the Commonwealth in Africa, which suggests that the concept was neither regarded as fully positive in press circles nor performed a wholly positive function at the end of empire.

The thesis does not surmount the methodological difficulties involved in analysing public attitudes or thought processes, which historians such as Howe have highlighted,<sup>38</sup> being foremost a study of press content, as opposed to public beliefs in the fullest sense. Yet it offers an assessment of an important set of understudied narratives on decolonisation, which large sections of the British public would have been aware of, and which, it is hoped, contributes to broadening our understanding of the nature of British metropolitan thought. It therefore also takes issue with certain of Sandbrook's claims regarding British public ignorance of or indifference towards decolonisation. It reveals that ordinary people had a great deal of material on Africa and empire at their disposal in the form of newspaper articles during these years, indicating that editors believed the subject interested consumers.

Neither does the thesis surmount the methodological conundrum of how to position in broader historical terms the results of investigations into popular or cultural narratives. Arguing that press content mitigated the impact of decline suggests a degree of acceptance that decline would otherwise have been negative, that loss (the 'loss' of empire) is fundamentally negative, that decline was decline, and so on; and this is obviously problematic in that these assertions need also to be proved. It is important to say at the outset, then, that the way in which the thesis verbally frames this particular conclusion does not reflect any underlying assumptions regarding Britain's historical experience. Rather, it proceeds from an analysis of the material, which is then positioned within those historiographical debates it believes it can most usefully inform: in this case, on the extent and the nature of 'impact'. The use of the words 'potential' and 'may' in the framing of the argument is conscious. An alternative way in which it might be phrased, however, is to say that through the British press, British readers experienced the end of empire in Africa in largely non-negative terms, the word 'non-negative' deliberately chosen to

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<sup>38</sup> Stephen Howe, 'Internal Decolonization? British Politics since Thatcher as Post-colonial Trauma', *Twentieth Century British History*, 14: 3 (2003), pp. 286-304.

encompass a very varied range of characteristics, yet revolving, importantly, on the issue of Britain's role, which was central to coverage. This very phrasing difficulty is in a sense a good illustration of one of the thesis's running themes on the role of the press; namely, that it is hard for writers or investigators to escape the linguistic and conceptual frames that proliferate in any given area of inquiry, and that this, if accompanied by a lack of explanation or even awareness, can result in the mechanical re-production of consistent underlying *implied* narratives over time, even at moments when conscious arguments or perspectives do in fact diverge.

As a study of the years 1957 to 1960, the thesis does not and cannot contest the veracity of Howe's suspicions that the impact of decolonisation was felt negatively only in later years.<sup>39</sup> Nor does it strive to challenge the specific conclusions, only the overall emphasis, of works whose sources relate to those later years.<sup>40</sup> Yet what is striking about press coverage over the period analysed is the consistency of its presentation of Britain and Britain's role in or in relation to Africa as non-negative, a trait which may have endured, because it was part-product of factors whose significance snowballed, discouraging ruptures. This does not mean that the press articulated unprogressive views on African or colonial-related issues. Indeed, it was its consistent ability to dissect, to debate and to rationalise Britain's colonial role in non-negative terms, whilst accepting the need for an over-haul of its and other European systems, in addition to post-colonial African ones, which was perhaps its most defining, and for many in Africa – irritating, characteristic.

In this, it did not purely mirror or reiterate the British Government's take on events, as the existing historiography might lead us to conclude. The narratives were instead press-generated in the sense that they were the product of a profusion of different influences bearing down on British newspapers, internal as well as external, local and foreign, practical and ideological, through which editors and journalists carved paths. As such, the thesis draws a critical distinction at important, potentially damaging, points between press views on Britain and press views on events in Africa, which appear as inextricable concepts in the majority of existing studies of the possible effects in the metropole of 'negative' African or colonial issues in the British Empire, and which may provide one answer to those historians, such as

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<sup>39</sup> Stephen Howe, 'When (if ever) did Empire end? "Internal Decolonisation" in British Culture since the 1950s' in Martin Lynn (ed.), *The British Empire in the 1950s: Retreat or Revival?* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 214-37.

<sup>40</sup> For example: Schwarz, *White Man's World*.



Caroline Elkins and David Anderson, who ask why it was that Britain appeared so able psychologically to weather the more unsavoury aspects of its imperial endgame.<sup>41</sup>

##### 5. British newspapers, Africa, and mid-Twentieth Century developments in the history of the British press

One further set of studies deserves some attention. These are histories of British newspapers, and of the British press during the twentieth century. Examples would include Richard Cockett's *David Astor and the Observer*, Duff Hart-Davis's *The House the Berrys Built*, *The History of The Times Volume V* by Iverach McDonald, Colin Seymour-Ure's *The Press, Politics and the Public*, and Peter Catterall et al., *Northcliffe's Legacy*.<sup>42</sup> Some of these works, such as *The History of The Times Volume V*, are approached here as primary sources, if the authors, in this case an ex-editor, appear to be drawing on 'insider knowledge' or their own personal experiences to document the history of the institution. Yet, as the example given is also an 'official' history, this thesis might also engage with it as a secondary source.

The first key characteristic of this body of works as a whole, and the official histories in particular, which this thesis can offer a perspective on, is the claim that British newspapers took an 'enlightened' view on events in Africa, and backed the cause of the independence movements.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London, 2005); David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London, 2005); Caroline Elkins, 'Alchemy of Evidence: Mau Mau, the British Empire, and the High Court of Justice', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39: 5 (2011), pp. 731-48; David Anderson, 'Mau Mau in the High Court and the "Lost" British Empire Archives: Colonial Conspiracy or Bureaucratic Bungle?', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39: 5 (2011), pp. 699-716; Benjamin Gröb-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame: Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Peter Catterall, Colin Seymour-Ure and Adrian Smith (eds.), *Northcliffe's Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1896-1996* (Basingstoke, 2000); Richard Cockett, *David Astor and the Observer* (London, 1991); Maurice Edelman, *The Mirror: A Political History* (London, 1966); Bill Hagerty, *Read All About It! 100 Sensational Years of the Daily Mirror* (Lydney, Gloucestershire, 2003); Duff Hart-Davis, *The House the Berrys Built* (London, 1990); Iverach McDonald, *The History of The Times, Volume V: Struggles in War and Peace 1939-1966* (London, 1984); Huw Richards, *The Bloody Circus: The Daily Herald and the Left* (London, 1997); Seymour-Ure, *Press, Politics*; A. C. H. Smith, *Paper Voices: The Popular Press and Social Change 1935-1965* (London, 1975); Geoffrey Taylor, *Changing Faces: A History of the Guardian, 1956-88* (London, 1993); James Thomas, *Popular Newspapers, the Labour Party and British Politics* (London, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> Cockett, *David Astor*, pp. 178-206; Hart-Davis, *House the Berrys Built*, p. 154; McDonald, *History of the Times*, pp. 277-84; Edelman, *Mirror: Political History*, p. 156; Taylor, *Changing Faces*, pp. 42-3.

While the conclusions reached here support this broad claim, particularly in the case of the *Observer*, at the same time they point to a number of very important caveats. One of these concerns is the discrepancy between editorial comment and news reportage, whose content often conflicted, which had the effect of distorting or undermining the strength of the editorial message. A second caveat would be that although some editors backed the cause of the independence movements, in so doing, they helped to prompt some white settler readerships to adopt an aggressive, yet essentially defensive, posture, which in the short-term appears to have contributed to the prolongation of European colonial rule, and thus also to the plight of Africans living under the rule of white minorities.

A third caveat concerns the motivations which underlay the British press's support for Africans. As mentioned previously, it should not be assumed that this reflected a liberal turn on the part of all of those concerned. In some important cases it did, but on other occasions, the support which British editors and correspondents gave to Africans reflected a hard-nosed pragmatism which turned on older racial fears, arguably, as well as on the issue of how best to conserve Britain's global influence. At moments when offering substantive support to Africans was not considered necessary to achieve this, as in the case of sufficiently 'foreign' South Africa, following the Sharpeville massacre, even the left-leaning press was notably more reticent. These caveats are important, not least because they help to explain something of the true nature of the complex and often strained relationship of the British press, and Britain, with the peoples of Africa. The claim that British newspapers backed the cause of the independence movements falls short of this, for obvious reasons.

A further set of arguments on which this thesis can provide a perspective, albeit tentative, concerns post-war, mid-twentieth century developments in the history of the British press. These include changes such as the decline in press partisanship during the 1950s, which some authors tie to British domestic social change and development, and a certain amount of political consensus; the comparative devolution of editorial authority during this period; and a notable increase in foreign news coverage, which manifested itself partly in the appointment of Africa specialists and an expanded foreign press corps.

This thesis's conclusions suggest that on African or colonial affairs between 1957 and 1960, British newspapers did display partisanship often by directly backing

either the Conservative Party or the Labour Party, which, as the thesis will show, publicly articulated very different views on events in the colonies. There was also an important connection between the content of British newspapers and British parliamentary debates on Africa, which deserves scrutiny, and which this thesis explores. At the same time, however, it also analyses the significance of press narratives which defied partisan bounds, such as many of its comments on Federation and apartheid.

On the subject of the devolution of editorial authority, particularly from press barons, the findings of this thesis would support the existing literature, except, it seems, in the cases of the *Express* and the *Mirror*, whose owners, Lord Beaverbrook and Cecil King, respectively, appeared to be deeply engaged in their day-to-day running. However, it is necessary to avoid the implication that this comparative devolution resulted in British newspapers becoming the embodiment of a cacophony of voices, including of the less privileged. Institutionally and culturally embedded patterns of employment, behaviour and reporting were important factors guiding the production of coverage over these years, as indeed were narratological frames for different stories and regions whose confines even fresh minds appeared to find it hard wholly to escape.

This thesis does not contest the view that these years witnessed a profusion of foreign news coverage, including of Africa. At the same time, however, it is important to take into account the distinction between foreign and colonial news, which this literature overlooks, because in the case of Britain and Africa, the British press had a decades-long engagement, as illustrated by the character of the coverage which forms the focus of this study. Neither do the conclusions reached here conflict with the related claim that there were more foreign correspondents covering Africa locally during this period. Yet, equally, it is important to note that the vast majority of these journalists could not accurately be classed as 'Africa specialists'. Most were roving reporters, or luckless or intrepid types repeatedly sent to 'trouble spots' all over the world, which also had implications for the kind of coverage that emerged. To call these men Africa specialists would be to imply that they produced a certain kind of quality coverage by virtue of more than their first-hand experience, but also studied research, which would be largely inaccurate.

It is true that there were more Africa specialists during this period than before, but by the beginning of the sixties, they could be counted on one hand:

perhaps only Colin Legum (*Observer*), Anthony Sampson (*Observer*), Oliver Woods (*Times*), and Basil Davidson (*Herald*). Additionally, Sampson did not consider himself to be one; nor was Africa part of his job description. Davidson wrote sparingly on Africa for the *Herald*. Only Legum and Woods would be given the job title of ‘Africa correspondent’, but in this period were still referred to as colonial correspondents. Judging from the nature of *Times* memoranda from Woods, the journalist spent more time with white men than black. Legum, a South African, was barred from South Africa, one of countries at the heart of the story of decolonisation and on which he offered frequent comments. In other words, the picture appears more complex. Further, British newspapers which did not send out either roving reporters of their own or Africa specialists, relied heavily on stringers, freelancers often drawn from local white settler communities. And therefore, lastly, it is again important to avoid the implication present in some of these works that more coverage meant more diverse or better reporting. This period might best be characterised as marking the beginning, rather than the culmination, in Britain, of a long process of learning about Africa in new ways.

On the issue of popularly held views on what various British papers stand or stood for, including the utility of the right/left distinction, and the categorisation of the *Express*, for instance, as the paper of Empire, or the *Mirror* as the representative of youth, or the *Observer* as the paper whose offices constituted ‘the capital of Africa’ during these years, this thesis finds no reason to dissent strongly. However, as stated previously, it also finds numerous similarities between the different papers’ Africa coverage, which were partly, but not exclusively, related to the indirect ways in which newspapers conveyed certain messages which conflicted with their explicitly stated editorial perspectives.

## 6. Structure and outline

The body of the thesis is divided into six chapters. These work chronologically to reveal the role of British press coverage in relation to a range of African and British imperial contexts over the period 1957 to 1960. For clarity, each of the chapters also corresponds to a particular colonial territory or region of Africa, and as far as possible, highlights one particularly prominent feature of coverage concerning that country or region. It is important to note, however, that these

characteristics did not operate discretely. Rather, each flowed through coverage as a whole over the period, and they are therefore also discussed at other critical points. The era of rapid decolonisation forms the thesis's focus because it is both one of the most understudied eras in British press-colonial relations, and a period of great change, which is therefore ripe for analysis.

The thesis concentrates on regions which were once part of the British Empire again due to the extent of political and other activity occurring at this time in those areas. Yet practical considerations, such as the extent of press interest, and thus material, as well as ease of access to sources, also influenced these choices. An omission is that the thesis does not focus on stories which did not attract the attention of the British press, although it does discuss those elements of the stories the press did cover but which it did not or chose not to amplify. The decision to include a chapter on the Congo crisis introduces a further comparative element, which allows for some consideration of the question this author is most often asked at seminars; namely, how did the British press portray Britain as compared to other European powers? It also allows for a comparative, cross-imperial, assessment of the production and effects of press content, which, it is felt, cannot be neglected in any study of the role of British coverage in decolonisation which sets out to identify over-arching themes.

The chapter summaries which follow focus on these broad themes. These are explored alongside nuances and specifics in the main body of the thesis.

The first chapter discusses the press's lauding of the British role in the Gold Coast's peaceful transition to independence in 1957, followed by its swift denunciation of the nature of Nkrumah's rule. It sets out and begins to explore the three central running themes of the thesis which concern the overall effects of coverage. To reiterate, these concern its largely disruptive impact on the British Government and groups in Africa, and its probable positive effects for British readers. In the Ghana example, British press content was an irritant and an obstacle in the path of the British Government's claim to sole authorship of 'Britain's' view in Africa, a dynamic which turned on the subject of consolidating, or undermining, the Commonwealth. It exacerbated tensions between the governing Convention People's Party (CPP), and the National Liberation Movement (NLM), whose cause large sections of the British press championed. At the same time, it conveyed a

positive impression of colonial rule to British readers, and in so doing, distanced Britain from the negative characteristics of the independent state.

On the topic of the dynamics which underlay the critical commentary, the chapter foregrounds the significance of the public rhetoric of opposition groups within Ghana, combined with their efforts to cultivate links with the right-leaning press in Britain. It also discusses the importance of Nkrumah's attacks on press freedom, the historically tense relationship between the CPP and the British media, the CPP's efforts to exploit or deepen the divide for internal political reasons, and the political and other perspectives of British editors and journalists. Further factors included the translation to Ghana of British domestic political tensions made possible by the presence of expatriate officials; and correspondents' limited historical awareness.

Violence and its fall-out in Kenya and Nyasaland during 1959 form the subject of Chapter Two, which turns on the press's diminution of the issue of British colonial misconduct. The chapter speaks predominantly to the third of this thesis's themes on the effects of coverage: its cushioning of the domestic psychological impact of decline. It discusses the potentially positive implications of this for the British Government, which faced an election that year. Yet it also identifies important ways in which aspects of press content continued to work at odds with elements of British colonial policy, in this case chiefly concerning its portrayal of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and African nationalism and white settlers therein. Press coverage was somewhat out of kilter with British policy towards Central Africa, and there is evidence to suggest that it influenced it. Locally, newspaper articles began to trouble and antagonise sections of the ruling white community, damaging their relations with Britain, and affecting their visions of the future.

Concerning the factors which influenced the nature and proliferation of such content, the chapter discusses the significance of official government media management strategies, which the existing historiography underscores. Yet it continues to describe press content as the product of a range of different factors, which, in the case of Central Africa, in particular, were numerous. During 1959, additional influences included racism, cultural or literary depictions of Africa, journalists' local experiences, African activism, the activities of Labour MPs and critics of empire, settler-press relations, editorial constraints, the perspectives of

editors and journalists; and, relatedly, the press's narratological and visual framing of events.

Chapters Three and Four turn the thesis's consideration to press treatment of Macmillan's 'wind of change' tour of Africa in January and February 1960. Chapter Three concentrates on the tour as a whole, spanning stops in Ghana, Nigeria, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and South Africa. Chapter Four is devoted to press coverage of an African demonstration in Blantyre, which occurred during Macmillan's visit to Nyasaland.

Chapter Three argues that the primary significance of press coverage of the tour lay with its depiction of the African nationalist challenge to colonial authority as strong, and white settler intransigence as downright dangerous, or mad. At first glance, these characteristics might seem to represent little more than a reiteration, albeit sensationalised, of the Prime Minister's famous 'wind of change' theme, and thus an affirmation of British Government statements. But it is the argument of this chapter that throughout the tour Macmillan was in fact far less concerned publicly to promote acquiescence in the face of change than he was an acceptance of the status quo, as embodied in concepts such as interdependence, patience, and the promotion of mutual understanding and respect through dialogue and Commonwealth ties. That African nationalist muscle and white settler psychosis shone through as the principal themes in British press coverage of the tour reflects the continued resonance of the institutional, cultural, political, personal, and experiential factors that influenced journalists' coverage of the southern region, which, critically, interacted with African nationalist efforts to exploit the British presence on the ground as a means of advancing the nationalist cause and fighting Federation and apartheid.

The British press's treatment of the tour frustrated the Government's ability to impose its narrative on the politics of the imperial endgame. Press content concerned and irritated Macmillan and his colleagues, and had policy implications. It also fuelled the fears of white groups inside the Federation and South Africa. And although it had some positive implications for African nationalists, white anxiety tended to translate into retrenchment, which meant that, overall, the effects of British newspaper coverage of the tour for Africans living in this southern region can best be characterised as negative. Due to the nature of the press's portrayal both of the

decolonisation process at large and of Britain's place within it, these articles tended once again not to diminish Britain's role, but instead to elevate it.

Chapter Four, which examines press coverage of an African protest in Blantyre, Nyasaland, pursues and develops the arguments in Chapter Three by looking specifically at British press treatment of Central African affairs. This is considered necessary due to the sheer extent of press interest in the question of the future of the Federation during these months and years. The opportunity is also taken, mid-way through the thesis, explicitly to foreground some of its core subsidiary, non-press-related running themes, which speak to the character of the decolonisation process at large, and which tend not to feature very heavily in the existing literature. These concern the significance of ordinary people and publics; the sense of contingency or possibility, which, it suggests, suffused each moment; the British Government's handling of the business of decolonisation, which it argues was messy at times, and even farcical; the impact of 'imaginaries', such as perceptions, hopes and fears, on the historical process; and the centrality of African action to decolonisation, a feature of coverage whose incorporation into the thesis as a 'neglected narrative' the chapter is careful to justify.

Chapter Five is devoted to South Africa, and concentrates on press coverage of the Sharpeville massacre. British newspapers sorely criticised the South African Government and the system of apartheid during these weeks. Yet they tended to portray Sharpeville and the events which followed it as a story of African action, violence and power, rather than African victimhood. They also displayed ambiguity on the subject of direct responsibility for the deaths and a lack of consensus, particularly initially, on the appropriate international, including British, response to the issue of white violence.

The press's emphasis on African power was firstly a reflection of dogged African efforts to stimulate a transformation locally. It stemmed, secondly, from the nature of the press's central narratological frames by March 1960 for interpreting events in 'white' Central and South Africa, the subject of the preceding two chapters; and, thirdly, from the specific ways in which the British press produced its South Africa coverage, which hinged on its close relations with South African English-language newspapers. The British press's initial ambiguity on the issue of direct responsibility for the deaths, and its later lack of consensus on how Britain should respond to the issue of white violence reflected the specific dynamics, and



limitations, involved in evaluating unexpected events. Yet the political perspectives of some British journalists and editors were also important influences, together with the limits of the British press's vision for South Africa.

British newspaper articles fomented division locally, circulating opposition views in the context of stringent internal censorship, and fuelling debates in white society on the causes of the troubles, which, in the Union Government's view, the stringer personified. British press content also helped prompt the South African Government to crack down more stringently on press and other freedoms, further turning the country in on itself. In Britain, the effects of coverage were less transformative, chiefly because interested organisations or institutions, such as the British Government, had their eyes and interests fixed on places other than the British public sphere; yet in the ambiguity and the lack of consensus mentioned previously, it may have performed a small inhibiting function. Despite this, British press content was also remarkable for the degree to which it upheld the 'enlightened' British example against the white racialism of the apartheid state, a perspective which may have appealed to British readers, and which could therefore have continued to mitigate the psychological impact of decline.

Chapter Six takes us out of British Africa to the Congo, where journalists grappled with a very different set of issues, but where there were also important continuities in coverage. British press treatment of the country in its first few months of independence, between June and October, 1960, proved essentially favourable for Belgium and inauspicious for Patrice Lumumba, the country's first Prime Minister. Recurring themes were Congolese political and tribal division, the strength and credibility of Lumumba's rivals, white vulnerability and victimhood, Lumumba's unpopularity and unpredictability, and the logic behind the intervention first of Belgium, and then of the UN. Crucially, papers made little attempt to investigate the full significance of those of Belgium's behind-the-scenes or more underhand activities of which they were aware. This pro-Belgian/anti-Lumumba coverage was, again, born of a variety of influences, including cultural, editorial, personal, institutional and experiential.

British press content helped impede Lumumba's ability to rule. It lent support to the idea of external intervention whilst obscuring the full extent of that intervention in practice, contributing to an international socio-political environment in which the West was able to act with impunity and Lumumba found few, and even

lost some, allies. It also advanced the cause of Lumumba's Congolese political opponents, fomenting division locally. Throughout it all, Britain came across very well, partly because of the British press's positive portrayal of parallel constitutional developments in British colonial territories such as Nyasaland, but also due to the way in which it depicted the Western, including Belgian and British, role in the Congo itself. Journalists set Britain firmly on the side of Belgium, rather than in opposition to it.

## 7. Sources and methodology

The thesis aims to build on the existing literature partly in its approach to the material, which, as stated previously, involves combining two previously distinct approaches to the study of the press in Africa at the end of empire, one focusing on newspaper content, the other on outsider interactions with or perceptions of that content, and adding a third: journalists' own accounts of events published or recorded in places other than the press. For the first of these, the study of press content, the thesis draws on a wide range of mainstream British newspapers, popular and serious, left- and right-leaning. These include *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Herald*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post*, *The Manchester Guardian*, *The News Chronicle*, *The Observer* and *The Times*. Further papers are consulted if they played a particularly prominent role in events; if, for instance, a member of their staff was arrested or deported from Africa, and if this is considered significant.

For the second element of the approach, the study of outsider interactions with or perceptions of press coverage, newspaper articles also form important sources. Previous studies have not paid adequate attention to those aspects of press content which reveal journalists' sources or other influences behind the production of coverage, including journalists' local experiences. Rather, they have chosen to privilege the substantive content, and in many cases, comment, leaving some stones unturned. In addition, the thesis utilises British Government documents; the published memoirs and diaries of prominent British politicians; the memoir of Harold Evans, Harold Macmillan's Public Relations Adviser; UK Hansard; published Government reports; the published memoirs and diaries of a number of politicians and officials on the African continent, with whom journalists interacted;

the papers of Sir Roy Welensky, the Prime Minister of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland; the papers of Sir Robert Armitage, the Governor of Nyasaland; the Devlin Commission Papers; the records of the South African Government; material relating to the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the South African Liberal Party, found in the Gail M. Gerhart Papers; and South African Hansard.

African and white settler newspapers also form important sources for information on outsider interactions with and perceptions of British press content. This is firstly because they provide an opportunity to identify some of the more popular or more widely-circulated African or settler responses to British press narratives, which official documents cannot always help us with; and secondly, due to the nature of the relationship, in some instances, of these papers and their correspondents to the British press, with whom they were largely either in collaboration or at 'war'. The newspapers from Africa this thesis utilises include: *The Ashanti Pioneer*, *The Ashanti Times*, *The Daily Graphic* (Ghana), *The Ghana Evening News*, *The Rhodesia Herald*, *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, *Malawi News*, *The Nyasaland Times*, *The Cape Times*, and *The Rand Daily Mail*. The thesis also uses press cuttings found in the Gail M. Gerhart Papers, in the records of the British and South African Governments, and in the Welensky Papers.

Concerning the third element of the approach, journalists' own accounts of events published or recorded in places other than the press, the thesis utilises The Times Archive; the records of the Manchester Guardian; the Colin Legum Papers; and the memoirs and other published works of British journalists and editors and of foreign (non-British) correspondents either writing for or commenting in the British press. Oral interviews were held with Derek Ingram, Stanley Uys and William Kirkman. A written interview was conducted with Peter Younghusband, whose text is in this author's possession.

## Chapter 1

### *Ghana's slippery slope: Independent Ghana, 1957*

On 6 March 1957, the Gold Coast became Ghana, the first sub-Saharan African territory to achieve independence under a democratically elected African leader: Kwame Nkrumah of the Convention People's Party (CPP). Within little less than a decade, all but the white settler colonies of Central and Southern Africa would be free from European colonial rule, this region to experience some of the most violent and protracted struggles for independence the world would ever see.

In contrast to this tortuous experience, Ghana's independence appears in the historiography as an almost wholly peaceful success story. Some have attributed this to the nature of British colonial policy. Richard Rathbone, Frank Furedi, and Ronald Hyam have described how, against a backdrop of incipient violence, colonial officials carefully cultivated relations with 'moderate' African successors to whom they progressively, carefully and intentionally transferred political power.<sup>1</sup> Others, such as David Birmingham and Richard Reid, have emphasised the pivotal role played by Africans, including Nkrumah and the CPP, in sparking and spurring on the decolonisation process, as well as in negotiating with the British a peaceful and productive transition to African majority rule.<sup>2</sup> Only Jean Marie Allman and Richard Rathbone have chosen to examine in detail the more disquieting narrative of fractures within Ghanaian society prior to and following independence, Allman in relation to the trials and tribulations of the main opposition party, the National Liberation Movement (NLM), and Rathbone regarding the experience of chiefs in southern Ghana.<sup>3</sup>

Yet it was Africans who would suffer the effects of these divisions. From the British perspective, the story is said to have remained a largely rosy one, and was,

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Rathbone, 'The Government of the Gold Coast after the Second World War', *African Affairs*, 67 (1968), pp. 209-18; Frank Furedi, 'Creating a Breathing Space: The Political Management of Colonial Emergencies', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21: 3 (1993), pp. 89-106; Frank Furedi, *Colonial Wars and the Politics of Third World Nationalism* (London, 1994); Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation* (Cambridge, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> David Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Father of African Nationalism* (Athens, Ohio, 1998); Richard Reid, *A History of Modern Africa: 1800 to the Present* (Chichester, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Jean Marie Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (London, 1993); Richard Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana 1951-60* (Oxford, 2000).

Rathbone claims, widely accepted as such at the time.<sup>4</sup> In an article elucidating ‘the distinctive unhappiness which swirled around Ghana’s last days as the British colonial territory of the Gold Coast’,<sup>5</sup> Rathbone argues that this bitterness has been largely ignored outside Ghana ‘because international interest focused, and still focuses upon, the political struggle for independence from British rule rather than upon the internal struggles for the eventual domination of the post-colonial state’.<sup>6</sup> The narrative ‘best known to the outside world...is an undeniably exciting story of the triumphant reassertion of sovereignty achieved by a courageous, radical political party led by the internationally renowned, charismatic figure of Dr Kwame Nkrumah’.<sup>7</sup>

International media treatment of Ghana’s independence celebrations, replete with their ‘radiant iconography’,<sup>8</sup> is thought to have been central to the creation and distribution of this jubilant, rather air-brushed narrative. ‘Much the most memorable, if clichéd, illustration of this story’, Rathbone suggests, ‘remains a grainy, flash-lit midnight photograph of Nkrumah and his closest political colleagues wearing northern smocks and jaunty “Prison Graduate caps” happily clustered around a flagpole flying the new flag of their only just independent country... Very much less well-known beyond Ghana’s borders is what appears to be a losers’ account; this is a much grimmer, considerably less romantic story of rapidly worsening post-colonial oppression’.<sup>9</sup> The predominance of the first, heroic account in international media depictions of Ghana at and around independence Rathbone attributes to the tendency of ‘decades of visiting journalists and scholars... not to stray too far away from the country’s capital and the Atlantic shore’, the heartland of the CPP.<sup>10</sup>

Rathbone’s account of Ghana’s independence celebrations is the only piece both to provide a detailed account of their nature as well as to make reference to the ways in which Ghana was perceived by the outside world through the media, at independence and more generally. Yet the article is primarily an exposition of what the media missed and draws not on media sources, but on the records of the British

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<sup>4</sup> Rathbone, ‘Casting “the Kingdome”’.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 705.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 706.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 712.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 706-7.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 707.

Government, the papers of the colonial Governor, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, and material from the Ghana National Archives.

This chapter aims to complement Rathbone's piece by analysing the nature and role of British press treatment of Ghana during 1957, including coverage of the independence celebrations in March. It makes reference to events within the period 1954-62 when relevant. It draws on British newspaper articles from left- and right-leaning papers, 'popular' and 'serious'; the memoirs of journalists, editors and political figures; newspaper articles from three Ghanaian papers; the records of the British Government; and the archive of *The Times*.

It is of course primarily concerned with this thesis's core research question, namely: Was the process of decolonisation in Africa and Britain, on the one hand, and the actions and opinions of the British press, on the other, interrelated – and if so, how and with what effects? Yet it speaks to Rathbone's conclusions in important ways. Regarding the nature of British media treatment of the celebrations, it questions the extent to which the triumphalist CPP narrative of a heroic Nkrumah was truly that omnipresent. Not only was it clouded out by a self-congratulatory British one, but, in right-leaning papers in particular, it was always weighted with references to or discussion of the criticisms and concerns of opposition groups.

In contextualising British press treatment of the celebrations, moreover, tracking coverage through 1957, this chapter concludes that to the extent to which positive commentary on the CPP and Nkrumah was evident at independence, it was not broadly representative of British Gold Coast/Ghana coverage as a whole, and thus that the triumphant podium scene was not the only image of the newly-independent state familiar beyond Ghana's borders during these years. The harshly critical commentaries emerging in British papers five to six months following the celebrations were more prolific, equally self-congratulatory, and far more representative of British Gold Coast/Ghana coverage over the period as a whole, not only in terms of the nature of the articles printed in British papers, but also concerning the ways in which these articles were produced, and their effects.

The moves taken by the Ghana Government against opposition groups within the country and against freedom of expression provided a base line which allowed for a highly critical commentary to emerge in the months following independence. Yet the speed and the character of the press attack indicated that there were also other, more historical, factors at play. The public rhetoric of opposition groups

within Ghana, together with their tried and tested strategy for combating CPP influence, which included cultivating links with the right-leaning press in Britain, was one factor. The tense relationship between the CPP and the British media was another. Further factors included the personal and political perspectives of journalists; the translation to Ghana of British domestic political tensions made possible by the presence of expatriate officials, including ex-MPs, serving in the newly-independent state – and a very interested and *political* British press; and journalists' limited understanding of the history of the country, of British colonialism, and of the nature or strictures of the post-colonial state. These dynamics combined to explosive journalistic effect within the columns of British papers, whose content was inextricably woven into events inside both Ghana and Britain.

During 1957, British press content fuelled tensions and divisions within African society, and strained Commonwealth ties. Because British press coverage tended to simplify the history of British colonial rule in Africa and the strictures of the post-colonial state, it may also have served to mitigate feelings of loss, regret, weakness and decline on the part of British newspaper readers at the very moment at which Britain began to reflect on its imperial past and present and divest itself of its African empire.

## 1. Coverage of the independence celebrations

### i. *'The way of the British'*:<sup>11</sup> Characteristics of the triumphalist narrative

The most striking feature of British press coverage of Ghana's independence concerned its portrayal of British imperialism, and the relationship between Ghana and Britain. This was essentially a triumphalist narrative. Yet it focused not on the CPP or Nkrumah. The starring role was left to the departing colonial power. It is likely that this reflected more than the British Government's effective press management of the occasion, given that British officials were acutely aware of the importance of allaying Ghanaian fears that their independence might at some future

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<sup>11</sup> *Mail*, 7 March 1957, fp.

date be compromised.<sup>12</sup> Rather, it owed more to the nature of the independence celebrations, which drew on the precedent of earlier such occasions, infused with British and imperial iconography;<sup>13</sup> and to the interests and perspectives of visiting journalists covering this one-off event, who appeared to find it more interesting and pressing, as well as easier, to comment on familiar faces and ‘the state of Britain’ than to recount the history of Nkrumah and the CPP. David Birmingham comments that of the six hundred journalists who travelled to Ghana to report the celebrations, ‘most of them’ had never visited Africa before.<sup>14</sup> Oliver Woods, *The Times*’s colonial correspondent, later hinted that even his paper’s coverage of Ghana at and around independence had been relatively poor.<sup>15</sup> He attributed this in large part to the absence in the region of a European newspaper, and thus of ‘appropriate’ stringers, as well as to the costs of sending out special correspondents for two to four weeks when stories surfaced.<sup>16</sup>

Three essentially self-affirming representations characterised the Anglo-centric narrative. One turned on the peaceful, unbloodied and consensual nature of Ghana’s transition to independence, which journalists conflated with the absence of a struggle.<sup>17</sup> Another foregrounded the long process of negotiation and, as part of this, the ‘tutelage’ of Ghanaians by Britain.<sup>18</sup> Also prominent was the claim that Ghana’s independence set Britain on the road to further distinction because it bolstered the Commonwealth, that organisation depicted as the embodiment of Britain’s future power and influence. For British newspapers, the defining image of the celebrations

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<sup>12</sup> This is suggested by the nature of its internal correspondence during the summer and autumn of 1957, and beyond. See especially: DO 35/6188 and DO 35/6189, The National Archives, UK; and final two sections of this chapter. Hereafter, The National Archives shall be referred to as ‘TNA’ if the file numbers are unusual. For all references with file numbers that begin with PREM, CAB, CO, CRO, DO, FO or FCO, it shall be assumed that the source is clear: all were accessed at TNA.

<sup>13</sup> Rathbone, ‘Casting “the Kingdome”’. For India, see: Nicholas Owen, “‘More Than a Transfer of Power’: Independence Day Ceremonies in India, 15 August 1947’, *Contemporary Record*, 6:3 (1992), pp. 415-51. Also: Robert Holland, Susan Williams and Terry Barringer (eds.), *The Iconography of Independence: “Freedoms at Midnight”* (Abingdon, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 62.

<sup>15</sup> Oliver Woods to editor, ‘Aide Memoire on re-establishment of Ghana Service’, 7 October 1957, MEM/Ghana file, Times Newspapers Ltd Archive (hereafter TNL Archive), News UK and Ireland Ltd for material relating to the archives of *The Times* or *Sunday Times*.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> *Mail*, 9 February 1957, fp; *News Chronicle*, 4 March 1957, p. 2; *Mirror*, 6 March 1957, fp & p. 2; *Mail*, 7 March 1957, fp.

<sup>18</sup> *Mail*, 9 February 1957, fp; *Mirror*, 6 March 1957, fp & p. 2; *Observer*, 3 March 1957, p. 10; *Guardian*, 6 March 1957, p. 8. The *Express* went a step further, presenting independence as the intended culmination of a long-standing, universal British imperial mission. *Express*, 5 March 1957, p. 6.



was not of the Ghanaian Prime Minister on the podium with his colleagues,<sup>19</sup> but of the Duchess of Kent, Britain's representative, pictured on the dance floor in Nkrumah's arms, clothed in white chiffon, sequins and pearls,<sup>20</sup> a vision which seemed to encapsulate Britain's continued greatness, as well as the lasting affection of Britain for Ghana and Ghana for Britain, which they considered likely to characterise the independence era. John Hall, covering the celebrations for the *Mail*, wrote that the popularity of the British in Ghana at the time was 'overwhelming'.<sup>21</sup> Nkrumah's refutation that Ghana might leave the Commonwealth at some future date was widely quoted in British papers on both left and right;<sup>22</sup> so too were his comments that 'We part from the former Imperial power...with the warmest feelings of friendship and goodwill'.<sup>23</sup>

It was not that this narrative was entirely untrue. The problem is that it presented only one perspective, in a pattern which would repeat itself elsewhere in Africa over the course of the next three years.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, Ghana's recent history had been far more peaceful than parallel developments elsewhere in the British Empire, most notably Kenya and Cyprus.<sup>25</sup> Political negotiation and 'tutelage' in the form of the expansion of western-style education, and co-government from 1948 were important characteristics of Britain's approach to colonial governance in the Gold Coast.<sup>26</sup> Ghana was the first sub-Saharan African country to achieve independence, too, meaning that Britain was essentially pioneering in that it was the first European colonial power to grant it. Yet these characterisations contained important omissions, which reinforced a misleading impression of Ghana's history that might otherwise have given British readers cause to reflect more demurely both on the quality of Britain's past relationship with its colonial subjects and the true extent of its historical agency.

The fact that most journalists conflated the lack of blood or violence against the colonial state during the 1950s with the absence of a fight for independence,

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<sup>19</sup> The photo appeared in only one of these papers, the *Guardian*, on 7 March 1957, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> *Herald*, 7 March 1957, p. 2; *Mirror*, 7 March 1957, p. 13; *Express*, 7 March 1957, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Mail*, 1 March 1957, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Guardian*, 6 March 1957, fp; *Express*, 8 March 1957, p. 2; *Mail*, 8 March 1957, p. 5; *Telegraph*, 8 March 1957, fp.

<sup>23</sup> *Mirror*, 7 March 1957, p. 24; *Express*, 7 March 1957, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> See all chapters which follow.

<sup>25</sup> States of Emergency had been declared in both countries: Cyprus 1955-59; Kenya 1952-60.

<sup>26</sup> For a helpful overview of events in the Gold Coast during this period, see: Hyam, *Declining Empire*, pp. 146-50, 182-6; or Reid, *Modern Africa*, pp. 272-4.

diminished the role of Africans, including Nkrumah and the CPP, in sparking the decolonisation process in the Gold Coast as well as in conditioning aspects of its pace and form. The British had initially favoured the more moderate United Gold Coast Convention Party (UGCC), and had imprisoned Nkrumah, the man to whom they were eventually to transfer power. In 1948, riots by discontented Africans had ignited a process of political and constitutional reform; and African support for Nkrumah in the 1952 General Election had influenced the future trajectory of the Gold Coast in no uncertain terms. Yet few papers chose this moment to recall Nkrumah's imprisonment, and no paper recounted the history of the CPP's battle with the more conservative UGCC. That this was not wholly surprising does not make it insignificant. This triumphalist narrative appeared at an important moment when, for the first time, British newspapers gathered together for their readers the story of Ghana's colonial past in order that they might move forward knowingly. Only the *Herald's* committed and very sympathetic Basil Davidson chose to refer to Ghana's independence as 'the happy ending to a long and bitter chapter of history'.<sup>27</sup> Davidson, whom the British Government suspected of being a Communist sympathiser,<sup>28</sup> was later to become one of the world's foremost authorities on Africa, working tirelessly throughout his life to educate Britain and the world on Africa's rich pre-colonial history and the European colonial legacy.<sup>29</sup> Yet in this instance, even he did not elaborate.

Africans tended to be denied anything but a generalised, secondary and rather oblique role in the story. Journalists' references to the person and to the role of Nkrumah were largely confined to 5-7 March, when the celebrations were at their height. Journalists represented the country itself in an essentially paternalistic way, too, diminishing it. The language used to describe Ghana's position in the world was replete with the imagery of birth, of childhood and of growing up,<sup>30</sup> belying the truth of the claim, stated elsewhere, that Ghana was, by virtue of its sovereignty, now regarded as being in a position of equality with the older, industrialised nations of the western world.<sup>31</sup> There was a rather condescending, yet at the same time

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<sup>27</sup> *Herald*, 5 March 1957, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> KV 2/3697, TNA.

<sup>29</sup> For a short overview of Davidson's life, see preface to: Basil Davidson, *Black Star: A View of the Life and Times of Kwame Nkrumah* (Oxford, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> *Mirror*, 4 March 1957, p. 11; *Mirror*, 5 March 1957, p. 11; *Herald*, 5 March 1957, p. 4; *Mirror*, 6 March 1957, p. 3; *Mail*, 6 March 1957, p. 6; *Guardian*, 6 March 1957, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> *Express*, 1 March 1957, p. 2; *Herald*, 5 March 1957, p. 4.

burdensome argument commonplace inside British papers that Ghana was the first of its kind in black Africa, a precarious test-case; and that just as a naughty teenager let loose on the world might damage its siblings' prospects of being granted the same freedoms, any inability to function as a 'nation-state' following the departure of the British would have unenviable repercussions for other African territories wishing to put an end to European colonial rule.<sup>32</sup> Yet worryingly for Ghana, British journalists were keen to point out that the support the new Prime Minister had accrued was far from universal. As the *Guardian* put it, 'To come of age is in part a deliverance, but more a challenge'.<sup>33</sup>

- ii.        “*“We are not happy” – now the British are going’*:<sup>34</sup> Regional rivalries and press coverage of independence

Balancing out the positive, celebratory aspect of British press treatment of independence, then, were notes of caution directed at Nkrumah, continually and in some cases stridently voiced.<sup>35</sup> Concerns were centred on Kumasi, the capital of Ashanti, the heartland of the NLM, a party comprised of elements of the old intelligentsia who had been active in the UGCC from which Nkrumah's CPP had split earlier in the decade, chiefs who felt their traditional status threatened by an increasingly centralised state dominated by a younger generation of leaders who owed nothing to heredity, and aggrieved cocoa farmers, mostly in Ashanti, whose high yields in previous years had failed to reap the expected returns under Nkrumah's socialism.<sup>36</sup> Also throwing in their lot with the NLM, were many of the people of the northern regions, as well as of Togoland in the east. Despite the results of a plebiscite in 1956, which had signalled Togoland's desire to join an independent Ghana, regional disaffection remained strong. The latest manifestation of these ruptures – a threat by the NLM to boycott the independence celebrations if regional safeguards were not written into the constitution - the British press understood to

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<sup>32</sup> *News Chronicle*, 4 March 1957, p. 2; *Guardian*, 6 March 1957, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> *Guardian*, 6 March 1957, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> *Express*, 28 January 1957, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> For instance: *Express*, 28 January 1957, p. 2; *Express*, 9 February 1957, p. 2; *Mail*, 9 February 1957, p. 2; *Mail*, 9 February 1957, fp; *Mail*, 21 February 1957, p. 5; *Express*, 25 February 1957, p. 7; *Telegraph*, 1 March 1957, fp; *Telegraph*, 2 March 1957, p. 7; *Telegraph*, 4 March 1957, fp; *Telegraph*, 6 March 1957, p. 6. Information on these difficulties also ran through other articles cited here and in the following section.

<sup>36</sup> For the history of the NLM, see: Allman, *Quills*, and Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs*.

have been soothed just in the nick of time by Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Colonial Secretary, who had visited the territory in January to mediate a resolution to the conflict. Yet the difficulties were predicted to resurface in the independence era, and the jury was out on the question of whether or not Nkrumah would be able to cope without the ‘safety net of the British Colonial Office’.<sup>37</sup>

At this time, both the *Mail* and the *Express* published large feature articles on the fears of the people of Ashanti, which pointed to some initial reasons why right-leaning papers aired more doubts than those on the left. One factor turned on how the public rhetoric of opposition groups meshed with the political stance of these papers. The large *Express* article, entitled ‘The people who live in fear – A knife in the back when the British go?’,<sup>38</sup> contained an exposition of Ashanti concerns, as described by John Redfern, reporting from Kumasi. ‘What is eating these Ashanti, a likeable, mettlesome people with a brave past?’, the correspondent asked: ‘They believe the new Government wants to destroy the Ashanti unity which the new Constitution safeguards. One of Nkrumah’s lieutenants sneers at “this man who calls himself Secretary of State” (Mr. Lennox-Boyd). This really rouses the Ashanti... Ashanti citizens are convinced that Nkrumah is going all out for a republic....’<sup>39</sup> To the *Express*, a publication which referred to itself as ‘The Empire Newspaper’,<sup>40</sup> this opposition narrative sat well. Beaverbrook, its proprietor, took an active interest in the paper’s editorial stance, and used it to promote his personal interests.<sup>41</sup> He had financial concerns in Africa, such as in Northern Rhodesia, where he owned shares in the copper mining industry.<sup>42</sup> The view that some Africans preferred the representatives of the British Empire to leaders such as Nkrumah was particularly vindicating for a paper with a stance such as this. The Ashantis’ apparent regard for the protection offered by the British Secretary of State, the Queen and the Commonwealth, was flattering and seemed genuine. Redfern’s reference to the Ashanti as ‘a mettlesome people with a brave past’ meshed nicely

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<sup>37</sup> Quote is from *News Chronicle*, 4 March 1957, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Express*, 25 February 1957, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Top of editorial column, *Express*, 15 January 1957, fp. Also see Editorial: ‘A paper with faith’, 2 March 1957, p. 4 for a description of the *Express*’s editorial position: ‘Empire comes first’.

<sup>41</sup> Material at the Parliamentary Archives indicates that Beaverbrook played a role in encouraging the paper to cover certain stories.

<sup>42</sup> BBK/H/219, The Beaverbrook Papers, Parliamentary Archives.

with traditional English views on magnificent warrior races and their relative quiescence in Empire.<sup>43</sup>

A second, interrelated factor concerned the efforts of opposition groups to cultivate links with the British right-leaning press. This was not an approach without its precedents. Ever since its formation in 1954, following the CPP's second electoral victory and therefore lacking an initial parliamentary presence, the NLM had turned to vociferous public criticism of Nkrumah's government as well as to 'extra-parliamentary activity', including a 'propaganda campaign' in London, to air and advance its case.<sup>44</sup> According to Rathbone, the NLM campaign sought to portray the CPP as despotic, and was supported by 'elements in London who were either apprehensive about the dissolution of the colonial empire in general or about the imminence of the Gold Coast's independence in particular'.<sup>45</sup> They included 'the boards of companies like the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation and partisans of empire in the Conservative party in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords'.<sup>46</sup> Since 1954, Oxford-educated Kofi Busia, the Party's leader, had cleverly plied these groups both with outspoken criticisms of Nkrumah's government and with praise for the British.<sup>47</sup> His efforts appear to have been fruitful. Birmingham goes so far as to suggest that sections of the British establishment and media felt 'duped' when their predictions of a federalist victory in the 1956 elections proved wrong, 'and so they fuelled a campaign of denigration against Nkrumah', which included portraying the CPP leader as a threat to democracy as well as broadcasting 'the words rather than the deeds of the opposition' to the West.<sup>48</sup>

At independence, the left-leaning press also printed the substance of the Opposition's attacks on the CPP, broadsheets such as the *Guardian* and the *Observer* often reproducing its words in news reports. Yet they did so in a less conspicuous way. When they commented, their tone was mostly cautionary as opposed to

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<sup>43</sup> Kathryn Tidrick, *Empire and the English Character: The Illusion of Authority* (London, 1990), pp. 172-93. Tidrick discusses the English fascination with the Masai.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Rathbone, 'Introduction', in Richard Rathbone (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire, Series B, Volume I: Ghana. Part I: 1941-1952* (London, 1992), pp. xxxi-lxxviii, pp. lxii-lxiii. Also see: Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 57; L. J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* (London, 2000), p. 122; and Martin Shipway, *Decolonization and its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires* (Oxford, 2008), p. 177.

<sup>45</sup> Rathbone, 'Introduction', in Rathbone (ed.), *British Documents*, p. lxii.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. lxii-lxiii.

<sup>47</sup> Kwaku Danso-Boafo, *The Political Biography of Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia* (Accra, 1996). Especially pp. 33-71.

<sup>48</sup> Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 60.

censorious, and their features tended to focus instead on issues such as the economy, development and the nature of Nkrumah's policies for the independence era.<sup>49</sup>

Some might argue that an overly optimistic or forgiving stance on independent Africa's new leadership lay behind the left-leaning press's cautionary content on this and similar issues.<sup>50</sup> Yet in the case of Africa, and Ghana in particular, explaining the practical issues behind the comparative absence of a left-leaning press narrative at this stage seems to be as significant as explaining its nature. The *Herald* and the *News Chronicle*, both left-leaning popular papers but 'financially weak', were limited in their coverage, 'only occasionally sending staff writers to the African continent'.<sup>51</sup> The *Mirror*, financially the strongest of the British left-leaning populars and the best equipped to cover events in Ghana by virtue of its links to West African journalism through Cecil King,<sup>52</sup> found itself restrained by the same connections as it trod tentatively to safeguard a future for the Group in changing times.<sup>53</sup> The editorial policy of the *Ghana Daily Graphic*, a Mirror Group publication, had originally been that of 'constructive criticism' of the Ghana Government.<sup>54</sup> Yet this 'became and more and more difficult as the CPP consolidated its position and began to move against dissent'.<sup>55</sup>

Although this might be taken as evidence of the accuracy of the right-leaning press's claims regarding the limits of Nkrumah's appeal, and therefore also of the relative insignificance of other factors affecting the nature of its articles, the situation appeared to be more complex. In West Africa, The Mirror Group could not be regarded as a purely disinterested commentator, but one whose fortunes were intimately tied to the course of political and constitutional change;<sup>56</sup> and, historically, it had been inclined to confront the CPP for this reason. The dearth of critical comment in the *Mirror* on Nkrumah at independence reflected the fact that the CPP

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<sup>49</sup> On 6 March 1957, the *Guardian*, for example, published articles on 'The Volta River plan', 'The economy of Ghana', 'The cocoa farmer', 'Timber in Ghana' and 'Social advancement in Ghana'.

<sup>50</sup> This is the view of Christopher Munnion, a *Telegraph* correspondent in a slightly later period. Christopher Munnion, *Banana Sunday: Datelines from Africa* (Rivonia, South Africa, 1995).

<sup>51</sup> Correspondence with Peter Younghusband, May 2013.

<sup>52</sup> King was Chairman of the International Publishing Corporation (IPC), owners of the *Mirror*. For autobiographical information, see: Cecil Harmsworth King, *Strictly Personal: Some Memoirs of Cecil H. King* (London, 1969). For the *Mirror*'s role, see Edelman, *Mirror: A Political History*. For information on King's involvement in West Africa, see John Chick, 'Cecil King, the Press, and Politics in West Africa', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34: 3 (September 1996), pp. 375-93.

<sup>53</sup> Chick, 'Cecil King', pp. 387-8.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387. During the fifties – i.e. Nkrumah became Prime Minister of the Gold Coast in 1952.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 387-8.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

had won the latest instalment of a 'press war', a term the British Government used to refer to these sorts of relations,<sup>57</sup> and thus the realities of power on the ground, as much as, if not more than, the character of Nkrumah's rule.

The large feature article which appeared in the *Mail* just before the celebrations represented a continuation of the efforts of opposition groups to exploit the British right-leaning press. The report told of 'a dramatic last-minute appeal... made to the British people through the Daily Mail by Sir Agyeman Prempeh, Ruler of the Ashanti nation'.<sup>58</sup> Hall had been 'summoned' to 'an urgent meeting' in Kumasi by the Ashantehene, who spoke of his fears for the future. "I am sorely troubled", the Ashantehene explained: "Three days ago Ashanti elders appealed to her Majesty's Government through the Secretary of State for the Colonies to help the Ashanti people before it is too late. We have heard only silence... It is possible that Mr. Lennox-Boyd has not heard. Thinking that may be possible it is my hope that a message through the *Daily Mail* will be able to help us by explaining our worries to the British people. Through you I want to speak to the British people as an old and good friend." The ruler was keen to cultivate a sympathetic audience in Hall, and his efforts found expression within the pages of the *Mail*. This contrasted very much with Nkrumah's approach towards the foreign media. According to Hall, 'in spite of many requests', the Prime Minister declined to see newspapermen until after independence.<sup>59</sup> From the beginning of the fifties, his Party had had strained relations with British newspapers. In August 1957, George Padmore, reporting from London for the *Ghana Evening News*, the paper of the CPP, accused 'certain British imperialist newspapers' of having over the years 'consistently opposed the right of self-government and independence of the coloured races of Asia and Africa', including Ghana,<sup>60</sup> and memories of this remained raw.

Particular hatred was reserved for the proprietors, editors and correspondents of Ghana's own 'White Press', the *Graphic* and the *Ashanti Times*, the latter the brain-child of Major-General Sir Edward Spears, the Chairman of Ashanti

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<sup>57</sup> DO 35/9354; DO 194/13.

<sup>58</sup> *Mail*, 4 March 1957, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ghana Evening News*, 9 August 1957, p. 3. For a recent history of George Padmore, see: Leslie James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke, 2015).

Goldfields, a powerful mining company.<sup>61</sup> All of these papers had arrived in West Africa at the end of the forties and the beginning of the fifties, just as the decolonisation process was beginning, and Africans generally believed that they spoke for metropolitan financial interests.<sup>62</sup> They also sensed a political connection. There was no official link between the White Press and the Colonial Office, but the latter had been 'helpful' at the moment the Mirror Group was considering entry; and prior to that, it had also been of the view that a newspaper or set of newspapers might prove useful in counterbalancing the vituperous African nationalist press during these important years.<sup>63</sup> British papers were believed to be part and parcel of the same game: suspected efforts to deny Ghana its hard-won freedom. Initially, this argument was advantageous in a practical sense for the CPP in addition to its being genuinely felt. Judging from the content of the *Ghana Evening News* over these weeks, it featured in Nkrumah's efforts to consolidate his domestic political popularity. If the British press and the NLM were in cahoots, then having contempt for one entailed having contempt for the other.

## 2. Coverage of independent Ghana

### i. The slippery slope: April to July, 1957

During the spring and summer of 1957, British press coverage of Ghana was not extensive. Yet, to the extent that press content exhibited one discernible pattern, the majority of articles, if often small, served to provide an insidious running commentary on Nkrumah's internal policies. This was a story of a sequence of moves which journalists on the right tended to regard both as an affront to the British as well as a turn to something akin to benign authoritarianism. The public rhetoric of opposition groups within Ghana, together with the political perspectives of British commentators, remained important factors behind their exposition. That this was not simply a case of journalists' perceptive or even premonitory detailing of what is sometimes referred to as Ghana's 'slide to dictatorship', is suggested by the fact that those of the government's moves which were arguably more indicative of

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<sup>61</sup> See Chick, 'Cecil King', as well as John Chick, 'The Ashanti Times: A Footnote to Ghanaian Press History', *African Affairs*, 76: 302 (January 1977), pp. 80-94.

<sup>62</sup> Chick, 'Cecil King', pp. 375-6.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 375-80.



authoritarian tendencies, such as Nkrumah's appointment of regional commissioners accountable to the Ghana Government,<sup>64</sup> failed to attract the same degree of publicity, or none at all. The tendency of some British papers to latch on to examples of Nkrumah's behaviour they regarded as a slur on the British, and then to extrapolate conclusions concerning incipient authoritarianism, and this at a very early stage, suggested that the nature of press content owed more to the resurfacing of latent tensions and concerns as well as to established patterns of reporting than it did to observable behaviour.

In April, the *Express* published a small report to the effect that Ghana had told Britain that it 'does not want to be' in honours lists for royal awards.<sup>65</sup> The following month, again in a small article, the paper told its readers that Nkrumah had moved into Christianborg Castle in Accra, adding that this was the 'former residence of the Governor-General'.<sup>66</sup> In June, the *Mail* reported that Ghana had banned the Queen's message to Commonwealth youth.<sup>67</sup> The article drew on the content of an open letter Busia had sent to Ghana's newspapers, in which he had reportedly protested against the ban. It explained that the leader had said there had been 'other "studied attacks on the Queen's position by the Ghana Government since independence" and instanced "the indecent haste to abolish honours bestowed by the Queen"'.<sup>68</sup>

The following week, both the *Mail* and the *Express* gave prominence to the comments of Joe Appiah, a leading member of the NLM and husband of the daughter of a British Labour peer,<sup>69</sup> who had recently spoken at a rally accusing the CPP of "acts of sedition and treason against Her Majesty the Queen".<sup>70</sup> Appiah's attack had centred on the ban on the Queen's message and on 'God save the Queen' being played with the Ghana national anthem, as well as to 'Nkrumah's decision to set up a 20ft. bronze statue of himself in Accra, to establish a workers' brigade, State farms, and to relegate the Governor-General to an inferior residence'.<sup>71</sup> Appiah reportedly accused the CPP of following 'Communist theory' at 'developing in the

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<sup>64</sup> This story was getting good display in the opposition paper, *The Ashanti Pioneer*.

<sup>65</sup> *Express*, 2 April 1957, fp.

<sup>66</sup> *Express*, 20 May 1957, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> *Mail*, 4 June 1957, fp.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Peggy Cripps, daughter of Sir Stafford Cripps.

<sup>70</sup> *Express*, 11 June 1957, p. 2. Also see: *Mail*, 11 June 1957, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Mail*, 11 June 1957, p. 2.

leader of the party the cult of the personality', and positioned the NLM as the party which would "rise up in arms if necessary against a Government which by its own actions would have proved itself disloyal to the Queen".<sup>72</sup>

The day Nkrumah arrived in London for the June meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers (the 18<sup>th</sup>), the *Telegraph* published an editorial which summarised events thus far. It was one of the first opinion pieces. The author thought that Nkrumah's presence at the conference was 'a signal demonstration of Ghana's new status and his own enhanced importance', but that 'less impressive assertions of both of these factors have come from Accra in a disconcerting spate since independence day'.<sup>73</sup> All of the examples the *Telegraph* cited to support this argument concerned the relationship between Ghana and Britain or questions of symbolism, most of which concerned the Queen. Given the nature of the triumphalist narrative which had appeared in British papers at independence, these later comments reveal continuities in thought that continue to point to a reading of the significance of press content which foregrounds journalists' existing frames and perspectives.

Even at a very early stage, this sort of coverage was having an impact in Ghana, where latent tensions and concerns were also resurfacing. Commenting in May on Nkrumah's decision to move into Christianborg Castle, Kofi Baako, Ghana's Minister without Portfolio, was reported to have accused the British right-leaning press of desiring to curtail Ghana's hard won freedom, the sentiment Padmore would reiterate in August.<sup>74</sup> "It is obvious from the comments of such papers as the Daily Express, which has never supported our struggle for independence...", Baako had reportedly argued, "that they would have wished our country only to be a glorified colonial territory. We are not prepared for that".<sup>75</sup>

At the time of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference, Nkrumah wrote an article for the London *Daily Sketch* in which he strove to dampen criticism of his government by promoting understanding of the moves which he had made since independence.<sup>76</sup> He explained that the decision to put his head on the coinage was a symbolic move to show the people of his country 'that they are now really independent'. The statue, the decision to place his likeness on the independence

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<sup>72</sup> Quotes are from *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Telegraph*, 18 June 1957, p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> *Express*, 20 May 1957, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 20 June 1957, p. 12.

stamps and his move to the castle were likewise described as symbolic steps. ‘To my people’, he explained, the castle is ‘the seat of government. The Governors have lived there for centuries. Now it is logical that their Prime Minister should live there’. He then reassured *Sketch* readers that the future Governor-General would be housed ‘with great dignity and suitability’, that youth camps were part of a scheme to tackle vast unemployment and were ‘certainly not (a form of) Nazism or Fascism’, and ended with a tribute to the Commonwealth. ‘We are proud to be in the Commonwealth’, he wrote, and ‘I hope to ask (the Queen)... to honour us, as soon as she has time, with a visit’.

This last proposition was received with some enthusiasm by the *Mirror*.<sup>77</sup> Yet across the press as a whole, the efforts Nkrumah had made to promote understanding of his Government’s recent moves fell on deaf ears. Again, the picture the press painted was therefore one-sided. In addition to the nature of the perspectives of large sections of the British press, the strength of the NLM campaign, and the history of tension between the CPP and the British media, these omissions reflected the extent of the obstacles British journalists and editors confronted at this great moment of historical change to understanding the nature or strictures of the post-colonial state. Davidson’s seminal work on this would not appear until 1992.<sup>78</sup> To journalists’ difficulties might be added African politicians’ own failure fully to understand, and thus to communicate, their own actions as torch-bearers in a new era.

As Rathbone reminds us, African nationalist politics had a two-pronged agenda, which consisted partly of the “forced expulsion of colonial overrule”, but - crucially - also of the “commitment to ushering in a new kind of state”.<sup>79</sup> While the development agenda was arguably the chief preoccupation of the new state,<sup>80</sup> so too was the consolidation of the governing party’s own authority, which included a ‘legitimation imperative’ that concerned itself in part with issues of symbolism

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<sup>77</sup> *Mirror*, 11 July 1957, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Basil Davidson, *The Black Man’s Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (London, 1992).

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Martin Shipway, *Decolonization and its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires* (Oxford, 2008), p. 174.

<sup>80</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, 2002); Crawford Young, *The Postcolonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960-2010* (London, 2012).

directed to demarcating the new state from its colonial predecessor.<sup>81</sup> Those of Nkrumah's actions British journalists believed were indicative of authoritarian tendencies – the beginnings of a 'personality cult' – were in part imperatives or strategies of rule in many ways specific to post-colonial states. They cannot be viewed simply as African versions of Stalinist or Hitlerist policies, as the frequency with which journalists deployed the terms 'fascism', 'Nazism' and 'communism' to describe Nkrumah's symbolic moves suggested to readers.

They were also the product of Ghana's colonial heritage in other, seemingly rather contradictory, ways. Stamps and statues bearing the likeness of the country's leaders, and the decision of those leaders to live in grand residences such as the castle, were not innovations. Birmingham thinks that one of the most harmful legacies of colonialism in Africa was 'the material lifestyle of its white rulers'.<sup>82</sup> Historical precedent was significant. As Cooper has observed, 'historical (sequences)... brought into being states that had all the trappings recognized around the world as "sovereignty." But the particular characteristics of those states were consequences of the sequence, not merely the sovereignty.'<sup>83</sup> The emphasis the majority of British journalists placed on independence as the moment at which responsibilities, and thus blame, shifted hands, foregrounded sovereignty over sequence.<sup>84</sup> Lacking the interpretive frames used or built by historians such as Rathbone and Cooper, journalists tended to decipher Nkrumah's moves through the lens of their own anxieties and concerns, using both the language handed them by the Ghana Opposition and the only frames they knew for interpreting actions such as those which were under scrutiny. The year 1957 was, after all, little over a decade following the end of the Second World War, in which depictions of Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia had set some strong and resounding precedents.

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<sup>81</sup> Young, *Postcolonial State*, p. 131. Also: Harcourt Fuller, *Building a Nation: Symbolic Nationalism during the Kwame Nkrumah era in the Gold Coast/Ghana* (2010). PhD thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

<sup>82</sup> Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, p. 84.

<sup>83</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Also see William Kirkman's chapter on Ghana in William Kirkman, *Unscrambling an Empire: A Critique of British Colonial Policy 1956-1966*, which provides the contrast to his main thesis.

ii. 'High hand in Ghana':<sup>85</sup> August to September, 1957

In August, critical commentators thought they saw their worst fears realised, when news reached them of the Ghana Government's decision to deport two Muslim leaders from the largely Muslim north, Alhaji Amadu Baba and Alhaji Osman Lardan,<sup>86</sup> as well as the Sierra Leone-born deputy editor of the Ghana *Daily Graphic*, Bankole Timothy, on the grounds that their presence was 'not conducive to the public good'.

The actions of the Ghana Government in proposing deportations provided a base line for British press reporting of the country. These were of greater seriousness than Nkrumah's previous symbolic moves, and therefore, arguably, warranted critical coverage. Yet just as decisive remained the historically-rooted press-related factors, concerning existing tensions, political perspectives and the NLM.

Two further dynamics were important in informing British newspaper content during this later period. The first was not entirely separate because it centred on the press itself, but it concerned fresh action taken by the Ghana Government against specific correspondents and papers as well as its attacks on press freedom more generally. This began with the proposed deportation of Timothy, but snowballed to include other incidents and undeniably hit a nerve across the press as a whole. The second main factor, which surfaced a little later, concerned the ways in which long-standing British domestic political rivalries impinged upon the Ghanaian scene through the medium of the British press, and thereby served to taint the image of that country.

British journalists took up the first theme - attacks on the press - immediately. The *Express*'s John Redfern, present in Accra when news of the proposed deportations broke, was one of the first to report with an article entitled 'An Empire Premier kicks out his critics'.<sup>87</sup> The journalist explained that all three men had either criticised the Ghana Government or had been involved in leading opposition groups within the country. Redfern, 'a canny Derbyshire man',<sup>88</sup> with a

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<sup>85</sup> Title to an editorial in the *Telegraph*, 3 August 1957, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Alhaji Osman Lardan was also referred to in the press as Alhaji Lardan Lalemie, and a few other variations on this.

<sup>87</sup> *Express*, 1 August 1957, p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 54.

strong faith, known to his colleagues as ‘The Bishop’, was not well-disposed to Nkrumah.<sup>89</sup> The two men went back a long way. According to Christopher Munnion, a *Telegraph* correspondent, Redfern had met and interviewed the CPP leader in 1948, and had found him ‘a complicated character... extremely charming one minute and coldly ruthless the next’.<sup>90</sup> Timothy, an out-spoken yet by all accounts a respected journalist, had written a highly critical article on 22 June (1957) entitled ‘What Next, Kwame?’, which had taken the new Prime Minister to task for his development of what Timothy claimed was a personality cult.<sup>91</sup> He may also have attracted disdain for having previously worked at the London *Daily Express*,<sup>92</sup> as well as for having binding links to the ‘White Press’, the *Graphic*, in Ghana. These historical dynamics may also have informed the *Express*’s response to the news of the deportation.

The situation rapidly deteriorated. On the 1<sup>st</sup>, the acting chairman of the Commonwealth Press Union, Lord Burnham, sent a cable to Nkrumah, ‘drawing attention to the grave concern that would be felt throughout the Commonwealth if any country appeared, for whatever reason, to endanger the freedom of the Press in this way’, and asking him to ‘reconsider the whole matter’.<sup>93</sup> The Ghana Government stood its ground, in a manner which recalled its earlier confrontational dealings with British papers. The following day, Redfern recounted part of an interview he had conducted with Krobo Edusei, Ghana’s Minister of Communications,<sup>94</sup> who was to become a notorious figure in the British press in the months to come. Edusei was a straight-talker, who appeared rough, head-strong and volatile to British journalists. He was from a humble background, in some contrast to men such as Busia. The press soon dubbed him ‘Crowbar’.<sup>95</sup> “There are more deportations coming”, Edusei told Redfern: “You British have deported plenty of people in your time. Now we are doing it”.<sup>96</sup> The same day, the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian* reported that Kofi Baako, now Ghana’s Minister of Information and Broadcasting, had held a defiant press conference at which he told pressmen that

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Bankole Timothy, *Kwame Nkrumah from Cradle to Grave* (Dorchester, 1981), pp. 153-6.

<sup>92</sup> UK High Commissioner to Ghana to CRO, 31 July 1957, fol. 10, DO 35/10424.

<sup>93</sup> The quotes are from *Telegraph*, 2 August 1957, p. 7.

<sup>94</sup> *Express*, 2 August 1957, p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 78.

<sup>96</sup> *Express*, 2 August 1957, p. 5.

while ‘the liberty of the press was maintained’, the Government would ‘in turn, expect the press to respect its authority’.<sup>97</sup> The signs looked ominous, and were the subject of acute concern within the pages of British papers.

The day following the departure of Timothy for Freetown, Sierra Leone,<sup>98</sup> the *Telegraph* published a highly critical editorial entitled ‘High hand in Ghana’.<sup>99</sup> ‘Deportation of editors has never been a convincing sign of democratic rule’, it began: ‘...Dr Nkrumah will only have himself to blame if people in this country begin to ask: “Is the Prime Minister of Ghana a dictator after all?”’<sup>100</sup> Left-leaning papers also voiced concerns. The next day, the *News Chronicle* printed an editorial entitled ‘Mr. Timothy’ in which it claimed that ‘The whole affair smacks unpleasantly of the sort of abuses rife in South Africa’.<sup>101</sup> The *Observer* worried that Nkrumah’s failure to rescind his decision ‘would not only harm the standing of his own Government, but would injure the wider cause of colonial freedom he represents’.<sup>102</sup> Here, too, important press-related and extraneous factors affected the nature of British newspaper coverage, meshing with and sometimes guiding interpretation of events on the ground. Timothy was an occasional reporter for the *News Chronicle* and had also contributed articles to the *Observer*. If nothing else, these links allowed for a more personal and prolific commentary on the case. The two Alhajis received no such treatment. In the case of the *Telegraph*, the paper’s reference to Nkrumah’s fulfilling certain expectations pointed to the continued significance of pre-existing interpretive frames to the production of coverage, and thus also to the importance of the NLM’s long-standing propaganda campaign.

True to form, the *Mirror* was noticeably silent on the issue. Commenting on Timothy’s proposed deportation, on 31 July the UK High Commissioner to Ghana told the Commonwealth Relations Office that ‘Daily Graphic management are naturally much concerned over possibility that this might be first step in a campaign by Government to close them down’.<sup>103</sup> In reply, the CRO commented that the *Mirror*, ‘who have been in contact with us... seem to think that sacrifice of Timothy

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<sup>97</sup> The quote is from *Guardian*, 2 August 1957, p. 7. Also see: *Telegraph*, 2 August 1957, p. 7.

<sup>98</sup> He left on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to take up a place on the *Mirror*.

<sup>99</sup> *Telegraph*, 3 August 1957, p. 6.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *News Chronicle*, 6 August 1957, p. 4.

<sup>102</sup> *Observer*, 4 August 1957, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> UK High Commissioner to Ghana to CRO, 31 July 1957, fol. 9, DO 35/10424.

may be necessary to enable “Daily Graphic” to continue publication’, and were as a result ‘deliberately treating the whole matter quietly’.<sup>104</sup>

Attacks by and on the British press soon began to move beyond the issue of Timothy. On the 5<sup>th</sup>, an article in the *Express* reported that the *Ghana Evening News* had criticised it for ‘(distorting) the news’ of the deportation order by claiming that the three men were being asked to leave because they were ‘critics’.<sup>105</sup> This attack (by the *Ghana Evening News*) displayed continuity with earlier attacks on the *Express*, just as the *Express*’s attack on Nkrumah’s treatment of Timothy displayed continuity with its earlier narratives, and should be interpreted in the light of these pre-existing tensions. Relations were hostile. Three members of the Ghana Cabinet whom Redfern had subsequently tried to approach had reportedly refused to answer any questions.<sup>106</sup>

The following week, coverage centred on Kumasi, where Baba and Lardan were appealing against their proposed deportations. Geoffrey Bing, QC, a British man who acted as constitutional adviser to Nkrumah, led for the Ghana Government. Mr Justice Smith, also a British man, presided over the court as judge. Ian Colvin, special correspondent for the *Telegraph*, reported that outside the courtroom in Kumasi demonstrations by ‘Moslems and National Liberation Opposition supporters’ were ‘thousands’-strong and verging on violence.<sup>107</sup> Opposition groups appeared to be taking advantage of the court hearing and the press presence which it invited, to air their continued concerns about the position of regions and minorities in an independent Ghana. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, the Ashantehene received Colvin in his palace ‘to repeat and affirm that the Ashanti people have no intention of surrendering to totalitarian rule’.<sup>108</sup> Once again, pre-existing interpretative frames informed coverage. In an accompanying editorial, the *Telegraph* accused Nkrumah of failing to allay the fears expressed by Busia, and by the chiefs of Ashanti and of the Northern Territories, ‘that his rule would be dictatorial’.<sup>109</sup>

When the court announced its ruling the following week, Colvin decided to make a pointed reference in his work to the role played by the British throughout the proceedings, a decision that would have important ramifications. According to

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<sup>104</sup> CRO to UK High Commissioner to Ghana, 2 August 1957, fol. 11, DO 35/10424.

<sup>105</sup> *Express*, 5 August 1957, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Telegraph*, 9 August 1957, p. 14.

<sup>108</sup> *Telegraph*, 12 August 1957, p. 11.

<sup>109</sup> *Telegraph*, 12 August 1957, p. 6.



Munnion, one of his colleagues, these criticisms did not reflect the train of events on the ground as much as the extent of Colvin's personal antipathy towards Bing. Colvin had met Bing on the plane flying out to Accra just days before, and had taken 'an instant dislike' to the Q.C., whom he regarded as "an assiduous, perspiring and ingratiating figure".<sup>110</sup> Colvin was no wall-flower. Winston Churchill reportedly told him that he had been the man who had started the Second World War.<sup>111</sup> The journalist's network of contacts in pre-war Germany had provided him with information that Hitler was planning to attack Poland; and Colvin dutifully informed Neville Chamberlain.<sup>112</sup>

The judge discharged the injunction on the understanding that the parties would not be deported pending an investigation into their claims for citizenship. They were subsequently transported to a jail in Accra. In his article, Colvin foregrounded the concerns voiced by NLM supporters gathered outside the courtroom, which cleverly played on British sensitivities. "British judgement bad", a 'toga-clad Moslem' had reportedly told the journalist, 'tapping his face to signify a blind eye in Mr Justice Smith. "Give us back our Gold Coast. Down with Ghana," shouted another. It was British legal officers who had defeated the injunction, and a British police officer who drove the two Moslems out of Ashanti. To their followers it appears that the British are furthering sinister designs on the part of the government Convention People's party.'<sup>113</sup>

*Express* coverage followed a similar pattern, homing in on Bing, former 'Socialist' MP for Hornchurch.<sup>114</sup> 'Bewildered Ashanti citizens, watching a British lawyer do Nkrumah's work, hold Britain to blame. They shout reproaches, like: "British justice is untrue!". Mr. Bing has said that he hopes eventually to return to the House of Commons. The British people should never receive him back in British public life'.<sup>115</sup> Through the medium of British papers, British domestic political rivalries, and even personal vendettas, the second new theme affecting the production of a negative commentary on Ghana, impinged upon the Ghanaian political scene, adversely affecting coverage of the country. According to the right-leaning press, Bing was disliked within Conservative circles in Britain for his 'legal

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<sup>110</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 84.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82-3.

<sup>113</sup> *Telegraph*, 13 August 1957, p. 7.

<sup>114</sup> *Express*, 14 August 1957, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

ingenuity', which had, it claimed, added to the burdens of Conservative governments in preceding years.<sup>116</sup>

The Ghana Government sprang into action immediately in response to these criticisms, illustrating the continued unease with which it regarded British press content. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Bing suggested in court that the case concerning the two Muslims be adjourned 'until the Daily Express and some other newspapers had made "necessary corrections"'.<sup>117</sup> According to Redfern, Bing had said that 'the Express article singled out for attack people concerned in the case, including himself' and '(as) the judge, senior Crown counsel and he were English, such reports might bring hardship to their careers'.<sup>118</sup> The following day, Redfern was brought in for questioning by Mr David Graeme Carruthers, Assistant Commissioner of Police 'and C.I.D. boss', who probed him on the issue of authorship of the editorial.<sup>119</sup>

Colvin also received a warning. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the journalist was told that Bing was contemplating proceedings against him for alleged contempt of court.<sup>120</sup> Two days later, at the same time the bail applications were denied, the Supreme Court granted an application for leave to issue writs of attachment against the editor of the *Ashanti Pioneer*, a pro-Opposition daily paper published in Kumasi, against the directors of the *Pioneer's* publishers, and against Colvin.<sup>121</sup> Two articles in the *Pioneer* were alleged to have constituted contempt of court, one of which had reproduced the *Express* editorial on Bing,<sup>122</sup> in a manner which recalled long-standing Opposition/British right-leaning press relations. Action was being taken against Colvin because the proprietors of the *Telegraph* were outside the jurisdiction of the court.<sup>123</sup>

The motivations which lay behind the contempt of court proceedings appear to have been multiple. Right-leaning papers tended to underscore the role played by Bing in bringing proceedings, they believed, for 'personal' reasons. This was the argument the *Telegraph* was to advance in court. There certainly seemed to be some truth behind this claim, indicating that the British protagonists in this story played a

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<sup>116</sup> Quote is from *Express*, 14 August 1957, p. 4.

<sup>117</sup> *Express*, 19 August 1957, p. 2.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Express*, 20 August 1957, fp.

<sup>120</sup> *Telegraph*, 19 August 1957, fp.

<sup>121</sup> *Telegraph*, 21 August 1957, back page (hereafter bp).

<sup>122</sup> *Express*, 10 September 1957, p. 2.

<sup>123</sup> *Telegraph*, 21 August 1957, bp.

significant role in fuelling the negative publicity given Ghana in the British press at this time. Even Bing, though strenuously denying it at the time, later admitted that he ‘probably gave too much weight to the feelings of the British members of the Judiciary and among the civil servants and police who looked to the Government to defend them against attacks which might prejudice their future employment once they had left Ghanaian service’.<sup>124</sup> Bing would later argue that British press criticism of British officials active in Ghana, in articles ‘syndicated... throughout the Commonwealth’, did ‘damage’ to ‘the conception of a Commonwealth Civil Service’.<sup>125</sup> If civil servants were ‘not only to be saddled with the whole responsibility for the policy of the state they served’, he explained, ‘but also, if that state’s policy did not suite (sic) some British newspaper, have the secrets of their families, down to the marital vagaries of their great-grandfathers, published for all to read’, as would happen later on to Bing, ‘then of course such recruitment would be largely inhibited if not entirely prevented’.<sup>126</sup>

A second important factor behind the bringing of contempt of court proceedings was the issue of British press content allegedly fuelling tensions within Ghana, a dynamic which Nkrumah and the *Ghana Evening News*, held to be central.<sup>127</sup> On 19 August, in his telegram which mentioned Justice Smith’s anger, the UK High Commissioner to Ghana also informed the CRO that the Ghana Government’s decision to take proceedings against Colvin ‘is, I understand, influenced by their strong resentment at critical comment in United Kingdom press on deportations. Some of it has been reproduced in opposition newspapers here and this is apparently regarded by the Government as liable to prejudice pending Court proceedings on citizenship’ for the two Muslims.<sup>128</sup>

Again, deeply-rooted CPP/British press antagonism was also significant, and fed into this. ‘Ministers’ attitude towards such comment’, the High Commissioner added, ‘is coloured by their view that certain sections of the United Kingdom press, after having tried to influence public opinion against the transfer of power, are misrepresenting events in Ghana to suggest that Ghana has proved unfit for self-

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<sup>124</sup> Geoffrey Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind: An Account of Kwame Nkrumah’s Ghana from 1950 to 1966* (London, 1968), p. 223.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> In other words, freedom was not considered to be ‘limitless’.

<sup>128</sup> UK High Commissioner to Ghana to CRO, 19 August 1957, fol. 21, DO 35/10424.

government'.<sup>129</sup> In December 1957, in a memorandum in which he reflected on these months, Oliver Woods told his editor at *The Times*, that 'Ghanaians believe' that Colvin and another *Telegraph* correspondent were 'sent out with deliberate instructions to run Ghana down in order to prove that the Daily Telegraph had been right all along in opposing self-government'.<sup>130</sup> It is difficult to assess the truth behind this claim. There seemed to be an element of paranoia fuelling these Ghanaian fears. British press coverage of the Gold Coast under British rule had not been extensive at all,<sup>131</sup> even though individual articles had undoubtedly been of the critical nature that Woods believed had fed Ghanaian fears of a British press campaign. Woods himself was unsure of the *Telegraph's* motivations, but was certain that Colvin and his colleague had written 'a lot of hysterical nonsense between them'.<sup>132</sup>

In British papers, the case against Colvin and the *Pioneer* subsequently eclipsed the case of the two Muslims. Yet not before the Ghana Government rushed through a special Deportation Bill to 'deal with' the two men. Despite facing strong opposition from the NLM, the bill passed, and on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the two men were deported to Nigeria. In the week which followed, criticisms of Ghana appearing in the British press intensified still further, in editorials with titles such as 'Time to retreat',<sup>133</sup> 'Wrong route',<sup>134</sup> 'Fear takes over',<sup>135</sup> and 'Joyful Ghana turns sullen and uneasy – Premier Nkrumah's appeal slips as the taste of independence goes sour'.<sup>136</sup> Numerous reports of opposition criticism of Nkrumah's government reinforced this narrative. Headlines in the right-leaning press included "'A black day for democracy" says Ghana M.P.',<sup>137</sup> "'Dictator Nkrumah" charge by rival party',<sup>138</sup> 'Nkrumah told: It's a police State',<sup>139</sup> and "'Trend" to dictatorship – Ghana charge by Dr. Busia'.<sup>140</sup> 'If in fact totalitarianism is creeping up on Ghana', the *Guardian's*

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Memorandum from Oliver Woods to the editor, 4 December 1957, MEM/Ghana file, TNL Archive.

<sup>131</sup> I have found very few articles published before 1957 even at election times.

<sup>132</sup> Memorandum from Oliver Woods to the editor, 4 December 1957, MEM/Ghana file, TNL Archive.

<sup>133</sup> *Guardian*, 23 August 1957, p. 6.

<sup>134</sup> *News Chronicle*, 24 August 1957, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> *Express*, 27 August 1957, p. 4.

<sup>136</sup> *Mail*, 27 August 1957, p. 7.

<sup>137</sup> *Express*, 23 August 1957, p. 2.

<sup>138</sup> *Mail*, 28 August 1957, p. 7.

<sup>139</sup> *Mail*, 30 August 1957, p. 2.

<sup>140</sup> *Telegraph*, 31 August 1957, p. 10.

James Morris observed, 'at least it will not come unheralded. The most readily bandied word here to-day is undoubtedly "dictatorship" and all the pessimists of the Opposition are doing their best to make our flesh creep... The Opposition, though pitifully impotent in the Assembly, is certainly exploiting the situation with skill'.<sup>141</sup>

The *Guardian* and the *Observer* stood out among British papers as offering their readers articles which interrogated the motivations of the Opposition, and which put the Ghana Government's case. One further exception was the *News Chronicle*, which, at the end of August, also raised a point in Nkrumah's defence; namely, the hypocrisy of some British papers in condemning acts of which Britain, too, it claimed, had been guilty not long ago in its own colonies, such as deportation without trial.<sup>142</sup> This weighting was significant. It continued to demonstrate the extent to which British papers supplied British readers with a particular type of selective narrative.

Colonial precedent would later form the core of Bing's exposition of the events of the summer of 1957, particularly the deportations.<sup>143</sup> 'British Colonial history is a long record of such deportations', Bing would explain: 'Occasionally they received publicity, as for example when Archbishop Makarios was sent to the Seychelles Islands, but never, so far as I can recall, condemnation from the *Daily Express*. The truth is that, in the eyes not only of the *Daily Express* but of other British newspapers as well, Ghana had committed the unpardonable crime of behaving, when independent, as independent and had acted in her own territory in exactly the same way as the British Colonial authorities would have done if they had remained in charge'.<sup>144</sup> Bing thought that one of the reasons why such a negative commentary on Ghana emerged at this time was that British journalists, amongst others, 'had no idea of how Colonial Government had been' and were thus unable to understand that the actions they condemned as tyrannical were 'in fact... the following by an independent government of past Colonial precedent'.<sup>145</sup> Bing's decision to pursue this line of argument was probably motivated by a desire to distance himself from the deportations and the contempt of court proceedings. Yet

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<sup>141</sup> *Guardian*, 31 August 1957, fp.

<sup>142</sup> *News Chronicle*, 26 August 1957, p. 4.

<sup>143</sup> Bing, *Reap the Whirlwind*. Especially pp. 216-38.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226. Emphasis added.

there was undoubtedly a general truth behind his assertions, both as they applied to Ghana, and more broadly.

In explaining Nkrumah's decision in 1958 to introduce a Preventive Detention Act, for instance, Birmingham highlights the value to the Prime Minister of 'the certainties of the colonial system' over and above 'the democratic system of British justice' when faced with perceived 'dissidents, enemies and even subversive plotters',<sup>146</sup> the latter arguably also itself partly the product of the colonial era. Opposition, coloured by ethnicity and regionalism, was fomented by colonial rule. Diverse peoples were brought together within one border the position of which was determined by the colonial power. And groups were played off against others as a strategy of rule.

iii. 'Ghana – the anxious weeks':<sup>147</sup> September to October, 1957

On 9 September, the contempt of court case opened in the Supreme Court in Accra, and again, British domestic politics hung over the Ghana scene, affecting the volume and nature of British press coverage of the trial. In the right-leaning press, news reports focused once again on Bing, now Attorney-General, leading the case for the Ghana Government. If right-leaning papers were predisposed to opposing the actions the Ghanaian authorities had taken against Colvin by virtue of their shared plight, the very fact that Bing was heading the defence undoubtedly fuelled their fury. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, Henry Fairlie wrote a scathing piece for the *Mail* on Bing, 'Nkrumah's right-hand man, the influence behind the latest Ghana moves'.<sup>148</sup> Fairlie accused Bing of being a communist, shrewd and overly legalistic.<sup>149</sup>

Christopher Shawcross, QC, heading the defence, was also the subject of much press attention, but of the opposite kind. Journalists saluted Shawcross for taking Bing to task on what he alleged were unjustifiable motivations for bringing Colvin and the *Pioneer* to trial.<sup>150</sup> Shawcross's accusation that Bing had perpetrated

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<sup>146</sup> Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, pp. 84-5.

<sup>147</sup> *Mirror*, 19 September 1957, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> *Mail*, 13 September 1957, p. 6.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Guardian*, 10 September 1957, p. 14; *Telegraph*, 10 September 1957, p. 14; *News Chronicle*, 10 September 1957, p. 2; *Mail*, 10 September 1957, p. 2; *Telegraph*, 11 September 1957, p. 14; *Guardian*, 11 September 1957, p. 7; *Express*, 11 September 1957, fp; *Express*, 12 September 1957, p. 2; *Guardian*, 12 September 1957, p. 7.

‘a monstrous outrage upon the tender and infant freedom of Ghana’ by abusing his position of authority for personal reasons was widely quoted in British papers.<sup>151</sup> The press also gave prominence to Shawcross’s contention that the matter was beyond the jurisdiction of the court, given that it was not usual for a contempt charge to be heard in a court other than that against which the contempt was alleged to have been made.<sup>152</sup> This last point was the eventual reason why, on the 12<sup>th</sup>, the judge ruled that proceedings against Colvin and the *Pioneer* had been brought to the wrong court.

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, Colvin, on the way to Nigeria, was stopped at the airport in Accra and forbidden to leave Ghana while the Government decided how to proceed.<sup>153</sup> He was eventually permitted to leave on the understanding that he would return for a further hearing. Meanwhile, Shawcross, who had flown to Nigeria successfully on the 13<sup>th</sup>, was forbidden to re-enter the country. British press coverage, though consistently high during these weeks, peaked again at this news.<sup>154</sup> Some British journalists believed Bing had been the brains behind the move, and he was again the subject of a feature article, this time in the *Express*, which described the ex-MP as ‘amazing’, ‘enigmatic’, ‘tall’, ‘plump’, and ‘communist’, with ‘slant-eyed, almost Mandarin features’,<sup>155</sup> every reader’s dream pin-up. To make matters worse, at this time the *Telegraph* told its readers that Colvin and the paper had filed writs ‘claiming injunctions and seeking damages’ against Nkrumah, Adjei (Minister of Justice), Bing (Attorney-General) and Collens (Commissioner of Police).<sup>156</sup>

All British papers gave prominence to news of the banning of Shawcross as well as to reports that the British Government had contacted the Ghana Government with an expression of ‘concern’ at the turn of events.<sup>157</sup> The British Government

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<sup>151</sup> *Express*, 12 September 1957, p. 2; *News Chronicle*, 12 September 1957, p. 2; *Guardian*, 12 September 1957, p. 7; *Telegraph*, 12 September 1957, p. 14.

<sup>152</sup> *Telegraph*, 10 September 1957, p. 14; *Express*, 13 September 1957, fp; *News Chronicle*, 13 September 1957, p. 2; *Telegraph*, 13 September 1957, p. 16; *Guardian*, 13 September 1957, p. 9.

<sup>153</sup> *Express*, 14 September 1957, p. 2; *Mail*, 14 September 1957, fp; *News Chronicle*, 14 September 1957, fp; *Herald*, 14 September 1957, p. 2; *Telegraph*, 14 September 1957, fp; *Guardian*, 14 September 1957, fp.

<sup>154</sup> *Telegraph*, 16 September 1957, fp; *News Chronicle*, 16 September 1957, fp; *Mail*, 16 September 1957, fp; *Express*, 16 September 1957, fp; *Guardian*, 16 September 1957, fp; *Mirror*, 16 September 1957, p. 4; *Express*, 17 September 1957, p. 6; *News Chronicle*, 17 September 1957, p. 4; *Herald*, 17 September 1957, fp.

<sup>155</sup> *Express*, 18 September 1957, p. 6.

<sup>156</sup> *Telegraph*, 16 September 1957, fp.

<sup>157</sup> *Mail*, 17 September 1957, fp; *News Chronicle*, 17 September 1957, fp; *Mirror*, 17 September 1957, p. 8; *Mirror*, 18 September 1957, p. 13; *Mirror*, 20 September 1957, p. 6; *Telegraph*, 17 September 1957, fp; *Guardian*, 17 September 1957, fp.

was in fact very reluctant at this time to issue any declarations which the Ghana Government might construe as critical.<sup>158</sup> British ministers were acutely aware of the necessity of avoiding giving the impression that Britain did not regard the country as truly independent.<sup>159</sup> The fact that the British Government did express concern at events is part testament to the weight of the public and political pressure it found itself subject to at home. Yet appeasing British newspapers was never uppermost in its mind. Its chief concern remained safeguarding Commonwealth ties. Some British officials believed that in criticising Ghana so severely, British papers were furthering the cause of those groups within Ghana 'who say that the Commonwealth is nothing more than a mud-slinging organisation and that Ghana would be well-advised to leave it'.<sup>160</sup>

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Shawcross attempted to re-enter Ghana in defiance of the ban, his efforts attracting much publicity.<sup>161</sup> Some British officials suspected that Shawcross was courting the media to further his own ends and those of his clients.<sup>162</sup> At this time, the UK High Commissioner to Ghana commented that Shawcross 'has turned the case into a political affair'.<sup>163</sup> The High Commissioner thought that the QC 'appears not to have known when to stop', and that 'by allowing the conduct of Colvin's case to appear to be degenerating into a personal vendetta against the Ghana Government he has given colour to the belief of the latter that they had here an example of a settled policy on the part of the Daily Telegraph to denigrate a newly independent Commonwealth country'.<sup>164</sup> Shawcross's attempt to re-enter Ghana appeared to be part and parcel of this campaign of insubordination, the High Commissioner thought, and courting the press, a tactical ploy on Shawcross's part. British journalists certainly had advance notice of Shawcross's plans, and were

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<sup>158</sup> DO 35/6188; DO 35/6189; Memorandum from J.D. Bishop to the editor, 19 September 1957, MEM/Ghana file, TNL Archive.

<sup>159</sup> DO 35/6188; DO 35/6189.

<sup>160</sup> A.W. Snelling to Lintott, Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 17 October 1960, fol. 7, DO 195/29.

<sup>161</sup> *Guardian*, 18 September 1957, fp; *News Chronicle*, 18 September 1957, fp; *Mail*, 18 September 1957, fp; *Telegraph*, 18 September 1957, fp; *Express*, 18 September 1957, fp; *Herald*, 18 September 1957, fp; *News Chronicle*, 19 September 1957, fp; *Express*, 19 September 1957, fp; *Guardian*, 19 September 1957, fp; *Telegraph*, 19 September 1957, fp; *Mail*, 19 September 1957, fp; *Mirror*, 19 September 1957, p. 4; *Herald*, 19 September 1957, fp.

<sup>162</sup> High Commissioner to Ghana to CRO, sent 17 September 1957 (received 18<sup>th</sup>), fol. 84, DO 35/6188.

<sup>163</sup> High Commissioner to Ghana to CRO, 16 September 1957, fol. 78, DO 35/6188.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*



present at Accra Airport in large numbers when he arrived. He remained approximately thirty minutes in Ghana before being sent back to Nigeria.

The British press was livid. The *Express* interpreted the move both as a vindication of colonialism, and as an opportunity for Bing to bow out of public service once and for all.<sup>165</sup> The *Mail* agreed: British guidance was needed now more than ever before.<sup>166</sup> 'At this stage it is imperative that Britain's influence be sustained at the highest level', it argued: 'Dr. Nkrumah is obviously in even greater need today of authoritative and friendly counsel than he was before independence'.<sup>167</sup>

The *Mirror*, hitherto rather restrained in its coverage, voiced its concern directly for the first time. In an editorial on the 19<sup>th</sup>, entitled 'Ghana: The anxious weeks', the paper expressed its 'regret that the going is not smoother for this vigorous new nation' and its 'anxiety to see Ghana flourish as a democratic Commonwealth country' lest its actions 'turn back the clock in Africa for 50 grim years'.<sup>168</sup> Accompanying the editorial was a cartoon by Vicky depicting a small child labelled 'Ghana' toddling from light into darkness behind the figure of Nkrumah holding a book entitled 'Freedom and justice', his head bowed.<sup>169</sup>

Only the *Herald* made an effort to put the Ghana Government's case. On the same day as the above editorials appeared, an article by Basil Davidson cautioned *Herald* readers against '(getting) Ghana wrong'.<sup>170</sup> In it, Davidson explained that Nkrumah's 'strong line on certain key issues – such as the authority of the central government over Ghana's different regions' was part of his efforts to 'weld' 'various peoples...into a single nation'. He also attributed Nkrumah's recent moves, firstly, to lack of experience and self-confidence, which had affected his ability to run strong government and democracy 'in the same harness', and secondly, to error, and to the Government's tendency to persist in error by virtue of the fact that any admission of guilt would damage its new-found authority. Davidson was keen to quash popular misconceptions rife in Britain, taking time to explain to his readers that Ghana was not new to democracy, but that 'the peoples of Ghana have had a tribal system, from

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<sup>165</sup> *Express*, 19 September 1957, p. 8.

<sup>166</sup> *Mail*, 19 September 1957, fp.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Mirror*, 19 September 1957, p. 2.

<sup>169</sup> *Mirror*, 19 September 1957, p. 3.

<sup>170</sup> *Herald*, 19 September 1957, p. 4.

time immemorial, that was highly democratic in structure'. 'They're going through a difficult patch', he concluded: 'but they will come out of it all right'.<sup>171</sup>

Again, arguments such as these tended to be clouded out across the press as a whole by a predominance of reports on Ghana's slide to dictatorship, on the continued need for British guidance and intervention, and in some cases, on what was believed to be Ghana's complete 'failure' just six months after its inception. On the same day as Davidson's article appeared, in a summary of recent UK press comment, the CRO communicated to the UK High Commission in Accra that 'no comment favourable to the Nkrumah Government has come our way'.<sup>172</sup> The negative coverage was undoubtedly having an impact in Ghana, where the *Ghana Evening News* again took the British 'capitalist imperialist press' to task for its reporting of the country since independence in an editorial entitled 'British press goes mad', a piece which was subsequently reprinted, apparently at 'popular request'.<sup>173</sup>

Colvin returned to London from Lagos, Nigeria, on the 19<sup>th</sup>, the *Telegraph* having concluded that the ban on the re-entry to Ghana of his legal representative freed the journalist from any legal or moral obligation to return to the country.<sup>174</sup> Shawcross eventually followed suit. Following their departure from West Africa, British press treatment of events in Ghana focused on the Ghana Government's efforts to explain their actions as well as on additional political moves taken by the latter that British journalists regarded as further proof of mounting authoritarianism. These two trends often appeared indistinguishable because the manner in which the Government justified its past and present behaviour continued to be taken as evidence of tyranny. Unfortunately, Nkrumah was not in Accra at this time, but in Half Assini, a village near his birthplace, resting.<sup>175</sup> The new Prime Minister found the scale of 'world interest in the affairs of Ghana' oppressive, his experience of which he likened to 'living under a spotlight'.<sup>176</sup> In his absence, Edusei, now Minister of the Interior, was one of the men tasked with dealing with the foreign press, and as the *Guardian*'s James Morris observed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, 'almost nothing can do more harm to Ghana's promising reputation than a press conference

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> CRO to Accra, 19 September 1957, fol. 104, DO 35/6188.

<sup>173</sup> *Ghana Evening News*, 19 September 1957, p. 2. The article was reprinted on 30 September 1957.

<sup>174</sup> *Telegraph*, 20 September 1957, fp.

<sup>175</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom* (London, 1973), p. 113.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

by Edusei'. 'His manner is at once rough and facetious', Morris thought, 'his syntax confusing, his remarks almost sometimes unbelievable in their naivety or brashness'. They provided ready copy for correspondents in search of sensation. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the *Mail* explained that Edusei had told a cocktail party in Accra that special courts were to be set up to try political offenders.<sup>177</sup> "If I want to get rid of anybody, I'll do it and nobody's going to stop me", the *News Chronicle*'s Frank Barber reported Edusei as having told the gathering.<sup>178</sup>

Nkrumah restored some degree of calm upon his return from the coast with a speech on the 24<sup>th</sup> in which he explained the Government's recent moves reportedly with reference to Ghana's 'tribal, feudal, and other' difficulties, and in which he announced that the charges against Colvin were to be dropped. Robert Jackson, a UN administrator working on the Volta project,<sup>179</sup> had, according to an internal memorandum circulated at *The Times*, been the main influence behind this move, flying up to see the Prime Minister at his retreat and persuading him that 'things were in danger of going over the edge with the outside world', thereby jeopardising the confidence of foreign investors.<sup>180</sup> Following Nkrumah's speech, the CRO sent a private message to the Ghanaian Prime Minister congratulating him on his 'statemanship', and '(assuring) (him) of our anxiety here at all times scrupulously to avoid any interference in your domestic affairs'.<sup>181</sup> The *Telegraph* subsequently withdrew the writs it had filed against Nkrumah and his fellow ministers.

Some journalists hailed Nkrumah's moves as a welcome return to sanity, but most reserved judgement as to whether this signified a meaningful turn-around.<sup>182</sup> Both Shawcross and Colvin were subsequently declared prohibited immigrants, a decision which unleashed a further wave of criticism.<sup>183</sup> Another *Telegraph* correspondent, George Evans, was banned 'by mistake' and then admitted to Ghana

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<sup>177</sup> *Mail*, 20 September 1957, p. 9.

<sup>178</sup> *News Chronicle*, 20 September 1957, fp. Also see: *Herald*, 21 September 1957, fp.

<sup>179</sup> This was a scheme to generate hydroelectricity through the construction of a dam on the Volta river. It was the largest project associated with Nkrumah's development plans. For a description of the scheme and the difficulties it entailed, see: Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, pp. 63-9.

<sup>180</sup> Internal memorandum, 2 October 1957, MEM/Ghana file, TNL Archive.

<sup>181</sup> Personal message from the CRO to Nkrumah, n.d., fol. 135, DO 35/6188.

<sup>182</sup> *Mirror*, 25 September 1957, p. 3; *Herald*, 25 September 1957, p. 2; *Telegraph*, 25 September 1957, fp; *Telegraph*, 25 September 1957, p. 8; *Telegraph*, 25 September 1957, p. 18; *Guardian*, 25 September 1957, fp; *Guardian*, 25 September 1957, p. 6.

<sup>183</sup> *Express*, 26 September 1957, p. 9; *Telegraph*, 26 September 1957, fp; *Telegraph*, 26 September 1957, p. 10.

on the 27<sup>th</sup>.<sup>184</sup> And through it all, Edusei's comments continued to attract a lot of page space. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, coverage peaked once again with claims drawn from an article printed in the *Pioneer* that the Minister had told a party rally outside Accra that he '(loved) power' and that he was 'going to use it sternly and strongly, no matter what people may say about me'.<sup>185</sup> Baako later denied that Edusei had made such a speech and attributed the genesis of these words to an over-zealous, vengeful Opposition.<sup>186</sup>

Yet Edusei continued to attract negative publicity throughout these weeks for other unfortunate statements such as 'I have no ambition to be a dictator', 'The Premier – Kwame Nkrumah – is not a dictator, so why should I be one?',<sup>187</sup> Across the British press as a whole, Edusei was widely dubbed Nkrumah's strong-arm man, and was consistently criticised and mocked.<sup>188</sup> Even the left-leaning *News Chronicle* referred to him as 'Ghana's little Caesar', and the *Herald* as a 'dictator'.<sup>189</sup> Munnion recalls that Edusei had, by this time, taken to giving press interviews from 'a massive gold-plated bed he had ordered from Harrods',<sup>190</sup> and this probably did not help. Members of the British Government seemed certain that Edusei was the 'key' to the continuing bad press and that 'we could start getting a better press for Ghana if, for any period of seven consecutive days, Edusei could remain silent and no other news bearing any appearance of dictatorism were received from Accra'.<sup>191</sup> The British Government was obviously fearful that the negative publicity would persist. In a personal minute written on 26 September, Macmillan asked the CRO to 'do all you can to dissuade the British Press and others from attacking the Government of Ghana'.<sup>192</sup> 'They are, after all, very new at the job', he added: 'Two generations ago

<sup>184</sup> *Express*, 27 September 1957, p. 2; *Mail*, 27 September 1957, fp; *Mirror*, 27 September 1957, p. 24; *Telegraph*, 27 September 1957, fp; *Guardian*, 27 September 1957, fp.

<sup>185</sup> *Mail*, 28 September 1957, fp; *Mirror*, 28 September 1957, p. 3; *Guardian*, 28 September 1957, p. 10.

<sup>186</sup> *Telegraph*, 28 September 1957, fp; *Mail*, 28 September 1957, p. 2.

<sup>187</sup> *News Chronicle*, 1 October 1957, p. 2; *Telegraph*, 1 October 1957, p. 15; *Guardian*, 1 October 1957, p. 11.

<sup>188</sup> *New Chronicle*, 6 September 1957, p. 2; *Mail*, 30 September 1957, p. 2; *News Chronicle*, 30 September 1957, p. 2; *Express*, 1 October 1957, p. 11; *Mail*, 1 October 1957, p. 2; *Express*, 4 October 1957, fp; *News Chronicle*, 4 October 1957, fp; *News Chronicle*, 8 October 1957, p. 6.

<sup>189</sup> *News Chronicle*, 7 October 1957, p. 5; *Herald*, 21 September 1957, fp.

<sup>190</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 85.

<sup>191</sup> Snelling to MacLennan, 1 October 1957, fol. 162, DO 35/6189.

<sup>192</sup> Personal minute by Macmillan sent to Alport, 26 September 1957, fol. 173, DO 35/6189.

they were savages: now they are supposed to be trained in the niceties of constitutional Government. We really must give them a chance'.<sup>193</sup>

Yet while the Ghana Government did undoubtedly take steps against opposition groups at this time and against freedom of expression, the Government's actions are insufficient alone to account for the wealth of coverage on Ghana, and most particularly its nature, for which historical press-related factors were also key determinants. If the British press therefore ensured that its readers were kept continually informed of Nkrumah's increasingly authoritarian actions, this was, it seems, as much by luck as good judgment. The relationship of the British press to the local, post-colonial tale it documented, moreover, was nothing short of conjoined. British journalists were involved in 'making' history as well as in reporting it.

## Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the role of British press coverage of Ghana during 1957. Its conclusions support Rathbone's argument both that international media treatment of the independence celebrations in March was essentially 'triumphalist', and that the 'pomp and partying' obscured some 'messy politics'. Yet it diverges from his views in two main respects. Firstly, it questions the extent to which the triumphalist CPP narrative of a heroic Nkrumah dominated British coverage of independence. Not only was it clouded out by a self-congratulatory British one, but, in right-leaning papers in particular, it was always weighted with references to the concerns of opposition groups.

Secondly, in contextualising British press treatment of the celebrations, this chapter concludes that to the extent to which positive commentary on the CPP and Nkrumah was present at independence, it was not broadly representative of British Gold Coast/Ghana coverage as a whole, and thus for outsiders, certainly in Britain, the image of Nkrumah on the podium with his colleagues was not the only narrative of Ghana available to them through the media. Rathbone's argument that the 'losers' account' (the 'grimmer, considerably less romantic story of rapidly worsening post-colonial oppression') is 'very much less well-known beyond Ghana's borders' than

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

the podium scene seems unsustainable as regards British press coverage of 1957. The claim that ‘a southern version was... necessarily that which was most often heard by decades of visiting journalists and scholars who have tended not to stray too far away from the Atlantic shore’ also seems untenable in the context of the British press experience. The production and the nature of coverage *were* fundamentally interlinked. Yet not in this way, for the means of production allowed for the airing of northern experiences and perspectives just as much as, if not more than, those emanating from the southern heartland of the CPP.

Between August and October 1957, the moves taken by the Ghana Government against opposition groups within the country and against freedom of expression, provided a base line which allowed for a highly critical commentary on Ghana to emerge within the pages of British papers. Yet other, more historical, factors were also significant, and bleeding into this. They included the nature of the public rhetoric of opposition groups within the country, their efforts to cultivate links with the British right-leaning press, the fraught relationship between the governing CPP and British newspapers, and the former’s relatively poor or unsuccessful public relations efforts. Further factors included the political perspectives of British editors and correspondents, the translation to Ghana of British domestic political tensions and rivalries, and British journalists’ limited understanding both of the nature of British colonial rule in Africa and of the strictures of the post-colonial state.

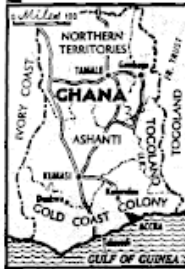
British press coverage of Ghana during 1957 had a number of significant consequences. Some members of the Ghana Government feared that in publicising, and often supporting, opposition views, British newspapers fuelled tensions and divisions within the country, and in doing so made it harder to govern. Others saw British press content as promoting the interests of a (white) capitalist (imperialist) class, or viewed it as part of a cynical and destructive journalistic campaign to justify past and present perspectives on empire and decolonisation in Africa. Expatriates such as Bing believed that British press treatment of independent Ghana was undermining the future of the Commonwealth Civil Service. The British Government feared the implications of British press content for the future of the Commonwealth in other ways, some officials worrying that it was furthering the cause of those groups within Ghana that maintained that the newly-independent state had no friend in Britain.

Press content may also have mitigated potential feelings of loss, weakness and decline on the part of British newspaper readers at the end of empire. There were a number of elements to this, but one important aspect was that over the period as a whole (1957-60), British readers were presented with a simplified or distorted picture both of the history of British colonial rule in Africa and of the actions and decisions of post-colonial African, and white settler, states. Simplification was not universal. Yet, in general, press content was remarkable for the ways in which it succeeded both in distancing Britain from unsavoury developments, and in presenting the nation as the champion of savoury ones. No better illustration of this came than in 1959, when two cases of alleged colonial brutality at Hola in Kenya and in Nyasaland hit the headlines simultaneously.



As Accra celebrates JOHN HALL is summoned to a disturbing audience

# WHY THERE'S FEAR IN ASHANTILAND THIS MORNING



● At midnight tomorrow the Gold Coast becomes the independent State of Ghana. As festivities began yesterday a dramatic last-minute appeal was made to the British people through the Daily Mail by Sir Agyeman Prempeh, Ruler of the Ashanti nation. The Ashantehene, as he is called, summoned Mail man John Hall to an urgent meeting. This is Hall's report:

**I**T was an abrupt break with precedent for the 65-year-old Ashantehene to receive me in audience in his palace here in these circumstances.

This grave African chief, who has nearly a million subjects—slightly less than a quarter of the whole population of the Gold Coast—came straight to the point.

"I am sorely troubled," he said. "Three days ago Ashanti elders appeared to her Majesty's Government through the Secretary of State for the Colonies to help the Ashanti people before it is too late."

"We have heard only silence. In a matter of hours it will be too late. It is possible that Mr. Lennor-Hoyd has not heard."

"Thinking that may be

treat a man who, for 28 years, has occupied the Golden Stool of Ashanti—the throne—and in that time has been a faithful friend of Britain.

What needs stressing is that time is running out... fast.

The Ashantehene explained Ashanti fear.

"When her Majesty's Government formulated proposals for Ghana's new Constitution there were safety provisions."

"It was laid down that the Government in Accra could not fundamentally alter the status of Ghana after independence unless four of the five regional assemblies approved."

"We rejoiced. Two of the five, ourselves and the people of the Northern Territories could prevent sweeping changes."

"Dr. Nkrumah, the Prime Minister, and those around him accepted this Constitution and pledged themselves to adhere to the spirit of it. But already they are making moves designed, as we see it, not to do this."

"In an Order in Council putting the new Constitution into effect they refer to more

member of the Royal Family is in our country, but this is what we feel in Ashanti and I must speak out."

The Ashantehene is not going to Accra for the celebrations. He is staying on with his people, joining in with them in muted celebrations here.

"But I am represented in Accra," he hastened to tell me. "I would not countenance any discourtesy towards her Majesty's representative."

There is keen disappointment here in the Ashanti capital that no arrangements have been made for the Duchess of Kent to pay a short visit to Kumasi.

## A blunder

**I** REGARD it as a serious blunder. It would have meant so much to the Ashanti people and could have been arranged. Kumasi is only 50 minutes' riding time from Accra.

I asked the Ashantehene if it is likely to cause serious trouble if an attempt is made to create a new region in Ashanti.

I asked because so many people here have expressed indignation at the affront to the Ashanti elders in the matter of

invitations to meet the Duchess and fears about the future intentions of Dr. Nkrumah.

I have been told: "Let them try it and we will march. And there are no more warlike people in Africa than the Ashanti. Britain should know—it took us many years to subdue them."

## Still time

**I** PUT this to the Ashantehene. He raised one hand: "This is no time for threats. This should be a time for rejoicing."

"All we in Ashanti, now is that before it is too late her Majesty's Government should act to ensure that these things we fear cannot come to pass."

There was a long pause. I rose and bowed. I left the palace deeply conscious of the feeling here that we have not kept faith with old and firm friends, but there is still time—just.

Since the audience with the Ashantehene I have tried to arrange an interview with Dr. Nkrumah. I wanted to question him about the Ashanti fears.

But in spite of many requests he is declining to see newspapermen until after independence.



SIR AGYEMAN PREMPEH... the Ashantehene is not hereditary. Elected Sir Agyeman was chosen by him & elders.

**KUMASI, Ashantiland, SUNDAY**

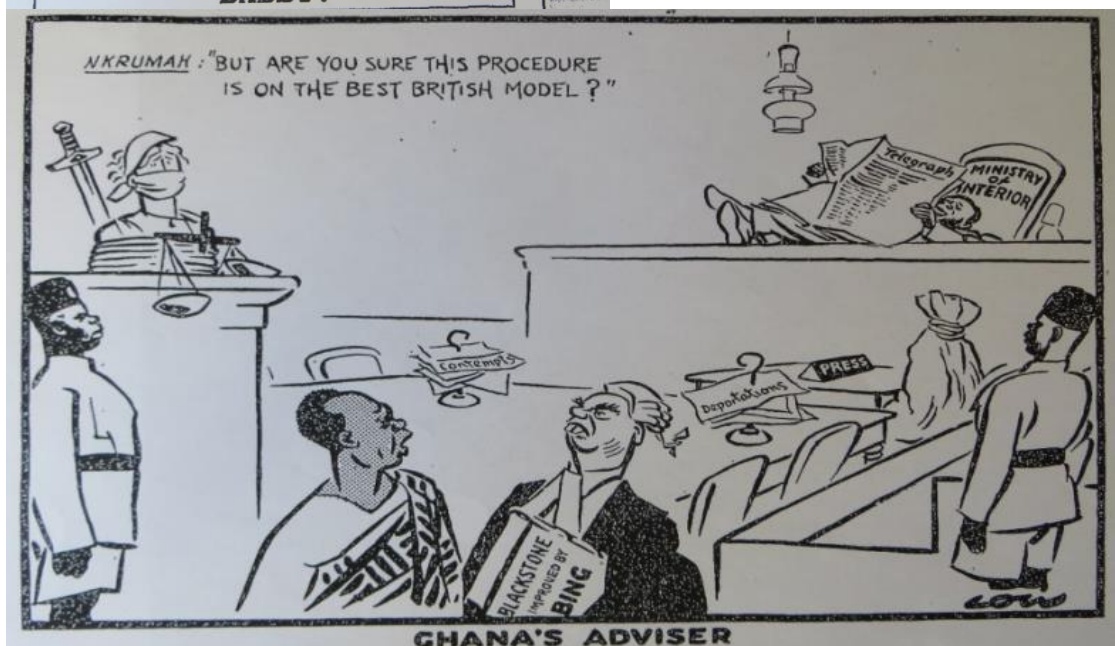
Mail, 4 March 1957, p. 6.





"DADDY!"

From top to bottom: *Mail*, 17 September 1957, p. 6; *Mirror*, 19 September 1957, p. 3; *Guardian*, 20 September 1957, p. 9.



## Chapter 2

### *Colonial violence in Kenya and Nyasaland as necessity, white settler phenomenon, or aberration; versus the centrality of Africa's desire for freedom: The Hola massacre and the Nyasaland State of Emergency, 1959*

‘Perhaps the most important single date in the story of Britain’s withdrawal from Africa’ is how the historian Philip Murphy describes 3 March 1959.<sup>1</sup> It was on that day that eleven Mau Mau detainees were beaten to death by their guards at a remote rehabilitation camp called Hola, in Kenya, and a State of Emergency was declared in the British protectorate of Nyasaland. Kenya was emerging from a near-decade long Emergency itself at this time, called in response to African violence and pressure for an end to British colonial rule.<sup>2</sup> By 1959, the Kenya Government had won the fighting war, but remained engaged in a battle for the ‘hearts and minds’ of the ‘Mau Mau’ men and women who had fought against it. The deaths of the detainees occurred within the context of the government’s efforts to speed up the process of the ‘rehabilitation’ of the Mau Mau ‘hard-core’. In Nyasaland, the Governor, Sir Robert Armitage, justified the declaration of the Emergency in similar terms to Kenya’s own. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, he referred to growing African agitation and violence in the territory, activities which the Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, informed the House of Commons had included a ‘plot’ to murder Europeans.<sup>3</sup>

A number of long-standing grievances informed nationalist activity in Nyasaland. These included land hunger, intrusive agricultural ordinances, racial discrimination, disenfranchisement and a lack of political representation.<sup>4</sup> There was also strong a desire to see the demise of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland or Nyasaland’s extrication from it. The British Government had formed the Federation in 1953 partly in deference to white settler calls for an amalgamation of

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Murphy, *Alan Lennox-Boyd: A Biography* (London, 1999), p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> For the origins and conduct of the Emergency, see: Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa: Book One: State and Class* (London, 1992); and *Book Two: Violence and Ethnicity* (London, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> For the immediate context to the Hola deaths and the declaration of the Emergency in Nyasaland, see: Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*.

<sup>4</sup> For a history of African nationalism in Nyasaland, see: John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966* (Woodbridge, 2012); or Joey Power, *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi: Building Kwacha* (Rochester, 2010).

Southern and Northern Rhodesia; partly in order to contain South African expansion; and partly for more idealistic reasons concerning notions of racial co-operation and mixed community. Yet it had done so against the expressed wishes of the majority of the population of the region, particularly of Nyasaland, a territory with comparatively few white settlers. Nyasaland had been included on account of its poverty and the scale of its debt, a situation the British Government had hoped partnership would alleviate; but there was also a further perceived advantage: the inclusion of Nyasaland would help to ensure a steady supply of African labour to the agricultural and mining industries of its two bigger neighbours.<sup>5</sup> Seven years on, and despite repeated promises of political, social and economic reform and development, most Africans still drew few tangible benefits from Federation and, worse still, regarded the structure as an instrument of oppression with which the powerful white community of Southern Rhodesia imposed its will on the African population of the region through coercion and strong-arm tactics

A great deal of uncertainty surrounded the question of the future of the Federation. From an African perspective, the situation looked bleak. The British Government had scheduled a review of the federal constitution for 1960, and in 1958, 'independence' for the Federation, called for by Roy Welensky, the Federal Premier, was still on the cards. The British Government soon backtracked on this idea. Yet publicly it continued to give the structure its support, right up to and right through 1960.<sup>6</sup> It was partly because of this that nationalist activity, guided chiefly by the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC), ballooned during 1958, leading to, and in turn energised by, the return of Hastings Banda to the protectorate in the summer to head the organisation.<sup>7</sup> Rising nationalist activity, consequently, fuelled European anxieties, which culminated in the declaration of the State of Emergency. In the event, no Europeans died. Yet in the space of a week following the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the 'security forces' killed forty-eight Africans.<sup>8</sup> The authorities arrested and detained over a thousand more, including Banda.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I would like to thank one of the anonymous readers of *JSAS* for drawing my attention to this last point. For a recent, over-arching summary of the reasons that lay behind the formation of the Federation, Nyasaland's inclusion in it, and African opposition before and at its inception, see: McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, pp. 274-81.

<sup>6</sup> See chapters three and four.

<sup>7</sup> Power, *Political Culture*, pp. 123-35.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

The British Government, soon faced with a barrage of questions and criticisms within Parliament, was forced to concede the need for a commission of inquiry to assess the circumstances behind the declaration of the Emergency and the deaths and detentions which followed. This was subsequently headed by Sir Patrick Devlin, a High Court judge. A coroner's inquest into the Hola deaths was also appointed, under W.H. Goudie, a senior resident magistrate, which was followed by a disciplinary tribunal for some of the men whose actions the inquest had cast aspersions on, and the appointment of a commission of inquiry into the future of Kenya detention camps. The reports provided uncomfortable reading for the British Government. When the Devlin Report was circulated in July, for example, Macmillan considered it 'dynamite', fearing that it 'may well blow this government out of office'.<sup>10</sup>

Two main arguments characterise the historiography on the British dimension to the events of 1959. One concerns the British Government and British colonial policy. The events of 3 March, and their legacy, are said to have played an important role in prompting the British Government to re-evaluate aspects of its approach to African affairs:<sup>11</sup> chiefly, the pace and timing of constitutional advance, but also its character, to some extent, as regards officials' growing appreciation of the nature, full extent and significance of African political objectives. The second focus concerns British public opinion and the British Government. The public and Parliament are said to have been shocked by the revelations of brutality and misconduct.<sup>12</sup> This, it is argued, impacted the Government in the lead-up to the general election in October,<sup>13</sup> causing it to mount considerable damage limitation exercises in anticipation of Devlin's report and the Hola judgements.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Alistair Horne, *Macmillan 1957-1986: Volume II of the Official Biography* (London, 1989), p. 181.

<sup>11</sup> Philip E. Hemming, 'Macmillan and the End of the British Empire in Africa' in Richard Aldous and Sabine Lee (eds.), *Harold Macmillan and Britain's World Role* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 97-121, pp.104-5; L.J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* (London, 2000), p. 148; Hyam, *Declining Empire*, pp. 264-5.

<sup>12</sup> John Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 20-1; Butler, *Britain and Empire*, p. 156, 161; Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, pp. 311-53; Hyam, *Declining Empire*, pp. 263-4; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 621; Gröb-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame*, pp. 360-6.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to the above works, the election factor is discussed in: Alistair Horne, *Macmillan 1957-1986: Volume II of the Official Biography* (London, 1989); Charles Williams, *Harold Macmillan* (London, 2009); D.R. Thorpe, *Supermac: The Life of Harold Macmillan* (London, 2010); Richard Lamb, *The Macmillan Years, 1957-1963: The Emerging Truth* (London, 1995); Colin Baker, *State of Emergency: Crisis in Central Africa, Nyasaland 1959-1960* (London, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> The best accounts of these are in Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*; Baker, *State of Emergency*; and Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*.

British public outcry, both anticipated and real, is identified as a factor behind the Government's decision to set up the Devlin Inquiry and the Hola inquest and tribunal;<sup>15</sup> and its growing aversion to the use of violence as a means of control in the colonies.<sup>16</sup> But the historiography draws few explicit connections between British public opinion and British colonial policy during this year. The Government is said to have been concerned about 'middle opinion' in general,<sup>17</sup> which is thought to have informed Macmillan's decision to embark on the 1960 'wind of change' tour.<sup>18</sup> Yet these trends to a more 'progressive' colonial policy are generally thought to have been long underway;<sup>19</sup> and given impetus during 1959 as much by the direct effect of the events on British politicians as by mediating forces such as public opinion. Members of the Government are said to have been shocked by the revelations of brutality and impressed by the scale of African discontent in the Federation, (which Devlin's report later set out in some detail).<sup>20</sup> We might, at this point, also recall the views of Sandbrook, Howe, Owen and Goldsworthy, who have argued much more explicitly that British low politics and public opinion bore very little affective relation to the decolonisation process as a whole - even, Sandbrook claims, during 1959.<sup>21</sup>

There have only been two studies of the role of the British press during this year. One is Lewis's chapter on popular press coverage of Kenya during the 1950s.<sup>22</sup> The other is Lewis and Murphy's piece on relations between the British press and the Colonial Office during 1959.<sup>23</sup> Both studies indicate that British public, including press, opinion was far more multi-faceted than the above works, which focus on colonial brutality, suggest. These two studies include a discussion of characteristics of coverage which include more sympathetic depictions of Africans,<sup>24</sup> more of a detachment from white settlers,<sup>25</sup> and an interest in the future of Central

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<sup>15</sup> Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, pp. 207-13.

<sup>16</sup> John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke, 1988), pp. 248-9; Butler, *Britain and Empire*, p. 151.

<sup>17</sup> Butler, *Britain and Empire*, p. 148; Darwin, *Empire Project*, p. 621.

<sup>18</sup> Butler, *Britain and Empire*, p. 151; Hyam, *Declining Empire*, p. 257.

<sup>19</sup> See, in particular: Hyam, *Declining Empire*; and Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*. Also, Hemming, 'Macmillan', pp. 98-103.

<sup>20</sup> Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, pp. 248-50; Hyam, *Declining Empire*, p. 263.

<sup>21</sup> Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good*; Howe, *Anticolonialism*; Owen, 'Critics of Empire'; Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis, "'Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Mau Mau'".

<sup>23</sup> Lewis and Murphy, "'Old Pals'".

<sup>24</sup> Especially Lewis.

<sup>25</sup> Especially Lewis.

Africa.<sup>26</sup> They also help us to understand some of the factors which may have informed British public opinion. These included an increasing alienation from empire,<sup>27</sup> and the Colonial Office's efforts to manage the press,<sup>28</sup> not only regarding the damning aspects of coverage, but also concerning the more progressive side, which Lewis and Murphy suggest that in the case of Central Africa the CO wished to foster. Concerning the effects of press content, Lewis suggests that its narratives helped to inform Britain's relatively peaceful decolonisation – a ground-breaking argument, which, as discussed in the Introduction, this thesis finds much further evidence of in different forms across the period and in relation to different African regions. Lewis and Murphy discuss press content during 1959 in the context of CO policy, and describe it, in many ways, as an extension of that policy.

This chapter analyses the nature and role of British press treatment of Kenya and Nyasaland during 1959, including coverage of the Hola massacre and the Devlin Report. It makes reference to events within the period 1952 to 1958 when relevant. It aims to build on Lewis's work and Murphy's by identifying further roles the press played in relation to Kenya and Nyasaland at this time. It does so by using additional sources. The chapter draws on newspaper articles from left- and right-leaning mainstream British papers, both 'popular' and 'serious'; the memoirs of journalists and editors; the archive of *The Times*; the archive of the *Manchester Guardian*; the records of the British Government; the memoirs of British politicians; *Hansard*; and the papers and memoirs of Armitage and Welensky.

This chapter's core theme differs from the focus of the majority of these works by proposing that the British press was itself a rather conservative force on the topic of British misdeeds and colonial brutality during these months. Despite this, it does find critical comment on Hola significantly pronounced for a time. It suggests that coverage of Hola, following the massacre, was more critical overall than that on the Devlin Report, an assertion which contrasts with one of Lewis and Murphy's emphases. Concurrently, the chapter argues that the British press was an important and independent force for change on Central African affairs. In both cases, Government tactics affected press coverage. But there were also other important influences, which included African activism, racism, cultural or literary depictions of

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<sup>26</sup> Lewis and Murphy.

<sup>27</sup> Especially Lewis.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis and Murphy.

Africa, journalists' local experiences, the activities of Labour MPs and critics of empire, settler-press relations, editorial constraints, the perspectives of editors and journalists; and, relatedly, the press's narratological and visual framing of events.

In Britain, coverage continued to mitigate the possible impact of decline by presenting British readers with ideas compatible with the trend to decolonisation, as Lewis has argued; but also by depicting key aspects of Britain's involvement in the process in non-negative terms. The chapter acknowledges the possible positive effects of this for the British Government, in the context of that year's election. Yet it continues to describe the relationship of the British press to the Government as less than wholly supportive, and even less collusive. Regarding the future of Central Africa, the press appeared to be one step ahead of the CO, and there is evidence to suggest that it informed British policy. The chapter begins to tease out some of the neglected connections between British public opinion and British policy towards Central Africa during these months. In Africa, it continues to describe press content as having induced tensions and anxieties, this time chiefly among white settlers.

1. '*Meet his challenge!*':<sup>29</sup> Press representations of Nyasaland at the time of the declaration of the State of Emergency: February to April, 1959

The day following the declaration of the Emergency, news of the 'massacre plot' Lennox-Boyd had referred to in the Commons dominated the headlines, together with reports that twenty-six Africans had died. Left-leaning popular papers cast doubt on the culpability of Africans, foregrounded the subject of colonial brutality and implicated Britons, including Lennox-Boyd.<sup>30</sup> The *Mirror* and the *Herald* reiterated the view of the Labour Party that in his African 'plot' statement to the Commons the Colonial Secretary had deliberately conveyed a false impression to the British people to justify the crack-down.<sup>31</sup>

Yet, in these papers, two further themes undercut the weight of these accusations. One concerned the tenor of the news reports from the field in which African violence figured prominently and colonial violence featured as law and order

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<sup>29</sup> Title of an editorial in the *Herald*, 4 March 1959, fp.

<sup>30</sup> *Herald*, 5 March 1959, fp; *Herald*, 6 March 1959, p. 4; *Herald*, 10 March 1959, fp; *Mirror*, 25 March 1959, p. 2

<sup>31</sup> *Herald*, 5 March 1959, fp; *Herald*, 6 March 1959, p. 4; *Mirror*, 25 March 1959, p. 2.

enforcement.<sup>32</sup> Another underscored the power of the Federal authorities, which had the effect of distancing Britain and even the Nyasaland Government from the disastrous turn of events on the ground.<sup>33</sup> The *Herald* immediately suspected that Federal intrigue lay behind the declaration of the Emergency, publishing an editorial on Welensky on the 4<sup>th</sup>, entitled ‘Meet his challenge’ in which the writer accused the Federal Premier of acting ‘to smash the Africans into subjection to his white settler Rhodesian Federation’ and to end ‘the protection of Africans by our Colonial Office’.

Right-leaning papers were supportive of Lennox-Boyd’s plot statement and the Federal, colonial and British response,<sup>34</sup> also in the context of numerous reports on African rioting, violence and sabotage emanating from the field.<sup>35</sup>

The commonalities were significant. British press coverage as a whole can be said to have focused on African, rather than white, action. The majority of the editorials published on both Left and Right on or around 3 March, augmented by the reports filed from overseas, concentrated overwhelmingly on the causes of the African violence, the nature of Britain’s colonial policy and the Federation’s future prospects.<sup>36</sup> Importantly, forward-looking views were not confined to the left-leaning press. Different papers voiced contrasting opinions on the value of the principle of Federation and on the origins of African opposition to it.<sup>37</sup> Yet a cross-paper consensus existed on the extent of the difficulties it now faced, centring on the growing power of African nationalism. Suggestions for the future ranged from the need to ascertain African opinion on Federation, to the importance of reassuring Africans of British intentions, devising a new constitution for Nyasaland, and

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<sup>32</sup> *Herald*, 21 February 1959, fp; *Mirror*, 24 February 1959, bp; *Herald*, 27 February 1959, p. 7; *Herald*, 2 March 1959, fp.

<sup>33</sup> *Mirror*, 24 February 1959, p. 8; *Mirror*, 1 March 1959, p. 2; *Mirror*, 3 March 1959, p. 10; *Herald*, 3 March 1959, fp.

<sup>34</sup> *Express*, 4 March 1959, p. 8; *Telegraph*, 4 March 1959, p. 8; *Mail*, 5 March 1959, fp; *Telegraph*, 7 March 1959, p. 6; *Mail*, 10 March 1959, fp.

<sup>35</sup> *Mail*, 23 February 1959, p. 5; *Telegraph*, 24 February 1959, fp; *Express*, 25 February 1959, fp; *Mail*, 26 February 1959, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Mail*, 4 March 1959, fp; *Telegraph*, 4 March 1959, p. 8; *Mirror*, 5 March 1959, p. 2; *Mail*, 5 March 1959, fp; *Mail*, 6 March 1959, p. 8; *Telegraph*, 7 March 1959, p. 6; *Observer*, 8 March 1959, p. 16; *Mail*, 10 March 1959, fp; *Mirror*, 10 March 1959, p. 2; *Telegraph*, 14 March 1959, p. 6; *Observer*, 15 March 1959, p. 16. This was also the case before the declaration of the Emergency as African violence gradually intensified in the region.

<sup>37</sup> Right-leaning papers were generally ‘pro’ Federation; left-leaning papers ‘anti’. Right-leaning popular papers tended to track African discontent to incitement, intimidation, and even Accra. Left-leaning papers traced discontent back to 1953 and the formation of the Federation, a view which right-leaning papers often also echoed. Left-leaning popular papers also blamed Welensky.



negotiating with Banda. Most papers also publicised and supported Labour's calls for an investigation into the Emergency.

This early coverage appeared not to be conditioned primarily, if at all, by the British Government's efforts to manipulate the media response to developments, suggesting first, that the British press was a self-regulating force for change on Central Africa; and second, rather paradoxically, that it was also an important stand-alone factor<sup>38</sup> behind the mitigation of those criticisms which concerned the behaviour of the British and colonial governments on and around 3 March.

Concerning the latter dynamic, the character of right-leaning popular papers' coverage of Africa up to that date suggested that their supportive comments reflected editorial perspectives (political and cultural). In the case of the *Express*, in particular, journalists' pieces were informed by a belief in the inherent value of empire; as well as by their intimation that Nkrumah and other such 'agitators' had precipitated the 'riots'.<sup>39</sup>

Reports of African violence, more broadly, revealed the popular press's quest for sensation.<sup>40</sup> However, more than anything, they reflected the train of events on the ground, which drew foreign correspondents in. Indeed, African action provided the foundation from which all British press coverage flowed. In 1959 it featured far more prominently in British public appraisals of the process of Britain's decolonisation than much imperial historiography, centred on British public responses to the subject of colonial violence, would seem to suggest.<sup>41</sup> Reports of African violence over colonial violence may also have reflected the significance of racial stereotypes; in addition to the restrictions the Federal and Nyasaland governments placed on journalists' freedom of movement and access to non-official sources of information.<sup>42</sup>

During these weeks, the focus on Federal power directly echoed the arguments of Labour MPs, such as John Stonehouse, who travelled to the Federation during these weeks, and African nationalists. Here too, events on the ground were significant. Armitage declared the State of Emergency independently. Yet he had

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<sup>38</sup> In the sense that newspaper content embodied a profusion of influences, which included, but which was not limited to, the press's interactions with the British Government.

<sup>39</sup> *Express*, 27 February 1959, p. 13.

<sup>40</sup> See Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, for some of the editorial pressures foreign correspondents faced.

<sup>41</sup> Such as in: Hyam, *Declining Empire*; Darwin, *Historical Debate*; and Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*.

<sup>42</sup> See end of this section.

been subjected to Federal pressure on the issue, and Federal troops played an important role in the subsequent suppression of African dissent.<sup>43</sup>

This latter representation did not just minimise the British or colonial involvement. It was positively self-affirming for Britain. The left-leaning popular press depicted the Federal Government as a body whom Britain now had to assuage and confront to 'win freedom' for Africans. The specific dynamics of the decolonisation process in Central Africa, and particularly the involvement of resident Europeans, allowed for the conceptual separation of Britain and the British people from negative aspects at key moments.

Regarding editorial comment on African nationalism and the future, immediate influences included the NAC actions as well as the nature of the British parliamentary debates occurring simultaneously. But the British press was much more than a passive recipient of politicians' views on Central African affairs. It was also, arguably, more than a mere witness to African activism. The significance of the political and related activities of British journalists and editors should also be acknowledged. During the fifties, Federation had become a party political issue, with parliamentary debate playing itself out in the pages of British papers; yet at times also informed by the actions and arguments of journalists and editors, such as David Astor, the editor of the *Observer*, and Colin Legum, that paper's colonial correspondent, both leading figures in the Africa Bureau, an organisation set up in 1952 to advise and support Africans opposed to colonial rule and its dictates, and whose first campaigning issue had been Central Africa.<sup>44</sup>

Some sections of the press, moreover, played a more direct role in conditioning the views of other papers, their efforts also bleeding into editorial content on Federation. Legum recalled that, in addition to his Africa Bureau activities, Astor aimed specifically to 'make the media more conscious of Africa's needs and interests'.<sup>45</sup> The editor sponsored lunches for correspondents, African leaders and British politicians throughout the fifties and sixties, and involved the editors of right-leaning papers, such as the *Sunday Times*, in organising this

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<sup>43</sup> John Darwin, 'The Central African Emergency, 1959', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21: 3 (1993), pp. 217-34.

<sup>44</sup> Cockett, *David Astor*, pp. 189-90.

<sup>45</sup> A Memoir: David Astor's *Observer* (by Colin Legum), D75.1.2, Colin Legum Papers (BC1329), Special Collections, University of Cape Town Libraries, University of Cape Town (hereafter UCT), p. 26.

venture.<sup>46</sup> By 1959, partly because of the efforts of newspapermen such as Astor, African perspectives in Central Africa and beyond were beginning to achieve a much broader circulation within newspaper circles in general, and attracted a deeper engagement. The views British journalists expressed in 1959 must therefore be viewed in a context broader than that of then-contemporary Government efforts to manage debate on events in the region. Indeed, in the coming weeks and months, far from acting in tandem with the Colonial Office, the press not only proved unhelpfully divisive, sowing seeds of distrust between the British, Federal and colonial governments, but also adopted a campaigning role in its relations with that Department.<sup>47</sup>

Part of the problem for the British Government was that press coverage of events in Nyasaland travelled back to Africa, mirroring the case of Ghana. For while the above narratives had positive implications for British readers' understanding of the decolonisation process, they did nothing for the psyche of the white settler communities of the Federation. The Federal authorities, in particular, worried over journalists' references to African action and to Congress.<sup>48</sup> Documenting either, let alone highlighting or sensationalising them, was to acknowledge both the existence of African discontent within the region and African agency to a degree that was considered highly undesirable both for security purposes and for the 'morale' of the European community.<sup>49</sup> Sections of white society, particularly Welensky and his devotees, were further antagonised by journalists' emphasis on the machinations of the Federal Government.<sup>50</sup>

Yet the majority of their fears centred on press comment concerning the future of the Federation. Despite the British Government's reassurances concerning its own intentions, Europeans knew that in the next few years the British Parliament would exert an important influence over the future of Central Africa. Any amendments to the Federal constitution required a UK parliamentary vote;<sup>51</sup> and, as

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> For the campaigning role, see Chapter Four on press coverage of Macmillan's visit to Blantyre.

<sup>48</sup> As in MSS. Welensky 278/5, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Hereafter, 'MSS. Welensky' shall be used to cite this collection.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> MSS. Welensky 281/3.

<sup>51</sup> '[Future of Hastings Banda]: inward telegram no 175 from Lord Home (Salisbury) to Mr Macmillan', 21 Feb 1960, PREM 11/3076, in Philip Murphy (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire, Series B, Volume 9: Central Africa. Part II: Crisis and Dissolution 1959-1965* (London,

we shall see in this and the following two chapters, white settlers regarded the relationship of British press content to British public opinion as illustrative and constitutive. British journalists were not only present on the ground, providing first news of events, but they also publicly articulated the budding, more radical, ideas of those on the Right in British politics to a far greater extent than was possible in the Commons, and thus provided a window onto the changing British political landscape.

A testament to the settlers' anxiety were the moves they took to influence the British press. One involved the actions of the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Committee,<sup>52</sup> an organisation formed in 1958 by a group of prominent businessmen with interests in the Federation to 'promote understanding' within Britain of events in the region.<sup>53</sup> During the crisis, the Committee maintained contact with British journalists and editors, supplying them with background information on events and querying what they considered to be misleading press content, occasionally supplying letters for publication.<sup>54</sup> A further approach concerned the tendency of some sections of the press to denigrate Welensky personally and involved taking legal action against the offending papers on a case-by-case basis, as the Federal premier did in relation to the *Herald* editorial of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 'Meet his challenge', for which he sued Odhams Press.<sup>55</sup> In Africa, the Federal and colonial governments introduced censorship and other press restrictions to inhibit the production and dissemination of potentially damaging pieces from the field – a third strategy. And fourthly, the leaders of both governments spent time discussing matters with certain individual correspondents privately.

Yet although their efforts were persistent and wide-ranging, they appear to have met with little success; pointing again both to the autonomous nature of British press activity on Central Africa and its rather 'anti-Federal' character. The efforts of the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Committee were not always very well-received, as in

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2005), pp. 116-8, p. 117. Also, in same collection, '[Monckton Commission]: outward telegram from Lord Home to Mr Macmillan (Kaduna)', 17 Jan 1960, PREM 11/3065, pp. 102-3, p. 103.  
<sup>52</sup> MSS. Welensky 272/5 and 273/2.

<sup>53</sup> The Rhodesian business community was not united on the issue of the desirability of Federation. As Philip Murphy has explained, the views of individual businessmen/companies reflected their specific interests and changed over time. Philip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization: The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951-1964* (Oxford, 1995).

<sup>54</sup> MSS. Welensky 272/5 and 273/2; Rhodesia and Nyasaland Committee, D/1135/1-33, Guardian Archive, The University of Manchester Library (hereafter UML).

<sup>55</sup> MSS. Welensky 281/3.

the case of the *Guardian* whose deputy editor often, even if politely, gave its members the brush off.<sup>56</sup> More generally, the Committee frequently declared *itself* ineffective, as did the Federal Government.<sup>57</sup> Libel action against popular left-leaning papers such as the *Herald* had even less of an impact, judging by the focus and tone of the paper's subsequent editorials on developments in the region. In Africa, press censorship and other press restrictions not only failed to prevent the production of potentially damaging reports; they appear to have aggravated the situation, antagonising the vast majority of foreign correspondents, who responded by venting their emotions on the printed page and in press conferences,<sup>58</sup> as they had done in Ghana, and would do again in South Africa. Press freedom continued to represent to journalists broader freedoms, the absence of one suggesting or confirming the absence of the other.

Spending time with individual correspondents was a strategy which, upon first examination, met with greater success, as in the case of *The Times*, whose editors and reporters, including Oliver Woods, and Rhys Meier, its Central Africa-based stringer, were on very good terms with Welensky.<sup>59</sup> Yet in general the Federal Prime Minister shirked overtures from British correspondents as part of his plan to say as little as possible to the press before the 1960 review.<sup>60</sup> A number of journalists, particularly from papers gauged to be unsympathetic had great difficulty in getting a private audience with the leader.<sup>61</sup> Thus it was that Welensky had greater success in influencing those who were more likely to support him anyway.

Where Lennox-Boyd's handling of the crisis in Nyasaland and colonial violence formed the focus of coverage, then, the predominance of other broader themes, such as African violence and Federal power, tended to undercut its potency, with the result that coverage was essentially non-negative, and sometimes self-affirming. This is not to say that the British Government was unconcerned by the critical dimension to press coverage. Indeed, its decision to mount an inquiry into

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<sup>56</sup> Rhodesia and Nyasaland Committee, D/1135/1-33, Guardian Archive, UML.

<sup>57</sup> MSS. Welensky 272/5 and 273/2.

<sup>58</sup> *Mail*, 7 March 1959, p. 7; *Express*, 7 March 1959, p. 7; *Mirror*, 7 March 1959, bp. Account of a press conference at Blantyre with Sir Robert Armitage on 6 March 1959 (account undated), fol. 103, MSS. Welensky 239/9.

<sup>59</sup> MSS. Welensky 686/2, 637/4, 645/4, 279/4, 274/1 and 292/3.

<sup>60</sup> MSS. Welensky 292/3, all but particularly Minute by W.S. Parker to Welensky, 29 July 1959, and Welensky's hand-written reply (at end).

<sup>61</sup> MSS. Welensky 686/2, 637/4, 645/4, 279/4, 274/1 and 292/3.

the circumstances surrounding the declaration of the Emergency was informed by its fears surrounding public and parliamentary censure on the matter.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, the primary significance of newspaper coverage as a whole in the first month of the Emergency seemed to lie elsewhere; that is, with the press commentary on African nationalism, Federation and white settlers. The impact of this dimension to coverage is most readily discernible amongst settler communities. However, there is also evidence to suggest that the decision of the British Government, privately, during these weeks, to appoint the Monckton Commission to travel to the Federation to gauge opinion in advance of the Federal constitutional review, was motivated by a perceived need to address British public opinion on Federation. Given that the Commission, which reported its uncomfortable findings to the British Government in October 1960, was the chief surface factor which sounded the death-knell of the Federation,<sup>63</sup> this is not insignificant.

Most studies of British policy which discuss the setting up of the Commission underscore the importance of the Government's own assessment of the situation on the ground and its plans to pursue a colonial policy more in tune with the times. Hyam discusses the perceived importance of 'buying time' in a crisis situation, but he also suggests that the Commission's critical findings were 'no doubt' what Macmillan had intended.<sup>64</sup> For Larry Butler, the decision reflected the aim of '(establishing) clear British control over the situation in Central Africa'.<sup>65</sup> For Philip Hemming, it was designed 'to put Africa on the political agenda'.<sup>66</sup> More broadly, and over the period as a whole, imperial histories tend to portray the changing, more 'progressive', nature of British colonial policy during 1959 as the decisive influence behind decision-making during these months, even in regard to the tricky situation of Central Africa (and constitutional developments therein). Yet there is evidence to suggest that, in the case of the Federation, the British Government was far less inured to change.<sup>67</sup> The potential still existed for 'external' forces, including public opinion, to affect policy.

When, in March, Lord Home, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, wrote on the topic to Lord Perth, Minister of State at the Colonial Office,

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<sup>62</sup> Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, p. 207.

<sup>63</sup> Hyam, *Declining Empire*, p. 285.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282, 285.

<sup>65</sup> Butler, *Britain and Empire*, p. 161.

<sup>66</sup> Hemming, 'Macmillan', p. 104.

<sup>67</sup> Darwin, *Empire Project*, pp. 627-30.

he explained that a Commission would ‘take Federation affairs out of party politics here over the period of our General Election and between now and 1960’.<sup>68</sup> Home also considered that ‘an impartial and objective inquiry would lead the public to a fair and objective view and do much to restore confidence’, given that ‘ignorance of the purpose of Federation is widespread both here and in Africa’.<sup>69</sup> This was not mere acquiescence. The goal was to save the structure; and transforming British opinion in favour of Federation was regarded as an important element to this. Yet the Government proved largely unsuccessful on all fronts. In this and the following two chapters, the thesis strives to illuminate some of the ways in which the British press, public and Parliament helped to set the agenda for British policy towards the Federation during these months, a dynamic which the historiography does not accentuate, and which meshed with settlers’ fears. The evidence it presents also suggests that CO and CRO attitudes to Central African affairs were not always very clearly delineated.

## 2. ‘*Hope in Kenya*’:<sup>70</sup> Coverage of the colony at the time of the Hola massacre and the subsequent inquest: February to April

The Hola massacre, which occurred on the same day as the declaration of the Emergency in Nyasaland, received far less press treatment. Readers first learned of the incident in tiny press agency reports of between thirty and sixty words, which simply documented the Kenya Government’s initial press statement.<sup>71</sup> The press reported that ten Mau Mau detainees had died after drinking water from a water cart, and that an inquest was to be held. The following week, the Kenya Government released a further statement, which read that the deaths ‘may have been due to violence’. This information appeared in four of the papers under discussion.<sup>72</sup> No editorial or other comment pieces were published. *The Times*, *Telegraph*, *Mail*, *Express*, and *Guardian* reported the inquest into the Hola deaths. Yet they did so with varying degrees of analysis, and none offered comment.

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<sup>68</sup> [Federal review commission]: draft telegram from Lord Home to Lord Perth (Lusaka), 18 March 1959, CO 1015/1533, no 30, in Murphy (ed.), *British Documents*, pp. 35-6.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Observer*, 5 April 1959, p. 5.

<sup>71</sup> *Guardian*, 5 March 1959, fp; *Herald*, 5 March 1959, p. 5; *Express*, 5 March 1959, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> *Guardian*, *Times*, *Telegraph*, *Express*, 13 March 1959.

This dearth of press coverage was attributable, in part, to the actions of the Kenya Government in attempting to conceal the true cause of the deaths,<sup>73</sup> as well as to the way in which it rather surreptitiously released the relevant information and took control of the situation by immediately launching an inquest.<sup>74</sup> Yet these moves should also be viewed as continuations of a much longer history both of government efforts to manage media coverage of the colony, and of British cultural engagement with Kenya, whose enduring practical and ideological effects were also relevant in explaining the absence of coverage. To this should be added further press-related and contextual factors.

Critical news on Kenya did appear in the press during the first four months of 1959. In addition to Hola, 'negative' articles, from the British Government's perspective, concerned the intention of the African-elected members of the Kenya Legislative Council to boycott the Queen Mother's impending visit to the colony;<sup>75</sup> the political and economic challenges facing Kenya;<sup>76</sup> Lennox-Boyd's refusal to hold an independent inquiry into conditions in Kenya detention camps and prisons;<sup>77</sup> and the travails of Captain Law, an ex-army officer, who had been imprisoned in Nairobi the previous year, and had made allegations against the colonial government of cruelty to Africans.<sup>78</sup>

The emergence of potentially damaging pieces on Kenya reflected a number of important dynamics. One concerned the efforts of Labour MPs to foreground African or colonial issues in Parliament because parliamentary debates were almost always reported in the press, even if only in a perfunctory fashion. Another reflected the efforts of whistle-blowers, such as Law, to turn to the media to get their voices heard, and therefore also the British and Kenya governments' abject failure to satisfy the concerns of such men. A third concerned the efforts of African politicians both to stand their ground in ongoing political negotiations with the British Government,<sup>79</sup> and to identify opportunities for public demonstrations of African resistance to colonial rule. The Government was unlikely to have been the only

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<sup>73</sup> Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, pp. 212-3.

<sup>74</sup> Even the Labour Party, usually attuned to these issues, was unaware of the severity of the situation until a fortnight following the deaths, when it received a tip-off.

<sup>75</sup> *Telegraph*, 20 January 1959, p. 13.

<sup>76</sup> *Observer*, 25 January 1959, p. 6; *Observer*, 1 February 1959, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> *Observer*, 25 January 1959, p. 12.

<sup>78</sup> *Mail*, 2 February 1959, fp; *Herald*, 2 February 1959, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> For a description of these efforts, see: Keith Kyle, *The Politics of the Independence of Kenya* (Basingstoke, 1999).



intended recipient of these efforts. The advantages of appealing to the British public and Parliament, often through the press, were not lost on Kenyans, and could be compared to the efforts of the NLM in Ghana in its relations with right-leaning papers from 1954, and the Malawi Congress Party in staging timely protests in Nyasaland during Macmillan's Africa tour (1960).<sup>80</sup>

In 1959 the activities of Kenyan political leaders included a planned boycott of what would be a highly publicised royal tour, but in previous months and years public resistance had taken other forms. During 1958, imprisoned African leaders had made attempts to communicate their criticisms and concerns to the British public and its parliament by writing letters to members of the Opposition and encouraging their distribution in the media.<sup>81</sup> In addition, African leaders such as Tom Mboya, the leader of the Nairobi People's Congress Party, had begun to form friendships with individual journalists, such as Legum, through whom they channelled prison letters and other such communications to a wider public.<sup>82</sup> The Kenya intelligence and security services suspected that the relationship was very close and that Legum had even been involved in the reproduction of prison letters then disseminated.<sup>83</sup>

The *Observer's* particular commitment to covering events in Kenya in 1959 should be viewed as a continuation of its investment up to that date because this had resulted in numerous connections, leads and a particular expertise that ran like a thread through its coverage. The *Observer's* dedication to reporting Kenya, and white settler colonies in general, stemmed from its Africa Bureau links as well as from the specific interests of Astor and Legum, both of whom were passionately interested in questions of race, inequality and injustice. Among Astor's mentors had been Adam von Trott, an anti-Nazi activist killed following an abortive plot to assassinate Hitler; the author George Orwell; and the Reverend Michael Scott, the champion of the Hereros and of South West Africa at the United Nations.<sup>84</sup> Legum, a South African exile with Jewish, Lithuanian roots, a former member of the

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<sup>80</sup> See chapters three and four for coverage of the tour.

<sup>81</sup> One case involved allegations from inmates at Lokitaung prison, published in the *Observer* in June 1958. See Lewis and Murphy, "Old Pals". Also FCO 141/6777. A further case concerned allegations published in *The Times* on 8 December 1958, which had been passed on to the newspaper by Labour MP John Stonehouse. LIT/Ryland, Charles, TNL Archive. For Africans' motivations, see in particular: Letters from Kaggia to Stonehouse, 3 September 1958.

<sup>82</sup> Fols. 73, 84, 106 in FCO 141/6777\* (\*file is numbered strangely, beginning from 1 twice – these 3 fols. appear in first set of numbers starting from rear of file).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> A Memoir: David Astor's *Observer* (by Colin Legum), D75.1.2, Colin Legum Papers, UCT, esp. pp. 4-5.

National Executive of the South African Labour Party, and former editor of the South African Labour weekly 'Forward', appeared driven throughout his life by his earliest encounters with poverty, inequality and their effects – conditions which he aimed to alleviate partly through journalistic activity in Britain following Malan's victory at the polls in 1948.<sup>85</sup>

Yet despite the efforts of Labour MPs, whistle-blowers, African nationalists and the *Observer* to foster critical debate on Kenya and to bring evidence of wrongdoing to light, numerous obstacles prevented the majority of British papers from printing potentially damaging pieces on Kenya during these months. None had British representatives stationed in the colony or any other full-time correspondents that head offices had carefully selected and appointed. This meant that British papers were heavily reliant for information or stories on travelling politicians, news agencies such as *Reuters*, or stringers, and this restricted their coverage in important ways. Stringers, for instance, tended to be either prominent members of the white settler community who worked full-time elsewhere often in a very different capacity, or professional journalists employed by one of the settler papers, such as the *East African Standard* or the *Kenya Weekly News*.<sup>86</sup> The stringer system had numerous deficiencies most of which concerned writers' dual commitments, which affected their freedom of movement, and possibly also expression.

Compounding journalists' difficulties in the case of Kenya was the legacy, and continued efforts, of the British and Kenya governments actively to manage British press content. One cannot overemphasise the extent to which the press's engagement with Kenya differed from its engagement with other British territories in Africa – even other white settler colonies, such as Southern Rhodesia. Kenya was at war and was still fully under British rule. The British Government was heavily committed to winning the war, and to this end had begun intensive engagement with the press on the matter little over five years following the end of wartime censorship, whose restrictions and associated culture it was therefore in a position to exploit more easily.

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<sup>85</sup> Profile of election candidate Colin Legum, *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 October 1947, C17.16.1, Colin Legum Papers, UCT; Profile of Colin Legum at age 30, *S.A. Jewish Times*, 15 July 1949, C17.16.2, Colin Legum Papers; A Memoir: David Astor's *Observer* (by Colin Legum), D75.1.2, pp. 6-7, Colin Legum Papers.

<sup>86</sup> *The Times* used the *East African Standard*. The *Manchester Guardian* used the *Kenya Weekly News*. Memorandum from Oliver Woods to Mr McDonald, 30 January 1959 (as well as subsequent memoranda), MEM/Kenya file, TNL Archive.

Propaganda and other press restrictions had played an important part in the colonial government's efforts to defeat Mau Mau during the Emergency which, though easing, was still in force.<sup>87</sup> Officially, journalists were not permitted to visit the prisons or detention camps,<sup>88</sup> although tours were sometimes organised, and one individual journalist gained special access.<sup>89</sup> A public relations expert appointed by the Kenya Government briefed British journalists in London throughout the Emergency, providing speedy, 'factual' accounts of key events and a continuous flow of good news.<sup>90</sup> The British Government also played a part in leaking positive stories to the press.<sup>91</sup> It encouraged self-censorship on certain matters such as the publication of prison letters, by indicating privately to British editors that their contents were of a dubious nature and from questionable sources.<sup>92</sup> Early on in the Emergency it had also sent lurid information on Mau Mau oath-taking ceremonies to editors, not for publication, but intended to generate a culture of trust between the Government and the press and encourage supportive and undemonstrative coverage of the war.<sup>93</sup> The Government also discredited whistle-blowers who had approached the press, and resisted calls for independent inquiries.<sup>94</sup> Instead, it encouraged the colonial authorities to launch internal investigations into the matters these men had raised, which rarely produced convictions, but whose findings provided ready ammunition in Parliament.

A further possible factor inhibiting British press coverage of Kenya was the threat of libel action from British colonial officials. In 1958, the *Observer* had published a letter from five of the inmates of Lokitaung prison, which had contained allegations of ill-treatment and brutality.<sup>95</sup> The camp commandant, Charles Ryland, sued the paper for £2,000 in damages (which he won).<sup>96</sup> The British Government had also heavily censured sections of the British press for publishing the allegations. By 1959, there was a feeling within the Government that these moves had

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<sup>87</sup> The most wide-ranging account of these propaganda efforts is: Carruthers, *Winning Hearts*.

<sup>88</sup> Correspondence between Baring and Lennox-Boyd during June 1958, when the *Observer* requested access, fols. 59, 74 (section nearer front of file), FCO 141/6777\*.

<sup>89</sup> Fol. 57 (as above), FCO 141/6777\*. The journalist was M.D. Odinga, the editor of *Uhuru* (although Baring later wrote that he was 'not entitled to be admitted').

<sup>90</sup> Carruthers, *Winning Hearts*, p. 144.

<sup>91</sup> Lewis and Murphy, "'Old Pals'", pp. 56-7.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-9.

<sup>93</sup> Carruthers, *Winning Hearts*, pp. 158-60.

<sup>94</sup> Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, pp. 322-3.

<sup>95</sup> For a full account of this and the related fall-out, see: Lewis and Murphy, "'Old Pals'", pp. 57-9.

<sup>96</sup> Minute by D.W. Conroy, 29 October 1958, fol. 143, FCO 141/6777.

discouraged the press's publication of further letters.<sup>97</sup> At the beginning of 1959, the publication by *The Times* of a very small article on conditions at Ryland's camp as described by inmates in a further letter, produced a flurry of internal correspondence at the paper when Ryland lodged a complaint.<sup>98</sup> The *Observer* was discussed. *The Times*'s solicitors advised that Ryland would almost certainly win any libel action he might take, and the paper settled out of court. The *Observer* also seems to have been shaken by the Lokitaung affair. When Legum received a letter from prisoners at Mariira shortly after, Astor immediately consulted the Colonial Office for advice on publication.<sup>99</sup>

These factors combined to ensure that 'negative' issues attracted minimal coverage in general. Yet they also had practical and ideological implications which were relevant in the specific case of Hola. Firstly, government restrictions on access to camps prevented British journalists in a working sense from investigating these sorts of breaking stories. Hanging over journalists' heads was also the possibility of receiving a stern rebuke from the British Government for any coverage deemed too negative and possible libel action from colonial officials who were implicated.

Secondly, there was an ideological dimension to government efforts whose effects deserve scrutiny. As British journalists were subject to a variety of different influences, partly by virtue of their position as members of the public, these must be considered in conjunction with the probable effects of literary and other depictions of Kenya, which David Maughan-Brown and John Lonsdale have examined in detail.<sup>100</sup> Carruthers thinks that the Government's propaganda efforts which denigrated Mau Mau had greater success than those concerning the defence of colonial officials implicated in brutalities – because, in the case of the former, she argues, the Government's representations went *with* the grain of popular opinion.<sup>101</sup> Yet while the deaths at Hola are associated in the historiography with the issue of colonial violence, and could therefore be thought to have registered deeply, the two dynamics Carruthers mentions may not always have been readily distinguishable in journalists' minds, a factor which might have worked in the Government's favour when it came

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<sup>97</sup> Letter from Amery to Baring, 5 March 1959, fol. 22, CO 822/1269.

<sup>98</sup> LIT/Ryland, Charles, TNL Archive.

<sup>99</sup> Letter from Astor to Lennox-Boyd, 4 July 1958, fol. 7, CO 822/1705.

<sup>100</sup> David Maughan-Brown, *Land, Freedom and Fiction: History and Ideology in Kenya* (London, 1985); John Lonsdale, 'Mau Maus of the Mind: Making Mau Mau and Remaking Kenya', *The Journal of African History* 31: 3 (1990), pp. 393-421.

<sup>101</sup> Carruthers, *Winning Hearts*, pp. 179-81.

to coverage of the massacre, and which readers' interpretations may also have mirrored. In the small articles on *Hola* which appeared during these first few weeks, as well as in the inquest-related coverage, readers learnt that the men who had died were from the inner core of the hard-core of Mau Mau; and had lost their lives, moreover, at the hands of African (as opposed to European) warders. Most papers seemed content to follow the inquest and await Goudie's judgement.

Instead, the majority of stories on Kenya published in the press at the time of the massacre and the inquest painted a picture of hope, change and political progress. This image was conditioned by a combination of cultural and political factors in addition to further governmental ones. Cushioning the deaths at one end was the royal tour. The *Telegraph*, *Times*, *Guardian*, *Herald* and *Express* all covered the Queen Mother's triumphant visit in February, and the apparent 'flop' that was the boycott.<sup>102</sup> Journalists foregrounded the Queen Mother's popularity, the multi-racial nature of her reception, and Kenya's peaceful atmosphere; depictions which recalled the press's portrayal of the Duchess of Kent's presence at the Ghana independence celebrations.

At the other end (April) were reports in the press that political tensions in the colony showed signs of easing owing to an initiative by Michael Blundell, Kenya's Minister for Agriculture, who resigned his post in order to head a new 'multi-racial' political grouping: the New Kenya Group. Greeting Blundell's move were headlines such as 'Hope in Kenya', 'Moderation in Kenya', and 'A courageous attempt'.<sup>103</sup> While some commentators such as Legum cautioned against expecting too much too soon, the overall picture the press presented was positive. This reflected the changing nature of the political scene in Kenya, as well as the extent of the bleakness and the trauma of its recent past, two important considerations which made critical comment appear particularly untimely. Yet the positive coverage might also have been influenced by the continued efforts of the British and Kenya governments as well as Blundell to promote stories such as these.<sup>104</sup> Three weeks earlier, the *Mail* had published a five-page 'Progress Report' on the colony entitled 'This Striking

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<sup>102</sup> For example: *Herald*, 6 February 1959, p. 7; *Telegraph*, 6 February 1959, p. 15; *Express*, 10 February 1959, p. 5; *Telegraph*, 10 February 1959, p. 9; *Express*, 14 February 1959, p. 7; *Telegraph*, 17 February 1959, p. 13.

<sup>103</sup> *Observer*, 5 April 1959; *Telegraph*, 4 April 1959; *Times*, 3 April 1959, respectively.

<sup>104</sup> Lewis and Murphy put forward a similar argument in "Old Pals", p. 57.

Success'.<sup>105</sup> It began with a 'special message' from Lennox-Boyd, and looked as if it had been sponsored by the Colonial Office.

3. '*No redeeming feature*'?:<sup>106</sup> Editorial treatment of the findings of the Hola inquest and the disciplinary tribunal: May to July

The publication by the British and Kenya governments of two White Papers on Hola (one in June; one in July) changed the situation somewhat. The story shifted its locus away from Kenya to Westminster, where the Labour Party was gearing up for a fight, where British correspondents were present in large numbers, and where journalism was not subject to the same kinds of constraints as in the colony. With the publication of these two reports, moreover, journalists found themselves commenting for the very first time on evidence of brutality revealed in documents endorsed by the British Government. This affected the Government's ability to place a positive gloss on their contents. Nevertheless, coverage was neither entirely nor consistently critical. Continued governmental, as well as historiographically neglected contextual, cultural and press-related factors, continued 'positively' to affect the nature of coverage, fluctuating in prominence throughout the summer, and finally triumphing, somewhat in the nature of breaking waves.

In Mombasa, on 6 May, Goudie summed up his findings at the conclusion of the inquest into the Hola deaths. The magistrate announced that he had found incontrovertible evidence that the eleven men had died as a result of shock and bleeding caused by violence. Yet he also spoke of his inability to apportion blame largely because of what he considered to be the highly unreliable and conflicting nature of the evidence he had heard. Coverage the following day was not extensive, and comment even less so, reflecting the relative lack of press interest to date, as well as the fact that the locus of the story was the Kenyan coast, where, as previously discussed, the British press presence was minimal. The nature of the news reports which did appear reflected the complexity of the evidence the magistrate had been presented with,<sup>107</sup> narratives which can be traced back to the trickery of staff and prisoners at the camp and which can be viewed at least in part as a continuation of

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<sup>105</sup> 18 March 1959.

<sup>106</sup> *Times*, 7 May 1959, p. 13.

<sup>107</sup> For example: *Telegraph*, 7 May 1959, p. 17; *Guardian*, 7 May 1959, fp; *Herald*, 7 May 1959, p. 9.

the efforts of members of the colonial service to influence the outside world's reading of events in the colony.<sup>108</sup> Added to this, were the effects of the British and Kenya governments' efforts to divert attention away from the past to the future at the time of the release of Goudie's findings, when they announced a full-scale inquiry into the future of the four remaining detention camps, including Hola, news which featured in the majority of articles that day and in at least one paper's headline.<sup>109</sup>

The two editorials which appeared that day communicated very clear messages, however, and both were highly critical. The *Guardian* considered the upcoming inquiry into the future of Kenya camps insufficient and recommended the colonial government instead seek 'expert guidance' on the policy, organisation and staffing of its 'whole prison service'.<sup>110</sup> The *Times*' editorial, entitled 'No redeeming feature', foregrounded the Cowan Plan<sup>111</sup> as a cause of the deaths and laid emphasis on the fact that the Kenya Government had backed it.<sup>112</sup> It castigated the Kenya authorities for their false press statement in early March, and it called on 'higher authority' to take up where Goudie had left off and 'name the persons who must bear the blame'. Both papers mentioned mitigating factors raised in passing in the Report, such as the status of those who had died ('degraded and fanatical ruffians'). Yet the overall message conveyed was negative, a characteristic that was particularly significant in the case of *The Times*, a centre-Right publication.

Indeed, one of the most notable features of broadsheet coverage during these months was the unanimity of its regret both for the deaths and for key aspects of the British and Kenya governments' handling of events, qualities which both reflected and reinforced those Conservative anxieties on African or colonial affairs which are thought to have lain behind the trend to decolonisation.<sup>113</sup> The anxieties expressed in *The Times* appear to have arisen not only independently, but in flagrant disregard, of the explanations provided by the British and Kenya governments, given that Lennox-

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<sup>108</sup> Elkins also views Goudie as complicit in the colonial administration's attempts at deception, his being an 'internal' investigation. *Britain's Gulag*, pp. 345-8.

<sup>109</sup> *Herald*.

<sup>110</sup> *Guardian*, 7 May 1959, p. 8.

<sup>111</sup> This was a plan drawn up in early 1959 by John Cowan, the Kenya Senior Superintendent of Prisons, to induce detainees at camps such as Hola to work as part of the colonial government's broader programme of 'rehabilitation', a process it was concerned to expedite. Cowan's plan envisaged the use of some force against prisoners, though aspects of it were defined and transmitted to others ambiguously. See Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, pp. 208-12, for a full explanation of its genesis.

<sup>112</sup> *Times*, 7 May 1959, p. 13.

<sup>113</sup> For example: Murphy, *Party Politics*; Hyam, *Declining Empire*; Hemming, 'Macmillan'; and Ritchie Owendale, 'Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa, 1957-1960', *Historical Journal*, 38: 2 (1995), pp. 455-77.

Boyd and Evelyn Baring, the Governor of Kenya, were in touch with the paper throughout these months, continually explaining their thoughts and actions to men such as Oliver Woods.<sup>114</sup> This press resistance is a dynamic which the historiography on Hola has not addressed because it has tended to foreground above all else the nature and the extent of the Government's damage limitation strategy during these weeks as documented in Colonial Office files. In this particular case, the critical opinions expressed in *The Times* also appear to have arisen independently of the arguments of the Opposition, given first, that the paper appears to have had far less contact behind the scenes with Labour and the Liberals,<sup>115</sup> and second, that Parliament discussed the matter the same day.

In fact, the editorial informed the conversation in the Commons at one point. Labour MP Kenneth Robinson mentioned 'No redeeming feature' on the 7<sup>th</sup> as an indication of the extent of the shock the deaths had caused in Britain.<sup>116</sup> Discussion was short. Proceedings consisted, in essence, of Lennox-Boyd's answers to previous Labour calls for a statement on the inquest's findings, followed by a number of Labour replies.

Critical coverage continued, particularly in the left-leaning press, boosted by these Labour interventions. The following day (the 8<sup>th</sup>), the *Mirror* published an editorial which called on the Colonial Secretary to ensure that those involved in the killings be named and prosecuted,<sup>117</sup> echoing the substance of Labour's argument. News reports in the *Mirror* and the *Herald* foregrounded Barbara Castle's plea for a standard of justice in Kenya comparable to that practised in Britain,<sup>118</sup> and Kenneth Robinson's claim that the deaths might not have occurred had the British Government heeded Labour's earlier calls for a judicial inquiry into all Kenya camps.<sup>119</sup> These popular press reports appeared to be the product of different papers' political leanings more than any other factor. Indeed, the degree to which their content mirrored parliamentary proceedings during these months is striking. On the Left, papers followed Labour's lead. Press content, at the 'popular' level, was notable during the summer for its partisan nature, which, as previously discussed,

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<sup>114</sup> MEM/Kenya file, TNL Archive. Oliver Woods of *The Times* discussed Kenya with Lennox-Boyd on 23 April, with Evelyn Baring on 9 June, and with Lennox-Boyd again on 6 July.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> HC Deb 7 May 1959, vol 605, cols 564-5.

<sup>117</sup> *Mirror*, 8 May 1959, p. 2.

<sup>118</sup> *Mirror*, 8 May 1959, p. 10.

<sup>119</sup> *Herald*, 8 May 1959, p. 7.



tended for a variety of reasons not to be as pronounced in 1959 for Kenya as for other African territories. This reflected and reinforced the reintroduction of political partisanship into 'popular' metropolitan debate on Kenya, which, combined with the intensification of Conservative anxieties on colonial affairs, as reflected in and reinforced by the content of papers such as *The Times*, presented Macmillan with some cause for concern.<sup>120</sup>

Yet coverage was by no means solely negative in May, reflecting the continued significance of governmental, ideological and contextual factors relevant in the case of Kenya. The day following the debate, right-leaning papers, in addition to the *Guardian*, chose to headline Lennox-Boyd's reference to the remedial measures being pursued by the British and Kenya governments,<sup>121</sup> indicating that aspects of the damage limitation strategy were proving effective. The *Telegraph* published a highly supportive editorial, which approved of these remedial measures, and which reminded its readers both of the 'evil' that was Mau Mau and of what it considered to be the 'extraordinary success' of the Kenya Government's rehabilitation policy 'as a whole'.<sup>122</sup> Two weeks later, the Kenya Government organised a carefully choreographed press tour of Hola for visiting journalists, which received favourable treatment in the *Telegraph*, the *Herald* and even the *Observer*.<sup>123</sup> The British Government was also aided during these later weeks, first, by the absence from the country of Lennox-Boyd, the focus of the Opposition's ire,<sup>124</sup> and second, by the fact that Parliament adjourned for the Easter break for two weeks from 15 May, the day on which Labour tabled a censure motion on Hola.<sup>125</sup> The previous day, the Colonial Under-Secretary, Julian Amery, had told the Commons that the Attorney-General of Kenya had decided that there was insufficient evidence to warrant the framing of criminal charges against identified individuals. Instead, on 5 June, the Government announced the composition of an internal tribunal, headed by D.W. Conroy, to inquire into disciplinary charges against the Camp Commandant (M.G. Sullivan) and his deputy (A.C. Coutts).

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<sup>120</sup> Hemming, 'Macmillan', p. 103; Ovendale, 'Macmillan and the Wind of Change', p. 457; Darwin, *Empire Project*, p. 621; Williams, *Harold Macmillan*, pp. 340-1.

<sup>121</sup> *Telegraph*, 8 May 1959, p. 22; *Mail*, 8 May 1959, p. 2; *Express*, 8 May 1959, p. 2; *Guardian*, 8 May 1959, p. 3.

<sup>122</sup> *Telegraph*, 8 May 1959, p. 12.

<sup>123</sup> *Telegraph*, 30 May 1959, p. 9; *Herald*, 30 May 1959, p. 7; *Observer*, 31 May 1959, p. 6.

<sup>124</sup> He was in West Africa.

<sup>125</sup> *Hansard*. It reassembled on 2 June.

From 10 June, however, coverage peaked once again, following the publication of Goudie's findings, together with a list of the charges against Sullivan and Coutts. In future weeks, these documents would undoubtedly facilitate a more critical turn in Parliament and the press because they enabled the exploration of certain key issues that no one in authority had explained in detail until then – including the nature of the Cowan Plan. In the short term, however, following the release of the Report, coverage was not initially too hostile, suggesting that it was the combination of the White Papers and Labour efforts that was the key dynamic. The content of the majority of the news reports which appeared on the 11<sup>th</sup> were on the negative side, but mostly explanatory, and in this way mirrored earlier coverage of the magistrate's statement in court.<sup>126</sup> Murphy notes that Macmillan was relieved by 'what he regarded as the sensible press reaction'.<sup>127</sup>

Editorial coverage was split. On the brighter side was the *Express*, which thought that although the inquiry 'has not led to criminal charges', 'the Hola affair has been brought under the full glare of the democratic process' and that this act bore out Britain's 'civilised' virtues.<sup>128</sup> In this way, press coverage itself helped to provide a sense of accountability that soothed any nagging doubts about Britain's own integrity, a theme which recalled journalists' critique of Nkrumah's Ghana during the Shawcross debacle. Other papers were more disapproving. The *Guardian* and *The Times* worried over the issues that were still open to question, such as the degree of responsibility of the Superintendent of Prisons, the Minister of Defence, the Kenya Government at large, and even the Colonial Secretary.<sup>129</sup>

This latter point formed the focus of discussion on 16 June, when MPs debated the Labour censure motion in the Commons. Labour MP Sir Frank Soskice, a former Attorney-General, began proceedings with a speech that lasted an hour. Soskice concentrated his attack not on lower-level officers, but on 'the responsibility of the Kenya Administration and the attitude of the Secretary of State himself to what has occurred'.<sup>130</sup> He focused on the Cowan Plan: its formulation, its approval, and - in particular - the way in which its contents were relayed (or not) by senior colonial officials to officers at Hola camp. Lennox-Boyd chose to devote the

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<sup>126</sup> *Herald*, 11 June 1959, p. 8; *Telegraph*, 11 June 1959, p. 18; *Mail*, 11 June 1959, p. 9.

<sup>127</sup> Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, p. 214.

<sup>128</sup> *Express*, 11 June 1959, p. 8.

<sup>129</sup> *Guardian*, 11 June 1959, p. 8; *Times*, 11 June 1959, p. 11.

<sup>130</sup> HC Deb 16 June 1959, vol 607, cols 248-64, col 248.

majority of his reply to the ‘background of the Mau Mau problem’, which he explained in some detail.<sup>131</sup> The Labour censure motion was defeated by 314 votes to 255, a Government majority of 59. Macmillan confided to his diary that the debate had gone off ‘as well as could be expected’, but that it had been ‘an anxious day’.<sup>132</sup>

Some of the reports of the parliamentary proceedings which appeared over the following two days were positive from the perspective of the Government. These included an editorial in the *Express*, entitled ‘A great rescue’,<sup>133</sup> and two news reports called ‘The big Hola censure debate fades out quietly - Lennox-Boyd hits back’ and ‘Lennox-Boyd fights back – He puts deaths in perspective’ published in the *Mail* and the *Express* respectively.<sup>134</sup> Yet the majority of coverage was negative. The left-leaning populists backed Labour’s calls both for a full public inquiry and for Lennox-Boyd’s resignation or dismissal in editorials entitled ‘Whitewash won’t do’ and ‘Save Britain’s good name’.<sup>135</sup> On the Right, *The Times* retained its critical stance,<sup>136</sup> again in direct contravention of the Conservative Party’s efforts and arguments. Significantly, the paper was impressed by the content of Soskice’s speech, which it thought ‘vigorous and penetrating’ and full of truths concerning the drafting and implementation of the Cowan Plan, illustrating the importance of the Labour Party’s efforts during these months to flag up certain of Goudie’s findings. The *Telegraph* was markedly more critical following the debate, influenced by what it considered to be the deficiency of the Colonial Secretary’s rebuttal.<sup>137</sup> Although this staunchly right-leaning paper thought that Lennox-Boyd could ‘on present evidence’ ignore calls to resign, significantly, it suggested that ‘heed might be paid to them in Nairobi’. These press narratives again mirrored Conservative anxieties behind the scenes as opposed to the Government’s public posture. The extent to which these anxieties centred on the issue of brutality,<sup>138</sup> over and above the more general issue of ministerial and administrative misconduct, is, however, not as clear-cut; and this analysis would favour the latter interpretation.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid. All of debate, but quote is from col 264.

<sup>132</sup> Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, p. 215.

<sup>133</sup> *Express*, 17 June 1959, p. 8.

<sup>134</sup> *Mail*, 17 June 1959, fp; *Express*, 17 June 1959, p. 2.

<sup>135</sup> *Herald*, 17 June 1959, fp; *Mirror*, 18 June 1959, p. 2.

<sup>136</sup> *Times*, 17 June 1959, p. 11.

<sup>137</sup> *Telegraph*, 17 June 1959, p. 10.

<sup>138</sup> As emphasised in: Darwin, *Historical Debate*; Hyam, *Declining Empire*; and Elkins, *Britain’s Gulag*.

Following the debate, no reports on Hola appeared for a month, when two further events occurred which drew attention back to Kenya. On 23 July the Government published the findings of the disciplinary tribunal headed by Conroy, which was then followed by an announcement from the Colonial Secretary that Sullivan was to retire compulsorily without loss of gratuity and that J.H. Lewis, the Kenya Commissioner of Prisons, due to retire shortly, had requested permission to retire as soon as possible. A further parliamentary debate followed on 27 July. Importantly, the findings of the Nyasaland Commission of Inquiry were published on the same day as those of the tribunal; and a debate on Nyasaland followed hot on the heels of the debate on Kenya. This did much to distract. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, most papers headlined the news that the ‘camp chief’ (Sullivan) was to be ‘sacked’.<sup>139</sup> Yet the articles were small and tended not to appear on the front pages, which were instead dominated by the first news of Devlin’s findings. There was also no editorial comment on Kenya that day, the exception being a piece in the *Guardian*, which addressed Hola and Devlin in a combined manner, and which stated that calls for the Colonial Secretary’s resignation would be ‘misplaced’.<sup>140</sup>

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, the day following the Hola debate, coverage in the populars again reflected papers’ political allegiances, and thus appeared critical in the case of the *Mirror* and the *Herald*,<sup>141</sup> but supportive in the case of the *Mail* and the *Express*.<sup>142</sup> And untrue to form, no left-leaning papers devoted editorial space to Hola that day. Nor did any of the right-leaning ‘serious’ papers, whose stance had been notably critical until that moment. The legendary and highly censorious interventions of Barbara Castle and the Conservative Party’s own Enoch Powell thus attracted minimal page space, and may therefore have featured less in British popular understanding of the end of empire in Kenya than some historians have assumed.<sup>143</sup> This dearth of coverage, affected by an ongoing printing dispute which had caused many papers to reduce their page count,<sup>144</sup> appeared to reflect the content of the White Paper; the success of Government tactics in timing its publication to coincide with the publication of the Devlin Report; and the Government’s efforts to confine

<sup>139</sup> For example: *Mail*, 24 July 1959, p. 6; *Express*, 24 July 1959, p. 2; *Mirror*, 24 July 1959, pp. 8-9; *Guardian*, 24 July 1959, fp.

<sup>140</sup> *Guardian*, 24 July 1959, p. 6

<sup>141</sup> *Mirror*, 28 July 1959, p. 4; *Herald*, 28 July 1959, fp.

<sup>142</sup> *Mail*, 28 July 1959, fp; *Express*, 28 July 1959, p. 2.

<sup>143</sup> See for example: Elkins, *Britain’s Gulag*, pp. 351-2.

<sup>144</sup> *Observer*, 26 July 1959, fp.

parliamentary discussion on Africa to a short, specified period. In the case of the debate, the dearth of coverage may also have reflected the comparatively poor performance of the hitherto trail-blazing Labour Party that day, whose members had introduced the topic late in the evening and in such a way that it could not be put to a vote.<sup>145</sup> Parliament soon adjourned for the summer recess, and coverage of Hola trickled off.

#### 4. *'Matters of opinion'*:<sup>146</sup> Editorial treatment of the 'Devlin Report': July

The Government published the findings of the Devlin Report on the same day as the second White Paper on Hola (23 July), and on the 28<sup>th</sup> the Report was debated in the Commons. During this week, the conduct of British ministers and colonial officials formed the focus of press coverage of Central Africa to a much greater extent than previously, and some of it was highly critical, but in general, less critical than Cabinet ministers had feared. At the same time, coverage continued to display 'progressive' views on future-related developments. While, in the case of ministerial misconduct, these characteristics resulted, in part, from the Government's efforts to manipulate the media response to developments, press content as a whole continued to reflect a profusion of other influences.

Among Devlin's conclusions were that Africans had not planned a wholesale 'massacre' of Europeans; the State of Emergency had been justified given that a crisis had existed at the beginning of March and the Governor had believed this to be the case; the Federal Government had played no direct role in this; Congress had discussed murdering Europeans at that time; Banda had not been involved in this; the African leader had not been as astute as he could have been concerning the probable effects of the public's interpretation of his speeches; African opposition to Federation was widespread; and during the Emergency, some members of the security forces had acted brutally. There was also the 'police state' reference on page one.<sup>147</sup>

Once again, negative comment on ministerial conduct appeared in the left-leaning popular press. The day following the publication of the report, summaries of

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<sup>145</sup> Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, p. 221.

<sup>146</sup> *Times*, 27 July 1959, p. 7.

<sup>147</sup> *Report of the Nyasaland Commission of Inquiry* (London, 1959), CAB 129/98.

Devlin's findings which appeared in the *Mirror* and the *Herald* focused on the murder plot 'that never was', the 'police state' charge, the brutality of the security forces, and the relative innocence of Banda.<sup>148</sup> The *Mirror* called for Lennox-Boyd's resignation, or failing that, dismissal.<sup>149</sup> The *Herald* thought that 'the report cries aloud that we must get rid of the men in government who have done these dreadful things'.<sup>150</sup>

The picture painted by the left-leaning serious press was more equivocal. The *Guardian* and the *Observer* presented weighted summaries of Devlin's findings, including the judge's assertion that the State of Emergency had been justified.<sup>151</sup> The *Guardian* even chose to pursue this matter in its editorial, arguing that although some aspects of Devlin's findings were 'serious blows to the Government's prestige', there was 'little comfort in the report for the friends of the Nyasaland African Congress'.<sup>152</sup> Both papers devoted the majority of their editorial space to the bigger picture, the future of the protectorate and of the Federation, further exploring the causes of the current crisis, detailing political and constitutional changes in the offing and recommending new policy initiatives such as a steady and continuous policy of release of detainees,<sup>153</sup> the provision of full democratic constitutions to Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, and the importance of countenancing both of the protectorates' eventual secession from the union.<sup>154</sup> The *Observer* declared that 'All policy must flow from a recognition of the strength of the African Congress and of the Africans' "almost universal" opposition to Federation'.<sup>155</sup> The emphasis both papers placed on 'broad' issues such as these, in some ways served to detract attention away from those of Devlin's criticisms which concerned the British and colonial governments' handling of the Emergency, including the subject of colonial violence. To some extent, this focus reflected the efforts of the Opposition to use the present crisis as a means of delving into Central African affairs more broadly. Yet it was much more pronounced in the case of the left-leaning serious press because in

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<sup>148</sup> *Mirror*, 24 July 1959, fp, p. 3 & pp. 8-9; *Herald*, 24 July 1959, fp & p. 4.

<sup>149</sup> *Mirror*, 24 July 1959, p. 3.

<sup>150</sup> *Herald*, 24 July 1959, fp.

<sup>151</sup> *Guardian*, 24 July 1959, fp; *Observer*, 26 July 1959, all.

<sup>152</sup> *Guardian*, 24 July 1959, p. 6.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Observer*, 26 July 1959, p. 12.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

Parliament the Labour Party was equally concerned with assigning blame to Lennox-Boyd.

The factors which affected the nature of *Guardian* and *Observer* coverage can in some ways be seen as representative of the influences that conditioned the response of the press as a whole. The emphasis the *Guardian*, in particular, placed on the justification of the Emergency must have reflected at least in part the nature of the judge's report, a surprisingly understudied factor that lay behind the relative absence of press criticism on certain matters.<sup>156</sup> It is significant that Devlin subsequently regretted including the 'police state' term.<sup>157</sup> That the *Guardian* was not more critical of the British and colonial governments may also have owed something to the success of the British Government's damage limitation strategy in the lead-up to the Report's publication – a factor which previous studies have underscored.<sup>158</sup> Government efforts involved obtaining advance copies of the report with which to plan;<sup>159</sup> placing pressure on Devlin to delete Appendix I, a summary of the report's conclusions, in order to deprive journalists of easy access to criticisms shorn of context;<sup>160</sup> assembling a meeting of ministers and other officials at Chequers on the weekend of 18-19 July to put together a firm rebuttal of the judge's most devastating conclusions in the form of a 'despatch' from Armitage, which was then published alongside the judge's report;<sup>161</sup> and leaking the content of the Report and the Despatch to the press before their release presumably to remove both gradually from the realm of 'news'.<sup>162</sup> Cabinet ministers also held private meetings with newspaper editors.<sup>163</sup>

Yet it may be dangerous to infer too much from these Government efforts. Journalists at both papers took an independent and comprehensive approach to reading and composing analyses of the two documents. The editor of the *Guardian* annotated the entire Report before planning and writing his piece, and chose not to

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<sup>156</sup> Most studies have focused on the significance of the framing of the rebuttal.

<sup>157</sup> Baker, *State of Emergency*, p. 156.

<sup>158</sup> The best accounts of this are in Baker, *State of Emergency* and Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*.

<sup>159</sup> Baker, *State of Emergency*, pp. 136-7.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., pp. 143-4; Lamb, *Macmillan Years*, p. 235; Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, p. 217.

<sup>161</sup> Baker, *State of Emergency*, p. 154; Lamb, *Macmillan Years*, p. 236; Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, p. 218.

<sup>162</sup> Nyasaland memoirs: 1959, fol. 80, MSS. Afr. s. 2204 2/4, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Hereafter, 'MSS. Afr. s. 2204' shall be used to cite the Armitage papers.

<sup>163</sup> Note of a meeting with Lennox-Boyd on 23 July 1959, C4/B5/21/1-3, Guardian Archive, UML.

annotate much of the despatch.<sup>164</sup> The *Observer* re-printed much of Devlin's text in full (almost a third of it, which took up ten full newspaper pages).<sup>165</sup> Moreover, the emphasis both papers placed on the future of the protectorate, the political and constitutional changes in the offing, and the importance of either releasing detainees or allowing Nyasaland the eventual right to secede from the union did not appear to have been the product of any Government intervention at all. This was in contrast to Kenya, where a focus on context and the brighter, promised future undoubtedly had. These points did not form part of the Governor's despatch, and it is unlikely that Colonial Office officials mentioned them in confidence to journalists behind the scenes, given firstly that British journalists appeared not to have a lot of self-restraint when it came to keeping certain matters (and their sources of information) under wraps; and secondly, the extent of Lord Perth's guardedness on the matter of detainees and the right of secession when pressured on these two issues during a private lunch with correspondents and editors in May.<sup>166</sup>

Subsequent discussions at the CO revealed the balance of power as perceived. When officials discussed the prospect of organising a trip to Africa for Astor, whose paper they felt mattered, a sense of cautious optimism pervaded its messages twinned with a generous dollop of realism.<sup>167</sup> 'I do not for a moment think that a visit to Africa by Mr Astor would radically change his paper's line', one official wrote in June (1959), 'but it would I think lead to some greater accuracy in presentation, and a better editorial sense of what African problems are. It might lead to much more, you never know, but I would not count on this'.<sup>168</sup> Lewis and Murphy also explain that during the summer, the Colonial Office was exploring the idea of an overture to Banda as a result of a private intervention from one of its "inner circle" of journalists, Donald McLachlan, the deputy editor of the *Telegraph*.<sup>169</sup>

These press ideas ran counter to a number of the Government's publicly professed policies even if they did, as Murphy suggests, mesh with the private

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<sup>164</sup> *Report of the Nyasaland Commission of Inquiry* (annotated), C4/B5/6, Guardian Archive, UML; Related notes, C4/B5/7-9; Nyasaland Despatch by the Governor relating to the *Report of the Nyasaland Commission of Inquiry* (annotated), C4/B5/10. None are dated.

<sup>165</sup> *Observer*, 26 July 1959, fp.

<sup>166</sup> Minute from Perth to Carstairs, 26 May 1959, fol. 19, CO 1027/185.

<sup>167</sup> Minute from Carstairs to Gorell Barnes, Sir John Martin and Lord Perth, 2 June 1959, fol. 21, CO 1027/185.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> Lewis and Murphy, "Old Pals", p. 66.



sympathies or ideas of individuals within government, as well as coincide with the future direction of Colonial Office policy.<sup>170</sup> The British Government wished to continue to pursue a moderate line. Yet, at the same time, it displayed a consistent awareness of the significance of aggravating factors, including the British public and parliamentary context to developments in the Federation. At the Colonial Office, W.L. Gorell Barnes, commenting on Welensky's reluctance to support the Monckton Commission, told Lord Perth in May that he 'has got to be made to understand that opinion in this country is such that we are going to have quite a job to hold the Federation together and that, without a good deal of help from him in this sort of way we may fail'.<sup>171</sup>

Right-leaning papers were almost wholly supportive of the British and colonial governments' handling of immediate events. True, news reports in the *Mail* and *The Times* documented the critical aspects as much as (or more than) the positives.<sup>172</sup> Yet the summaries of Devlin's findings which appeared in the *Telegraph* and the *Express* concentrated very much on the claim that a crisis had existed at the beginning of March, that the Governor had been justified in calling a state of emergency, and that in their meetings in the bush the Congress Party had indeed discussed violence against Europeans.<sup>173</sup> Editorials across the right-leaning press as a whole echoed this latter supportive focus.<sup>174</sup> However, they were far less vocal on matters concerning the future. Many right-leaning papers refused to be drawn on the 'bigger' issues concerning the future of the region, most probably because of the extent to which Federation remained a party political issue. Although they had voiced strong opinions at the start of the year concerning the changing trajectory of events on the African continent, in July Africa was in the parliamentary spotlight perhaps more consistently than ever before and in the intervening period a general election had been announced and set for October. Only *The Times* commented. The editor, extremely nonplussed by the Report's critical analysis of

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<sup>170</sup> This is conveyed by all of Murphy's works, including *Alan Lennox-Boyd and Party Politics*.

<sup>171</sup> '[Federal review]: minute by W L Gorell Barnes to Lord Perth', 29 May 1959, CO 1015/1703, in Murphy (ed.), *British Documents*, p. 47.

<sup>172</sup> *Mail*, 24 July 1959, p. 4; *Times*, 24 July 1959, p. 5.

<sup>173</sup> *Express*, 24 July 1959, fp; *Telegraph*, 24 July 1959, fp.

<sup>174</sup> *Express*, 24 July 1959, p. 4; *Telegraph*, 24 July 1959, p. 6; *Times*, 24 July 1959, p. 7; *Mail*, 24 July 1959, fp.

‘recent events’, suggested that those of its passages which dealt with the growth of African nationalism were ‘reflective and true’.<sup>175</sup>

The nature of the editorials appearing in the right-leaning press at this time reflected the content of the Governor’s despatch. Yet they also drew on Devlin’s Report, the nature of which continued to be an important factor behind the absence of critical comment on certain issues. Colin Baker has argued that holes and inconsistencies existed in the Report, which enabled supporters of both governments to attack the judge’s critical claims as ‘matters of opinion’,<sup>176</sup> the title of *The Times*’s editorial. These holes Baker tracks back to the timing pressures Devlin and his team faced, which in turn can be traced to the actions of the British Government during the summer, and their inadvertent consequences, because it desired to present and debate the Report before the end of the summer session and relayed this information continually to the Commission.<sup>177</sup>

On broader issues, such as the extent and nature of African opposition to Federation, as on the Left, right-leaning papers such as *The Times* appeared to be performing a more independent role – in this case by continuing publicly to articulate the anxieties of those on the Right in British politics to a far greater extent than was possible for any leading member of the Conservative Government. Macmillan probably had press responses to ministerial behaviour (as opposed to future policy) in mind when, on the 24<sup>th</sup>, he studied press comment on the Report and decided to congratulate all those involved in the framing of the rebuttal for the part they had played in “a well conducted exercise”.<sup>178</sup>

A week later, at the time of the Commons debate on the Devlin Report (28 July), most papers retained their existing stance. The left-leaning populars were still gunning for Lennox-Boyd’s resignation.<sup>179</sup> They also reiterated calls for the British Government to deal with leaders of the Africans’ choosing.<sup>180</sup> The left-leaning serious press continued to present weighted appraisals of the Emergency and thus the British and Nyasaland governments’ handling of it, again particularly in the *Guardian*, with its special feature article on ‘The deaths at Nkata Bay’, where the

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<sup>175</sup> *Times*, 24 July 1959, p. 7.

<sup>176</sup> Baker, *State of Emergency*, p. 166.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145, 166.

<sup>178</sup> Nyasaland memoirs: 1959, fol. 91, MSS. Afr. s. 2204 2/4.

<sup>179</sup> *Herald*, 28 July 1959, fp.

<sup>180</sup> *Mirror*, 28 July 1959, p. 2.

greatest loss of life had occurred, sub-headed 'A tragedy of misunderstanding'.<sup>181</sup> This section of the press also continued to put forward numerous suggestions for the region's future – a subject it continued to foreground in editorials.<sup>182</sup> The *Guardian* expressed concerns over the British Government's continued hostility towards Banda, whom Devlin depicted as "a frank and honest man".<sup>183</sup> The *Observer* suggested bringing Banda and his colleagues to Britain for negotiations as free men.<sup>184</sup>

The right-leaning press still displayed strong support for the British and Nyasaland governments' actions on and around 3 March. It also continued to concentrate on those of Devlin's comments which concerned the immediate background to the Emergency, the *Express* and the *Telegraph* standing out in this regard.<sup>185</sup> Despite this, the content of some papers such as *The Times* continued to indicate the changing nature of centre-Right opinion on broader issues. In an editorial on the day of the debate *The Times* conceded that given the dangers of African discontent within the protectorate, 'it may... be necessary to fix a time-table for (political and constitutional) advance'.<sup>186</sup> It also advocated 'a progressive return of those in detention to normal life', and while it supported Nyasaland's inclusion in the Federation, it indicated that 'it would be neither desirable nor in the long run practical politics that it should be dragged along... in the state of mind depicted in the Devlin report'.

Few fresh influences appear to have affected press coverage of the Devlin Report and related issues at this later stage - in marked contrast to journalists' evolving responses to Hola. As previously suggested, the end of July may have been considered too close to the upcoming election for many right-leaning papers to permit serious consideration of the arguments of the Opposition; and the same could be said of papers on the Left in their attitude to the Conservative Party. There was also the nature of the Devlin Report itself, whose content was in many ways defined by the questions one asked of it, as well as cross-paper dissatisfaction with the quality of the Commons debate on the 28<sup>th</sup>, which may otherwise have swayed

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<sup>181</sup> *Guardian*, 27 July 1959, p. 4 & 6.

<sup>182</sup> *Guardian*, 27 July 1959, p. 6; *Guardian*, 29 July 1959, p. 6; *Observer*, 2 August 1959, p. 10.

<sup>183</sup> *Guardian*, 29 July 1959, p. 6.

<sup>184</sup> *Observer*, 2 August 1959, p. 10.

<sup>185</sup> *Express*, 28 July 1959, p. 4; *Telegraph*, 29 July 1959, p. 6.

<sup>186</sup> *Times*, 28 July 1959, p. 9. Parenthesis and its contents added.

opinion.<sup>187</sup> Back in June, Soskice's incisive appraisal of the Hola evidence had influenced papers such as *The Times*. Yet there was no similar quality attack from Labour on Devlin in July. Some journalists attributed this to the Party's fears of saying something they might later regret were they to win the forthcoming general election and assume a position of responsibility for Central Africa. Others thought that MPs were tired following the Hola debate the previous night, which had continued into the early hours. Yet perhaps the most significant factor behind the absence of a strong Labour 'impact' in the Commons at this stage seems to be the fact that both Parties continued to talk at cross purposes to an extent that was not true of the discussions on Hola, both sides defiantly exploring those aspects of Devlin's Report that concerned them, and this was reflected in coverage.

## Conclusion

Overall, British press treatment of Kenya and Nyasaland during 1959 served to mask or lessen the prominence of criticisms circulating within Britain concerning British or colonial misdeeds and brutality, with positive implications for British readers as well as for the British Government. Importantly, coverage concentrated on more than the issue of colonial violence. Future-oriented themes were particularly prominent in the case of Central Africa. Additional themes included African violence, African nationalism, the suspected machinations of white settlers, Britain's role as 'protector' of the Africans, her colonial policy, and Federation.

In all instances, the content was born of more than the Government's media management efforts. It was instead press-generated in the sense that coverage represented the fusion of many stimuli, interests and ideas – cultural, political, internal, external, in Africa as well as in Britain – through which British journalists negotiated paths. The British press might itself therefore be characterised both as a rather conservative force on the issue of colonial violence during these months, and as an important and independent force for change on Central African affairs.

The nature of these press narratives might cause us to question the extent to which 3 March 1959 signalled the 'moral' end of the British Empire in Africa –<sup>188</sup> at least in popular perceptions. They also suggest that the articulation of major,

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<sup>187</sup> *Mail*, 30 July 1959, fp; *Telegraph*, 29 July 1959, p. 6; *Observer*, 2 August 1959, p. 10.

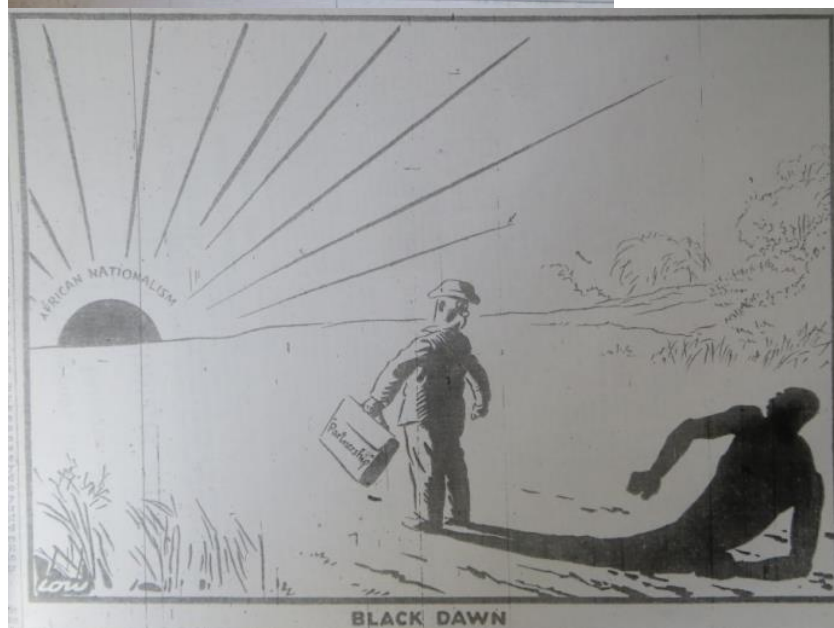
<sup>188</sup> Hyam, *Declining Empire*, p. 263.

prominent criticisms of the British and colonial governments' handling of local events was not a pre-requisite for the expression of 'progressive' views on decolonisation. Of these two subjects, the latter was really the fundamental one. The presence of these broad themes in press narratives, moreover, over and above the narrower issue of colonial violence, points to the importance of reassessing the distinction which is often drawn between the nature of British public appraisals of events in Central Africa during 1959 and those of the British Government.

This chapter offers one explanation for the apparent dichotomy between the scale of public interest in events in Africa during the summer of 1959 and the re-election of the Conservative Party in October that turns on more than the question of the British Government's damage limitation exercises. Because it draws a distinction between the press's coverage of the violence on the one hand, and its visions of the future on the other, the chapter's conclusions are also consistent with the view that during this year, and to the extent that the British press influenced the British Government, new initiatives were necessary.

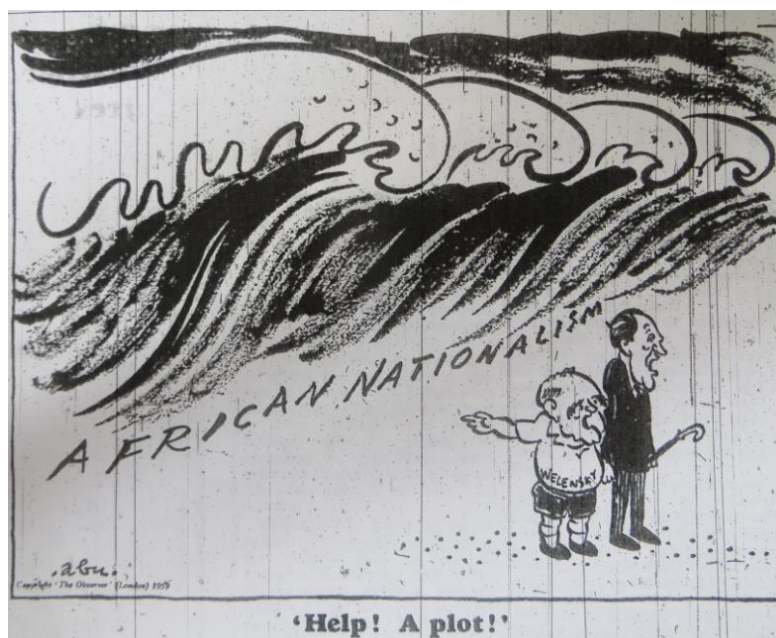
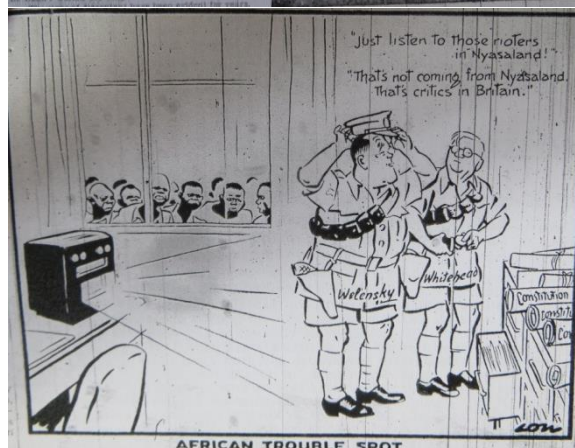
Yet, as we shall see in Chapter Three, this should not be taken to signify that from 1959 the Government wholeheartedly supported African aspirations in white settler colonies, for this reason or for any other. Of these two case studies – Kenya and the Federation – British policy towards the latter, in particular, remained rather conservative. The Government held out the hope of pursuing a middle road, only to be frustrated in its efforts; and, in this, British newspaper content was one perpetual aggravating factor.

During 1959, white settlers had picked up on British press treatment of the Nyasaland Emergency and its fall-out and had begun to ponder that coverage's potential significance for the Federation's constitutional prospects. Despite the Conservatives' victory in the general election in October (1959), these concerns only intensified in the following weeks and months, peaking the next time in February 1960, when British journalists, accompanying Macmillan on his 'wind of change' Africa tour, landed en masse.

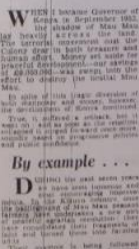
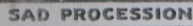
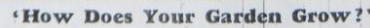


From top to bottom: *Express*, 10 February 1959, p. 5; *Herald*, 3 March 1959, p. 4; *Guardian*, 3 March 1959, p. 13.



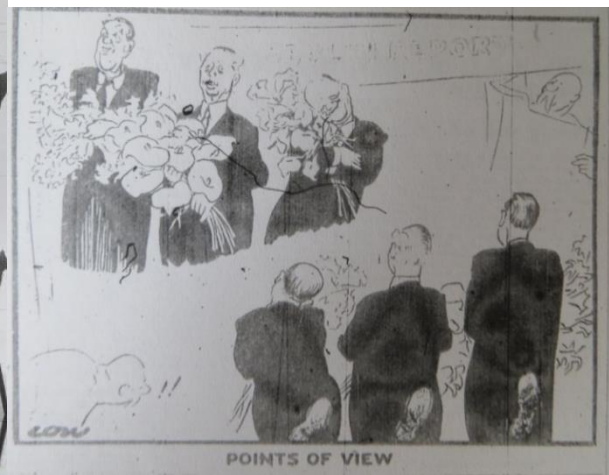
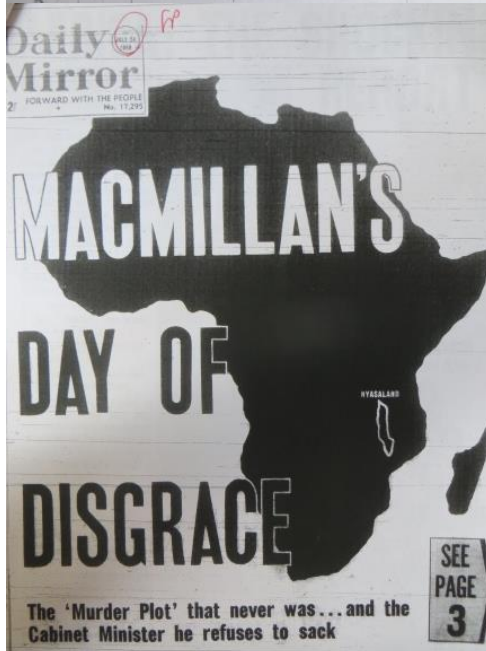
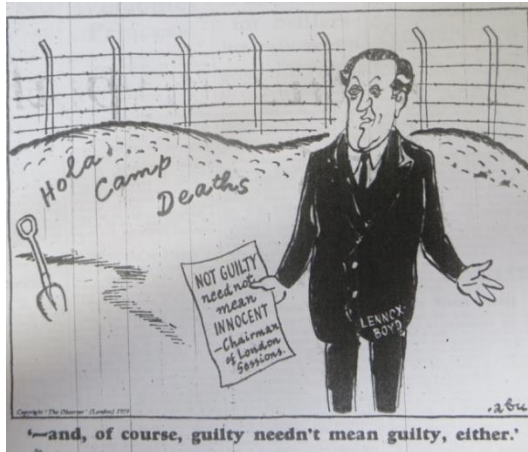


Clockwise from top left: *Mail*, 6 March 1959, p. 8; *Express*, 9 March 1959, fp; *Observer*, 8 March 1959, p. 6; *Guardian*, 6 March 1959, fp.



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Clockwise from top left:  
*Observer*, 7 June 1959, p. 8;  
*Mirror*, 20 July 1959, p. 3;  
*Guardian*, 28 July 1959, fp;  
*Mail*, 14 August 1959, p. 4;  
*Mirror*, 24 July 1959, fp.

### Chapter 3

#### *African nationalism, white settler intransigence, and Britain's future influence: Harold Macmillan's 'Wind of Change' tour, January-February, 1960*

On 5 January 1960, Macmillan set off for Africa on a month-long tour to four 'Commonwealth' countries. Only two were Commonwealth members: Ghana and South Africa. Yet the British Government also used the term to refer to those territories thought to be nearing full Commonwealth status: Nigeria, on the cusp of independence, and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The official Government report of the tour stated that three factors had influenced Macmillan's decision to travel to Africa. The first of these was rounding off the Commonwealth tour he had undertaken in 1958 to countries outside Africa.<sup>1</sup> The second was informing himself at first hand of the problems of Africa in the context of the 'rising tide of nationalism'. The third factor concerned 'the specific challenge presented to the United Kingdom Government by the problem of constitutional advance in multi-racial societies in Africa'. The report stated that the Prime Minister wanted to 'help focus public opinion at home on this problem and possibly...lift it to a plane above that of narrow party politics'.

The historian Ronald Hyam records that in the autumn of 1959, Macmillan explained to Norman Brook, the Cabinet Secretary, that Africa seemed to be the biggest problem "looming up for us here at home": "We just succeeded at the General Election at 'getting by' on this. But young people of all Parties are uneasy and uncertain of our moral basis. Something must be done to lift Africa on to a more national plane as a problem to the solution of which we must all contribute, not out of spite – like the *Observer* and *New Statesman* – but by some really imaginative effort." Undertaking a journey immediately after Christmas would bring this African problem "into the centre of affairs".<sup>2</sup>

This last consideration is one of those most frequently cited by historians of decolonisation, who, until recently, have associated the tour with a clear policy

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction to 'Prime Minister's African Tour: January-February 1960', 12 April 1960, CAB 129/101, pp. 3-5, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Hyam, *Declining Empire*, p. 257.

departure on the part of the British Government.<sup>3</sup> Viewed in conjunction with the ‘wind of change’ moment, and the Government’s apparently unequivocal identification with African nationalism,<sup>4</sup> the report’s references to public opinion at home and party politics look like signalling a radical break with existing policy towards ‘white’ Africa in the name of British attitudes and parliamentary unity on colonial affairs. The Cape Town speech is deemed to have been ‘a *tour de force*’;<sup>5</sup> ‘No one could deny its impact’;<sup>6</sup> ‘Macmillan “jolted” European opinion’.<sup>7</sup>

A number of recent works have begun to question both the degree to which the famous speech signalled a fundamental change in British policy, and the extent of its local impact.<sup>8</sup> Saul Dubow maintains that the speech was ‘far more conciliatory to white South African interests than is usually assumed’,<sup>9</sup> and ruffled few feathers within Nationalist circles. Joanna Lewis argues that it concealed a fundamental continuity in the British Government’s thinking on race, which the character of Macmillan’s visit to Northern Rhodesia and its lack of impact on the ground belied.<sup>10</sup> Lewis writes of the success of the Cape Town speech in Britain, but attributes this to clever politics, which included the ‘artful’ nature of the text and Macmillan’s ability to ‘(get) the (British) press to bite’.<sup>11</sup>

The work of Lewis and Dubow has been of great importance in recalibrating historical understanding of Macmillan’s 1960 tour to include a reassessment of the central ‘wind of change’ theme. Yet there are also some important continuities. The sections of these studies which confirm existing views on the significance of the tour concern the Cape Town speech’s impact and reception in Britain; and the British

<sup>3</sup> Hyam, *Declining Empire*, p. 275, 260; Hemming, ‘Macmillan’, p. 105; Ovendale, ‘Macmillan and the Wind of Change’, p. 455; Colin Baker, ‘Macmillan’s “Wind of Change” Tour, 1960’, *South African Historical Journal*, 38 (May 1998), pp. 171-82.

<sup>4</sup> In his Main Policy Speech to the South African Parliament, Macmillan declared that ‘The wind of change is blowing through this continent and, whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it.’ ‘Address by the Right Hon. Harold Macmillan, M.P., to Members of both Houses of the Parliament of the Union of South Africa, Cape Town, 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1960’, CAB 129/101, pp. 153-8, p. 155.

<sup>5</sup> Hemming, ‘Macmillan’, p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> Hyam, *Declining Empire*, p. 260.

<sup>7</sup> Ovendale, ‘Macmillan and the Wind of Change’, p. 476.

<sup>8</sup> One recent work, an edited collection, has made a particularly significant contribution to reassessing the significance of the tour: L.J. Butler and Sarah Stockwell (eds.), *The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization* (Basingstoke, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Saul Dubow, ‘Macmillan, Verwoerd, and the 1960 “Wind of Change” Speech’, *The Historical Journal*, 54: 4 (December 2011), pp. 1087-1114, p. 1087.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, “White Man”.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75, 89.

Government's largely successful management of the rhetoric of the end of empire (if not quite its application).

This chapter interrogates this last aspect. It supports the emphasis Lewis and Dubow have placed on the clever, rather reactionary nature of Macmillan's speeches. Yet, at the same time, it agrees with the older studies that both the Cape Town speech and the tour had an important role and impact that was not confined to Britain, but which included settler groupings.<sup>12</sup> It reconciles these two perspectives by placing the British press at the heart of developments.

Implicit in the argument is the view that the references to British public opinion and party politics in the official report of the tour were as much statements of intent regarding the Government's hopes for changing public attitudes in favour of the status quo, as indicators of a new responsive, liberal policy that was put into practice during the tour. Macmillan's correspondence with Brook signalled a desire to engage with the views of papers such as the *Observer* and *New Statesman*, but not simply to bow to their 'spite'. The fact that this was a Commonwealth tour is a point which is often obscured in the historiography, which pivots on the 'wind of change' speech. The focus is on the tour as an expression of partiality, rather than themes such as 'co-existence' or 'multi-racialism' (the protection of minority – white – rights) and the familial bonds of Commonwealth to which Macmillan was deeply committed.<sup>13</sup>

This chapter de-centres the 'wind of change' moment. It focuses on alternative British Government pronouncements made during the tour in speeches, propaganda and private diplomacy. These, it argues, were largely at odds with the 'wind of change' sentiment, but were both more indicative of the Government's overall policy and far more prolific a feature of its public relations efforts. The chapter weighs them against British press coverage and its effects. In addition to British newspaper articles, the chapter draws on British Government documents; the diaries or memoirs of British politicians, British journalists and Macmillan's public

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<sup>12</sup> Contributions by Sue Onslow and Stuart Ward to the edited volume, *The Wind of Change*, make a similar point, but our conclusions are not entirely comparable because their studies relate to the tour's aftermath over the *longue durée* and engage as much with the effects of the 'wind of change' as a process as they do with the tour itself. Stuart Ward, 'Whirlwind, Hurricane, Howling Tempest: The Wind of Change and the British World', in Butler and Stockwell (eds.), *Wind of Change*, pp. 48-69. Sue Onslow, 'Resistance to "Winds of Change": The Emergence of the "Unholy Alliance" between Southern Rhodesia, Portugal and South Africa, 1964-5', in *ibid.*, pp. 215-34.

<sup>13</sup> Hemming, 'Macmillan', esp. p. 117.

relations adviser; the Welensky papers; the Armitage papers; the British Library Sound Archive; and local papers published in the Federation and in South Africa.

Throughout the tour, diversity and difference across Africa were key official themes; so too was the importance of refraining from comment on the ‘internal affairs’ of Commonwealth member states. Interdependence, patience, and the promotion of mutual understanding and respect through dialogue and through Commonwealth ties were concepts Macmillan strove to promote.

Yet British newspapers recorded a very different narrative, which turned on an unabashed depiction of the African nationalist challenge to colonial authority as strong and the white settler response (intransigence) as downright dangerous or mad. The presence of these features in coverage reflected the continued resonance of ideological, political, experiential and institutional factors influencing British journalists, which interacted with African efforts to exploit the British presence on the ground as a means of advancing the nationalist cause. The 1959 Emergency in Nyasaland had given nationalists more international publicity than they would normally attract;<sup>14</sup> and there is evidence to suggest that this informed the efforts of activists thereafter.

Press treatment of local events continued to work at odds with elements of policy, in this case by placing pressure on the British Government; selectively relaying Macmillan’s words to mass audiences; and presenting a rival claim to authorship of ‘Britain’s view’ in Africa. It continued to have significant consequences, firstly, for Britain’s deteriorating relations with the governing white settler communities of Central (and now Southern) Africa; and secondly, for the British Government, for whom press content had policy implications. Additionally, articles tended once again not to diminish Britain’s role, but instead to elevate it.

#### 1. Press arrangements for the tour: an exercise in damage limitation?

One of the Government’s biggest fears concerned the potential for miscommunication or unfavourable publicity presented by the tour. It was a very nervy start. In one respect it positively took the lead. Before setting off, Macmillan

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<sup>14</sup> Power, *Political Culture*, p. 142.

decided that in Cape Town he would speak publicly on the issue of apartheid.<sup>15</sup> Apartheid had become a hot topic in Britain during the summer of 1959 due to the efforts of the Boycott Movement to increase British public awareness and stimulate action against the Union Government.<sup>16</sup> Yet Macmillan's decision to speak represented a response to British public opinion, which reflected the relative balance of power on this issue, and which augured ill, from its perspective, for the tour. As is well-known, on 15 December the Prime Minister met John Maud, the British High Commissioner to South Africa, to discuss possible topics and themes for speeches. Macmillan told him that 'there was a very strong demand in the United Kingdom that he should at some stage during his visit to the Union indicate that the majority of people in this country did not agree with the Union Government's policy on apartheid'.<sup>17</sup> The Prime Minister 'thought that he must really try to find some phrase which indicated a critical approach'.<sup>18</sup> From the end of November 1959, parliamentary pressure on the subject had been most acute.<sup>19</sup>

Less well-documented is the specific part played by the British press. During 1959, papers such as the *Observer*, with its numerous connections to South Africa, through Astor, Legum, Sampson and others,<sup>20</sup> had also voiced strong views. In addition, British newspapers provided a means by which opponents of apartheid residing in South Africa were able to communicate with large audiences and to hold politicians to account. Following Macmillan and Maud's meeting, a draft of the speech was composed. A week later, an 'Open Letter' from Albert Luthuli, the President of the African National Congress, and three others, appeared in the *Observer*, imploring Macmillan on his visit to the Union 'not (to) say one single word that could be construed to be in praise of (apartheid)'.<sup>21</sup> Macmillan thought it advisable to obtain the views of the Commonwealth Relations and Colonial Offices ('the Departments') on whether or not 'the signatories of the letter would be satisfied

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<sup>15</sup> 'Note for the record', minute of a meeting between Prime Minister and Sir John Maud in 'further discussion about possible topics and themes for speeches in South Africa', 15 December 1959, fol. 28, CO 1027/143.

<sup>16</sup> Christabel Gurney, "'A Great Cause': The Origins of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959-March 1960", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26: 1 (2010), pp. 123-44.

<sup>17</sup> 'Note for the record', fol. 28, CO 1027/143.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> The subject was addressed at the greatest length on 7 December 1959 in a debate on 'Racial intolerance and discrimination' at home and abroad.

<sup>20</sup> See Introduction, Chapter Two, and Chapter Five.

<sup>21</sup> 'An Open Letter: South African Plea to Macmillan', *Observer*, 20 December 1959.

with the current draft of the Union speech’,<sup>22</sup> a move which suggested that he may have considered going further.

A similar point could be made regarding Central African affairs. Constitutional discussions with African and settler political parties were soon to begin in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, and the Government had recently decided to release Banda. This latter move was to remain a matter of private, rather than public, discussion during the tour. Yet it is important for understanding the uneasy mind-set with which Macmillan embarked on the journey. Historians do not tend to refer to British public opinion when discussing the release of Banda. Existing works focus on Macleod’s role in pushing for it; and on the need for the Monckton Commission’s work to be regarded as credible.<sup>23</sup> Yet, as we have seen, the release of the detainees, including Banda, formed the subject of public, including press, pressure and debate throughout 1959; as well as of critical and specific interventions, such as during the British editors’ lunch meeting with Lord Perth; and, as Lewis and Murphy describe, the actions of the *Telegraph* correspondent, Donald McLachlan.<sup>24</sup> The official report of the tour also bears out the significance of the British metropolitan context to Banda’s release. Responding to a suggestion from the Nyasaland Government, part way through the tour, that Banda be restricted to the UK upon his release, Macmillan replied that ‘if there was any question of Dr. Banda being refused permission to return to Nyasaland there would be severe public criticism, in Parliament and the Press, in the United Kingdom... The cry at present was for Dr. Banda’s release; if he were released but exiled the cry would be for his return to his own country.’<sup>25</sup> Later that day, Macmillan repeated that ‘To release Dr. Banda and then exile him would be indefensible to Parliament and public opinion.’<sup>26</sup> We might also recall, at this point, the British public and political context to the appointment of the Monckton Commission.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> T.J. Bligh (Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister) to D.W.S. Hunt (Under-Secretary, Commonwealth Relations Office), 29 December 1959, fol. 74, CO 1027/143.

<sup>23</sup> Hyam, *Declining Empire*, pp. 283-4; Hemming, ‘Macmillan’, pp. 106-7; Butler, *Britain and Empire*, p. 161.

<sup>24</sup> Lewis and Murphy, “‘Old Pals’”.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Record of a Meeting held at Government House, Zomba, on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1960, at 5.15 p.m.’, CAB 129/101, pp. 111-3, p. 113.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Record of a Meeting held at Government House, Zomba, on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1960, at 11 p.m.’, CAB 129/101, pp. 115-6, p. 116.

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter Two.

Against this domestic political backdrop, and despite the ‘progressive’ nature of some of these recent moves, the Government continued to pursue a conservative line on associated issues. From the summer of 1959, for example, in response to press pressure and persistent questioning from the Opposition about the two northern protectorates’ right to decide whether to remain in the Federal grouping or to leave, the Government fudged the issues and showed great reluctance to commit either way.<sup>28</sup> Commenting in August on a remark by the *Observer* ‘that we would have to announce readiness to allow Nyasaland to secede’, Perth wrote that he had ‘great difficulty about this’.<sup>29</sup> The Government held to the view that the Federation was of great economic benefit to Nyasaland. It also feared triggering either a Federal or a Southern Rhodesian ‘tea party’,<sup>30</sup> or driving the Rhodesians into the arms of South Africa.<sup>31</sup> In regard to South Africa itself, Macmillan wished to avoid driving the country out of the Commonwealth and the Sterling area.<sup>32</sup> The Government also had strategic concerns, such as over-flying rights, which permitted the defence of the High Commission territories of Basutoland and Swaziland.<sup>33</sup>

What the tour would demonstrate was not only the magnitude of Macmillan’s efforts to carve out these ‘middle roads’, but also the extent of the constraints that British journalists placed on his ability to do so, partly by persisting in vocalising strong opinions on Federation and apartheid, but also by mediating Macmillan’s words to mass audiences, and by challenging his claim to sole authorship of ‘Britain’s view’ in Africa. British press content therefore had an indirect effect on the achievement of policy goals, in addition to a direct effect on Government thinking; and in this it recalled developments in Ghana.

The official press arrangements for the tour suggested both that the Government was not ignorant of these dynamics, and that it was indeed intent on treading a fine line on certain subjects. It directed most of its efforts towards ensuring that Macmillan’s main (policy) speeches were relayed to newspaper readerships accurately. Officials thought it of ‘great importance’ for texts of the

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<sup>28</sup> The longest debate was on 22 July 1959.

<sup>29</sup> ‘[Future of Hastings Banda]: minutes by Lord Perth, J C Morgan, W B L Monson and Mr Amery’, 14-18 August 1959, in Murphy (ed.), *British Documents*, pp. 73-7, p. 74.

<sup>30</sup> Hyam, *Declining Empire*, p. 219, 265-6; ‘[Boston Tea Party]: letter from Sir R Armitage to Mr Macleod’, in Murphy (ed.), *British Documents*, pp. 109-10.

<sup>31</sup> Hyam, *Declining Empire*, p. 282.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.



Prime Minister's speeches, or all significant passages, to be cabled back to London during the tour.<sup>34</sup> Both the CRO and the CO, the latter in correspondence with Nigeria, worried over Macmillan's tendency to depart from the texts of his speeches. 'We are anxious that U.K. press and official press services should be given every assistance over Prime Minister's speeches', one CO telegram stated:<sup>35</sup> 'Evans', the Prime Minister's public relations adviser, 'will try to make copies of texts available beforehand for checking against delivery but final text usually differs substantially from speaker's notes'.<sup>36</sup> 'For this reason no advance copies of drafts should be prepared for Press use, nor should any statements be issued with embargoes', the CRO stated in a further message.<sup>37</sup> Evidently doubtful as to the capacity of the different countries and territories to perform these functions unaided, officials thought it best for Evans to take with him 'a portable battery-operated tape recorder which can be used to supplement your resources where necessary'.<sup>38</sup>

The CRO also supported the call to bar journalists from the 'Pan African Party' in Ghana.<sup>39</sup> The High Commission in Accra relayed that the Ghanaian authorities wanted correspondents and photographers to attend the function, but it '(feared) embarrassment to Prime Minister when he gets to Rhodesia and Union if newspaper men (sic) have sent ahead misleading reports based on half-heard conversations between him and some of Pan-Africans'.<sup>40</sup> The CRO agreed with the High Commission's suggestion that the 'best way of dealing with this is to exclude press and photographers but for Evans and Moxon to give them afterwards whatever account of it the two of them consider expedient'.<sup>41</sup> Officials also decided that Macmillan should decline all requests from journalists for advance interviews, but that he 'should be willing, as he did after his Commonwealth tour, to accept an invitation from the Commonwealth Correspondents' Association to speak to them at a lunch meeting';<sup>42</sup> to take no part in interviews with individual correspondents during the tour 'unless strongly advised to do so';<sup>43</sup> and to avoid numerous press

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<sup>34</sup> CRO to Pretoria, Accra and Salisbury, 1 December 1959, fol. 6, CO 1027/144.

<sup>35</sup> CO to Federation of Nigeria, 23 December 1959, fol. 28, CO 1027/144.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> CRO to Accra, repeated to Salisbury and Pretoria, 5 January 1960, fol. 56, CO 1027/144.

<sup>38</sup> CRO to Accra, repeated to Salisbury and Pretoria, 5 January 1960, fol. 55, CO 1027/144.

<sup>39</sup> CRO to Accra, 31 December 1959, fol. 43, CO 1027/144.

<sup>40</sup> Accra to CRO, 23 December 1959, fol. 26, CO 1027/144.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Agreed with in CRO to Accra, 31 December 1959, fol. 43, CO 1027/144.

<sup>42</sup> S.H. Evans to Ben Cockram, 26 November 1959, fol. 1, CO 1027/144.

<sup>43</sup> CRO to Pretoria, Accra and Salisbury, 1 December 1959, fol. 6, CO 1027/144.

conferences, which were to be prepared for extensively and conducted ‘preferably late in the visit’ in each of the countries or territories.<sup>44</sup> Policy pronouncements were to be delivered in a single speech, and in these speeches Macmillan’s mission was purely to restate the Government’s position and venture no further.<sup>45</sup>

All in all, the nature of the Government’s discussions suggested that it viewed the British press as a necessary encumbrance rather than as an organisation with whose members it was a pleasure to do business or who it was somehow possible actively to co-opt. There certainly seemed to be no plans to approach it directly. Overall, this nervousness reflected the sheer scale of the task at hand on African affairs. Yet, as the reference to ‘misleading reports’ of the ‘Pan-African Party’ indicated, it was also a sign of the Government’s understanding of press perspectives on African nationalism and Federation, discussed in the previous chapter; together with a sustained recognition, on its part, of the associated importance of British public opinion.

More specific, circumstantial issues fuelled these fears, such as the nature of the tour and the make-up of the press party. This was the first time a serving British Prime Minister had visited Africa,<sup>46</sup> and papers lapped up the opportunity to send their most celebrated correspondents. On few previous occasions, too, had so many London-based political correspondents and editors converged simultaneously on the same patch of ground in Africa, taking with them both a professional inclination to comment and a tendency to frame events in parliamentary or political perspective.

They could not be characterised as shy, retiring types. Munnion refers to Henry Fairlie, the political correspondent for the *Mail*, as ‘then the most celebrated of Fleet Street political columnists’.<sup>47</sup> Fairlie eschewed anonymity;<sup>48</sup> and was later prominent enough to put into circulation the term ‘the establishment’ to describe those, who, while often unelected, controlled the levers of power in British public life,<sup>49</sup> which recalls Sampson’s interests and suggests that the war and the social change which it sparked affected the outlook of these men.<sup>50</sup> Rene MacColl, the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. There was, it was hoped, to be a maximum of one in each country.

<sup>45</sup> CAB 129/101.

<sup>46</sup> Lewis, “‘White Man’”, p. 70.

<sup>47</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 88.

<sup>48</sup> Anthony Howard, ‘Henry Jones Fairlie’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *OXDNB*).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> See Prelude to Introduction to this thesis.

*Express*'s most revered foreign correspondent, was best known for his sensational, uncompromising writing style. Peregrine Worsthorne, special correspondent for the *Telegraph*, later described his approach to journalism as centring on 'destabilising (and) de-legitimising all the institutions one after the other'.<sup>51</sup> Anne Sharpley, the only female British correspondent on the tour, was no shrinking violet either. As a woman in a predominantly man's world, she needed to be tough. According to Ann Leslie, another of Britain's first female foreign correspondents, Sharpley advised her at the start of her career that there were 'two things that as a female correspondent she'd need to do: "First, sleep with the resident Reuter's correspondent and then with the chief of police. That way you'll pick up stories before anyone else"'.<sup>52</sup>

The group was also comparatively progressive politically. On the Right, some of the most prominent and respected, such as Fairlie and MacColl, were self-professed 'liberal' or 'radical' Tories.<sup>53</sup> Others were committed Africanists who knew the continent well or had connections to it. These included Sydney Jacobson (*Mirror*), who had been born in the Transvaal,<sup>54</sup> and Anthony Sampson, the *Observer*'s representative, who had lived and worked alongside Africans in *Drum*'s Johannesburg offices for four years.<sup>55</sup>

The fact that the Government's efforts to accommodate press representatives were less than strenuous was therefore unlikely to have reflected a belief that British press reporting of the tour would be either benign or of minimal significance. On the contrary; the Government demonstrated the extent of its concern not only in the lengths it went to to ensure accurate transcription by the press of Macmillan's main policy speeches, but also in its discussions on how the press might characterise the individual countries and territories visited. When, on 15 December, Evans received a telegram from the CRO communicating the Federal authorities' intention to provide 'an aircraft free of charge' for travel within the Federation for 'local press' representatives only,<sup>56</sup> he responded with some shock and trepidation. 'I cannot think', he wrote, 'that the Federal authorities are so misguided as not to realise that

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<sup>51</sup> 'I might well have been gay, but there was such pressure to be non-gay' (Interview with Worsthorne), *London Evening Standard*, 6 October 2011.

<sup>52</sup> 'Ann Leslie, Queen of the frontline', *Observer*, 5 April 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Rene MacColl, *Dateline and Deadline* (London, 1956); Howard, 'Fairlie', *OXDNB*.

<sup>54</sup> Terence Lancaster, 'Sydney Jacobson', *OXDNB*.

<sup>55</sup> See Prelude to Introduction to this thesis. Sampson, *Anatomist*, pp. 17-43.

<sup>56</sup> Alastair Scott (Chief Press Officer to CRO) to Evans, 15 December 1959, supplying extracts from a letter from the Office of the High Commissioner in Salisbury, fol. 18 (i.e. copy of this letter included with Evans's letter to Scott), CO 1027/144.

the attitude of Fleet Street to Colonial African affairs in the critical time ahead is going to be quite largely conditioned by the impressions taken back by these U.K. correspondents. Moreover, what these people write will have a considerable influence on Parliament and the public. Some of them will arrive with a strongly critical bias. If the Federal authorities are wise they will do their utmost to remove or weaken any such bias: certainly they would be most unwise to strengthen it at the outset by an unhelpful attitude'.<sup>57</sup> Feelers sent out by the Federal authorities regarding the racial composition of the overseas press party, set further alarm bells ringing.<sup>58</sup> Once more, Evans cautioned against provoking the British press. 'I am not aware that there will be any black or coloured people in the overseas Press party', he told the CRO, 'but again I would emphasise that any discrimination against a bona fide representative of the U.K. Press would result in a tremendous row involving the whole U.K. Press'.<sup>59</sup>

## 2. '*Make it a mission for justice*':<sup>60</sup> The British press as critic and activist

Before the Government party had even reached the settler regions of Central and South Africa, all indications were that Evans's instincts had been spot on. The majority of editorials the day before Macmillan left Britain and during the tour's early stages were impassioned and centred on three topics: the future of the Federation, the release of Banda, and the issue of apartheid.<sup>61</sup> Judging from the timing and the nature of these pieces and the accompanying reports, their appearance reflected the efforts of the Opposition and the Tory Bow Group to raise these subjects in Parliament. Yet the arguments of these two groups meshed with the press's longer-term focus,<sup>62</sup> and therefore also reflected editorial perspectives.

Locally, British correspondents were in the hunt for a good story. They had to dig deep at first. British press treatment of the tour was initially rather positive from the Government's perspective, with the exception of accounts of the poor turn-

<sup>57</sup> Evans to Scott, 16 December 1959, fol. 18, CO 1027/144.

<sup>58</sup> Scott to Evans, 15 December 1959, fol. 18 (as above) CO 1027/144.

<sup>59</sup> Evans to Scott, 16 December 1959, fol. 18, CO 1027/144.

<sup>60</sup> Headline to an article in the *Herald*, 4 January 1960, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> *Observer*, 3 January 1960, p. 14; *Herald*, 4 January 1960, fp; *News Chronicle*, 4 January 1960, p. 4; *Telegraph*, 4 January 1960, p. 10; *Mirror*, 5 January 1960, p. 2; *Herald*, 5 January 1960, fp; *News Chronicle*, 5 January 1960, p. 4; *Guardian*, 5 January 1960, p. 6; *Times*, 6 January 1960, p. 11.

<sup>62</sup> See Chapter Two.

out for Macmillan's reception at the airport in Accra, characterised as 'adequate, but hardly overwhelming' by Stanley Bonnett of the *Daily Mail*.<sup>63</sup> The day following their arrival, all papers covered the cheerful welcome the 'mammies' gave Macmillan and his wife, Lady Dorothy, in the capital's market.<sup>64</sup> Photos of the Prime Minister perched on 'a mammy chair' held aloft by a group of African men running into the surf in the city's harbour were splashed across the leader pages of the populars.<sup>65</sup> The mood conveyed was fun and light-hearted. This reflected the tour's careful staging. The photo of Macmillan on the mammy chair corresponded to one of the official Government images sent to the press during these weeks.<sup>66</sup>

Yet it was not long before the Ghana segment of the tour produced stories which leant themselves to a more critical portrayal, and British journalists seemed only too willing to run with them. Right-leaning papers, in particular, latched on to the kind of stories that recalled their earlier portrayal of Ghana in the period immediately following independence, such as those which focused on Nkrumah's apparent disregard for Britain.<sup>67</sup> MacColl informed *Express* readers that the Ghanaian Prime Minister had recently '(f)layed) Britain' at a CPP rally in Accra.<sup>68</sup> The *Telegraph* and the *Express* reported the failure of approximately twenty guests (including Nkrumah's wife) to turn up for a state banquet held in Macmillan's honour.<sup>69</sup>

These negative narratives may have been informed by old regional loyalties, gripes or patterns of reporting, including, historically, the actions of opposition groups.<sup>70</sup> Yet there was also a sense that they were beginning to reflect something new as well: both an understanding of the increasing obsolescence of empire, suggested by the editorial context within which they appeared (discussed below), and Nkrumah's actions. Nkrumah used the tour to initiate a number of public attacks on British policy, reflecting his confidence as independent Africa's trailblazer. The *News Chronicle* noted that the week of Macmillan's visit marked 'the tenth

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<sup>63</sup> *Mail*, 7 January 1960, fp.

<sup>64</sup> *Express*, 8 January 1960, p. 2; *Mail*, 8 January 1960, p. 5; *Mirror*, 8 January 1960, pp. 9-11; *Times*, 8 January 1960, p. 10; *Herald*, 8 January 1960, fp.

<sup>65</sup> *Mail*, 8 January 1960, p. 5; *Mirror*, 8 January 1960, pp. 9-10; *Express*, 8 January 1960, fp. Also: *Telegraph*, 8 January 1960, fp.

<sup>66</sup> Photo 2 in CO 1069/1 (Photos of the tour with press statements on reverse).

<sup>67</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>68</sup> *Express*, 9 January 1960, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> *Telegraph*, 11 January 1960, p. 20 (article begins fp); *Express*, 11 January 1960, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> As we saw in Chapter One.

anniversary of his call for “positive action” against British rule’.<sup>71</sup> Journalists’ personal accounts of the tour also suggested that at this early stage they felt editorial pressure to produce ‘a story’,<sup>72</sup> a further factor which led them to home in on the conflictual over the consensual.

The Prime Minister’s initial welcome in colonial Nigeria received a far more favourable press than his airport reception in Ghana.<sup>73</sup> According to British journalists, all the Nigerian leader did was to criticise Nkrumah and denounce apartheid.<sup>74</sup> Yet Nigerians citizens, possibly anticipating this, had decided to take matters into their own hands; and British journalists were quick to lock on to their protests, such as at the University of Ibadan, where students staged a demonstration during Macmillan’s visit to the campus, shouting slogans and waving placards emblazoned with the words ‘Hail McNato’ and ‘Lord Malvern is an ass. Tell him so’.<sup>75</sup> *The Times*’s correspondent considered the encounter amusing.<sup>76</sup> Yet the majority wrote it up as an unnerving or portentous spectacle. MacColl thought the protest ‘(could) not be written off as just a light-hearted “rag”’.<sup>77</sup> Bonnett told *Mail* readers that Macmillan had ‘tried to laugh his way out’, but ‘ended up grim-faced and angry’.<sup>78</sup>

The presence of these negative narratives reflected first and foremost African efforts to exploit the British presence on the ground as a means of getting their voices heard. This, in turn, reflected regional concerns, such as fears surrounding the French atomic tests being conducted close-by in the Sahara. Yet they also had a pan-African dimension, as the placard referring to Lord Malvern, Welensky’s predecessor, attested to. One member of the youth wing of the Malawi Congress Party later described how grateful he and his colleagues had been to these Nigerians who had protested on their behalf, and recounted how their efforts had inspired protests in Nyasaland.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *News Chronicle*, 9 January 1960, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Peregrine Worsthorne, *Tricks of Memory: An Autobiography* (London, 1993), pp. 191-2.

<sup>73</sup> *Times*, 12 January 1960, p. 12; *News Chronicle*, 12 January 1960, fp; *Mail*, 12 January 1960, p. 9; *Express*, 9 January 1960, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Evening Standard*, 13 January 1960, p. 9; *Mail*, 14 January 1960, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> Anthony Sampson, *Macmillan: A Study in Ambiguity* (London, 1967), p. 184.

<sup>76</sup> *Times*, 15 January 1960, p. 10.

<sup>77</sup> *Express*, 15 January 1960, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> *Mail*, 15 January 1960, p. 11.

<sup>79</sup> Thandika Mkandawire, interviewed in ‘Africa at 50: Wind of Change’ (episode 5), BBC Radio 4, first broadcast 16 November 2010, PLN036/104A2572, British Library Sound Archive.

British press perspectives also began to conflict with many of the key concepts Macmillan strove publicly to promote. As the Accra speech illustrated, these were that Africa was a diverse continent of races and places in which differences had to be respected and catered for, particularly in countries which lacked the relative racial ‘homogeneity’ of West Africa: the Central and Southern regions.<sup>80</sup> In contrast, British papers reflected the tone of the demonstrators in emphasising that Africa was one, and that its future resided firmly with the African majority. Many journalists, including those working for right-leaning papers, wrote that they considered the white presence in Africa a dull anachronism. Worsthorne thought that Accra’s ‘quiet, restrained and undemonstrative welcome’ befitted a country now looking to the future unfettered by the old colonial ties.<sup>81</sup> It was Macmillan and Dorothy, he wrote, who ‘introduced a touch of the past in such striking contrast to the gleaming modernity of their African hosts’.<sup>82</sup> In Nigeria, still stuck in a colonial time-warp, ‘everything was so Old-World’, Barber quipped, ‘that Lady Dorothy looked more than ever like a visiting Girl Guide commissioner in mufti’.<sup>83</sup>

If Africans were soon to triumph continent-wide, as British journalists believed they would, the view that it was inadvisable for Macmillan to comment on the internal affairs of Commonwealth member states, such as apartheid South Africa, therefore found no echo in British papers. Instead, editors and correspondents were keen to point out that adopting a critical stance was the only way Britain might hope to retain the loyalty of the Africans, and thus its global power. ‘Britain can confidently face the challenge of modern Africa so long as she is willing to give Africans a square deal’, explained the *Mirror*.<sup>84</sup> Legum pursued the same point in relation to Kenya and the Federation.<sup>85</sup> In his view, Britain’s ‘future influence’ depended on its ‘re-discovering’ some ‘moral strength’. This meant supporting the demands of the African majority. Pursuing two different policies in Africa – one which protected minority (white) rights, and one which aimed to bring about majority rule – was thought to be asking for trouble if not downright impossible.

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<sup>80</sup> ‘Text of Speech Delivered by Mr. Macmillan at the State Banquet in Accra on Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> January, 1960’, CAB 129/101, pp. 24-7.

<sup>81</sup> *Telegraph*, 7 January 1960, p. 20 (begins fp).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *News Chronicle*, 12 January 1960, fp.

<sup>84</sup> *Mirror*, 5 January 1960, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> *Observer*, 3 January 1960, p. 14.

It is not surprising that Macmillan and his entourage were irritated by the journalists' presence even at this early stage. Not all of this irritation bore a specific relation to the press's presentation of policy, but at all moments it belied the myth of a cosy relationship and of Government control. According to Evans, Macmillan vented his irritation behind the scenes before each and every press conference, irrespective of the line-up.<sup>86</sup> Evans displayed particular concern at the journalists' take on the Tema/Volta trip, an excursion the Government had hoped would showcase Ghana's progress and development as well as the scale of Britain's economic investment. It had been hot, and Macmillan had had to make three unscheduled stops.<sup>87</sup> 'The U.K. correspondents fussed about his pallor and told each other that he had "Accra tummy"', Evans recorded in his diary: 'I did my best to remind them that without exception this kind of thing was said at various points during all tours, but a number of them ran with it hard all the same'.<sup>88</sup>

At this stage, Evans appeared to be conducting a relatively futile exercise in damage limitation, which only invited ridicule from journalists.<sup>89</sup> The Prime Minister's personal contact with the press representatives was by all accounts more fruitful and engaged with weightier issues, including Britain's Africa policy. Macmillan and Lady Dorothy treated British journalists to drinks regularly during the tour from the end of the Ghana section.<sup>90</sup> Worsthorne thought that most journalists were 'overawed' by the proximity to a Prime Minister that these off-the-record chats provided and felt 'touched' Macmillan wanted to share his 'private musings' with them.<sup>91</sup> These conversations may therefore have carried considerable weight with British journalists.

Significantly, too, the substance of Macmillan's private musings sometimes differed substantially from his public statements. This was particularly so in relation to South Africa. In public, Macmillan underscored the importance of refraining from comment on the 'internal policies' of Commonwealth member states. In private, he told British journalists that he disagreed with apartheid and that he had decided to speak out on the issue. This happened early on. Throughout the tour, and in answer

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<sup>86</sup> Harold Evans, *Downing Street Diary: The Macmillan Years 1957-1963* (London, 1981), pp. 87-106.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-1.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>89</sup> *News Chronicle*, 9 January 1960, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup> Worsthorne, *Tricks*, p. 189.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.



to the issues raised by the 'Open Letter' published in the *Observer* in December, Sampson received repeated reassurances about Macmillan's intention to speak on apartheid.<sup>92</sup> At a New Year's Eve party in Downing Street, the Prime Minister told the journalist that 'he completely agreed with the letter'.<sup>93</sup> 'I did not believe that he would dare criticise Henrik Verwoerd while he was his guest', Sampson recalled, 'but his private secretary, Tim Bligh, kept assuring me through the tour that the speech would include paragraphs which would clearly dissociate Britain from apartheid. "They're still in", he promised me as we travelled down the continent, "they're still in"'.<sup>94</sup>

Reassurances such as these were not for Sampson's ears alone. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, papers reported that at a press conference in Accra Macmillan had hinted that he intended to speak to Verwoerd privately about apartheid.<sup>95</sup> A week later, readers were told much more categorically that it was now 'almost certain' that Macmillan would speak out 'and very firmly' on 'racial topics' during his visit to South Africa, not only in private 'but in public too'.<sup>96</sup> These later reports give no indication of how journalists unearthed this information, which suggests that it had been revealed privately to the press. Macmillan appeared to be attempting to encourage a degree of patience in relation to a difficult situation in which he hoped to show that his heart was in the right place. His success should not be over-emphasised. Press criticism of British policy towards South Africa only intensified in the days and weeks to follow. Journalists were sceptical of Macmillan's intentions, and Government policy remained reactive.

The relationship between the Government and the press was fraught at times, and not only concerning the conflicting opinions on what it was best for Britain to do in Africa. As the plans for the tour indicated, the Government's concern extended to press treatment of the countries and territories visited, and in the preceding three years few African countries had been as berated as Ghana. The 1960 tour was the first time Nkrumah had spoken to British newspapermen in twelve months, testament to the depth of the gulf between them.<sup>97</sup> In an article on 12 January, *The Times* (of London) summed up the 'protest at British reports' of the tour thus far,

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<sup>92</sup> Sampson, *Anatomist*, p. 93.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> *Mail*, p. 5; *Express*, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> *Express*, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> *Mail*, 8 January 1960, p. 5.

which had appeared in an editorial in the *Ghana Times*.<sup>98</sup> The paper was said to have ‘roundly (condemned) certain foreign correspondents for their reporting of Mr. Macmillan’s visit to Ghana’ by “refusing to see anything good in any anti-imperialist or the country he represents”, it quoted. British journalists’ references to the faded appearance of the flags and bunting lining the streets were cited as a principal point of contention.

These Ghanaian narratives recalled older fears, which point to the continuities in the patterns of responses to coverage as well as of reporting. As before, these responses must be understood within a context broader than that of British press perspectives or motivations. Certainly, much of the coverage of Macmillan’s visit to Ghana was ‘negative’. Yet the *Ghana Times* chose not to run with those ‘negative’ aspects which concerned the obsolescence of empire, or indeed the overall ‘sweep’ of British press opinion on Central and Southern African affairs. Journalists’ references to the faded flags appear to have been intended to demonstrate this very point: the changing nature of the modern world.<sup>99</sup> Judging from the tone of the *Ghana Times*’s report, these omissions reflected the legacy of the CPP’s past relations with the British press, as well as a certain degree of resentment towards the Westerners’ self-proclaimed ‘right’ (as it saw it) to comment on newly-independent states. The omissions may also have continued to reflect practical considerations, such as the CPP’s efforts to consolidate its domestic political popularity by vilifying or scapegoating outsiders.

As in 1957, the British Government’s efforts to allay Ghanaian fears fell on deaf ears. The day before the publication of the *Ghana Times* editorial, Macmillan distanced himself from the reports. At a press conference on the 10<sup>th</sup>, when asked by a Ghanaian journalist whether he had had a cool welcome, the Prime Minister replied that ‘the truth was the exact opposite, and he could not understand how such reports were written’.<sup>100</sup> The character of the subsequent *Ghana Times* editorial suggested that the relationship between the British press and Ghana continued to have its own dynamic independent of the actions of the British Government.

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<sup>98</sup> *Times*, 12 January 1960, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> As in the *Telegraph*, 6 January 1960, p. 16.

<sup>100</sup> *Guardian*, 11 January 1960, fp.

3. *'Nyasaland will be free to decide'*:<sup>101</sup> The 'Lagos statement' and after: The British press as interlocutor and perceived signifier of British public opinion

Events inside the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland were soon to demonstrate just how disruptive the same dynamic could be in territories still governed from Westminster. The Federal Government's response to British press treatment of the events of 3 March 1959 and their fall-out, had provided a taster of this. Yet, by January 1960, the situation was more combustible because of a changed local context.

Macmillan later recalled that upon setting foot in Salisbury, his first stop in the region, he 'could not help being struck by the sense of uncertainty, whether among Europeans or Africans'.<sup>102</sup> In the case of the former, with which the Government had the most dealings, the official report of the tour attributed the unease to 'the year 1960, which was to see the visit of the Monckton Commission and the opening of the Constitutional Review Conference'.<sup>103</sup> Yet 'more specific fears', it thought, 'had been aroused by reports of what the Prime Minister was alleged to have said at a press conference in Lagos on 13<sup>th</sup> January, and of a television interview given by Lord Shawcross' because 'both seemed to imply that the United Kingdom Government were prepared to see the break-up of the Federation if African opinion in the two northern protectorates so demanded'.<sup>104</sup> The report noted what appeared to be 'a general lack of confidence in the intentions of the United Kingdom Government towards the Federation'.<sup>105</sup> Hitherto, ministers in Salisbury 'had assumed that Britain favoured its continuation';<sup>106</sup> yet 'recent developments had caused them to wonder whether there had been some change in United Kingdom policy on this'.<sup>107</sup>

The significance Federal officials attached to the Shawcross and Lagos comments reflected the fact that they had occurred recently and had not been

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<sup>101</sup> Headline of front-page leader in the *Guardian*, 14 January 1960. Full title was 'Nyasaland will be free to decide – Not to be forced to stay in the Federation – Premier's answer'.

<sup>102</sup> Harold Macmillan, *Pointing the Way, 1959-1961* (London, 1972), p. 131.

<sup>103</sup> 'Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland: Commentary', 12 April 1960, CAB 129/101, pp. 60-1, p. 60.

<sup>104</sup> Lord Shawcross was a member of the upcoming Monckton Commission.

<sup>105</sup> 'Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland: Commentary', 12 April 1960, CAB 129/101, pp. 60-1, p. 60.

<sup>106</sup> 'Record of a Meeting of Ministers held at Salisbury on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1960, at 8.45 a.m.', 12 April 1960, CAB 129/101, pp. 67-9, p. 67.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

discussed with members of the British Government. However, it also revealed the extent to which anxieties could be stimulated by the British press and publicity. British newspapers and television programmes appeared to be fuelling a desire for hard information that British officials were either unable or unwilling to provide, and in doing so, fuelling tensions.

The British Government displayed considerable concern at the possible effects of this, particularly in relation to Lagos. On 15 January, the CRO sent Macmillan a telegram in which it informed him of British press depictions.<sup>108</sup> ‘Guardian 14<sup>th</sup> January under headline “Nyasaland will be free to decide”’, the telegram read, ‘reports you as having told Press Conference in Lagos on 13<sup>th</sup> January that “There was no question of forcing Nyasaland to remain in a fully independent Central African Federation...” Other papers have also taken your remarks as implying that Nyasaland will be able to choose whether or not to stay in Federation’. ‘This puts a meaning on your words’, it continued, ‘which goes further than what has been said before... *eventual choice that we have contemplated up to now would be between dependence and independence for Federation as a whole and not a choice for component territories whether or not to stay in Federation*’.<sup>109</sup> The telegram ended with a suggestion that ‘it might be well to have a form of words ready for use’ as ‘you will certainly be question (sic) about this as soon as you reach Salisbury’. The Government’s fears concerning press misrepresentation of Macmillan’s words, which it had done so much to try to avert during the tour’s planning stage, appeared now to be reaching a climax.

The relationship between press content, the broader metropolitan political context to the end of empire in Africa, and the future of the Federation, to which Evans had alluded back in December, was also budding with first fruits. While the CRO was drafting its telegram to Macmillan, members of the Opposition were composing a message of their own in response to press reports arriving in London. In a telegram received in Salisbury on the 18<sup>th</sup>, (and published in the *Guardian*), Callaghan and Hilary Marquand told Macmillan that they ‘(welcomed)’ his reported statement in Lagos ‘that when the time comes the expressed opinion of people of Nyassaland (sic) and Northern Rhodesia will decide whether Federation is beneficial

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<sup>108</sup> Commonwealth Secretary to PM, 15 January 1960, PREM 11/3065.

<sup>109</sup> Emphasis added.

to them'.<sup>110</sup> Press reports of Macmillan's remarks had supplied the necessary ammunition for Callaghan and Marquand to re-engage the Government on the topical question of the northern territories' 'right to decide'.

Macmillan's initial response to the MPs' telegram smacked of frustration and displayed a hint of irritation hitherto reserved for members of the British press corps. 'This will, I suppose require an answer', he wrote: 'They will just put their telegrams in the Press. Both Sir NB<sup>111</sup> and Mr Evans should be consulted. Draft reply should be prepared'.<sup>112</sup> Some care went into the response. Yet Macmillan's reaction conveyed a sense that this was what was to be expected from Labour. The Government devoted more energy towards quelling concerns in Africa. Macmillan's reply trailed by some three or four days his discussions with Federal ministers on the topic as well as his main policy speech in Salisbury, in which he strove to clear up the confusion caused by (as he saw it) British press reporting of his words.

In his speech, Macmillan rounded on the press, explaining that his words had been 'misunderstood or misrepresented'.<sup>113</sup> 'I should like to take the opportunity to repeat the words which I actually used', he elaborated, 'and having some little experience I now go about at these conferences with a tape recording machine and I quote from the record as played back by the machine'. He did so. He also firmly reiterated his support for Federation. Sacrificing amiable relations with the press, in this instance, appeared to be a price Macmillan felt it necessary to pay.

British correspondents were incensed. Evans characterised the following day as 'critical'.<sup>114</sup> Journalists 'resented' the Prime Minister's reference to being misinterpreted, he recorded, 'and to the necessity to travel with a tape recorder': 'They accused him of quoting himself out of context and three or four of them waylaid me as we left the hall, "insisting" that the whole of the transcript should be made available to them. But the P.M. agreed to have another off the record talk with them at Government House and did it beautifully'. Macmillan had stepped in once again, and by all accounts British journalists were warming to him immensely. Evans recorded that Rene MacColl 'now likes Mac in a big way'.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Callaghan and Marquand to Macmillan, received 18 January 1960, PREM 11/3066.

<sup>111</sup> Sir Norman Brook.

<sup>112</sup> Macmillan, handwritten note, together with the Callaghan/Marquand telegram, undated, PREM 11/3066.

<sup>113</sup> 'Main Policy Speech', Salisbury, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1960, CAB 129/101, pp. 120-5, p. 124.

<sup>114</sup> Evans, *Downing Street Diary*, p. 98.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

The feeling was not mutual. British press coverage of the Central African section of the tour was almost entirely negative from a British Government perspective, as Lewis describes in her study of the Northern Rhodesian visit,<sup>116</sup> and the strain was showing. Journalists scrupulously documented persistent African nationalist protests; the discovery of four sticks of gelignite in the Savoy Hotel, where Macmillan was to dine; and Lady Dorothy's fall up the steps of Britannia, which had resulted in a bloodied leg.<sup>117</sup> Meanwhile, press commentary continued to push the twin themes of African nationalism and white settler intransigence in the face of Macmillan's more dulcet tones. The press consistently irritated him. According to Evans, in one of his speeches in Salisbury Macmillan once 'again interpolated a complaining piece about the problems of doing international business with every word weighed by the Press and every expression on his face recorded'.<sup>118</sup> He planned to get some respite in Livingstone, with a trip to the Victoria Falls, where he hoped to keep the press at arm's length.<sup>119</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether or not British journalists were used as scapegoats by the British Government here to quell white settler anxieties concerning Britain's colonial policy. Sampson certainly thought that this was the case.<sup>120</sup> Yet Macmillan's irritation appears to have been genuine, suggesting that if he had said what journalists said he had, this had been the result more of error than of intention. Equally, it is uncertain whether correspondents deliberately misread Macmillan's comments for much the same reason as Callaghan and Marquand: to pressure the Government on its colonial policy. The tone of their reports up to that moment suggests they may well have wanted to. What is certain is that in the process of decolonisation, words mattered, and the future of the Federation was a verbal minefield of Olympic proportions. There was ample scope for error, misunderstanding and intrigue in just about equal measure, and this unsettled Macmillan deeply.

Yet, significantly, however much the British Government feared miscommunication of Macmillan's words, for the white communities of the Federation, the thrust of his remarks was not in fact the focus of concern. In many

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<sup>116</sup> Lewis, "White Man".

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Evans, *Downing Street Diary*, p. 98.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 100. He was not entirely successful.

<sup>120</sup> Sampson, *Macmillan*, p. 184.

ways, this mirrored white understanding of British press coverage of the events of 1959. Federal ministers undoubtedly felt it important that Macmillan publicly refute the substance of the allegations which had appeared in the press, for they were causing some embarrassment.<sup>121</sup> Yet they generally conceded very early on that at Lagos the British Prime Minister had gone no further than previous British Government statements. Instead, when worries were articulated, they tended to lie, firstly, with the attitudinal aspect to British press treatment of Lagos, or the light the unanimity in press reports shed on the nature of opinion in Britain; and secondly, with the British Government's response - or lack thereof initially - and what this indicated about the character of the relationship between the Government on the one hand and the British press and public on the other.

Four days elapsed between the Lagos press conference and Macmillan's public refutation of the claims appearing in the press, ample time for speculation. The day before the speech, in a letter to A.D. Evans, the Federal Secretary for Home Affairs, Welensky set out his initial views.<sup>122</sup> 'I know there's a great deal of concern in the country at the moment about things generally', he wrote, 'Macmillan's statement in Nigeria hasn't helped. I have seen what our High Commissioner says is the text of what he said, and there is really nothing that one can complain too much about. The sinister side of all this is the fact that no attempt was made to get the correct version - if the version I have been given is the correct one - across either in the United Kingdom or here, and I don't like that. I know people talk a lot. It's one of the failings of the human race, but I must say I'm a bit disturbed by the ease with which people talk about getting out, not only out of the two Northern Territories, but out of Southern Rhodesia, because things appear to be getting a little bit difficult. It makes me sour'.

The context to the Lagos press conference is important and may have predisposed Welensky to viewing events in this way. British press reports of Macmillan's remarks fed into debates within the white community on the recent perceived shift in British public opinion towards a more liberal consensus; on the role of British journalists in reflecting or, indeed, constituting this; and on the apparent susceptibility of the governing Conservative Party to one or both of these

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<sup>121</sup> 'Record (made by Federation officials) of a Meeting between Mr. Macmillan and Members of the Federal Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1960, at 9. 50 a.m.', CAB 129/101, pp. 69-71, p. 70.

<sup>122</sup> Welensky to A.D. Evans (Secretary for Home Affairs), 18 January 1960, fol. 30, MSS. Welensky 198/6.

pressures by the beginning of 1960. White settlers were aware of the British public context to the events of 1959, including the appointment of the Monckton Commission, and although the British Government continually spoke out in favour of Federation, it also kept the Federal and colonial governments informed of the relevance of British metropolitan developments (amongst other factors) to future policy.<sup>123</sup>

As we have seen, Macmillan informed the Nyasaland Government of the relation between public opinion and the terms of Banda's prospective release. During the tour, in meetings with the Federal and Southern Rhodesian governments, the Prime Minister and his entourage also continued to discuss the goals of the Monckton Commission in the context of British opinion. On 19 January, for example, Macmillan informed the Federal Cabinet that 'The Monckton Commission would help to bring it home to public opinion that the concept of Federation not only offered material advantage but was also right and fair.'<sup>124</sup> Shockingly, he referred to – limited – political advancement for Nyasaland in the context of the Government's efforts to win this desired support at home.<sup>125</sup> Elsewhere, British officials discussed the problem of the settlers in similar terms.<sup>126</sup> Historians indicate that Macmillan feared white settlers more than Africans at this moment; and that this was due to the settlers' resistance to the Government's plans to pursue programmes of political advancement or to 'move on' from empire.<sup>127</sup> However, the material uncovered here suggests that a further factor which lay behind these fears concerned the perceived relation between the actions of settlers and waning British public support for Federation. In January 1960, Lord Home, echoing Evans's earlier comments, summed up this perspective in a telegram to Macmillan in which he told him that 'Welensky cannot bring himself to admit that the fate of Federation lies with the

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<sup>123</sup> As in CAB 129/101.

<sup>124</sup> 'Record (made by Federation officials) of a Meeting between Mr. Macmillan and Members of the Federal Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1960, at 9. 50 a.m.', CAB 129/101, pp. 69-71, p. 70.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. Other official communications indicate that changes were to be modest and that only the prospect of advance was to be offered before the Federal review in order to placate African opinion! '[Nyasaland constitution]: outward telegram no 110 from Mr Macleod to Sir R Armitage (repeated to Sir E Hone)', 15 Feb 1960, PREM 11/3075, pp. 112-4, p. 112; and '[Future of Hastings Banda]: Cabinet conclusions', 18 Feb 1960, CAB 128/34, CC 10(60)3, pp. 114-6, pp. 114-5; both in Murphy (ed.), *British Documents*.

<sup>126</sup> '[Monckton Commission]: outward telegram from Lord Home to Mr Macmillan (Kaduna)', 17 Jan 1960, PREM 11/3065, in Murphy (ed.), *British Documents*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>127</sup> Hyam, *Declining Empire*, p. 282.



United Kingdom Parliament but it is a fact which he must be made to understand.’<sup>128</sup> ‘He believes that our Government can bulldoze the next instalment of Federal constitution through Parliament’, Home explained, ‘and when I have told him of the difficult atmosphere and doubts of the younger Conservatives he has quite plainly thought them excuses for lack of political decision and guts. He must be made to realise that the more he takes up attitudes which seem unreasonable..., the more he puts himself out on a limb here and our public becomes more and more doubtful as to whether their Government is backing the wrong horse. I am very uneasy about our Parliamentary position following the 1960 Review as largely because of their inept public relations Southern Rhodesia and the Federation are becoming more and more classed with South Africa in the public mind.’

The settler press was an engine for the accumulation and dissemination of disturbing material on these sensitive issues. At the start of the year, newspapers such as the *Rhodesia Herald*, the *Bulawayo Chronicle* and the *Nyasaland Times* regularly printed summaries of British press coverage of Central African affairs, together with information concerning individual articles’ prominence on the page.<sup>129</sup> Particularly worrying pieces were sometimes borrowed from British newspapers and re-printed in full, often drawing heated responses from readers.<sup>130</sup> Debates and trends in British politics were also summarised. ‘Britons need only a vote to control colonial destiny’, the headline to a reader’s letter in the *Rhodesia Herald* read on 7 January.<sup>131</sup> ‘Federation must “sell” its case in Britain’, worried another.<sup>132</sup> ‘If the British Press were prepared to print all points of view, the position would be vastly different’, the reader thought: ‘The attitude that the European is an ogre and the African a downtrodden slave is so far from the truth that every aspect of our problem is now so distorted in the minds of the British public that we enter 1960 with nothing in our favour at all... I suggest that our efforts in 1960...be directed to putting over

<sup>128</sup> [Monckton Commission]: outward telegram from Lord Home to Mr Macmillan (Kaduna), 17 Jan 1960, PREM 11/3065, in Murphy (ed.), *British Documents*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>129</sup> *Rhodesia Herald*: 1 January 1960, p. 11; 4 January 1960, p. 11; 5 January 1960, p. 2; 9 January 1960, fp; 15 January 1960, p. 24; 22 January 1960, p. 4. *Bulawayo Chronicle*: 1 January 1960, p. 7; 5 January 1960, p. 4; 6 January 1960, p. 8 and p. 10; 7 January 1960, p. 9; 9 January 1960, p. 5; 18 January 1960, p. 7; 21 January 1960, p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> One such article was Henry Fairlie’s ‘Can Macmillan bring enlightenment?’, published in the *Daily Mail* in mid-January, reproduced in Rhodesian newspapers, and referred to by one Rhodesian lady as the most ‘obnoxious’ and ‘untrue’ article she had ever read in her life. See *Rhodesia Herald*, 13 January 1960, fp & *Chronicle*, 13 January 1960, fp. For the lady’s letter, see: *Rhodesia Herald*, 20 January 1960, p. 11.

<sup>131</sup> *Rhodesia Herald*, 7 January 1960, p. 5.

<sup>132</sup> *Rhodesia Herald*, 16 January 1960, p. 5.

the case for Federation to the man in the street in Britain.<sup>133</sup> White settler understanding of British press, public and parliamentary opinion could be as acute a source of debate and concern as British policy. Existing studies of white settler cultures in the Federation tend to focus on the latter as the driving force behind the break-up of the notion of 'Greater Britain'.<sup>134</sup> Yet the presence of these sorts of debates suggests that there was also a low political, including press, dimension which deserves scrutiny.

The fears expressed in the settler press were echoed at Federal Government level. At the time of the tour, the Deputy High Commissioner in London, P.F. Barrett, set out in some detail in a report circulated amongst members of the Federal Cabinet, what he perceived to be the changing nature of opinion within Britain on African affairs, which he felt had been so prominent a feature of 1959.<sup>135</sup> Barrett explained that in contrast to 1958, a widespread adverse attitude in the United Kingdom was now one of the Federation's major problems. He accepted that 'some in the Federation might say that the views I am repeating are those of a minority and that the majority of the people in Britain know nothing and care less about our affairs', but warned that he '(did) not think that that argument has much validity even if it were true'.

Barrett believed that British newspapers were playing a part in this. By 'plugging' the inevitability of the triumph of African nationalism, he wrote, the press was 'doing much to mould public opinion', thus 'preparing the ground for the United Kingdom to take an easy way out of the situation by accepting this allegedly foregone conclusion and disbanding the Federation, or at least changing its nature'. The Conservative Party is 'no longer a party professing privilege and committed to supporting oligarchy', he warned, but 'a Party of the People', 'far more than ever before conscious of the necessity to take considerable notice of the general feelings of the average Briton'. British press treatment of Central African affairs was believed variously to have played a part in simplifying, restricting and monopolising representation and debate on Federation. In this way, the press was felt to be

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Donal Lowry, "'Shame Upon 'Little England' While 'Greater England' Stands!'" Southern Rhodesia and the Imperial Idea' in Andrea Bosco and Alex May (eds.), *Round Table: The Empire/Commonwealth and British Foreign Policy* (London, 1997), pp. 305-41; Schwarz, *White Man's World*; Ward, 'Whirlwind'.

<sup>135</sup> 'Annual review by the Deputy High Commissioner in London', 4 February 1960, circulated amongst members of the Federal Cabinet, fols. 2-7, MSS. Welensky 153/5.

contributing to the production of a one-sided narrative that was hampering the British Government's freedom of manoeuvre on the future of its Central African colonies. Macmillan's 'Lagos statement' and its fall-out, fed into and fuelled these existing fears. Barrett believed the solution was '(to remove) as far as possible the Federation from interference by the United Kingdom', a statement which in hindsight looked portentous.

#### 4. 'Challenge him Mac!':<sup>136</sup> Press activism on apartheid

When the British press reached South Africa, the final stop on the tour, its criticism of British policy toward the Union Government returned with great force. Journalists' chief concern was that Macmillan's itinerary signalled *to Africans* that Britain condoned – or worse still, endorsed – the racial policies of the South African Government. The press documented the Prime Minister's trip to a gold mine, a township and a 'Bantu university' as well as an elaborate ceremony in which he was invested as a Paramount Chief.<sup>137</sup> Hometowns, segregated educational institutions and chiefdom were all essential components of the apartheid system, which, judging from the tone of their reports, most correspondents found archaic, sad, and dangerously out of kilter with modern African realities. Sampson summed up the tenor of these articles when he wrote that Macmillan had been 'paraded' around apartheid institutions 'like a living certificate of acceptability, a walking guarantee':<sup>138</sup> 'The more Mr. Macmillan sees of the subsidised chiefs of black South Africa, and the more he talks about the splendour of the gold mines, the more Africans are anxiously speculating as to whether he will in fact be able to see the real African leaders'.

British journalists knew that Macmillan had received requests for meetings from the ANC and other (predominantly white) liberal political parties, because these groups had contacted the press; and wrote that their absence from the itinerary had left both an informational and a moral void. African protests, a prominent feature of the tour from as far back as Nigeria, had stalled. Prior to Macmillan's

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<sup>136</sup> Cartoon, *Mirror*, 2 February 1960.

<sup>137</sup> *Evening Standard*, 28 January 1960, p. 10; *Mirror*, 29 January 1960, p. 9; *Express*, 29 January 1960, p. 2; *Evening Standard*, 30 January 1960, p. 6; *Mirror*, 30 January 1960, p. 5; *Mail*, 30 January 1960, p. 9; *Express*, 30 January 1960, p. 2; *News Chronicle*, 30 January 1960, p. 2.

<sup>138</sup> *Observer*, 31 January 1960, p. 10.

arrival, the ANC had sent out an appeal to its female followers to take to the streets.<sup>139</sup> But the Union Government had prevented them from doing so. Some correspondents took it upon themselves to atone for Macmillan's failings by recording these obstructions,<sup>140</sup> by meeting with Africans and by documenting some of the 'realities of life' for Africans living under apartheid.<sup>141</sup> Yet these were not regarded as substitutes for the actions of a Prime Minister, and press unease and pressure persisted.

Macmillan and his advisers displayed considerable concern at this, primarily from a metropolitan perspective. They took actions in response, first before the speech, and then in the text of the speech itself, continually adding modifications,<sup>142</sup> demonstrating both the perceived importance of these views and the reactive nature of British policy on this issue. Yet as in the Federation, the Government placed limits on the lengths to which it was willing to go, creating a shortfall, within whose confines the role of the British press in and after Cape Town, the subject of this chapter's final section, should be understood.

The first set of actions taken in response to British opinion turned on the Government's formal, active efforts to negotiate with the Union Government a less restrictive tour itinerary, with room to meet non-parliamentary political parties such as the Liberal Party, and even the ANC. British press treatment of the South Africa section of the tour was not a causal factor in this. Yet due to the timing of some of the Government's overtures, it would be unwise to ignore the role played by press coverage of the tour as a whole. J.B. Johnston (in London) raised the subject on 23 January, while Macmillan was in the Federation.<sup>143</sup> The Union Government had not consented to Macmillan's meeting any opposition groups, including parliamentary parties, and Johnston was apprehensive at the possible metropolitan political repercussions. 'Though this is not strictly for us to judge', he wrote, 'it seems to me that the Prime Minister could hardly return to the United Kingdom having to admit if questioned that he had not seen any Opposition leaders of any kind in the Union.'

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<sup>139</sup> Copy of circular issued by the ANC (signed Alfred B Nzo and D Nokwe, for Secretary General), PREM 11/3071.

<sup>140</sup> *Herald*, 28 January 1960, p. 7; *News Chronicle*, 1 February 1960, p. 2; *Mail*, 2 February 1960, p. 6.

<sup>141</sup> In Johannesburg, Sampson visited the shebeens and beer halls, and Jacobson travelled to a township. *Observer*, 31 January 1960, p. 10; *Mirror*, 3 February 1960, p. 6, respectively.

<sup>142</sup> Baker, 'Macmillan's "Wind of Change" Tour', p. 182.

<sup>143</sup> Notes for High Commissioner from J.B. Johnston, 23 January 1960, PREM 11/3071.

Certainly if he had to make any such admission, it would have to be accompanied by an indication that this was at the strong request of the Union Government'. United Party and Progressive Party meetings were subsequently scheduled in. Yet none were set for non-parliamentary political parties.

Upon reaching South Africa, Macmillan discussed the matter with Eric Louw, South Africa's Minister of Foreign Affairs, initially face-to-face (though fruitlessly), and then in written form. At this time, the tour party's preoccupation with the metropolitan context to the South Africa segment of the journey expanded to include the role of British, and other, journalists. 'Dr. Verwoerd has kindly arranged for me to meet leaders of the Parliamentary Opposition Parties, which I very much appreciate', Macmillan told Louw in his letter, 'But it is generally known (and was mentioned in questions – which I evaded – at my Press Conference in Pretoria yesterday) that the Liberal Party and the A.N.C. have both said they would like to meet me... I feel therefore it would be quite impossible for me to say that I was for my part unwilling to see them – though of course I would not see them without Dr. Verwoerd's agreement... My difficulty is that if he should feel it impossible to agree... I fear I should eventually have to indicate when questioned in Parliament or by the Press that this was the reason'.<sup>144</sup> In 'knowing' and 'making known' the fact that Macmillan had received requests for meetings from the Liberal Party and the ANC, the press played a part in fuelling the British Government's fear of being held to account at home for shortcomings in its dealings with the National Party and its rivals locally. British public, including press, comment on the South Africa visit caused the Government to adopt a more combative stance in its dealings with Verwoerd than it had thought either necessary or desirable before setting off on the tour.

It could be objected that the British Government's decision to confront the Union Government on the itinerary also reflected an earnest desire to meet the groups in question, the consequence, perhaps, of a fresh ambition to engage with African nationalist, and other, groups opposed to apartheid – in other words, a genuine desire to get in step with the 'wind of change'. This seems unlikely. Even in his most active efforts, Macmillan's priority appears to have rested more with the problems inherent in his having to 'say that I was for my part unwilling to see them'

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<sup>144</sup> Macmillan to Louw, 28 January 1960, PREM 11/3071.

than with the lack of contact per se.<sup>145</sup> There is also no evidence that the Government actively sought out meetings with non-parliamentary political parties. On this occasion, the Government's more 'progressive' foray into South Africa's internal politics did not therefore appear to reflect a desire to change it.

Its efforts were instead the direct result of British public and parliamentary considerations, and were intended to be cosmetic rather than profound. The Prime Minister's response to the rebuffs he received from the Union Government suggested much the same. His letter to Louw drew no positive response, nor did a private talk he had with Verwoerd. Macmillan seemed unperturbed. The official report of the tour recorded that 'On reflection Mr. Macmillan decided that this matter was less important than the content of the Cape Town speech... He thought it more important, *from the point of view of public opinion at home*, that he should be uncompromising about this (race relations in the Union) in his speech than that he should persist in seeing representatives of the African National Congress against the wishes of the Union Government'.<sup>146</sup>

The second set of actions concerned the British Government's behind-the-scenes communications with correspondents. Officials made unceasing efforts to reassure British journalists of the racial inclinations of the British Government. Judging from the nature of the articles published in the press (and despite their promises to Verwoerd), part of their strategy involved discreetly letting it be known that the Prime Minister was displeased with the programme the Union Government had organised for him. It also involved Macmillan's continuing to voice privately to the press both his disapproval of apartheid and his intention to address the subject in his upcoming speech. Macmillan dampened a certain amount of personal criticism this way. Yet journalists' demands did not abate. Indeed, they may even have intensified, for the Prime Minister's words whet the press's appetite for a defining moment.

At a garden party on 2 February, three days before the end of the tour (and the day before the speech), Macmillan finally met some representatives of South African liberal opinion, including Margaret Ballinger, the President of the Liberal Party, and Patrick Duncan, one of its most prominent members. Yet Duncan and

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<sup>145</sup> My italics.

<sup>146</sup> 'Note on Suggested Meetings with Representatives of African National Congress and other Parties not Represented in Union Parliament', CAB 129/101, pp. 150-2, p. 152. Parenthesis and its contents added. My italics.

Ballinger were white, and few British correspondents seemed moved by what they regarded as a tardy gesture. Worsthorne described the informal encounter a ‘display’ ‘designed to act as a consolation prize for the failure to see the representatives of African opinion’.<sup>147</sup>

Much therefore rested on the speech. It assumed a greater significance in the British Government’s calculations as a result of the failure either to negotiate an expanded tour itinerary or to badger Verwoerd successfully into taking the blame for a limited one. At the same time, it figured more prominently in the minds of British journalists, partly because of the nature of the itinerary, too, but also because of the Government’s private pledges that the speech would, as Evans let slip to Worsthorne, ‘make history’.<sup>148</sup>

5. ‘*This is our faith*’:<sup>149</sup> Macmillan’s Cape Town speech: The role of the British press in ‘making meaning’

Of these two factors – Macmillan’s resolve to speak out decisively against apartheid, and British journalists’ anticipation of a momentous statement – the former proved perhaps the least prominent a feature of the events which followed. His address is usually associated with his acceptance of the strength of African nationalism, his expressed desire to move with the times, and his taking a definitive stand on the issue of apartheid. Certainly, Macmillan spoke of ‘the strength of... African national consciousness’, ‘the wind of change... blowing through this continent’, and the need for ‘our national policies (to) take account of it’.<sup>150</sup> He also commented on race. Macmillan informed his audience that Britain ‘(rejected) the idea of any inherent superiority of one race over another’. ‘As a fellow member of the Commonwealth’, he famously declared, ‘it is our earnest desire to give South Africa our support and encouragement, but I hope you won’t mind my saying frankly that there are some aspects of your policies which make it impossible for us to do this without being false to our own deep convictions about the political destinies of free men’.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *Telegraph*, 3 February 1960, p. 20.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *News Chronicle*, 4 February 1960, fp.

<sup>150</sup> ‘Main Policy Speech’, CAB 129/101, all three quotations p. 155.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-7.

Yet, further examination of the speech suggests that Macmillan's position was more vague or ambivalent than these quotations imply. Dubow suggests that the speech was far more conciliatory to white South African interests than is usually assumed.<sup>152</sup> Although Macmillan commented on apartheid, he did so indirectly, using the words "internal" or "national" policies, and never 'apartheid', an omission which Dubow thinks 'softened the key message'.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, little in the speech suggested that Macmillan was concerned actively to support black South Africans in their fight against the system. Macmillan referred to nationalism in Africa as 'national consciousness', a choice which Lewis argues was 'likely an act of diminution'.<sup>154</sup> His acknowledgment of the strength of African nationalism, Dubow observes, did not extend to African nationalism in South Africa other than by implication.<sup>155</sup> Macmillan also spoke out strongly against the international boycott of South African goods, which he told his listeners he '(deprecated)' and '(deplored)',<sup>156</sup> but which African leaders had called for.

The context to these, the most 'critical' of Macmillan's statements, reduced their salience still further, for they appeared within a frame which placed primacy on putting differences 'on one subject' into a broader historical perspective. His comments on race and the Union Government's 'policies' were followed by a lengthy eulogy on friendship, the inviolability of spheres of interest, and the importance of cooperation and coexistence despite differences on 'principle'. '(Differences) on one subject, important though it is', Macmillan concluded, 'need not and should not impair our capacity to co-operate with one another in furthering the many practical interests which we share in common... The independent nations of the Commonwealth do not always agree on every subject... I hope – indeed, I am confident – that in another 50 years we shall look back on the differences that exist between us now as matters of historical interest, for as time passes and one generation yields to another, human problems change and fade...' <sup>157</sup>

Importantly, British journalists tended not to highlight Macmillan's ambiguity. In fact, many went out of their way to argue that the speech signified the

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<sup>152</sup> Dubow, 'Macmillan, Verwoerd', p. 1087 & pp. 1098-1100.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 1099.

<sup>154</sup> Lewis, "'White Man'", p. 77.

<sup>155</sup> Dubow, 'Macmillan, Verwoerd', p. 1099.

<sup>156</sup> 'Main Policy Speech', CAB 129/101, p. 158.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.



‘end to a long period of official evasions’, and the ‘end of ambiguity’.<sup>158</sup> Most journalists described the address as signifying Macmillan’s clear, principled denunciation of apartheid, in articles with headlines such as ‘Toast of Africans – Macmillan’s speech stirs a continent’;<sup>159</sup> ‘Plain speech in Cape Town – Mr. Macmillan on human rights – No support for racialism – “Destinies of free men”’;<sup>160</sup> and ‘Britain to Africa: This is our faith’.<sup>161</sup> Even Sampson, commenting in the *Observer* on the Sunday, hailed the speech ‘astonishing’ and a ‘milestone’.<sup>162</sup> The British press, as interlocutors or mediators, had contributed to lifting a rather paltry attack on apartheid to a ‘higher plane’, more in keeping with the initial historiographical assessment of the significance of the speech prior to the re-evaluations undertaken by Lewis and Dubow.

Macmillan’s PR efforts had very likely played a role in this. Yet the journalists involved were by no means averse to criticising the British Government, and, judging by the nature of their reports of the tour as a whole, they were well aware of Macmillan’s way with words. At every stage, given a choice, they favoured adopting a sceptical stance over an approving one. Some, like Sampson, also cared personally and passionately about Africa and the cause for which black South Africans fought. The primary cause of the journalists’ unanimity in praise for the address appears to be that they evaluated it purely on the basis of the calls which they had made beforehand for Macmillan to make public the fact that Britain did not endorse South Africa’s racial policies. This Macmillan had very largely done by rejecting ‘the idea of any inherent superiority of one race over another’, and by stating that supporting South Africa would entail Britain’s sacrificing its ‘deep convictions about the political destinies of free men to which in our own territories we are trying to give effect’.<sup>163</sup>

Journalists’ desire for Macmillan to state Britain’s racial or moral stance appeared greater than any yearning for a substantive change in Anglo-South African relations. Thus, the limits of the press’s vision for South Africa was also a significant factor, ironically, behind its lauding of Macmillan’s denunciation of

<sup>158</sup> *News Chronicle*, 4 February 1960, p. 4; *Observer*, 7 February 1960, p. 5, respectively. Italics added.

<sup>159</sup> *Mail*, 4 February 1960, fp.

<sup>160</sup> *Times*, 4 February 1960, p. 10.

<sup>161</sup> *News Chronicle*, 4 February 1960, fp.

<sup>162</sup> *Observer*, 7 February 1960, p. 16.

<sup>163</sup> ‘Main Policy Speech’, CAB 129/101, p. 157.

apartheid. 'Speaking out' could be a matter of degree, and did not imply either action or support for the alternatives. The priority was to give Britain a facelift in Africa. British journalists wrote that the speech was for African ears. The reality was that Africans were rather nonplussed.<sup>164</sup> Later, thoughts turned more conclusively to the issue of effecting meaningful change on the ground, in papers other than the *Herald* and the *Guardian*, the only papers to have been critical of the speech from the outset.<sup>165</sup> Yet in the meantime, the British press had played an important role in producing for mass consumption a 'black and white' version of a much 'greyer' speech.

This troubled Macmillan and his advisers. David Hunt, Under-Secretary at the CRO, one of the authors of the speech, later insisted that he could not understand why the reference to the 'wind of change' had received such prominent treatment.<sup>166</sup> 'As nobody had paid any attention to the phrase in Accra I thought I might as well use it again and had put it in with only a minor variation', he recalled: 'But I had certainly never imagined that it would be seized on as the key phrase of the speech, nor intended it to be that... the phrase in its context is morally entirely neutral. All Macmillan did was to remind his hearers that certain changes were taking place in Africa. It is for this reason that I have always been surprised at the vigour of the reaction in the newspapers'. Hunt surmised that 'it may have had something to do with the fact that the phrase went very conveniently into a headline'.

Macmillan also later referred to it as 'unfortunate, although perhaps inevitable, that the British Press singled out certain phrases like "wind of change" as headlines or accentuated certain passages which were likely to cause the most hostile comment in South Africa, without giving some of the balancing phrases and tributes to the history of Dutch and British alike in building up such a great structure of economic strength by individual effort and devotion'.<sup>167</sup> By highlighting specific words and phrases, and thereby producing a distilled and partial version of a fuller and more measured speech, the British press contributed to frustrating the British Government's attempts to adopt a more 'middle of the road' public policy towards apartheid South Africa. The following month, in a television broadcast, Macmillan explained to viewers that although he had recently spoken of 'the wind of change

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<sup>164</sup> Lewis, "'White Man'", pp. 77-8.

<sup>165</sup> *Guardian*, 4 February 1960, p. 8; *Herald*, 4 February 1960, fp.

<sup>166</sup> Hunt, *On the Spot*, p. 116.

<sup>167</sup> Macmillan, *Pointing the Way*, pp. 159-60.

that was blowing through Africa... that's not the same thing as a howling tempest which will blow away the whole of the new developing civilization. We must, at all costs, avoid that.'<sup>168</sup>

The British press reports and editorials had a certain amount of impact inside South Africa, which the speech did not; mirroring the patterns of press reporting and its effects in Central Africa. Dubow explains that Macmillan's words initially ruffled few feathers within Nationalist circles. Hunt recalled that during the speech he had witnessed 'no reaction' from the audience at the paragraph dealing with the 'wind of change'.<sup>169</sup> Although he thought that Macmillan's address had 'rattled' Verwoerd, he disagreed with some journalists that the South African Premier's reply had been 'poor'.<sup>170</sup> Sampson recorded that the House had first 'applauded' the speech; that Verwoerd had then 'politely agreed to differ'; and that in the lobby afterwards the MPs had been 'enthusiastic about the oratory': 'they seemed flattered to hear South Africa involved in this great historical survey'.<sup>171</sup> Worsthorne, too, witnessed no divisive fall-out. He characterised the general feeling in the lobby afterwards as anti-climactic:<sup>172</sup> 'The long-awaited thunderbolt had come and gone and nobody felt much the worse for it'.<sup>173</sup> 'That Britain disapproved of apartheid came as no surprise. What had caused anxiety was the fear that Britain might be preparing to do something about it', he added astutely: 'The Nationalist response in short was one of relief'.<sup>174</sup>

In stark contrast to descriptions of Nationalist reactions to the speech in its immediate aftermath, were accounts of the response during the following few days and weeks. Many believed that British press reports had contributed to this eventual 'coming home'. However, this was not because of what they 'explained' or 'revealed' of the text of the speech, as journalists at the time alluded to, rather derogatively. South Africans knew that Macmillan had been critical, but they had also heard his reassurances.<sup>175</sup> Instead, as in the Federation, the significance of newspaper articles lay more with what they signified of 'general opinion' in Britain.

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<sup>168</sup> Ward, 'Whirlwind', p. 54.

<sup>169</sup> Hunt, *On the Spot*, p. 116.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. p. 117.

<sup>171</sup> Sampson, *Macmillan*, p. 188.

<sup>172</sup> Worsthorne, *Tricks*, p. 195.

<sup>173</sup> *Telegraph*, 4 February 1960, fp.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Dubow, 'Macmillan, Verwoerd'.

Macmillan recalled that 'it was not until the news came of the reception of the speech in Britain and throughout the world that criticism combined with a good deal of self-pity and resentment began to develop',<sup>176</sup> and commentary in some sections of the South African press appear to confirm this view. An editorial in the *Cape Times* on the 5<sup>th</sup>, entitled 'Isolated', characterised 'the reactions to Mr. Macmillan's speech' as 'almost as significant as the speech itself': 'Throughout the Western world the speech has been taken as stating the Western way of life in the African context'.<sup>177</sup> The *Rand Daily Mail* agreed. 'Apart from the immediate impact of Mr. Macmillan's speech...', the editor reflected, 'the speech has also had a delayed effect which may be even more profound'.<sup>178</sup> 'The general approval that has greeted Mr. Macmillan's speech overseas', he continued, 'indicates that if the West has to choose between the good will of South Africa and that of the other African countries or the smaller powers of the Far East, it will be ready, however gradually, to turn its back on this country and its unpopular policies'.

British press comment, in conjunction with other international responses, resonated to a degree that Macmillan's speech had not. This was because, in their unanimity and in their words of praise for the British Prime Minister, British journalists demonstrated the extent of South Africa's isolation in ways Macmillan's speech could merely describe. The press continued to hamper the British Government's efforts to maintain equable relations with the South African Government. It did this by signing Britain up to a more radical stance than Macmillan had perhaps intended, and which became the focus of international acclaim, but also by fuelling fears within white South African society of British attitudes and intentions.

Dubow has linked the speech to the subsequent efforts of the Union Government to strengthen the system of apartheid as well as to Verwoerd's success in rallying support for a republic.<sup>179</sup> Yet if newspaper coverage had played a role in amplifying the speech's import inside South Africa, there is a possibility that it was not the address itself, but the British press and other responses to it, which contributed to the series of 'shocks' to follow, including the Sharpeville massacre, the subject of Chapter Five; the establishment of a republic; and South Africa's

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<sup>176</sup> Macmillan, *Pointing the Way*, p. 159.

<sup>177</sup> *Cape Times*, 5 February 1960, p. 12.

<sup>178</sup> *Rand Daily Mail*, 8 February 1960, p. 8.

<sup>179</sup> Dubow, 'Macmillan, Verwoerd'.

decision not to renew its application for Commonwealth membership. Thus although the press appeared to be on the side of the Africans, and had also in a sense ‘saved Britain’s skin’ in its depictions of Macmillan’s speech, with positive effects for British readers,<sup>180</sup> in the long run it may inadvertently have contributed to worsening the situation for black South Africans.

## Conclusion

This chapter emphasises the British Government’s failure effectively to manage the rhetoric of the end of empire in Africa, particularly in its relations with white settler communities. It underscores the reactionary nature of much of Macmillan’s language, which Lewis and Dubow have identified. Yet, in some contrast to their pieces, it also argues that the Africa tour had an important role and impact that was not confined to Britain; and it places the British press at the heart of these developments.

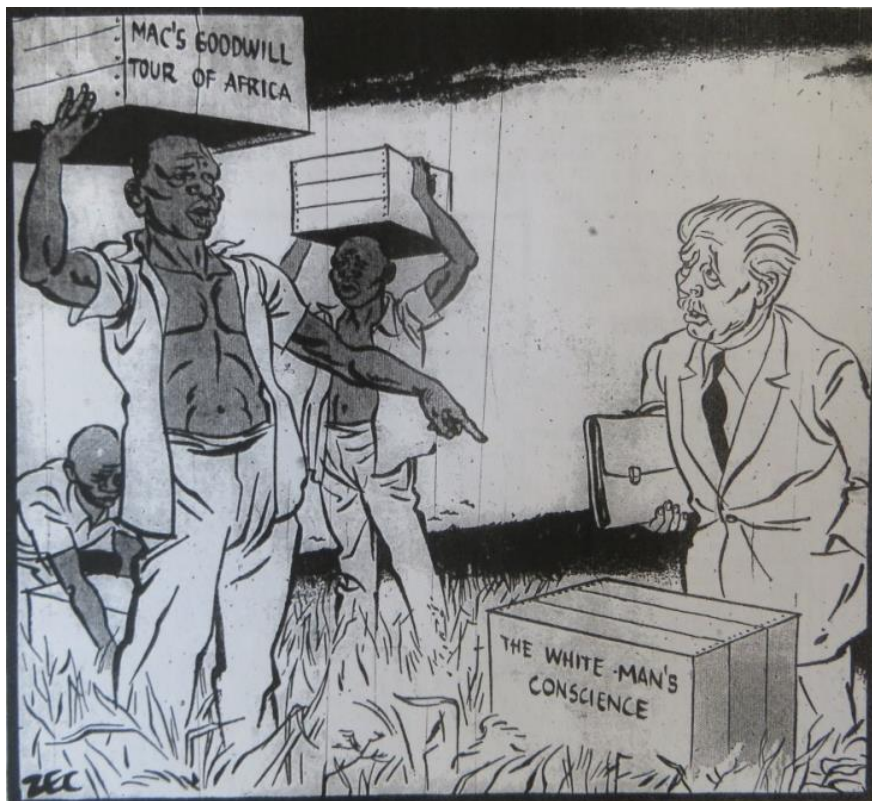
Throughout the tour, diversity and difference across Africa were key official themes. The achievement of co-existence or ‘multi-racialism’, interdependence, patience, and the promotion of mutual understanding and respect through dialogue and through Commonwealth ties were concepts Macmillan strove to promote. Yet British journalists, partly as interlocutors, partly as critics and activists, and partly as perceived signifiers of British public opinion, consistently frustrated the British Government’s ability to impose its narrative on the politics of the imperial endgame, with important consequences.

Press content had implications for British policy, and, as part of this, contributed to damaging Britain’s relations with the governing white settler communities of Central and South Africa. It also continued to ensure that British readers were plied with ideas compatible with the trend to decolonisation. And not only that: it presented Britain as the champion of freedom, including in its own empire, and in some contravention of Macmillan’s statements. Newspaper coverage continued to reflect more than the Government’s public relations efforts, but also personal, ideological and institutional factors influencing British journalists, which

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<sup>180</sup> Lewis, “‘White Man’”.

interacted with African efforts to exploit the British presence locally as a means of advancing the nationalist cause.



**"That's the load no one can carry for you"**



From top to bottom:  
*Herald*, 5 January  
 1960, p. 4; *Guardian*,  
 5 January 1960, fp.



From left to right: *Mirror*, 8  
 January 1960, p. 10; *Herald*, 8  
 January 1960, fp.



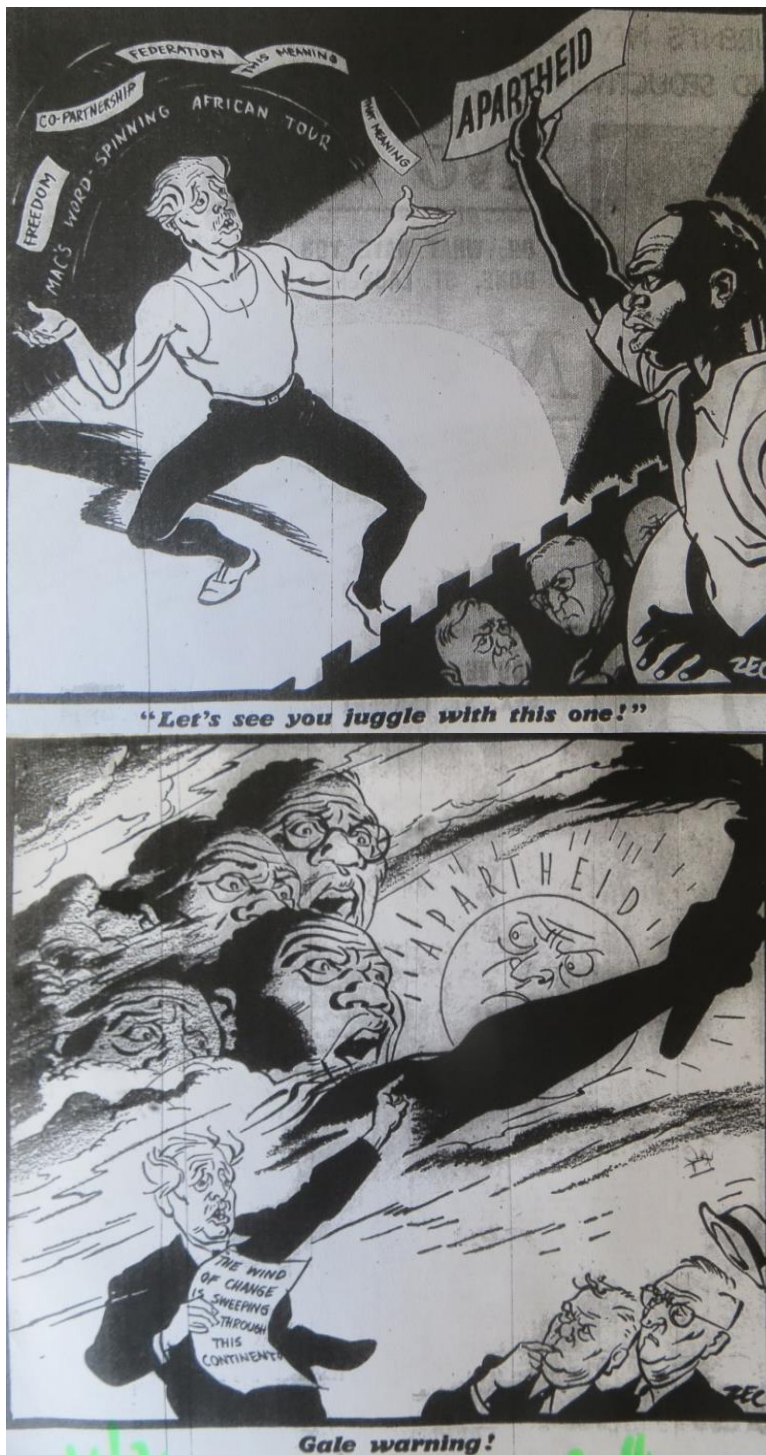


From top to bottom: *Mail*, 18 January 1960, p. 6; *Express*, 20 January 1960, p. 6.





From top to bottom: *Herald*,  
21 January 1960, p. 4;  
*Guardian*, 22 January 1960, p.  
11.



From top to bottom: *Herald*,  
28 January 1960, p. 4; *Herald*,  
4 February 1960, p. 4.





"The wind of change is blowing through the Continent"  
—MR. MACMILLAN



'We see ourselves as a true white State in Southern Africa,  
with a possibility of granting a full future to the black man  
in our midst.'—Dr. Verwoerd

From top to bottom: *Mirror*, 4 February 1960, p. 3; *Observer*, 7 February 1960, p. 6.

## Chapter 4

### *'The paladins of Fleet Street':<sup>1</sup> The 'Blantyre riot', Nyasaland, January, 1960*

'An ugly disturbance flared up here today outside a hotel where Mr. Macmillan lunched with the Mayor on roast pheasant flown from Scotland'.<sup>2</sup> So began a report filed from Nyasaland on 26 January 1960, by Sydney Jacobson, political editor of the *Mirror*. Jacobson was reporting on Macmillan's visit to Ryall's Hotel in Blantyre, Nyasaland, for a luncheon held in his honour. Macmillan was two weeks into his famous 'wind of change' tour of Africa, throughout which the foreign press corps was a ubiquitous presence. Earlier that day, in anticipation of the Prime Minister's arrival at the hotel, a group of fifty to eighty members of the youth wing of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) had gathered to call for the release of Banda, independence for the Protectorate, and its secession from the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.<sup>3</sup>

The Emergency was still very much in force at the time of Macmillan's tour, and African disaffection remained strong. Indeed, the Emergency appears merely to have added fuel to the fire of discontent. African displeasure was widespread and deep-seated and not, as Armitage surmised, the consequence of Congress 'agitation'.<sup>4</sup> New leaders soon emerged; and the MCP was born.<sup>5</sup> Crucially, too, the Emergency gave life to the view, if this were needed, that Federation was indeed an ordeal to be resisted. Rhodesian troops played an important part in the suppression of African protest, which included the killing of Africans, in addition to other brutal, coercive practices.<sup>6</sup> The strong arm of the state was omnipresent, apparently unimpeachable, and continually augmented. In addition to the increased troop presence, the Emergency led to further expansion of the Nyasaland police force, which had always had a fraught relationship with the population of the protectorate.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Southworth Commission Report* (Zomba, Nyasaland, 1960), p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Mirror*, 27 January 1960, bp.

<sup>3</sup> For the figures, see: *Southworth Commission Report*, p. 81. For the placards, see: CO 1069/110 (Photographs of Blantyre riots, Jan, 1960).

<sup>4</sup> McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 140. Power, *Political Culture*, p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> Power, *Political Culture*, p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> *Report of the Nyasaland Commission of Inquiry*.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, John McCracken, 'Coercion and Control in Nyasaland: Aspects of the History of a Colonial Police Force', *The Journal of African History*, 27: 1 (1986), pp. 127-47; John McCracken, 'Authority and Legitimacy in Malawi: Policing and Politics in a Colonial State' in David M.

Importantly, the police had an official coercive function as an arm of government as opposed to being involved purely in the prevention and the detection of crime.<sup>8</sup> It was also officered solely by Europeans.

At the time of the tour, there had been one ‘concession’: the authorities had given Africans special permission to assemble.<sup>9</sup> Yet banners and placards, outlawed during these months, remained forbidden. African and European police officers stood guard outside the hotel, with further Africans, members of the European settler community and local and foreign correspondents looking on;<sup>10</sup> a combustible crowd, which amounted to some 800-1000 people.<sup>11</sup>

Accounts of what happened subsequently varied widely between each group. Yet British journalists were in striking agreement: a loud but largely peaceful African protest (with banners) had descended into a riot owing to the idiocy and brutality of a number of the European police officers present. ‘Police blunder starts battle’,<sup>12</sup> ‘Blunder at Blantyre - British police provoke riots on Macmillan visit’,<sup>13</sup> ‘Shaming scenes at Blantyre’,<sup>14</sup> and ‘Vicious...Violent – then came the rain’,<sup>15</sup> were some of the headlines the following day.

Prominent claims common to all or the majority of the reports were that the police had caused the first incident by tearing down the demonstrators’ banners and by making arrests;<sup>16</sup> and that European police officers had used batons, canes or sticks on African protesters.<sup>17</sup> Jacobson told *Mirror* readers that he saw a European police officer ‘repeatedly knee African youths in the groin and another officer beat heads with his stick’.<sup>18</sup> Bonnett (*Daily Mail*) wrote that he had seen ‘a leading

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Anderson and David Killingray (eds.), *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics, Nationalism and the Police, 1917-65* (Manchester, 1992), pp. 158-86; Owen J. M. Kalinga, ‘The 1959 Nyasaland State of Emergency in Old Karonga District’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36: 4 (2010), pp. 743-63.

<sup>8</sup> In particular, McCracken, ‘Coercion and Control’.

<sup>9</sup> Armitage to Macleod, 27 January 1960 (received 28 January), fol. 3, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>10</sup> CO 1069/110; *Southworth Commission Report*; all news reports.

<sup>11</sup> *Southworth Commission Report*, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> *Mirror*, 27 January 1960, bp.

<sup>13</sup> *Mail*, 27 January 1960, fp, continued p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> *News Chronicle*, 27 January 1960, fp.

<sup>15</sup> *Herald*, 27 January 1960, p. 7. Photo introducing the report fp.

<sup>16</sup> *Mirror*, 27 January 1960, bp; *Mail*, 27 January 1960, fp & p. 9; *Express*, 27 January 1960, fp & p. 2; *News Chronicle*, 27 January 1960, fp; *Herald*, 27 January 1960, p. 7; *Telegraph*, 27 January 1960, fp.

<sup>17</sup> *Mirror*, 27 January 1960, bp; *Mail*, 27 January 1960, fp; *Express*, 27 January 1960, p. 2; *News Chronicle*, 27 January 1960, fp; *Herald*, 27 January 1960, p. 7; *Times*, 27 January 1960, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Mirror*, 27 January 1960, bp.

Blantyre policeman... deliberately, time after time, stamp on women's bare feet'.<sup>19</sup> Describing the moment a series of arrests of African demonstrators had been made, Worsthorne (*Telegraph*) explained that 'European police officers... began seizing Africans from the crowd indiscriminately and bundling them roughly with punches and whip slashes, into caged lorries'.<sup>20</sup> MacColl (*Express*) thought he saw the police deploy 'a large Black Maria'.<sup>21</sup> Next to their reports, the *Mail*, *Mirror* and *Herald* published a photograph of a white police officer cradling a female African demonstrator in his arms, apparently having fainted. The white settler onlookers also drew press attention. Worsthorne recorded that he heard a European comment: "Funny little monkeys aren't they?".

Not all of the articles were as incriminatory, a point to which we shall return. Even in the left-leaning press, journalists such as Jacobson and Walter Legge, stringing for the *Herald*, had tempered the critical core of their articles with the observation that most of the police had behaved with 'patience'.<sup>22</sup> A number of the articles suggested that the demonstrators had been eager to court arrest.<sup>23</sup> Two papers went much further in putting the police case. Sharpley's piece for the *Evening Standard* did not mention police violence or police provocation.<sup>24</sup> It focused instead on the violence of the demonstrators, whom the journalist referred to as a 'frenzied, dancing, yelling mob'. James Bishop's report for *The Times* also laid emphasis on the activity of the African crowd, which, the correspondent explained, had 'set up a prolonged growling cry' and had engaged in activities explicitly designed to provoke the police, such as 'knocking off policemen's caps'.<sup>25</sup> *The Times* and the *Telegraph* published photos not of the collapsed African lady, but of the demonstration itself.

The reports reached Britain the following morning, where they immediately became the focus of discussion in Parliament. Jo Grimond, the leader of the Liberal Party, asked the Colonial Secretary, Iain Macleod, to consider holding an impartial inquiry.<sup>26</sup> Newspapers soon made similar calls. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, the *Mirror* published an

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<sup>19</sup> *Mail*, 27 January 1960, fp.

<sup>20</sup> *Telegraph*, 27 January 1960, bp.

<sup>21</sup> *Express*, 27 January 1960, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Mirror*, 27 January 1960, bp; *Herald*, 27 January 1960, p. 7. Jacobson's word.

<sup>23</sup> *Mail*, 27 January 1960, p. 9; *Express*, 27 January 1960, p. 2; *News Chronicle*, 27 January 1960, fp; *Times*, 27 January 1960, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Evening Standard*, 26 January 1960, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> *Times*, 27 January 1960, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> HC Deb 27 January 1960, vol 616, col 170.

editorial calling on Macmillan and Macleod to end the ‘police state’ in the Protectorate, a reference to Devlin’s assessment of the state of colonial Nyasaland just six months previously.<sup>27</sup> Also on the 28<sup>th</sup>, in an article flanked by three faceless silhouettes with question marks where their features should have been, the *Herald* demanded that the British Government ‘name’ the guilty officers, ‘prosecute them’, and ‘appoint an impartial tribunal to inquire into the Nyasaland police at once’.<sup>28</sup> *Herald* readers learned of a ‘challenge’ their paper had sent to Armitage, to this effect.<sup>29</sup> The *Mail* had also contacted the Governor, this time by telephone, calling for an inquiry.<sup>30</sup>

On 2 February, Macleod told the Commons that an inquiry was to be set up.<sup>31</sup> In view of the seriousness of the allegations made, he added, he had ‘felt it desirable not to rely on the ordinary Departmental form of inquiry’. It was to be impartial. Callaghan responded with rare words of praise. ‘Is the right hon. Gentleman aware’, he congratulated the Colonial Secretary, ‘of the striking contrast this is to the attitude of his predecessor, who, in relation to a much more serious matter at Hola, when 11 Africans lost their lives, appointed only a Departmental inquiry into the circumstances?’<sup>32</sup> Hola had been the subject of intense parliamentary debate the year before. It was now Blantyre’s turn. The Opposition had asked, and they had received. Parliamentary criticism subsided.

Yet this was by no means the full story. Nor was it the end. Ten of the correspondents involved flew back to Blantyre in the days which followed to be questioned by a High Court judge.

This chapter pursues and develops those arguments of the preceding chapter which concern British press treatment of the Federation, British journalists’ main preoccupation in Africa during these months and years. The particular event which it focuses on, which became known as ‘the Blantyre riot’, has not been analysed in any depth in any histories of decolonisation or nationalism. Yet it provides an important prism through which we might gain further insight not only into the role of the British press at the end of empire, but also into more of the neglected characteristics of the decolonisation process at large, as Chapters One to Three have

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<sup>27</sup> *Mirror*, 28 January 1960, p. 2. See Chapter Two.

<sup>28</sup> *Herald*, 28 January 1960, fp.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Mail*, 28 January 1960, fp (continued p. 4).

<sup>31</sup> HC Deb 2 February 1960, vol 616, col 792.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, col 795.



begun to set out. Here, therefore, in this chapter's discussion of 'the Blantyre riot', the opportunity is taken not only to corroborate more fully and to develop the arguments of Chapter Three concerning the nature, effects of and effects on British press coverage of the Federation; but also explicitly to foreground this thesis's subsidiary or underlying core arguments concerning further neglected aspects of decolonisation, which this study of the role of British newspaper coverage of Africa brings to light. It draws on the same sources as the previous chapter.

Concerning the first goal, it continues to emphasise the theme of African action, together with the press's very negative depictions of white settler society. It discusses the presence, even prominence, of the theme of colonial brutality, but is careful to contextualise and critically to assess its relevance and role. It continues to underscore the multifarious nature of influences on coverage, emphasising in this instance the role of Africans in exploiting the British press's local presence. It also examines the continued impact of British press coverage on white settler communities, the power of the press in its relations with the British Government, the significance of its coverage to African nationalists, and its possible implications for British readerships. It continues to describe the effects of coverage in terms of a wider nexus of perceptions and interactions, which included British parliamentary proceedings, specific sets of historical concerns, and assumptions regarding the relationship of British press content to British public opinion, and of either or both of these to British policy.

In relation to the second goal, to foreground this thesis's core subsidiary non-press-related running themes, the chapter makes five points. One centres on the significance of ordinary people and publics to developments. A second concerns the sense of contingency, which, it suggests, suffused each moment. The chapter therefore moves away from the themes of momentum, of planning and of inevitability, which often characterise the grand narratives of the experience of decolonisation. A third theme concerns the British Government's handling of the business of decolonisation, which it suggests was not always slick, but messy at times, ironical and sometimes amusing to behold. A fourth theme turns on the view that African action might be repositioned at the heart of imperial histories or of histories of Britain's experience of decolonisation in Africa, and also of the very process. Press coverage of Africa over this period is useful in reminding us that at most, if not all, important moments the actions of Africans were pivotal, and that the

African ‘collective’ was omnipresent in British minds. A fifth neglected characteristic, which runs throughout this chapter, centres on the critical significance of ‘imaginaries’, such as perceptions, image, hopes and fears, to historical actors caught up in this momentous, life-changing process. This thesis’s focus on mediation brings to the fore the moments at which words and actions were ‘lost in translation’, why and with what effect.

1. Fear and loathing in Central Africa: White settler responses to British press treatment of Blantyre

For the white communities of the Federation, Macleod’s decision to call an inquiry was an anathema. Yet these white groups directed their anger not towards the organisers of the demonstration, the Malawi Youth League (MYL); or indeed the colonial police; but rather, British journalists. It seems that adopting this focus provided a useful means by which those sections of white society resistant to change avoided having to confront more discomfiting issues, such as African agency, African discontent, and police brutality. Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that the settlers’ focus was conscious or insincere. White society had normalised racial rule, preferred to think of itself as benevolent; and, as part of Armitage’s reasoning for declaring the Emergency indicated, even government policy operated on the basis that African grievances were un-organic and imposed or cultivated by politicians and outsiders. As we have seen, it also had good reason to monitor British public opinion.

By the time of Macleod’s announcement on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, tensions were running high as a result of what was thought to be extreme British press distortion of the incident. The settler press was again at the forefront of efforts to assemble and disseminate the disturbing news to its white readership. ‘Wild’ was the word the *Rhodesia Herald* chose to describe the reaction of Blantyre’s white community two days after the press reports emerged: ‘In every hotel, shop and pub in the town the British Press is being condemned’.<sup>33</sup> On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, in an article entitled ‘Blantyre is seething at Fleet Street’, the *Nyasaland Times* summed up the response from within

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<sup>33</sup> *Rhodesia Herald*, 29 January 1960, p. 2.

Blantyre's European community.<sup>34</sup> According to the writer, 'Hundreds of photographs, both still and cine', of the scene outside Ryall's Hotel had been brought to the Nyasaland police 'to counter accusations of provocation and brutality made by sections of the British Press, the Liberal and the Labour Parties'. Eye-witness accounts of the scene had been sent to the Nyasaland police. The Settlers and Residents of Nyasaland Association had sent the Federal Minister of Home Affairs a letter of complaint in which it had suggested that 'when Press reports alleging police brutality can be laid at the door of any individual, he should be declared a prohibited immigrant'. This letter had also been sent to the Governor of Nyasaland, the Colonial Secretary and press unions.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the *Nyasaland Times* had itself received letters from concerned members of the European public, many of which it published in full or quoted form.

Concern was not confined to Nyasaland. In Salisbury, the *Rhodesia Herald* printed five photographs of a set of twenty-four of the incident taken by one of its correspondents, which appeared conclusively to refute the substance of the majority of the claims appearing in the British press.<sup>36</sup> MacColl was pictured in one, watching the action, hand on hip, apparently sipping a gin and tonic.<sup>37</sup> This image was subsequently sent to the Colonial Office, together with photos of the large African crowd heckling the police, either flanked by orderly lines of African police officers or wrestling, seemingly good-humouredly, with European ones.<sup>38</sup> A Federal Film Unit captured the demonstration on camera. Its pictures were used at the subsequent inquiry, reinforcing the message conveyed by the *Rhodesia Herald* photographer.<sup>39</sup>

Politicians also took action. On 5 February, the *Nyasaland Times* printed a letter its editor had received from two MPs, John Stratton (Limbe), and Frank

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<sup>34</sup> *Nyasaland Times*, 2 February 1960, fp.

<sup>35</sup> The National Union of Journalists, The General Council of the Press, The Institute of Journalists and The British Newspaper Proprietors' Association.

<sup>36</sup> *Rhodesia Herald*, 2 February 1960, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Also see: CO 1069/110.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> I would like to thank one of the anonymous readers of *JSAS* for drawing my attention to this. I have been unable to find the original Federal Film Unit footage, but contemporary footage of the incident can be found in the British Movietone Digital Archive under 'The Blantyre Disturbances', 1 February 1960, available at [http://www.movietone.com/N\\_search.cfm?ActionFlag=back2ResultsView&start=1&pageStart=&V\\_DateType=&V\\_DECADE=&V\\_FromYear=&V\\_QualifySubject=&V\\_TermsToOmit=&V\\_ToYear=&V\\_searchType=&V\\_MainSubject=&V\\_Year=&V\\_resultsPerPage=1&V\\_storyNumber=79219](http://www.movietone.com/N_search.cfm?ActionFlag=back2ResultsView&start=1&pageStart=&V_DateType=&V_DECADE=&V_FromYear=&V_QualifySubject=&V_TermsToOmit=&V_ToYear=&V_searchType=&V_MainSubject=&V_Year=&V_resultsPerPage=1&V_storyNumber=79219)

Collins (Blantyre), which they had also sent to Roy Welensky,<sup>40</sup> and which described the steps that they were taking.<sup>41</sup> These included writing to the Minister of External Affairs, asking him first ‘to request our High Commissioner in London to write to the British newspapers which have published untruthful reports drawing their attention to the true facts of the case and asking them to publish a retraction’; and second, ‘to make an official, international protest to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom about H.M. Secretary of State for the Colonies referring in the House of Commons to the incidents in Blantyre as a “riot”’. ‘We regret the length of this letter’, it ended, ‘but we consider the matter to be one which may have repercussions affecting the future of the Federation as a whole and Nyasaland in particular. We will not stand idly by while the future of our country is prejudiced by sensational falsehoods’.

The general consensus in settler responses to British press treatment of the incident was that British journalists had been wrong to accuse the Nyasaland police of brutality. They were thought to have misrepresented what had occurred. And not only this. As the editor of the *Nyasaland Times* put it, British correspondents had apparently done so wilfully, ‘disregarding facts for the sake of getting a story’.<sup>42</sup> Yet there was also a further dimension, which recalled settler responses to ‘the Lagos statement’. This featured in the letter from Stratton and Collins, and concerned the character of the relationship between the British press, the British Government and the future of the Federation. The fact that Macleod had responded so swiftly to press claims deemed highly dubious, fuelled a sense of anxiety within the white community about the nature of Britain’s colonial policy and the apparent power of the press to push the Government in a direction it had not intended. Just days before, in Salisbury, if we recall, Macmillan had defended the Federation in soaring terms.<sup>43</sup>

Stratton and Collins were not the only ones to suspect that something was up – even before the inquiry had been called. The *Nyasaland Times* also condemned ‘the apparent readiness of the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Macleod, to accept the

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<sup>40</sup> Stratton and Collins to Welensky, 3 February 1960, MSS. Welensky 642/4. The letter can also be found in CO 1015/2239.

<sup>41</sup> *Nyasaland Times*, 5 February 1960, fp.

<sup>42</sup> *Nyasaland Times*, 2 February 1960, fp.

<sup>43</sup> ‘I say and say again’, he had declared, ‘it (Federation) began and it lives with high and honourable purposes... many of your problems are difficult – but the prize is great’. ‘Main policy speech: Address by the Rt. Hon. Harold Macmillan, M.P., to the Rhodesia National Affairs Association: Salisbury, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1960’, CAB 129/101, pp. 120-5, p. 125. Parenthesis and its contents added.

malicious reports printed in some British newspapers'.<sup>44</sup> 'That he has called for a report at all', the paper explained, 'tends to discredit Nyasaland in the eyes of the world and gives ammunition to those who have proved themselves the ruthless enemies of all the law-abiding people of Nyasaland stand for'.<sup>45</sup> A concerned reader wrote into the paper at the start of February to suggest that 'in the light of recent events, one must seriously ask: Does the Daily Paper Rule Britannia'?<sup>46</sup>

In a manner consistent with the fall-out following 'the Lagos statement', the white settler responses to the Blantyre incident possessed an historical significance broader than that of the immediate chain of events, feeding off, as well as fuelling, existing patterns of thought and behaviour characteristic of that group's experience of the decolonisation process. As we saw in Chapter Three, British press coverage of specific local events acquired an amplified significance in settler minds because it connected with their pre-existing fears concerning the nature of British public opinion, the role of the press in reflecting and/or constituting this, and the growing susceptibility of the governing Conservative Party to one or both of these pressures.

There was also a cultural dimension to settler responses which deserves scrutiny. On an intrinsic level, British newspaper articles informed white settler narratives of 'self' and 'community'. In other words, they provided material with which these groups defined what it was to be a white African in 1960. Again, previous studies have focused on the role of British policy in informing these sorts of 'national' narratives.<sup>47</sup> Yet the British low political or 'popular' dimension to policy was also important. Judging from the tone of settler responses to British press treatment of Blantyre, these narratives represented a backlash to their belief that the British public regarded white society as cruel-hearted, away with the fairies, and very, very foreign. That there was an element of truth to journalists' descriptions did not matter much. Again, white society had normalised racial rule. The British popular press, moreover, alienated potential allies by over-generalising, describing white society in blanket terms; and rarely, if ever, displaying an appreciation of white settlers' historical circumstances, opting instead to attribute their faults to evil machinations. Press content fuelled the fear and anxiety which is understood, in

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<sup>44</sup> *Nyasaland Times*, 2 February 1960, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Nyasaland Times*, 2 February 1960, fp.

<sup>47</sup> Lowry, "'Shame Upon 'Little England'"; Schwarz, *White Man's World*; Ward, 'Whirlwind, Hurricane, Howling Tempest'.

many ways, to underlie or to define white settler cultures.<sup>48</sup> Yet simultaneously, and rather paradoxically, it reinforced an image of settler society as supremely confident and in control.

Importantly, too, as we shall see in the following chapter, and in a manner which recalls British press treatment of independent Ghana, British journalists lacked a full awareness of the nature of Britain's colonial involvement in Central Africa, which aggravated relations.<sup>49</sup> In most cases, this inaccuracy turned on the starkness or simplicity of the press's 'goodie' (British)/'baddie' (settler) narrative. Yet it would be possible to cite numerous additional examples of similarly unhelpful representations, such as the well-intentioned argument that it was now time for the world to move on from empire, because this displayed no cognizance of how hard such a move would be for those who had settled in parts of it (in Britain's name, moreover). Such depictions proved beneficial for British readers' understanding of the decolonisation process, but in Africa they generated a lot of resentment.

The siege mentality which is said to have informed the decision of Southern Rhodesia's white leadership to declare independence from Britain unilaterally in 1965 was born of a sense of its people's historical exclusivity, British Government policy, and the rise of African nationalism.<sup>50</sup> Yet settler responses to British press treatment of the 1959 Emergency, Lagos and then Blantyre, to name three critical events, indicate that it would be unwise to neglect the possible additional significance of British press and public, as distinct from British Government, engagement with white settler groupings over the *longue durée*. These interactions formed the stuff of everyday experience. Unlike politicians, journalists did not mince their words. They may thus have drummed down deeper into the psyches of those affected. It is possible that the *Rhodesia Herald*, being supportive of 'the old

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<sup>48</sup> Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939* (Durham, US, 1987).

<sup>49</sup> Much of the press conveyed the impression that British colonial rule in the protectorates of Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia was immune from the sorts of abuses which characterised both white minority rule in self-governing Southern Rhodesia and Federal over-rule. Two recent works which provide detailed sections on the invasive effects of British colonial rule in Malawi are: McCracken, *History of Malawi*, and Power, *Political Culture*.

<sup>50</sup> Robert C. Good, *U.D.I.: The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion* (London, 1973); Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London, 1978); Anthony Verrier, *The Road to Zimbabwe, 1890-1980* (London, 1986).

Establishment',<sup>51</sup> also intentionally exacerbated the situation by disseminating the worst kinds of British press narratives. However, the significance of this last point should not be overstated. British press narratives were critical, often very personal and very rude, and white settlers also voiced their concerns privately.

On a more general level, case studies such as this, then, can also begin to give us fresh insight into some of the neglected characteristics or dynamics of the decolonisation process. For the white settler communities of Central Africa, as for many of the other groups examined here, the end of empire was not experienced as a high-level political affair, but was one in which the day-to-day actions of ordinary people and publics were just as important. It is a point worth stating that even in a grand, global historical process such as European decolonisation, which might in some regions of the world be tracked back to the end of the nineteenth-century, futures were not conceived of as pre-ordained, even in 1960.<sup>52</sup> Nor was decolonisation experienced as revolving solely around official Government committees, commissions and reports. Historical actors approached the future piecemeal, often at the level of the community, with hopes and fears attached to each event, and thus it was considered necessary to engage at each moment, as African nationalists and settlers did in the case of Blantyre.

Much imperial historiography, with its emphasis on the internal Government reports of 1959 and changes in policy from the autumn in particular, might lead us to infer that the work of the British press merely provided a means by which settlers 'came to know' a progressive British colonial policy sooner than the British Government had planned. Yet as this thesis has already tried to suggest, we might question the extent of the Government's progressiveness at the start of 1960. All the evidence cited here suggests that when it came to the Federation, British journalists were not merely observing and documenting events, but also contributing to outcomes.

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<sup>51</sup> For an analysis of the role of the media during the years of Rhodesian Front rule, see: Elaine Windrich, 'Rhodesian Censorship: The Role of the Media in the Making of a One-Party State', *African Affairs*, 78: 313 (1979), pp. 523-34, p. 523.

<sup>52</sup> In their introduction to the *Wind of Change* collection, Larry Butler and Sarah Stockwell also discuss the importance of avoiding adopting a teleological approach to the study of the end of empire. Stockwell and Butler, 'Introduction', *Wind of Change*, pp. 1-19.

## 2. The British press, British public opinion, and British policy

### i. Factors influencing the calling of an inquiry

In the case of Blantyre, settler suspicions regarding the nature of the relationship between the British press and the British Government proved hugely accurate. Parliament had played a crucial intermediary role in bringing pressure to bear, as it had over the duration of the tour as a whole.

The British Government had received reports from Nyasaland from as early as 28 January, the day following the initial discussions in Parliament, which suggested that the press had grossly exaggerated what had occurred. These included an official report, which Armitage had sent to the Colonial Office Press Section,<sup>53</sup> details of a preliminary police report,<sup>54</sup> and a summary of the events of the 26<sup>th</sup>, also from Armitage, addressed to Brook, who was with the Prime Minister in South Africa.<sup>55</sup> Yet the Government leant towards holding an inquiry even at this very early stage. The reason given was that relying on a Governor's report 'wouldn't begin to satisfy the House or the Country'.<sup>56</sup> On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Macleod cabled Armitage to explain his predicament. 'I shall do everything possible to keep this incident in its proper proportions despite press exaggeration and political heat which has been generated', he told the Governor.<sup>57</sup> 'I shall, however, have to satisfy the House about the police action generally. There will undoubtedly be demand for general inquiry, which I shall resist; but I doubt if I shall be able to restrain the criticism unless I can say that some formal enquiry is to be undertaken'. Even after he had received further information from the Governor, together with a plea not to prejudge the issue or to act prematurely,<sup>58</sup> Macleod remained convinced of the need to hold an inquiry and began to prepare for an announcement to this effect. British public and parliamentary opinion was perceived as acute and in many ways irresistible.

Macleod set out his views most extensively on 1 February, the day before his announcement to Parliament that an inquiry was to be held, in a telegram to

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<sup>53</sup> Referred to in: Armitage to Macleod, received 28 January 1960, fol. 3, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Armitage to Brook; repeated to Macleod, 28 January 1960, fol. 26A, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>56</sup> Note attached to copy of police report sent from Nyasaland, received 28 January 1960, fol. 22, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>57</sup> Macleod to Armitage, 28 January 1960, fol. 28, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>58</sup> Armitage to Macleod, 30 January 1960, fol. 29, CO 1015/2239.



Armitage in which he informed him of his final decision. The perceived state of metropolitan opinion again featured heavily in this, as did Macleod's acceptance that events in Blantyre had been exaggerated by the British press. 'I fully understand your reactions', he wrote, 'and I agree that B.B.C. film of this incident, which I have seen in full, confirms that press accounts of the demonstration were grossly exaggerated. These reports have however given rise to a good deal of anxiety... In view of opinion here, and the publication by the press of the names of your Police Officers involved in the incident, I am sure that normal departmental inquiry will not suffice to dispel public anxiety or to clear the names of those Police Officers who have been mentioned. I have, therefore, concluded that an independent Inquiry must be carried out by a Judge in Nyasaland.'<sup>59</sup>

Macleod's telegram underscored the importance he placed on satisfying British public and parliamentary opinion on the events in Blantyre as characterised and relayed by the British press. The decision to hold an inquiry did not appear to reflect the fact either that he believed the press accounts of brutality on the one hand or that he disbelieved the Governor's defence on the other. Nor did it seem to reflect any explicit recognition of the power and justness of the protestors' cause or a concern for their welfare. Adverse press and parliamentary comment seemed reason enough to act.

Its power was likely born of more than that moment alone, mirroring the pattern of settler responses. Press comment had been sorely critical, and almost unanimously so, but it had not been extensive. Before the decision to call an inquiry, there had only been one set of questions tabled in Parliament.<sup>60</sup> The experiences of 1959, and memories of the role that British press and parliamentary pressure had played at that time, following the deaths of a total of over 60 Africans at the hands of the colonial authorities at Hola in Kenya and in Nyasaland, likely loomed large in officials' minds. The subject of police or colonial brutality was very much an open sore, even if, at that time, in the case of the British press, as we will recall, there had been a certain disjuncture at moments between Government perceptions of press content and the nature of newspaper articles, particularly concerning Britain or British responsibility. In the parliamentary discussion on Blantyre on the 2<sup>nd</sup>,

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<sup>59</sup> Macleod to Armitage, 1 February 1960, fol. 41, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>60</sup> On 27 January 1960.

Callaghan had mentioned Hola,<sup>61</sup> and one of his colleagues had cheekily suggested that Devlin could be suitable to head the Blantyre inquiry.<sup>62</sup> The *Mirror* had also mentioned the 'Devlin Inquiry' on the 28<sup>th</sup>, as had the *Herald* in its editorial, to which it had added a reference to 'the Hola Camp scandal in Kenya'.

It is therefore likely that memories of the events of 1959, as refracted through the British press and Parliament, played a part in the Colonial Secretary's swift response to British press reports and parliamentary pressure on Blantyre. Yet, again, this is not to suggest that the Colonial Office was, by early 1960, firmly in the driving seat in its relations with the British press and Parliament, or that Macleod's decision to call an inquiry was merely a symptom of the British Government's changed African or colonial policy by February 1960. Firstly, Macleod's worries appeared to be both real and acute. Secondly, as we have seen, the press and Parliament had a long history of exerting pressure on the British Government on Central African affairs, some of which had previously informed policy, so there was also a history of relations and of a current of power, which should not be ignored. Thirdly, mirroring the previous section's argument concerning the contingency of settler actions, we should remember that the future of the Federation was still very much undecided. We now know that the Monckton Commission, which reported in October of that year, was the key surface factor which paved the way for the dissolution of the Federation. Yet although the nature of the Commission's findings may well have been predicted in early 1960, they were not known, and Government officials behaved accordingly.

ii. The nature of the correspondence between the British press and the Colonial Office concerning the inquiry, February-May, 1960

In the two months which followed, the nature of the correspondence between the Colonial Office and British newspapers further reflected the extent of press power. CO responses recalled Macmillan's irritation during the tour. Press influence found expression in the Colonial Office's desire to please and placate.

Armitage was not with the Colonial Office on this. He was extremely unhappy with Macleod's decision to call an inquiry. 'I note that you consider an

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<sup>61</sup> HC Deb 2 February 1960, vol 616, col 795.

<sup>62</sup> Ernest Fernyhough (Labour). *Ibid.*, col 794.

enquiry by a judge is unavoidable', he informed the Colonial Secretary rather curtly on 2 February: 'I presume you have so decided from press statements and photographs so far not seen by me'.<sup>63</sup> 'No local and specific complaints' had been made against the Nyasaland police, he reminded Macleod the following day.<sup>64</sup> 'Only persons known to have made critical allegations to date have been representatives of the press through the medium of their papers and Orton Chirwa', the acting leader of the MCP. Yet Chirwa had failed to contact the Commissioner of Police or the Attorney-General with a statement committed to writing. Vera Chirwa, Orton Chirwa's wife, has claimed that her husband had secretly supported the actions of the Youth League in assembling outside the Hotel.<sup>65</sup> However, the historiographical consensus appears to be that he had not, in fact, sanctioned this activity,<sup>66</sup> hence, perhaps, his reluctance to become involved in pressing specific allegations.

It was as a consequence of this dearth of 'local and specific complaints' that Armitage was keen to secure the presence at the inquiry of British journalists and others who had made allegations of brutalities.<sup>67</sup> Armitage asked for the assistance of the Colonial Office in securing their presence.<sup>68</sup> In pushing this matter, he was likely responding to a desire within the Federation to take the British press on, once the decision to call an inquiry had been made. Macleod entrusted the appointment of a suitable local judge to Armitage, who soon selected Frederick Southworth,<sup>69</sup> a man the Governor had probably gauged as sympathetic to colonial perspectives. Southworth had had vast experience of colonial law and order enforcement, including from within government, in violent regions such as India during the Second World War, Palestine during partition; and then Tanganyika and the Bahamas, where he had been Acting Governor during 1952.<sup>70</sup> Even at the time a possible inquiry was being mooted by the Colonial Office, Armitage had noted in his diary that if it were to go ahead, 'we would hope people would show up the conduct

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<sup>63</sup> Armitage to Macleod, 2 February 1960, fol. 44, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>64</sup> Armitage to Macleod, 3 February 1960, fol. 50, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>65</sup> Power, *Political Culture*, p. 144.

<sup>66</sup> For example, McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 371.

<sup>67</sup> Armitage to Macleod, 3 February 1960, fol. 50, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Armitage to Macleod, 2 February 1960, fol. 44, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>70</sup> 'SOUTHWORTH, Sir Frederick', *Who Was Who*, A & C Black, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 1920–2014; online edn, Oxford University Press, 2014 ; online edn, April 2014 [<http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U182035>, accessed 15 Aug 2014]

of certain sections of the British press',<sup>71</sup> and the appointment of Southworth was probably part of his strategy, followed by the assembling of press representatives.

Armitage may also have had personal reasons for wishing to confront press representatives head-on. He was certainly on the defensive in his relations with both the Colonial Office and the British public, following stints as Governor of Cyprus as well as of Nyasaland, both during Emergencies. Left-leaning British newspapers and members of the Labour and Liberal Parties had heavily criticised his police force the year before in the wake of the declaration of the emergency in Nyasaland, a judge had dubbed the protectorate over which he presided a 'police state', and on the Left, this term had entered common parlance by the end of the summer of 1959. Armitage, together with Welensky, had borne the brunt of British public and political ire at that time. The thought that British journalists might pillory colonial Nyasaland once more, this time without anyone having been seriously hurt, and then escape with the goods, was too much for Armitage. The Prime Minister's visit appears to have been an occasion when 'the public deliberately exercised restraint in permitting persons to assemble and to remain assembled although a breach of Emergency Regulation 44 was being permitted' - particularly aggravating.<sup>72</sup>

The Colonial Office immediately appeared more cautious. There was certainly no love lost between it and Armitage, a Governor whom it did not hold in great esteem. It agreed that 'all newspapers represented, and Reuters, should be invited to make their correspondents available', although it did take a week to communicate this to Armitage.<sup>73</sup> It also undertook to effect this by contacting the press directly. Yet it was not optimistic about the prospect of receiving replies, suggesting that some within the Colonial Office may have been accustomed to playing second fiddle to the press: 'Our feeling is that only some of those invited will respond', it told Armitage.<sup>74</sup> It felt, too, that 'it may be necessary to offer to pay travelling and subsistence expenses' out of Nyasaland public funds,<sup>75</sup> a request to which Armitage subsequently agreed.

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<sup>71</sup> Nyasaland memoirs: Jan.-May 1960, fol. 17, MSS. Afr. s. 2204 3/1.

<sup>72</sup> Armitage to Macleod, 27 January 1960 (received 28 January), fol. 3, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>73</sup> Macleod to Armitage, 11 February 1960, fol. 59, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

The decision to meet journalists' travel expenses further reflected the extent of press power. For Armitage, the concern was that if the British press did not participate in the inquiry, the Nyasaland Government would never be able effectively to refute the allegations levelled at its police force, and British press representations of events in Blantyre would live on. That he was willing to meet journalists' travel costs is testament to the importance he placed on challenging these representations. In proposing that journalists' travel expenses be met, the Colonial Office on the other hand, was likely motivated by a desire to forestall parliamentary criticism on the matter, given the nature of the discussion on 2 February, when ministers had raised the matter of the inquiry's taking evidence from 'valuable witnesses to these incidents who are no longer in Nyasaland'.<sup>76</sup> It may also have hoped to pre-empt newspapers' concerns and demands, given the level of concern and irritation the British press party had caused Macmillan during the tour, as well as its specific composition, which included political editors and other such influential correspondents.<sup>77</sup>

The mustering of the journalists would not be all plain sailing. On 16 February, Sir Hilton Poynton, Permanent Under-Secretary of the Colonial Office, sent letters to the editors of the relevant papers requesting the attendance at the inquiry of the relevant journalists.<sup>78</sup> Yet not before a good deal of correspondence, telephone calls, and rescheduling, was the presence of all except Fraser Wighton of *Reuters* secured.<sup>79</sup> On 17 February, Doon Campbell, *Reuters*' News Manager, informed the Colonial Office that Wighton was 'at present a victim of acute muscular rheumatism', which made it unwise for him to travel.<sup>80</sup> *Reuters* may have been a dangerous place to work because by the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, he was also reported to have 'a spinal injury'.<sup>81</sup>

Travel to Africa in 1960 was undoubtedly more difficult and expensive than it is today. Yet if some organisational difficulties were to be expected, what may not have been so easily predicted was the extent to which the concessions needed to reach consensus came almost solely from the Colonial Office side. The *Evening Standard* initially refused to send its correspondent, Anne Sharpley. Percy Elland,

<sup>76</sup> HC Deb 02 February 1960, vol 616, col 794.

<sup>77</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>78</sup> Master copy of Poynton's letter, 16 February 1960, fol. 65/75, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>79</sup> The *Guardian* had used Wighton's report.

<sup>80</sup> Campbell to Poynton, 17 February 1960, fol. 81, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>81</sup> Campbell to Poynton, 24 February 1960, fol. 105, CO 1015/2239.

the *Standard*'s Managing Director, told Poynton that it was 'impracticable' for Sharpley to go out to Blantyre 'in the near future'.<sup>82</sup> The decision to adjourn the inquiry temporarily and to provide the newspaper with a specific date on which she would be required to testify appeared to enable her to travel out.<sup>83</sup> Two of the biggest papers, *The Times* and the *Telegraph*, agreed to send their correspondents, Bishop and Worsthorne respectively, but were concerned to take the Government up on its offer of financial assistance. In the case of *The Times*, financial help was a condition of Bishop's travelling out.<sup>84</sup> Worsthorne was apparently on an 'important mission of enquiry' in South Africa when the *Telegraph* received Poynton's letter, but the editor, Colin Coote, was 'quite ready' that his correspondent should stop off in Nyasaland on the way home in early March.<sup>85</sup> The date was apparently non-negotiable. Worsthorne's appearance at the inquiry was subsequently also facilitated by the decision to extend the duration of the Commission.<sup>86</sup>

Left-leaning popular papers had the strongest sets of demands, and did on occasion adopt a highly combative tone, which betrayed a history of tension and grievance. Pointed requests concerned the issue of legal representation and the costs thereof. The *Herald*, possibly spooked by Roy Welensky's on-going libel case against it for the highly personal piece it had published on the Federal Premier on 4 March 1959 in which it had referred to the leader as 'this high-handed son of an Afrikaner mother',<sup>87</sup> immediately judged it necessary to secure legal representation for its correspondent, Walter Legge, a freelancer based in Salisbury.<sup>88</sup> It asked the Colonial Office if the cost of flying out 'a member of the English Bar' would be borne by the Nyasaland Government.<sup>89</sup> Armitage communicated that it would not.<sup>90</sup> In addition, the *Herald* was angry that it had not been given ample time to secure representation at the inquiry's opening. Poynton's original letter of invitation had been sent on 16 February. The inquiry opened on the 17<sup>th</sup>. 'Had the Inquiry opening

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<sup>82</sup> Elland to Poynton, 17 February 1960, fol. 79, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>83</sup> For trail, see: CO 1015/2239: Macleod to Armitage, 20 February 1960, fol. 83; draft telegram Macleod to Armitage, 23 February 1960, fol. 104; Armitage to Macleod, 25 February 1960, fol. 106.

<sup>84</sup> W.J. Haley, editor of the *Times*, to Poynton, 17 February 1960, fol. 80, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>85</sup> Colin R. Coote, editor of the *Telegraph*, to Poynton, 17 February 1960, fol. 82, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>86</sup> For trail, see: CO 1015/2239: Macleod to Armitage, 17 February 1960, fol. 83; Armitage to Macleod, 19 February 1960, fol. 89; Macleod to Armitage, 20 February 1960, fol. 90.

<sup>87</sup> MSS. Welensky 281/4. See Chapter Two.

<sup>88</sup> Douglas Machray, editor of the *Daily Herald*, to Poynton, 17 February 1960, fol. 84, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Armitage to Macleod, 19 February 1960, fol. 94, CO 1015/2239.

been of a formal nature this would not have been a matter for concern', it told the Colonial Office on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 'but since...the hearings on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> have been extensive and have allowed our name, along with those of other newspapers, to be called into question by the Solicitor-General without any possibility of a rejoinder by our representative, you will appreciate...that a very different complexion could be placed upon the matter'.<sup>91</sup>

The *News Chronicle* had similar concerns. It made its decision to find legal representation for its correspondent, Stephen Barber, 'in view of the tone of the opening of the Inquiry'.<sup>92</sup> It had had to find 400 guineas to do so and it was not best pleased. 'We feel this is a penalty for which we should not have been liable', the paper complained in a letter to the Colonial Office.<sup>93</sup> Someone, presumably from that department, underlined the word 'penalty', and annotated it with a question mark. The nature of the correspondence between the Colonial Office and the representatives of the different papers exhibits a certain nervousness and responsiveness on the Colonial Office side, and on the press side, a certain sense of entitlement and, on occasion, a combativeness, which were important characteristics of the nature of the relationship between the British press and the British Government more generally during this period.

iii. Factors guiding the British Government's handling of the Commission's findings

a. The findings

That the British press had power in its dealings with the British Government is further suggested by the Government's nervy response to the damning findings of the inquiry, published in May (1960). These were damaging from the perspective of the British press. Southworth not only cleared the Nyasaland police of brutalities, but also heavily criticised British correspondents for distorting events. He revealed that the 'batons' had been swagger sticks,<sup>94</sup> the 'boots', walking shoes,<sup>95</sup> and the

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<sup>91</sup> Machray to K.J. Neale, Principal of the Nyasaland Department at the Colonial Office, 18 February 1960, fol. 88, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>92</sup> Cursley, editor of the *News Chronicle*, to Poynton, 25 February 1960, fol. 110, CO 1015/2239.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> *Southworth Commission Report*, pp. 73-4.

‘Black Marias’, a Landrover and a three-ton Bedford truck.<sup>96</sup> Southworth concluded that the European police officers had not caused the first incident by tearing down the demonstrators’ banners, but that the tearing down of the banners had represented a response to the crowd’s ‘worsening behaviour’, which he attributed partly to the press presence itself.<sup>97</sup> Concerning the manner in which some of the arrests were said to have been made, Southworth concluded that they had been sought after and that most of those who had been taken away had voluntarily stepped into the police vehicles.<sup>98</sup> He also determined that the two police officers who were alleged to have used force, had acted with ‘forbearance’ and ‘restraint’, and had also been under intense provocation from the crowd.<sup>99</sup>

The inquiry revealed that some of the demonstrators had shouted in the faces of the police, while others had jeered, or had deliberately defied police instructions by attempting to push through the police cordon, some successfully.<sup>100</sup> The protestors had illegally displayed approximately 50 banners, emblazoned with provocative slogans such as “To hell with Zomba government” and “No confidence in Monckton”.<sup>101</sup> The pictures taken by the *Rhodesia Herald* photographer depict a defiant group of young people intent on making their presence known and their voices heard.<sup>102</sup> That paper likely hoped that revealing the extent of the pressure the police were under exonerated those of their actions the press had cast aspersions on, and Southworth seemed to be in agreement.

Yet their other, unintended effect, and thus also the Commission’s, was that they illustrated the strength of the African nationalist challenge to colonial authority, in keeping with the intentions of some of the demonstrators; and, as this thesis would like to suggest, a further neglected dynamic of the decolonisation process. The defiant actions or, in the language of the journalists, ‘frenzy’ of the demonstrators had been a key feature of a number of the British press reports, albeit not the one that was headlined or taken up by politicians or newspapers in their comment or campaigning columns. This reflected the character of the demonstration, and thus

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-5.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-7.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 122, 125.

<sup>100</sup> The pictures provided by the *Rhodesia Herald* photographer appear to document all of these acts. See CO 1069/110.

<sup>101</sup> For the slogans, see *ibid.* For the number of banners, see: *Southworth Commission Report*, p. 80.

<sup>102</sup> CO 1069/110.



some of the motivations of the Africans who participated. Thandika Mkandawire, one of the protestors, later argued that a significant consequence of the incident was that it ‘blew the myth of peaceful natives’, which white society had long-pedalled and of which Mkandawire kindly and cleverly suggested Britain was none the wiser, a factor which he thinks ‘helped inform’ Macmillan’s ‘Wind of Change’ speech.<sup>103</sup> Disregarding the instructions of the police or ‘taking them on’ may have been part of the demonstrators’ strategy from the outset, although the behaviour of particular officers appears also to have been important in the escalation of tensions from the moment at which they began to tear down the demonstrators’ banners. The long history of hostility and friction between the African population of Nyasaland and the colonial police must also have informed events.<sup>104</sup>

As the demonstration progressed, there is evidence to suggest that Africans exploited the foreign, including British, press presence to amplify their cause. One witness told the Commission that ‘Every time a (camera) bulb went off, there were more shouts and demonstrations’.<sup>105</sup> Mkandawire later told the Commission that ‘they wanted the gentlemen of the press to “tell the world” about them’.<sup>106</sup> The demonstrators appear not to have set out with the explicit intention of goading the police into engaging in violent acts in order to provoke international criticism on this specific matter. This is where the British press’s mediation of events was critical. Yet it cannot be ruled out as a possible goal present in some of the protestors’ minds, particularly as events unfolded, and it is important to stress that the colonial violence the press recorded stemmed at any rate largely from African efforts to illustrate the depth of the chasm between white and black, as Mkandawire has alluded to, and which amounted to a similar thing. Some of the newspaper reports of the demonstration had had African action at their very core, even if in much of the remainder of this story the African dimension was almost wholly eclipsed because of further features of that content; the ways in which some features more than others interlocked with the most pressing concerns of powerful groups; the nature of British parliamentary and editorial comment on the event; and Southworth’s approach, which, strikingly, dismissed African interpretations almost out of hand, at the same

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<sup>103</sup> ‘Africa at 50: Wind of Change’ (episode 5), BBC Radio 4, first broadcast 16 November 2010, PLN036/104A2572, British Library Sound Archive.

<sup>104</sup> McCracken, ‘Coercion and Control’; McCracken, ‘Authority and Legitimacy’; Kalinga, ‘Old Karonga District’.

<sup>105</sup> *Southworth Commission Report*, p. 86.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

time as privileging the agency of Europeans, particularly members of the British press corps, whom he almost undeniably set out to denigrate.

Nevertheless, it seemed that the press had sensationalised or manipulated events *to a degree*. The rather innocuous photo of the police officer cradling an African demonstrator in his arms after having fainted,<sup>107</sup> for example, was edited and cut in papers such as the *Herald* in such a way as to eliminate all bystanders, including press representatives;<sup>108</sup> and was positioned near leading phrases such as ‘ugliest day of Macmillan’s tour’ and in the context of reports emphasising police brutality.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, even if we accept that there had been much violence, papers such as the *Mail* and *Express*, had not, over the years, always been as sympathetic to African perspectives or as critical of colonial police force action.

The indictment was stinging. It was also highly personal. In the section of the report which dealt with ‘the Value of the Testimony of the Representatives of the Press’, Southworth took it upon himself to describe their personalities. Bonnett (*Mail*) and Sharpley (*Standard*) escaped fairly lightly by being referred to as emotional and impulsive, respectively.<sup>110</sup> Skinner (*Reynold’s News*), Barber (*Chronicle*), and Fairlie (*Mail*) came out of it the worst. Southworth thought that ‘when deposing to his testimony, Mr. Skinner conveyed the impression that though he was present at the scene in the capacity of a newspaper correspondent he used his powers of observation to singularly little effect’.<sup>111</sup> ‘Lardy-dardy’ was the word he used to describe Barber, who, he thought, had ‘a gift for the fine phrase which, when you get down to examine it, means very little’.<sup>112</sup> Fairlie, ‘aggressively self-confident and opinionated’, apparently ‘conveyed a compelling impression that his observation of what he saw on this occasion was coloured by preconception and predisposition; and his perception of events appeared defective’.<sup>113</sup>

Overall, Southworth was highly dismissive of the British journalists’ perspectives, at which he poked fun by citing Aesop and stories of myth and legend from ancient Greece. The parallel was clinched by the experience of the toe of one of the female protestors, Emmah Phombeya, which had, according to Bonnett been

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<sup>107</sup> CO 1069/110.

<sup>108</sup> *Herald*, 27 January 1960, p. 7.

<sup>109</sup> As in *ibid*.

<sup>110</sup> *Southworth Commission Report*, p. 104 and p. 109 respectively.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

trampled on intentionally by a member of the Nyasaland police force, but whose injuries the commissioner concluded (after examining the toe in court) were of a 'trivial character'.<sup>114</sup> 'As far as can be ascertained', Southworth wrote approaching the end of his report, 'the amount of skin lost by both police and demonstrators as a result of injuries received on this occasion would hardly cover an area of one square inch, probably no more than the area of a penny postage stamp... Contemplating the measure of the injuries sustained by the demonstrators, one cannot avoid the reflection that when the face of Helen launched a thousand ships, and brought Agamemnon and the great Achilles to the shores of Phrygia, it hardly achieved as much as Miss Phombeya's toe when it brought the paladins of Fleet Street in the aerial argosies of our day across two continents to appear before your Commissioner in the remote highlands of middle Africa'.<sup>115</sup>

Southworth attributed British press 'fabrication' to a range of factors, including journalists' sloppiness or ineptitude,<sup>116</sup> personal idiosyncrasies,<sup>117</sup> a tendency to 'over-write',<sup>118</sup> an over-reliance on the opinions or testimony of colleagues,<sup>119</sup> and an inclination to 'elide' fact and comment in line with what he concluded were journalists' preconceptions of and predispositions towards: the European police in Nyasaland, the use of force, and most particularly, the use of force by the European police in Nyasaland.<sup>120</sup> The centrality of this last point to Southworth's conclusions again points to the significance of the legacy of 1959 in informing the chain of events; in this case, not only the content of the news reports, but also the ways in which those news reports were approached by members of colonial society, of which the Judge was one.

Southworth concluded that Bonnett was 'clearly a very emotional man...somewhat highly sensitive about the use of force',<sup>121</sup> that Legge had 'some impulse to judge the police hardly when they made use of force',<sup>122</sup> and that Jacobson, too, had 'some inclination to react against any use of force by

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>116</sup> For example: Skinner (*Reynold's News*), ibid., p. 106; Barber, ibid., pp. 106-7; Fairlie, ibid., pp. 107-9.

<sup>117</sup> For example: Worsthorne, ibid., p. 106.

<sup>118</sup> For example: MacColl, ibid., p. 111.

<sup>119</sup> For example: Bonnett, ibid., pp. 104-5; Skinner, ibid., pp. 105-6.

<sup>120</sup> For example: Fairlie, ibid., pp. 107-9; also Bonnett, ibid., pp. 104-5; Legge, ibid., p. 105; Jacobson, ibid., p. 105; Worsthorne, ibid., p. 106; Barber, ibid., p. 107.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

authority'.<sup>123</sup> Southworth thought that Worsthorne had 'perhaps something of an aesthete's dislike for the obvious vulgarity of violence, and might therefore have been inclined to overstate a little the measure of the violence that he saw'.<sup>124</sup> Fairlie, who had not written a report, but had apparently influenced his colleague Bonnett's reading of the scene, was also criticised by the judge, who cited Fairlie's testimony in court to the effect that 'in the Federation there is a too easy attitude on the part of the European police to the use of force' and that 'one must look at the action taken by the police in Blantyre against the background of that attitude'.<sup>125</sup> 'He made it clear', Southworth explained, 'that his notion of the attitude of the police in the Federation was formed before he came to Nyasaland'.<sup>126</sup>

Whether 'misrepresentation' in this regard had been wilful or inadvertent, it was part testament both to the increasingly 'liberal' nature of the British press consensus on empire and independence by early 1960, which so concerned the white settler communities of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, as well as to the gulf that now existed between British journalists' conceptions of what acceptable levels of force were, and the views of much of the white settler community of Nyasaland, including its police officers. That articles written by journalists such as MacColl, Fairlie and Worsthorne, who tended to be right-wing in their views, were critical of the Nyasaland police supports this view. Yet, as Southworth's conclusions point to, this was not purely a case of journalists' reflecting a contemporary profusion of left-wing sentiment.

What appeared, and was received by others, as a 'liberal' consensus that was anti-settler and pro-African, was also the product of personal, institutional and experiential factors affecting individual journalists' and papers' production of reports as well as a recognition on their part, powered by pragmatism more than anything else, that independence was where the future, and thus Britain's best interests, lay. As we have seen, British press content embodied a fusion of many ideas, interests and stimuli, and as such represented an important and independent driving force for change on Central African affairs that was bound up with those shifts in metropolitan opinion, but was also partly distinct.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

During this period, and for a number of practical, editorial and ideological reasons, the themes of African action, including violence, and African nationalism, dominated the columns of British papers, particularly from the beginning of 1959, following African rioting across Central Africa, in the Congo as well as in Nyasaland. By early 1960, these themes were prevalent in editorial comment, too. Most British papers portrayed decolonisation as favourable and/or inevitable in the context of a rising 'tide' of nationalism, were increasingly united on the form it should take (unconditional African majority rule) and were progressively more disdainful of white minority efforts, particularly in Central Africa, to resist this process, attempts which they tended to portray as mad, archaic, immoral, impracticable and, most often, dangerous. This press unanimity on the subject of settlers and nationalism suggests that a campaigning element, born of long-standing observations and interactions, influenced British journalists' treatment of the demonstration in Blantyre, a consensus which was also inextricably linked to the local initiatives of Africans in preceding months and years.

The press's focus on colonial brutality in this case should not therefore be taken to suggest that this constituted its primary preoccupation at the end of empire, or indeed on this occasion either. It is only by fully contextualising coverage of this event, and by examining the profusion of specific, motivating influences which resulted in the foregrounding of the issue of brutality in this instance that it is possible correctly to pinpoint journalists' main focus, which was African action, and Britain's global role.

Editorial comment on Blantyre had not been extensive. Nevertheless, the *Herald* editorial on the 28<sup>th</sup> had alluded to the perceived centrality of Africa and the Africans when it called on the British Government to 'name' the guilty men. 'The brutal, barbarous, bullying attitude of mind must be kicked out of our colonial administration', it had declared: 'From Kenya to Nyasaland, we have had enough of it. This is the sort of thing that wrecks our relations with Africa. Need we be astonished that hatred boils up in the hearts of friendly coloured folk when boneheads are let loose to knock them around with batons?'<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> *Herald*, 28 January 1960, fp.

b. The Government's response

Ministers and officials in London received advance copies of the report in the second week of May, and were initially unsure how best to respond. They appeared not to have anticipated the degree to which Southworth would censure the British press. In all probability, this was because they had taken care to frame the terms of reference of the Commission around the specific issue of the conduct of the police.<sup>128</sup> Armitage was the first to relay the content, before copies of the report arrived in London. He was glad that his police officers had been 'fully exonerated'.<sup>129</sup> He was puzzled by the reference to the face of Helen. He also warned the Colonial Office that Southworth had taken 'a rather involved approach' and had criticised individual journalists.

On 11 May, after the report had arrived in London, O.H. Morris, Head of the Information Department at the Colonial Office, sent a telegram to Harold Evans in which he conveyed Macleod's intention to seek the Chancellor's advice on publication in Britain, and in which he also set out his personal views on the possible press reaction.<sup>130</sup> Morris thought that the *Herald* came out the worst, together with *Reynold's News*, but his 'hunch' was that they would 'lie pretty low'. The 'critical question' for him was the line the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* would adopt 'in view of the criticisms of Mr. Fairlie and Mr. Worsthorne'. Evans also anticipated a mixed reaction. He told Morris the following day that Southworth's assessments of individual journalists '(rang) true', and that 'this will be recognised by Fleet Street';<sup>131</sup> yet he also expressed the opinion that 'the Commissioner's approach is indeed somewhat involved and this might well be a point of comment and it may also be questioned whether it was really necessary to delve with such zest into assessments of the character and temperament of each of the reporters'. With its references to Achilles, Aesop and Hamlet, parts of Southworth's report read more like a book of proverbs than an impartial, judicial analysis of the events of the 26<sup>th</sup>.

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<sup>128</sup> For the terms of reference, see: *Southworth Commission Report*, p. 1.

<sup>129</sup> Armitage to Macleod, 4 May 1960, fol. 126, CO 1015/2240.

<sup>130</sup> O.H. Morris to H. Evans, 11 May 1960, fol. 154, CO 1015/2240.

<sup>131</sup> Evans to Morris, 12 May 1960, fol. 155, CO 1015/2240.

Southworth had been a journalist,<sup>132</sup> and in later years wished to return to the profession, applying to Worsthorne for a job at the *Sunday Telegraph*.<sup>133</sup>

During the following week, the British Government took a number of decisions that were intended to reduce the possible fall-out from Fleet Street and Parliament on the report of the inquiry which they had set up to placate them. The irony of these actions should not pass without comment, because it reveals a further neglected dynamic of the decolonisation process, which Lewis and Darwin have identified,<sup>134</sup> and which is that it was sometimes rather a mess. To these actions we might add further examples, such as the British Government's willingness to pay the travel expenses of up to ten journalists to travel to Africa to defend or advance claims it believed were wholly inaccurate; the surprising extent of the Government's inability to retain control of Britain's relations with white Africa in the face of British journalists' efforts to muscle in; the inclusion of references to Greek legend, Aesop's fables and Shakespeare in an official Nyasaland Government report; and the judge's subsequent choice of a return to a career in journalism to which end he later contacted one of the defendants he had found guilty of professional misconduct.

Again, the actions the Government took did not appear to reflect the power and justness of the protestors' cause, doubts surrounding police innocence, a more progressive colonial policy, or indeed, Southworth's bias, except as it concerned British journalists. While the Government chose not to attempt to restrict the circulation of the report 'because of the references to the United Kingdom press' or to select a publication date, such as a Friday, 'on the grounds that it would minimise press comment', both were possibilities freely discussed in a meeting at the House of Commons on 12 May, chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and at which Morris and Evans were present.<sup>135</sup> At the meeting and in further correspondence during that week, decisions were reached that were intended to prevent adverse press criticism. These included the decision by the Colonial Office, in conjunction with Armitage, to refrain from issuing anything more than a formal Governor's communique with the report when they released it. This judgement followed from Macleod's intimation that the reaction of the press to the report 'could

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<sup>132</sup> *Mail*, quoting *Who's Who*, 18 May 1960, p. 11.

<sup>133</sup> Worsthorne, *Tricks*, p. 194.

<sup>134</sup> Darwin, *Empire Project*, pp. 610-48; Lewis, "'White Man'".

<sup>135</sup> 'Note of a Meeting at the House of Commons on Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 1960 to discuss the publication of the Report of the Southworth Commission on a disturbance in Blantyre, Nyasaland, on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1960', 13 May 1960, fol. 133, CO 1015/2240.

be critical because they are criticised'.<sup>136</sup> 'I am inclined to think it will be best to let it speak for itself', he told Armitage on the 10<sup>th</sup> in response to his reference to a possible communique.<sup>137</sup>

British officials also deemed it wise to follow normal procedure for the publication and distribution of a report within Britain, and specifically, to avoid 'elevating' it by printing it as a Command or White Paper. This was in line with Macleod's initial gut feeling, although he did seek advice.<sup>138</sup> Morris felt that 'the possibility of any considerable interest in the newspapers would be increased if publication were as a Command Paper... From the point of view of the Government of Nyasaland it would be sufficient, I think, for the report to speak for itself in an unobtrusive way, and I am sure that we should not want positively to seek publicity'.<sup>139</sup> Evans agreed: 'I would not elevate the report into a Command Paper but deal with it as a Nyasaland Government Report'.<sup>140</sup> Those who tried to anticipate the parliamentary response came to much the same conclusion. The men present at the meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> discussed the possibility that the Opposition might seek a debate on the report, in which case it should be published as a White Paper, but that 'the Government should not... take the initiative in publication as a White Paper, since this would invite a debate'.<sup>141</sup>

Finally, it was judged prudent to reiterate the original terms of reference of the commission and to emphasise its exoneration of the Nyasaland police rather than the references to the British press, not only in the Government's summaries sent to overseas posts;<sup>142</sup> but also in Macleod's statement to the Commons upon publication. This statement took written as opposed to oral form, a further attempt perhaps to divert attention away from the findings. 'As the House will recall from my statement of 2<sup>nd</sup> February', Macleod wrote on 24 May, 'the Commission was established primarily because of the allegations made against individual members of the Nyasaland Police after the incident at Blantyre on 26<sup>th</sup> January. I made it clear in

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<sup>136</sup> Macleod to Armitage, 10 May 1960, fol. 128, CO 1015/2240. For the trail on this, also see CO 1015/2240: Armitage to Macleod, 4 May 1960, fol. 126; and Armitage to Macleod, 12 May 1960, fol. 132.

<sup>137</sup> Macleod to Armitage, 10 May 1960, fol. 128, CO 1015/2240.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. Morris to Evans, 11 May 1960, fol. 154, CO 1015/2240.

<sup>139</sup> Morris to Evans, 11 May 1960, fol. 154, CO 1015/2240.

<sup>140</sup> Evans to Morris, 12 May 1960, fol. 155, CO 1015/2240.

<sup>141</sup> 'Note of a Meeting at the House of Commons on Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 1960 to discuss the publication of the Report of the Southworth Commission on a disturbance in Blantyre, Nyasaland, on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1960', 13 May 1960, fol. 133, CO 1015/2240.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.



my original statement that I did not accept the allegations made against the Police and I am glad that the Inquiry confirms that they handled the situation calmly and efficiently'.<sup>143</sup> Following receipt of the report, the Colonial Office therefore did everything short of direct manipulation to minimise the impact of Southworth's findings with the sole aim of avoiding adverse British press and parliamentary comment on the matter.

Complimentary copies of the report were posted to the relevant papers, in line with normal procedure, to which a number of the editors responded with letters of thanks.<sup>144</sup> Bishop and Worsthorne claimed their travel expenses.<sup>145</sup> Nyasaland public funds were debited accordingly. There were no apparent repercussions for the British press, and no apologies, despite the fact that the report had amounted to an indictment of the institution. There was also no perceivable effect on subsequent newspaper coverage of Central African affairs in line with Southworth's implied suggestions. Most British papers either criticised Southworth's findings, or managed to extract from the report positive references to their own correspondents as well as information with which to lambast their competitors.

In Britain, the storm would soon blow over, if indeed it had not done so already. For the white communities of the Federation, however, it was rapidly brewing. This would have implications for the foreign press presence in the weeks and months to follow. On 18 June, Armitage informed the Colonial Office that two of his police officers were seeking permission to start proceedings for libel.<sup>146</sup> Christopher Munnion later commented that 'the proven distortion and exaggeration of foreign correspondents' was to linger in Central Africa, and 'grow into rancorous loathing of journalists in the dramatic events soon to unfold'.<sup>147</sup> Though never one to understate the situation, in this case Munnion may well have been right. His colleague Worsthorne recalled that during the inquiry some reporters had been 'chucked out of Blantyre's only decent bar'.<sup>148</sup> 'Than which', the young journalist

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<sup>143</sup> HC Deb 24 May 1960, vol 624, col 22W.

<sup>144</sup> R. Dinsdale, deputy editor, *Daily Mirror*, to O. H. Morris, 17 May 1960, fol. 152, CO 1015/2240; W. J. Haley to Morris, 17 May 1960, fol. 133, CO 1015/2240; Walter Cole, *Reuters*, to Morris, 17 May 1960, fol. 157, CO 1015/2240.

<sup>145</sup> Colin R. Coote to Poynton, 29 March 1960, fol. 117, CO 1015/2239. Worsthorne's statement of expenses incurred is attached to this letter, and signed by the journalist. Contributors Department, *Times*, to Secretary to Poynton, 9 May 1960, fol. 130, CO 1015/2240.

<sup>146</sup> Armitage to Macleod, 18 June 1960, fol. 166, CO 1015/2240.

<sup>147</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 181.

<sup>148</sup> Worsthorne, *Tricks*, p. 193.

observed, 'there could be no greater mark of disfavour or indeed, for a foreign correspondent, sterner punishment'.

More significant were the effects within African nationalist circles. Joey Power explains that the League of Malawi Youth attracted more and more members as a result of Southworth's inquiry because the proceedings had raised the organisation's profile.<sup>149</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has pursued and developed those of the preceding chapter's arguments which concern the nature and role of British press coverage of the Federation. It has continued to highlight the presence of the theme of African action in newspaper coverage, together with the press's very negative depictions of white settler society. In this instance, colonial brutality was also an important theme, but as the analysis has tried to show, its presence should not be taken as a reflection of the British press's primary focus at the end of empire, or indeed on this occasion either. It has also continued to underscore the multifarious nature of influences on coverage, emphasising in this case the role of Africans in exploiting the British press's local presence. Additionally, it has continued to examine the important effects of British press coverage on white settler communities, the power of the press in its relations with the British Government, the significance of British newspaper articles to African nationalists, and their possible implications for British readerships. In most cases, it has continued to describe the effects of coverage in terms of a wider nexus of observations and interactions, which included British parliamentary proceedings, specific sets of historical concerns, and assumptions regarding the relationship between British press content, British public opinion, and British colonial policy.

It has also attempted to foreground some of this thesis's underlying core arguments concerning the light its analysis of the role of the press can shed on further neglected characteristics of the decolonisation process. Core themes include ordinary people and publics, contingency, muddle (and farce), African action, and the imaginary. In particular, it has tried to make the point that British press coverage

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<sup>149</sup> Power, *Political Culture*, p. 144.

of Africa over this period is useful in reminding us that at most, if not all, important moments African activism was pivotal, and that the African 'collective' was uppermost in British minds.

Perhaps no better illustration of the significance of African action, and the ubiquity of Africans in British journalists' imaginations, came than during the weeks following the Sharpeville massacre, an event which is usually framed in terms of white colonial action and violence, and which forms the subject of the following chapter.



Photographs of  
Blantyre riots,  
January 1960, CO  
1069/110. From  
top to bottom:  
piece numbers 1,  
5, 10 and 11.





**AFTER BLANTYRE, THE HERALD DEMANDS**

# NAME THESE GUILTY MEN

**O**UTSIDE Mr. Macmillan's hotel in Blantyre, Nyasaland, a shameful, brutal, **UN-NECESSARY** clash between police and African demonstrators was provoked — by senior British police officers.

The "Herald" demands today: **NAME THESE MEN.**

There is no denying what happened. It took place under the eyes of experienced reporters representing the "Herald," and other British newspapers.

## HE STARTED IT

They are agreed that it was the actions of these policemen that turned a peaceful demonstration — one that any competent police force could have handled with good humour — quite needlessly into a riot.

**NAME** the plain clothes officer who, in a state of frenzy, seized banners and posters out of the hands of demonstrators,

## STOP THESE BULLIES ONCE AND FOR ALL

including women, and ripped them to pieces. He started the whole thing.

**NAME** the senior officer, apparently an inspector, who then started lashing out with his baton.

He seemed to go berserk. He went down the cordon of police holding back the crowd, and aimed punch after punch at the Africans.

## TRY THIS MAN

Such crazy, ignorant, savage behaviour recalls the Hola Camp scandal in Kenya. It made certain there was a riot.

This man is short, thick-set, about 36 years old, with a short ginger moustache.

We want him named. We want him tried. We want to hear his defence, if he has one.

**NAME** also the officer in charge of the whole operation

—the man responsible for this fiasco.

The brutal, barbarous, bullying attitude of mind must be kicked out of our colonial administration. From Kenya to Nyasaland, we have had enough of it.

This is the sort of thing that wrecks our relations with Africa.

Need we be astonished that hatred boils up in the hearts of friendly coloured folk when boneheads are let loose to knock them around with batons?

## INVESTIGATE!

We want to know why people in Blantyre, Nyasaland, should not have as much right to demonstrate peacefully with banners as people in Blantyre, Scotland.

How rightly the Devlin Commission called Nyasaland a Police State!

The Colonial Secretary plays for time when he says in Parliament that he is awaiting a report from Nyasaland before considering an inquiry. The report is here, in every British newspaper.

The Government should appoint an impartial tribunal to inquire into the Nyasaland police at once.

**NAME** the men responsible for violence. **PROSECUTE** them.



**WHO WAS THE GUILTY  
PLAIN-CLOTHES MAN?**



**WHICH INSPECTOR  
WAS GUILTY?**



**WHO WAS THE GUILTY  
OFFICER IN CHARGE?**

**Last night the Herald cabled this  
challenge to Nyasaland's Governor—**

SIR ROBERT ARMITAGE: GOVERNOR OF NYASALAND

GOVERNMENT HOUSE ZOMBA NYASALAND —

PUBLIC AND POLITICAL CIRCLES SHOCKED BY PRESS REPORTS IN LONDON BLAMING UNANIMOUSLY EUROPEAN POLICE OFFICERS FOR UGLY RIOT SCENES AT BLANTYRE YESTERDAY DURING MACMILLAN VISIT STOP DAILY HERALD CALLS ON YOU AND RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES TO START IMMEDIATE INQUIRY WITH PURPOSE OF NAMING AND DEALING WITH POLICE OFFICERS RESPONSIBLE —

EDITOR DAILYHERALD LONDON

*Herald*, 28  
January 1960,  
fp.

## Chapter 5

### *African action at Sharpeville, and the intervention conundrum: South Africa, 1960*

On Monday 21 March 1960, in Sharpeville, Vereeniging, an African township on the outskirts of Johannesburg, the South African police shot dead 69 people and wounded 180 others who had congregated outside the local police station demanding arrest for contravention of the pass laws.<sup>1</sup> In Langa, a township just outside Cape Town, a similar demonstration took place. There, a further three protesters were killed by the police, and 50 wounded in day-long clashes between the security forces and African residents.<sup>2</sup> Those who had assembled in both locations were responding to a public announcement sent out four days earlier by Robert Sobukwe, the President of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), for a nationwide day of action against the pass system.<sup>3</sup> The PAC's immediate aim was to achieve abolition of the pass laws and a minimum wage of £35 a month.<sup>4</sup> Sobukwe's longer-term vision was of a campaign of 'positive action'.<sup>5</sup> He believed the pass protests would spark this off. The ultimate aim was majority rule. The goal was 1963.<sup>6</sup> Yet South Africa would have to wait another thirty years before this was achieved, with the accession of Nelson Mandela, the country's first democratically elected leader (and an ANC man),<sup>7</sup> to the Presidency in 1994.

Despite the absence of political change in 1960, Sharpeville is generally regarded as a turning point in South African history. It is said to have heralded an era of increased internal state repression, as apartheid laws were toughened and extended and the authorities cracked down more ruthlessly than ever before on most forms of dissent or defiance.<sup>8</sup> It is also thought to have ushered in a new era in

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Harlow, 1983), p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> James Barber, *South Africa in the Twentieth Century: A Political History – In Search of a Nation State* (Oxford, 1999), p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences* (Oxford, 2011), p. 71. Passes restricted a person's freedom of movement and their place of residence. They also stated a person's ethnic identity and other personal details. It was illegal for an African not to carry his pass. From 1956, this law also applied to African women.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61-2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> African National Congress. Led by Albert Luthuli at this time.

<sup>8</sup> Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy* (Chichester, 2012), pp. 116-9; Barber, *South Africa*, pp. 165-6; Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid:*

Africa's liberation wars.<sup>9</sup> Both the PAC and the ANC were stripped of many of their leaders, pushed underground and into exile, and those of their members who until then had opposed the use of violence as a strategy either on moral or on practical grounds, confronted by an increasingly ruthless and repressive state began to see it as a potentially valid and practical component of the struggle.

Sharpeville is also regarded as a pivotal moment in South Africa's relations with the outside world.<sup>10</sup> The international significance given Sharpeville in the historiography tends to focus on the protests and demonstrations which peppered the globe in the days that followed, the rising fortunes of the global anti-apartheid movement, and for the first time substantive action at the level of high politics, with the adoption of a UN Security Council resolution deploring the racial policies of the South African Government.<sup>11</sup>

International media, including British press, treatment of the massacre is thought to have been central to these developments, by fuelling a wave of global indignation against apartheid. Prominent claims in the existing literature indicate that the media did this by portraying Africans as passive victims, by depicting the South African police and the apartheid state as brutal and repressive, and by sorely and unanimously condemning the system and practice of apartheid, which, as a result of Sharpeville, the media is said to have begun to criticise both on moral and on practical grounds.<sup>12</sup>

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*Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 241-6; John Lazar, 'Verwoerd Versus the "Visionaries": The South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (Sabra) and Apartheid, 1948-1961' in Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel (eds.), *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962* (Braamfontein, South Africa, 1993), pp. 362-92, p. 381.

<sup>9</sup> Worden, *Modern South Africa*, p. 116; Reid, *Modern Africa*, p. 285; Robert Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 141; Barber, *South Africa*, pp. 165-6; Allister Sparks, *Tomorrow is Another Country: The Inside Story of South Africa's Road to Change* (Chicago, 1995), p. 23; Robert V. Lambert, 'Trade Unionism, Race, Class and Nationalism in the 1950s Resistance Movement' in Bonner et al, *Apartheid's Genesis*, pp. 275-295, pp. 288-9; Lodge, *Black Politics*, p. 225.

<sup>10</sup> Worden, *Modern South Africa*, p. 116; Adrian Guelke, *Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid: South Africa and World Politics* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 99-101.

<sup>11</sup> For Sharpeville and the growth of the anti-apartheid movement, see: Roger Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain - A Study in Pressure Group Politics* (London, 2005); Gurney, "'A Great Cause'".

<sup>12</sup> In addition to the above works, for specific references to media treatment of the massacre, see: Smith, 'Apartheid, Sharpeville and "Impartiality"'; Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media*; Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa Since the Boer War* (Cambridge, 2003); Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid*; Rob Skinner, *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid: Liberal Humanitarians and Transnational Activists in Britain and the United States, c. 1919-64* (Basingstoke, 2010). There is also a particularly large section on media treatment of Sharpeville in Lodge, *Sharpeville*, pp. 228-38.



The most extensive study of international press treatment of Sharpeville, a chapter in Håkan Thörn's *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, is the only work to make some additional and contrasting observations such as on the presence in some papers of references to African violence and extremism;<sup>13</sup> and 'certain silences', such as the absence of comment on the desirability of full democracy.<sup>14</sup> Yet their full significance is not explored. Thörn makes many of the more common aforementioned points as well, and, taken as a whole, his discussion emphasises the growth of the anti-apartheid movement. He does not draw out the possible significance of references to African violence for the overall role of British press treatment of Sharpeville, beyond the claim that, when viewed in conjunction with the actions of 'moderates', these references 'provided a possibility to express support for one section of the anti-apartheid movement (the ANC), while at the same time repudiating those activists perceived as too militant (the PAC), thus threatening to disrupt the social order'.<sup>15</sup> On the subject of silences, Thörn goes no further than to suggest that this reflected 'tacit assumptions on the limits of change in South Africa'.<sup>16</sup>

This chapter reassesses the nature and role of British press treatment of Sharpeville. It extends the range of sources beyond those of existing studies to include a broader variety of newspapers, both popular and serious, left- and right-leaning. Additional archival sources, which have not been examined before in relation to media treatment of Sharpeville, include British Government and parliamentary records; the memoirs of journalists and politicians; the records of the South African Government; documentary material relating to the PAC and the South African Liberal Party; correspondence with Peter Younghusband, and an interview with Stanley Uys, both South African journalists who contributed articles to British papers during these weeks.

The chapter diverges from the existing literature in three broad respects. The first of these concerns the nature of press content. The chapter agrees that the press criticised the South African Government and the system of apartheid strongly during these weeks. Yet it argues that newspapers portrayed Sharpeville and the events which followed it as a story of African action, power and violence just as much as, if

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<sup>13</sup> Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid*, p. 134.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141. Parentheses and their contents added.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

not more than, African victimhood, and that the portrayal and the criticism were fundamentally interlinked. The chapter also suggests that the press displayed ambiguity on the subject of direct responsibility for the deaths, and a lack of consensus, particularly initially, on appropriate international, including British, responses to the issue of white violence.

The second broad divergence concerns the factors which influenced coverage. The chapter foregrounds the significance of the actions of Africans; the British press's core narratological frame for Central and Southern Africa by 1960, which turned on the relation between African (as opposed to white) action, violence and opinion and the necessity of decolonisation; and the British press's close ties to South African English-language newspapers. It also discusses the significance of the difficulties journalists experienced in covering unexpected events, and the limits of the British press's vision for South Africa, referred to in Chapter Three on the tour.

The third main difference concerns the effects of coverage, which, the chapter argues, were felt more keenly in South Africa than in Britain. In Britain, press content may even have encouraged restraint or passivity; the apparent incongruity explained by the fact that different groups responded to different features of press content.

The chapter argues that press coverage proved largely beneficial for the British Government during these weeks. Yet it also continues to discuss some of the ways in which British newspaper articles inhibited the achievement of some British policy goals. From a South African perspective, journalists' views continued to belie the myth of Commonwealth solidarity, mirroring the cases of Ghana and the Federation.<sup>17</sup> British press content also continued to foment division locally, in Africa, in this case by circulating opposition views in the context of stringent internal censorship; and thereby fuelling some of the fear and the anger which found expression in the Government's further curtailment of press and other freedoms. British newspaper coverage continued to have more positive implications for British readers, partly because of the extent to which editors held British ideals up against the white racialism of the Afrikaner state, but mainly due to their characterisation of

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<sup>17</sup> Although the Federation was not independent, and was therefore part of the Empire as opposed to the Commonwealth, its position might be viewed as comparable, firstly, because of the status of Southern Rhodesia, which had been self-governing from 1923, and secondly, because of the presence of debates in Britain and Central Africa concerning possible independence for the Federation and its inclusion as part of the Commonwealth. The CRO also dealt with Britain's communications with the Federal and South Rhodesian governments.

Anglo-South African relations. As elsewhere in Africa, the British press distanced Britain from its colonial past.

1. Police violence, African violence, and Sharpeville as ‘storm signal’: Initial British press treatment of the massacre

The massacre at Sharpeville featured prominently in all British papers the day following the shootings. The overall theme was death and violence. The general tone was reproofing. Yet the news reports from the field were not moralising or straightforward, and it would have been difficult for readers to know with whom to identify. On the African side, photos were given a lot of page space, and would have induced some horror and sympathy. One picture appeared in all of the papers, showing African bodies lying on the road and on a grass verge outside the police station.<sup>18</sup> Clothes and belongings were strewn across the ground, and the earth appeared to be discoloured by the blood of those who had died.

The photos had been taken by Ian Berry,<sup>19</sup> a photographer at *Drum*, who had been involved in putting together a special feature on the PAC. *Drum* was one of only two publications with correspondents on the spot at the time of the shootings.<sup>20</sup> The other had been the *Rand Daily Mail*, a liberal, anti-government daily, which was also present by virtue of its correspondents’ links to African nationalists.<sup>21</sup> Tom Hopkinson, *Drum*’s British-born editor, recalled that within a few hours of the shootings he had received five cables from overseas papers for photos, and that the *Daily Mirror* had also rung him up at home late that night.<sup>22</sup> Hopkinson was well-known in London, and contacts likely persisted. During the forties, he had been the editor of London’s *Picture Post*.<sup>23</sup> He had also worked as features editor of the *News Chronicle*, and had reviewed novels for the *Observer*.<sup>24</sup> These links, between the British and South African English-language presses on the one hand, and the South

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<sup>18</sup> For example: front-page of the *Mirror*, 22 March 1960.

<sup>19</sup> The photographs can be found in Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville*.

<sup>20</sup> Berry was accompanied by Humphrey Tyler, a *Drum* journalist. See: Humphrey Tyler, *Life in the Time of Sharpeville – and Wayward Seeds of the New South Africa* (Cape Town, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin Pogrand, *War of Words: Memoir of a South African Journalist* (London, 2000), p. 83. Pogrand had been there for the *Rand Daily Mail*.

<sup>22</sup> Tom Hopkinson, *In the Fiery Continent* (London, 1962), p. 263.

<sup>23</sup> Correspondence with Peter Younghusband, May 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Hopkinson, *Fiery*, p. 9.

African English-language press and African nationalist organisations on the other, remained important to the production of coverage in the days and weeks to follow.

Through the size, positioning and nature of quotes and other captions, police brutality was tentatively pushed as a theme, particularly in the left-leaning popular press, whose coverage of Sharpeville mirrored its treatment of white violence in Nyasaland. Next to the photos of the bodies, three of the papers (the *Herald*, *Mirror* and *Mail*) chose to position a quote from Colonel Pienaar, the area police commander, to the effect that Africans “must learn the hard way”.<sup>25</sup> All of the papers described the weaponry of the State as displayed at Sharpeville: rifles, light machine guns, armoured cars, Sabre jets, and Sten guns.<sup>26</sup> The pass laws were mentioned in all of the reports.<sup>27</sup> An African was quoted as saying the shootings had been unprovoked.<sup>28</sup> Articles in the popular press were impassioned and sympathetic.

Yet the news reports blurred the issue of direct responsibility for the deaths by putting the police case as well. Articles laid as much emphasis on African violence as on Afrikaner, describing those who had died as having been involved in a ‘riot’.<sup>29</sup> Most articles referred to the crowd as a ‘mob’, whose numbers were in the region of 12,000-20,000.<sup>30</sup> Readers were told that the police had searched the bodies of the dead for ‘concealed weapons’,<sup>31</sup> that the demonstrators had thrown stones at the police,<sup>32</sup> and that most were members of an ‘extremist’ or ‘militant’ group (the PAC).<sup>33</sup> These depictions were not confined to right-leaning papers. The *Herald* article referred to African ‘riots’, of ‘the crowds (stoning) the police and (refusing) to disperse’, of telephone wires being ‘cut’, and of the ‘mob’ ‘(stoning) the station’.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Mail*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 9); *Mirror*, 22 March 1960, bp; *Herald*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 7).

<sup>26</sup> For example: *Mirror*, 22 March 1960, bp.

<sup>27</sup> *Mirror*, 22 March 1960, bp; *Herald*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 7); *Mail*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 9); *News Chronicle*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 2); *Telegraph*, 22 March 1960, fp.

<sup>28</sup> *Mirror*, 22 March 1960, bp; *Herald*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 7); *News Chronicle*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 2).

<sup>29</sup> *Herald*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 7); *Mail*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 9).

<sup>30</sup> *Herald*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 7); *Mail*, 22 March 1960, fp and p. 9; *News Chronicle*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 2); *Telegraph*, 22 March 1960, fp.

<sup>31</sup> *Mirror*, 22 March 1960, bp; *Herald*, p. 7 (begins fp).

<sup>32</sup> *Mirror*, 22 March 1960, bp; *Herald*, 22 March 1960, p. 7 (begins fp); *Mail*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 9); *News Chronicle*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 2).

<sup>33</sup> *Herald*, 22 March 1960, p. 7 (begins fp); *Mail*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 9); *News Chronicle*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 2); *Telegraph*, 22 March 1960, fp.

<sup>34</sup> *Herald*, fp and p. 7.

Readers learned that journalists had also been attacked. The PAC's relations with certain sections of the press evidently only went so far, and can be characterised as volatile at a mass level. Although these assaults had occurred in Cape Town, not Sharpeville, reports were sometimes fused in such a way as to blur that distinction, as in the *News Chronicle*, whose article on Langa appeared under the large 'Sharpeville' headline, reinforcing the image of African violence at Sharpeville. The paper explained that two people from the *Cape Times* had 'narrowly escaped death at the hands of the mob', and that their driver had been 'strangled by African rioters, his body mutilated, then soaked in petrol and set alight'.<sup>35</sup> The word 'battlefield' featured prominently in many of the news reports and in some of the headlines that day, implying a fight; in other words, violence on both sides.

Editorials reinforced the view that the prime responsibility for the deaths lay at the door of the state. Yet on neither Left nor Right did editors debate the issue of who attacked whom in this instance. Rather, they chose to present social relations within South Africa as a whole as being of an inherently volatile and explosive character, something which Sharpeville brought to the fore. Fear of future, incipient African violence was a prominent ideological undercurrent informing the press's representations, and recalled existing press narratives on Federation and the necessity of decolonisation.<sup>36</sup>

On the Left, in an editorial entitled 'The Awful Warning', the *Mirror* told its readers that the deaths 'lie grimly at the door of the people who wilfully deny the wind of change'.<sup>37</sup> 'Unless the South African Government sweeps away its abominable race laws', the paper warned, 'horrors like this will happen again. Yesterday's tragedy could be the beginning of the revolt in South Africa'.<sup>38</sup> The *News Chronicle*'s editorial, 'Carnage', warned its readers that Sharpeville 'shows how close South Africa is to explosion... It can only be a matter of time before there are more bloody outbreaks'.<sup>39</sup> The more conservative *Times* deployed the same combustible imagery, arguing that 'an explosive state of affairs will continue and may well get worse unless the implications of the pass law system are squarely

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<sup>35</sup> *News Chronicle*, 22 March 1960, fp (continued p. 2).

<sup>36</sup> See chapters three and four.

<sup>37</sup> *Mirror*, 22 March 1960, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *News Chronicle*, 22 March 1960, p. 8.

faced'.<sup>40</sup> The *Telegraph* reminded its readers that 'Such a wind of change as Mr. Macmillan found blowing through Africa is not the same thing... as "a howling tempest to blow away the whole of the new developing civilisation."' But, as to-day's news from the Rand too aptly illustrates, the ever-present danger is that the one may turn into the other'.<sup>41</sup>

## 2. British press content, Labour pressure, and Government obduracy

The initial press treatment of the massacre had less of a transformative impact in Britain than previous studies have either suggested or assumed. This is not to suggest that there was no public outcry; merely, that the outcry appeared not to be inspired by the coverage (beyond, possibly, the photos). Indeed, the comment-based features of coverage may even have played a small consoling or constraining role. None of the editorials on the 22<sup>nd</sup> commented on what they thought Britain or the British Government should do in response to news of the massacre. The *Telegraph* was the only paper to remark on British action. Yet it chose to concentrate on what it thought had been unhelpful to date: the British boycott of South African goods.<sup>42</sup> The press did not place the Government under editorial pressure the day following the shootings, as it had in the case of Nyasaland, therefore, permitting it greater freedom to operate as it saw fit. Added to the dearth of comment on British policy was the initial ambiguity most papers displayed on the subject of direct responsibility for the shootings, which may also have inspired or enabled constraint.

In Parliament, the Labour Party subjected the Government to immediate pressure. Yet in doing so, it did not draw on news reports directly as it had in the case of the Federation. The day following the shootings, a group of Labour back-benchers tabled a motion challenging the Government to denounce the actions of the South African authorities.<sup>43</sup> Gaitskell appealed to the Government to sponsor or contribute to a fund to help the dependents of those who had died, and later, when faced with Government obduracy on the motion, called on it at the very least to express 'regret' at what had happened.

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<sup>40</sup> *Times*, 22 March 1960, p.

<sup>41</sup> *Telegraph*, 22 March 1960, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> For example: *Herald*, 23 March 1960, fp.

The Government proved immovable on all fronts. Cuthbert Alport, speaking on its behalf, was evasive on the issue of regret, stating that ‘civil commotion at any time and in any part of the world is always to be regretted’.<sup>44</sup> On the subject of money for dependants, he suggested that people who took part in riots were in ‘a different position’ from those injured or killed while at work, an allusion to the fund set up to support the dependents of those who had died in the Coalbrook mining disaster.<sup>45</sup> This doggedness reflected, first and foremost, the fact that in the case of South Africa the Government had its eyes and interests fixed on places other than the British public sphere. Macmillan’s approach appears to have been to weather the storm, whilst concentrating on the issues he deemed most important: principally ‘how to deal with the matter in the United Nations without leading to a break up of the Commonwealth into two opposing groups’.<sup>46</sup> Yet the absence of editorial pressure from British newspapers may have helped to soothe his mind.

The press began to speak out the following day. Some editorials mirrored the sentiments of Labour MPs, in the manner of the reporting of Kenya and Nyasaland. Yet on the whole, opinions within, as well as between, different sections of the press diverged, pointing to a lesser interdependence in the case of South Africa, and contributing to an overall image of British public disunity on the subject. Notwithstanding the press’s general disapproval of apartheid, this may have continued to play a consoling role in relation to the Government’s sustained reticence.

The *News Chronicle* wanted the British Government to express sympathy for the victims of the massacre or ‘(endanger) the gains made for British influence in Africa by Mr Macmillan’s tour’.<sup>47</sup> The *Herald* thought the solution might lie with the Commonwealth Prime Ministers, who were due to meet, and who the paper hoped would ‘ram into (Verwoerd’s) head the need to change policies that wreck every principle on which the Commonwealth can exist’.<sup>48</sup> It also wanted the British Government to speak up,<sup>49</sup> and called for a national demonstration in the form of two minutes silence throughout the country in mourning for the men and women

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<sup>44</sup> HC Deb 22 March 1960, vol 620, col 240.

<sup>45</sup> On 21 January 1960, 435 people died at Clydesdale Colliery, Orange Free State, South Africa. Pogrand, *War of Words*, p. 79.

<sup>46</sup> Macmillan, *Pointing*, p. 167.

<sup>47</sup> *News Chronicle*, 23 March 1960, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> *Herald*, 23 March 1960, fp.

<sup>49</sup> *Herald*, 24 March 1960, fp.

‘butchered by Verwoerd’s police’ or ‘a silent demonstration in the streets when this man sets foot in Britain’.

In contrast, the *Telegraph* thought that Sharpeville ‘makes all the more welcome Dr. Verwoerd’s announcement that... he intends to be present at the forthcoming Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference in London’.<sup>50</sup> The paper was critical of the boycotters,<sup>51</sup> of the demonstrations outside South Africa House and of the ‘shrill interpolations of Mr. Gaitskell’, which it thought ‘would be more likely to confirm Dr. Verwoerd in his natural obstinacy’ than bring about the desired change.<sup>52</sup> *The Times* thought that ‘smugness, thick as the fat on a turtle’ enveloped ‘the most irresponsible critics’ of the South African Government,<sup>53</sup> and defended those MPs who had refused to ‘judge in advance of the evidence’. British papers were thus by no means united on a preferred course of action. Even the most critical, though desiring Macmillan to speak, did not press the issue, appearing to favour action at the level of the man-on-the-street.

Three days after the shootings, the Government issued a watered down amendment to Labour’s motion which read: that ‘This House, while recognising that it has no responsibility or jurisdiction over the independent countries of the Commonwealth, at the same time wishes to record its deep sympathy with all the people of South Africa at the recent tragic events which have taken place at Vereeniging and Langa’.<sup>54</sup> In contrast to the original motion, which had ‘deplored the shootings’ and had expressed sympathy only with the families of the dead and injured, the Government amendment expressed sympathy ‘with all the people of South Africa’, black and white (presumably), and pressed the view that Britain had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of a Commonwealth member state.

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<sup>50</sup> *Telegraph*, 22 March 1960, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Telegraph*, 24 March 1960, p. 12.

<sup>53</sup> *Times*, 23 March 1960, p. 13.

<sup>54</sup> For example: *Telegraph*, 25 March 1960, fp.



3. From massacre to 'march of change'<sup>55</sup>: African action as the key characteristic of British press coverage of South Africa in the two weeks following the shootings

It was initially difficult for the British press to stamp its mark on Sharpeville coverage. There were no foreign journalists at the scene, either witnessing the shootings or in the immediate aftermath. Many papers used reports filed by South African stringers. Yet none of those stringers whose articles on Sharpeville appeared had been present at the scene until after the shootings. Some British papers, such as the *Mirror*, used news agency reports from which to construct their accounts. All reports, whether from the news agencies or from stringers, drew heavily on the evidence of the South African police, who held a press conference later that day.

As fresh information came in, and as editors and journalists began exploring some of the issues, the picture adjusted somewhat. The press devoted more space to the issue of police blame and brutality, and of the just grievances of the Africans who had been shot. All papers used the evidence gathered by Ambrose Reeves, the Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg, who had entered Baragwanath Hospital in the days following the massacre to take down and collate the testimony of the survivors. Reeves saw British papers, which were sold in South Africa, as a means through which to communicate to other South Africans that which would otherwise have remained hushed up, given the restrictions the authorities had imposed on the local press printing certain information, which did not apply to material sent abroad.<sup>56</sup> On the 25<sup>th</sup>, the *Mirror* and the *Mail* published interviews with Reeves,<sup>57</sup> and on the 26<sup>th</sup>, the *News Chronicle* devoted a full front-page to an article written by Reeves himself, cabled from Johannesburg.<sup>58</sup> In it, the clergyman described the injuries the victims had suffered as 'normally only seen after a battle...bone powdered by heavy calibre slugs, limbs so mutilated by bullets tearing through that amputation is necessary, a great number of wounds inflicted from behind'.

The following day, the *Observer* published exclusive material gathered by *Drum*: one of the only eye-witness accounts of the massacre written by a journalist, Humphrey Tyler, in which the writer not only contested the authorities' claim that

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<sup>55</sup> *Mail*, 31 March 1960, fp.

<sup>56</sup> Reeves, *Shooting*, pp. 72-3.

<sup>57</sup> *Mirror*, 25 March 1960, p. 4; *Mail*, 25 March 1960, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup> *News Chronicle*, 26 March 1960, fp.

the African crowd had been armed and violent, but also described the behaviour of the police in damning terms.<sup>59</sup> One officer Tyler saw standing on top of a Saracen appeared to the journalist to be firing his Sten gun into the crowd, ‘swinging it around in a wide arc from his hip as though he were panning a movie camera’. A number of journalists also made a conscious effort to put the African perspective. The *News Chronicle* and the *Observer* both ran articles on the passes, the *Observer* drawing on its Africa Bureau links;<sup>60</sup> and the *Herald* published a sympathetic interview with Philip Kgosana, the young Cape regional secretary of the PAC, sent from its Cape Town stringer, Myrna Blumberg.<sup>61</sup> In it, Kgosana explained that he “would rather die than live in South Africa as it is today”.

Blumberg appeared to have a good relationship with Kgosana, characterised by mutual trust. In his diary, Kgosana recorded that he had visited Blumberg’s house at Sea Point on the evening of 24 March for an interview which lasted about an hour.<sup>62</sup> According to Randolph Vigne, a prominent member of the South African Liberal Party, Blumberg was a friend of the organisation.<sup>63</sup> In the Cape, Liberals had forged a strong relationship with the leaders of the PAC. This included Kgosana, who worked as a seller for *Contact*, a Liberal fortnightly publication, edited by Patrick Duncan.<sup>64</sup> Journalists such as Blumberg, who had previously had material published in *Contact*,<sup>65</sup> likely benefited from these close associations. Such connections were widespread, and would inform British press treatment of South Africa in the days and weeks to follow, allowing for in-depth coverage of African activities, although not always to the approval or advantage of the PAC. Indeed, Kgosana’s links with journalists, and the way in which he was subsequently ‘feted’ by the media, later earned the young leader the contempt of many of his fellow pan-Africanists,<sup>66</sup> who were part of an organisation which, though pragmatic in its use of

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<sup>59</sup> *Observer*, 27 March 1960, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> *News Chronicle*, 23 March 1960, p. 5; *Observer*, 27 March 1960, p. 16. The *Observer*’s article was written by Mary Benson, a South African who was on the Executive of the Africa Bureau.

<sup>61</sup> *Herald*, 26 March 1960, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Philip Ata Kgosana, *Lest We Forget: An Autobiography* (Braamfontein, South Africa, 1988), p. 27.

<sup>63</sup> Randolph Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid: A History of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-68* (Basingstoke, 1997), p. 120.

<sup>64</sup> For Duncan’s role, and particularly his relationship with Kgosana, see: C. J. Driver, *Patrick Duncan: South African and Pan-African* (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>65</sup> Myrna Blumberg, *White Madam* (London, 1962), p. 106.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with T.T. Letlaka, Z.B. Molete, A.B. Ngcobo and Peter Raboroko, Dar-es-Salaam, 9 September 1968, A2422/4, Section A: Interviews, Gail M. Gerhart Interviews and documents. 1945-1972 (A2422), Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand (hereafter Wits).

the press, was also profoundly distrustful of it. According to J.D. Nyaose, a founding member of the PAC, the organisation once devised a slogan to say 'No press has built us, and no press will destroy us'.<sup>67</sup> While the NLM in Ghana and the MCP in Nyasaland had sought out British journalists, it is less certain that in the case of South Africa the initiative lay with the PAC.

Through Reeves, Tyler, and Blumberg, then, British papers laid emphasis on African grievances and police brutality at Sharpeville during this week. Yet the British press described the ten days following the massacre as a period of African violence, too, and predominantly one of African power. This action was presented not as a response to the massacre, but as part of a continuum of African action of which the demonstration at Sharpeville had been only the beginning, as Sobukwe had intended. What is sometimes lost in studies of media treatment of Sharpeville, if decontextualized, is the fact that the massacre marked the inception of a planned African campaign of civil disobedience, as opposed to its culmination, and defeat, and press coverage reflected this.

For the most part, the focus was Cape Town, which became the locus of the struggle. Coverage was patchy at first, owing to the fact that most visiting correspondents had initially flocked to Johannesburg, where Sharpeville was located, as the 'imagined storm centre'.<sup>68</sup> Again, this pointed to the difficulties inherent in covering unexpected events; but it also reflected a certain degree of ignorance on the part of the British press of the situation unfolding on the ground, a condition born partly, one can surmise, of their lack of a sustained physical presence. This factor may also have been what drew them to English speakers and familiar South African publications upon arrival. Hopkinson recalled that Sharpeville brought 'the press of half the world pouring in on Johannesburg - and pouring into *Drum* offices as well'.<sup>69</sup>

Fortunately, Cape Town was serviced well by stringers. Some journalists such as the *Cape Times*'s Stanley Uys,<sup>70</sup> stringing for the *News Chronicle*, appeared to be on the inside track of events, and that paper was receptive to publishing his material. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, an article by Uys described the mounting tension on the

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with J.D. Nyaose, Nairobi, 4 December 1969, A2422/19, Section A: Interviews, Gail M. Gerhart Interviews and documents (A2422), Wits. For the ANC's attitude to the 'white press' (recall Ghana), see: Albert Luthuli, *Let My People Go: An Autobiography* (London, 1962).

<sup>68</sup> Vigne, *Liberals*, p. 119.

<sup>69</sup> Hopkinson, *Fiery*, p. 268.

<sup>70</sup> The *Cape Times* was also an English-language paper.

second day of the anti-pass demonstrations.<sup>71</sup> Uys explained that in Cape Town there had been ‘shooting, stonings, arrests – and mass absenteeism’: ‘Pan-Africanists are telling Africans in the townships, and even in the white suburbs, not to go to work anymore.’ Readers were told that employers in Cape Town estimated that between 60 and 80 per cent of their African staffs were absent. The *Telegraph*’s Colin Reid, the only British correspondent resident in South Africa,<sup>72</sup> reported further police shootings, African plans for sustained demonstrations, and ‘large-scale absenteeism’ in Cape Town, which ‘delayed shipping and industry’.<sup>73</sup>

Three days later, Uys reported that 2,000 Africans led by Kgosana had ‘massed silently’ outside a police station in Cape Town, and had ‘won a victory against the Pass Laws’.<sup>74</sup> In response to pressure from the African delegation and Duncan, who had arrived on the scene, Colonel Terblanche, deputy police commissioner for the western Cape, had suspended the pass laws temporarily.<sup>75</sup> The decision was subsequently applied nationwide.<sup>76</sup>

All papers reported the temporary suspension of the pass laws, and the apparently extensive and mounting concern below Cabinet level.<sup>77</sup> By the 28<sup>th</sup>, some journalists were asking if Verwoerd could last much longer. Stephen Barber’s piece for the *News Chronicle* explained that South Africa was ‘on the edge of anarchy’.<sup>78</sup> ‘If Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd can last in office much longer’, he wrote, ‘then this is an even stranger place than it has ever been made out to be... The Government of what cannot be described as anything but a slave State has frankly had to confess that it cannot impose its own laws’. The *Telegraph* also chose to emphasise the significance of the Government’s suspension of the pass laws. The paper thought that they ‘(constituted) the very framework of apartheid’ and were in Nationalist thinking at moments of crisis more necessary than ever.<sup>79</sup> ‘If the Union Government fails to resume the enforcement of these laws’, the editorial read, ‘it will not be too

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<sup>71</sup> *News Chronicle*, 23 March 1960, fp.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Staff correspondents of United Kingdom newspapers and the B.B.C in Commonwealth countries’, 26 May 1960, fol. 11, DO 194/29.

<sup>73</sup> *Telegraph*, 23 March 1960, fp (continued bp).

<sup>74</sup> *News Chronicle*, 26 March 1960, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Lodge, *Sharpeville*, pp. 140-3.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>77</sup> *Observer*, 27 March 1960, fp (continued p. 6); *Mail*, 28 March 1960, fp and p. 9; *Herald*, 28 March 1960, fp and p. 7; *News Chronicle*, 28 March 1960, fp and p. 4; *Telegraph*, 28 March 1960, fp and p. 12; *Mirror*, 28 March 1960, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> *News Chronicle*, 28 March 1960, fp.

<sup>79</sup> *Telegraph*, 28 March 1960, p. 12.

much to say that the tide has turned in the country's history'. Although a number of factors were thought to have played a part in this incipient turning of the tide, including world pressure, National Party tactics, and changes in Afrikaner opinion, journalists also wrote it up as a story of African achievement. 'It is because the African labour force has at last become aware of its passive strength', the *Telegraph* claimed.<sup>80</sup> The *Mail* underscored the importance of 'the capacity for organised protest suddenly shown by the black Africans'.<sup>81</sup>

Then came the first nationwide demonstration of African strength: the ANC's national 'Day of Mourning' (28 March), the first event since Sharpeville to attract a comparable degree of publicity. Albert Luthuli, the President of the ANC, had asked his supporters to stay away from work and to burn their passes in memory of those who had died the previous week. Hopkinson claims that the idea had come from Nat Nakasa, a *Drum* journalist,<sup>82</sup> illustrating the continued importance of the links between African nationalists and the press, as well as the degree to which journalists contributed to creating or facilitating the stories they covered. Hopkinson passed the idea on to Luthuli through Cecil Eprile and Dennis Kiley.<sup>83</sup> Again, the South African English-language press enabled the foreign press to cover the story. The editor drove out with Berry that day and 'three or four visiting journalists and cameramen on a tour of the townships'.<sup>84</sup> Norman Phillips, a Canadian journalist, remembered going into Orlando, a township near Johannesburg, with Harold Sacks, crime reporter for the *Rand Daily Mail*.<sup>85</sup>

Articles pushed African hate and African violence as themes. Readers were told that the day had been filled with arson and murder. Africans had reportedly burned churches and schools nationwide. Striking Africans had stoned those who had chosen to ignore the strike call. And an African policeman had been stabbed to death by a mob.<sup>86</sup> Europeans had also been threatened. Peter Younghusband, *Drum*'s Cape Town editor, stringing for the *Mail*, sent a report from Langa that day, from the funeral of three Africans shot by the police the previous Monday (the 21<sup>st</sup>).

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<sup>80</sup> *Telegraph*, 28 March 1960, p. 12.

<sup>81</sup> *Mail*, 28 March 1960, fp.

<sup>82</sup> Hopkinson, *Fiery*, pp. 263-4.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* I think Eprile and Kiley were both journalists.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>85</sup> Norman Phillips, *The Tragedy of Apartheid: A Journalist's Experiences in the South African Riots* (London, 1961), p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> *Mirror*, 29 March 1960, p. 3; *Telegraph*, 29 March 1960, fp; *News Chronicle*, 29 March 1960, fp; *Herald*, 29 March 1960, fp (continued p. 7); *Mail*, 29 March 1960, fp.

He had gone in with members of the PAC and the Liberal Party, who had tasked him with operating a loudspeaker,<sup>87</sup> which the Liberal Party had intended to be used to call for peaceful and orderly behaviour.<sup>88</sup> He wrote that he ‘wished (he) was not there’.<sup>89</sup> ‘At the graveside a relative of one of the dead men raised red-rimmed eyes’, he explained, ‘and seeing me, a white face among the mass of black faces on the other side of the grave, snarled through clenched teeth the one word: “Go.”’.<sup>90</sup> The leaders of the Pan-Africanists standing beside him advised him to ‘leave immediately’.<sup>91</sup> In other areas, action shots of Africans burning their passes seemed to capture a mood of fun and frenzy.<sup>92</sup> Hopkinson saw that at least one of the photos had been staged by an overseas cameraman encouraging specific poses.<sup>93</sup>

This upsurge in African activity only seemed to increase thereafter, climaxing two days later, when photos of a huge crowd of 30,000 Africans marching from Langa and Nyanga to Cape Town city centre to demand the release of their leaders were plastered across the front pages.<sup>94</sup> Kgosana was pictured leading the march. He had missed the beginning, and had had to be given a lift by an American journalist, who had gone to interview him, to get to the front of the procession.<sup>95</sup> Journalists flanked the march.<sup>96</sup> According to Youngusband, the procession pushed before it a ‘fleet’ of cars and vans containing newspapermen, cameramen, and newsreel photographers.<sup>97</sup> At its head beside Kgosana, amongst others were Youngusband and Ken Mackenzie, Blumberg’s husband, who wrote a piece for the *Spectator*.<sup>98</sup> During this period, a reporter for the *Rand Daily Mail* recalled that ‘the Cape Town liberals’ were ‘putting Kgosana in touch with the white establishment press, and later with foreign journalists, so that he could explain the nature of the

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<sup>87</sup> Vigne, *Liberals*, p. 121.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Diary kept by an African member of the Liberal Party, Cape Town, March/April 1960 (Mr. August)’, piece 389, Section B: Documents, Gail M. Gerhart Interviews and documents (A2422), Wits.

<sup>89</sup> *Mail*, 29 March 1960, fp.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Mail*, 29 March 1960, p. 11.

<sup>92</sup> *Mirror*, 29 March 1960, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> Hopkinson, *Fiery*, p. 266.

<sup>94</sup> *Mail*, 31 March 1960, fp; *Express*, 31 March 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 31 March 1960, fp; *News Chronicle*, 31 March 1960, fp; *Telegraph*, 31 March 1960, fp; *Herald*, 1 April 1960, fp.

<sup>95</sup> See: Vigne, *Liberals*, p. 125; Kgosana, *Lest we Forget*, p. 33; and Lodge, *Sharpeville*, p. 150.

<sup>96</sup> Kgosana, *Lest we Forget*, p. 33.

<sup>97</sup> *Mail*, 31 March 1960, fp.

<sup>98</sup> *Mail*, 31 March 1960, fp; Blumberg, *White Madam*, p. 27. Blumberg said she arrived later than her husband: see *White Madam*, p. 27 and p. 32.

campaign'.<sup>99</sup> 'I could hardly meet all the newsmen who wanted to see me', Kgosana later recalled.<sup>100</sup> On the day of the march, 'press people and other spectators watched from roof-tops'<sup>101</sup> as Kgosana victoriously negotiated with Colonel Terblanche and General Rademeyer for a meeting with the Minister of Justice.

Most of the articles published in British papers the day following the march pushed the power of African non-violence as a theme. Yet bubbling under the surface of some of the narratives was an unmistakeable latent violence communicated to readers through descriptions of the crowd as 'seething', for instance – 'a great black snake'.<sup>102</sup> The titles of the editorials that day reinforced the view that substantive change was now more necessary than ever. These included: 'At breaking point' (*Mail*), 'A change must come' (*Herald*), 'The shadows' (*News Chronicle*), and 'Life and reason at stake' (*Telegraph*).<sup>103</sup>

Despite the perceived need for it, however, editors had doubts as to whether positive changes would in fact take place. The Government had already announced its plans to ban the ANC and PAC, and the day of the march marked the beginning of a State of Emergency. This potentially explosive mix of African strength and white intransigence was not lost on editors, and recalled Sharpeville. 'At breaking point' told *Mail* readers that 'The clouds lower over South Africa. One feels an ominous tension as before a savage storm. What has been seen in other countries is now happening there. The mass arrests, the state of emergency, the menacing demonstrations. All this, the world rightly believes, is due to the blind stupidity of the National Government in persisting with apartheid in the face of reason and reality. The onlooker, who sees most of the game, helplessly watches the approach of almost inevitable tragedy'.<sup>104</sup>

The *Herald's* 'A change must come' explained that 'The South African Government is asking for a revolution... There are ten million black South Africans. There are three million whites. The 10 million *cannot* be held in subjection to unjust laws, ever savagely tightening. Shooting, banning, flogging, jailing only challenge hatred. To remove injustice, to abandon *apartheid*, to aim at government by consent

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<sup>99</sup> Benjamin Pogrand, *How Can Man Die Better: Sobukwe and Apartheid* (London, 1990), p. 145.

<sup>100</sup> Kgosana, *Lest we Forget*, p. 32.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>102</sup> *Mail*, 31 March 1960, fp. The *Mirror* referred to a 'tide of anger'. The *Express* headline was 'Terror on the march'. Both fp articles on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> These were on pages 8, fp, 4 and 12 respectively.

<sup>104</sup> *Mail*, 31 March 1960, fp.

is the only hope in South Africa. Even yet it is not too late. But Dr. Verwoerd's Government arrests liberals, trade union leaders, moderates, black and white – some of the very people whose influence is important to avoid nation-wide violence'.<sup>105</sup>

In the ten days following the massacre, papers continued to hold the apartheid state responsible for clashes between black and white, and certainly this had implications for the portrayal of Africans, who did begin to look like victims. Yet the core premise upon which calls for change were based, reinforced by reports of the Day of Mourning and the march, was the view that it was with the Africans that power resided, and that there could and would be death on both sides, including white, if that fact were not acknowledged.

#### 4. British press content, the British Government, and the UN

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council gathered to discuss the situation. Some MPs had pressured the British Government to adopt a firm stance. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, James Callaghan, Labour's chief spokesman on colonial affairs, had asked the Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, to instruct the UK delegate to support proposals for bringing the South African situation within its jurisdiction.<sup>106</sup> Lloyd subsequently informed the House that the UK representative had instructions not to oppose discussion of the item, but that the Government still adhered to the view that, 'in accordance with Article 2(7) of the Charter, nothing in the Charter authorises the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State'.<sup>107</sup> Labour greeted the announcement as a positive step, but also began to push for a progressive approach to a possible resolution.<sup>108</sup>

The nature of the editorials on the 31<sup>st</sup> indicated that the British press remained divided on the issue of what it was best for Britain to do. The *Herald* laid emphasis on the importance of 'world opinion' or 'world pressure' in supporting all 'reasonable' people inside South Africa 'to bring a change', but it did not mention the UN.<sup>109</sup> The *Mail* welcomed Lloyd's announcement, but also thought that the 'rule about non-interference in internal affairs is necessary and wise' or 'the world

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<sup>105</sup> *Herald*, 31 March 1960, fp.

<sup>106</sup> HC Deb 28 March 1960, vol 620, cols 954-5.

<sup>107</sup> HC Deb 30 March 1960, vol 620, col 1329.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, cols 1329-30.

<sup>109</sup> *Herald*, 31 March 1960, fp.



would be in constant turmoil'.<sup>110</sup> The paper seemed to settle on the view that Commonwealth leaders might have the greatest impact by exerting pressure on Verwoerd privately. The *News Chronicle* approved of the British Government's decision not to oppose discussion of the item, but said little more.<sup>111</sup> The *Telegraph* favoured calm.<sup>112</sup> It thought that 'blanket indignation levelled at the whites' or 'unmitigated encouragement of the blacks' would only 'exacerbate passions already at boiling point', and could prove 'incendiary'. It doubted whether the Security Council meeting could serve any 'constructive' purpose, but argued that 'on balance', Britain was 'probably correct' not to oppose such a meeting, 'since to have done so would not only have been ineffective, but would also have been taken as condonation of apartheid'. In short, British press opinion on the action Britain should take at the UN (and elsewhere) remained divided.

This uncertainty may have been representative of British public opinion as a whole. On 7 April, the *News Chronicle* published the results of a Gallup Poll it had conducted 'a few days after the shootings', so, relevant for this earlier period of discussion.<sup>113</sup> Existing historical works usually only cite certain aspects of the poll's findings, such as the paper's claim that the events at Sharpeville had dramatically increased British public awareness of events in South Africa (to 99%), and that British opinion had swung against apartheid (to 80%).<sup>114</sup> Yet, importantly, the findings also stated that 'there are gradations of opinion about what the British attitude should be'. Although 52% of respondents favoured adopting a strong and outspoken stand, 48% did not know what to do or favoured inaction of various kinds on apartheid or South African events and issues. The Labour Party was also less willing to take a strong lead, in some contrast to Central Africa.

At the UN, Britain abstained from voting on a resolution deploring the loss of life in the shooting of African demonstrators and calling on the South African Government to abandon its racial policies in the interests of international peace. The vote was 9 to 0 for the resolution. France also abstained. Some of the headlines that day suggested that the press approved of the resolution and disapproved of Britain's abstention. These included the *News Chronicle*'s 'Britain silent as U.N. raps

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<sup>110</sup> *Mail*, 31 March 1960, fp.

<sup>111</sup> *News Chronicle*, 31 March 1960, p. 4.

<sup>112</sup> *Telegraph*, 31 March 1960, p. 12.

<sup>113</sup> *News Chronicle*, 7 April 1960, fp.

<sup>114</sup> Lodge, *Sharpeville*, p. 237.

Africa', and possibly the *Mirror*'s "'Stop it! Demand by UN'.<sup>115</sup> Yet papers refrained from editorial comment on the issue. Parliamentary criticism was greater, but still rather insubstantial, and the Government remained resolute. In the Commons on 6 April, John Profumo, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, summed up the Government's reasoning thus: 'we thought that the resolution went beyond the scope of the Security Council', and 'we did not think it was the most effective way of alleviating the situation'.<sup>116</sup>

In the period following the initial request for a meeting from the African and Asian members (the 24<sup>th</sup>), the British Government's behaviour at or in relation to the UN had been influenced by a number of considerations. To the extent that the Government had taken 'positive' action against the National Government, its overriding concern had been the importance of avoiding damaging relations with the newly independent nations of Africa and Asia, although its appreciation of the strength of British public opposition to apartheid had also played a role.<sup>117</sup> Examples of 'positive' action would include its decision not to oppose the UN's discussion of the matter, and then abstaining from voting on the resolution as opposed to vetoing it. On the inhibiting side, the Government's priority was its concern that Britain itself might need to rely on Article 2(7) at some future date in its own African colonies, particularly Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. Yet the rather equivocal character of British editorial comment might also have inspired or enabled constraint. The nature of the Commons debate on the 6<sup>th</sup> indicated that it may well have informed developments, for although one Labour MP had argued that failure to vote on apartheid was 'totally unrepresentative of British and Commonwealth public opinion',<sup>118</sup> another, on the Government benches, had felt able to contend that 'general public opinion feels that the greatest contribution which this House can make towards a happy solution of these tragic and perplexing events is to exercise restraint and leave Her Majesty's Government to use their own judgment as they think best at this delicate time'.<sup>119</sup> Judging from the nature of press comment, this seems a fair assessment.

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<sup>115</sup> On pages fp and p. 3 respectively.

<sup>116</sup> HC Deb 06 April 1960, vol 621, col 376.

<sup>117</sup> DO 35/10730-1; PREM 11/3163; PREM 11/3109.

<sup>118</sup> Stephen Swingle. HC Deb 06 April 1960, vol 621, col 376.

<sup>119</sup> Sir G. Nicholson. *Ibid.*, cols 377-8.

5. 'The day of the whips':<sup>120</sup> Police brutality as the core theme of British press coverage of Langa and Nyanga

It was only during the following week that police brutality became the central theme in British newspaper coverage of events in South Africa. Yet this was not because more details on Sharpeville emerged. It stemmed from the behaviour of the police in Cape Town as they began to enforce new laws introduced under the State of Emergency. This process had begun at the time of the march, but the violence did not peak until a week later: 4-6 April. Operations prior to this included the first waves of the arrests of 'moderates', including Luthuli, Kgosaana, and some white liberals,<sup>121</sup> prompting others, such as Reeves, to flee the country;<sup>122</sup> and efforts by the police to force strikers back to work.<sup>123</sup> Indications that in Cape Town these activities were taking a turn for the worse included news that the authorities had thrown cordons around Langa and Nyanga,<sup>124</sup> and that a police officer had shot a 'sick baby' in the head.<sup>125</sup>

On 5 April, reports concentrated on what was happening in Cape Town city centre.<sup>126</sup> James O'Driscoll was there, covering events for the *Telegraph*. He wrote that police had gone into 'some of the main streets of Cape Town' and had 'attacked Africans, who were walking peacefully, with riding whips and rubber truncheons', 'in full view of bustling shoppers'.<sup>127</sup> The State of Emergency was biting, and journalists' movements were strictly curtailed. Yet many did manage to report scenes of police brutality further out, too, even in cordoned off Langa and Nyanga. These included Younghusband and Blumberg, who used their network of contacts until the telephone wires were eventually cut;<sup>128</sup> and Barber, who had, according to his article, come across the violence 'almost by accident' on his way to the city centre from the airport.<sup>129</sup> Barber sent a particularly colourful report. Yet it was not unrepresentative of the accounts appearing in other papers, and drew on war-time

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<sup>120</sup> *Mail*, 6 April 1960, p. 10.

<sup>121</sup> For example: *Herald*, 31 March 1960, fp (continued p. 8); *Telegraph*, 31 March 1960, fp.

<sup>122</sup> For example: *Observer*, 3 April 1960, bp.

<sup>123</sup> For example: *Mail*, 31 March 1960, fp.

<sup>124</sup> For example: *Telegraph*, 1 April 1960, fp.

<sup>125</sup> For example: *Herald*, 2 April 1960, fp.

<sup>126</sup> *Mirror*, 5 April 1960, p. 3; *Mail*, 5 April 1960, fp; *News Chronicle*, 5 April 1960, fp; *Telegraph*, 5 April 1960, fp.

<sup>127</sup> *Telegraph*, 5 April 1960, fp.

<sup>128</sup> *Mail*, 5 April 1960, fp; *Herald*, 5 April 1960, p. 9. Blumberg, *White Madam*, p. 33.

<sup>129</sup> *News Chronicle*, 5 April 1960, fp.

imagery. He told his readers that in the two townships the police had launched “kragdadigheid” – ‘a beastly word that means precisely what the Nazis meant by “beastliness”’.

The Labour Party continued to up the pressure in the Commons. On the same day as these articles were published, Gaitskell urged Macmillan to agree that ‘the overwhelming majority of the British people received with a shock of horror the news of the police action at Cape Town yesterday’ and to give to the South African Government ‘early expression of his regret about what happened’.<sup>130</sup> Macmillan replied faster than he had on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, immediately stating that ‘what has happened in this tragic situation is a very great source of deep regret to me’.<sup>131</sup> The press hailed this as the Prime Minister’s most outspoken comment yet,<sup>132</sup> but his words could hardly have concerned the South African Government any more than had Britain’s recent action at the UN, for it was on a par. Macmillan also continued to urge caution in the name of Commonwealth unity.<sup>133</sup>

The following day, Younghusband wrote a particularly striking feature for the *Mail* entitled ‘The day of the whips’, which summarised recent developments.<sup>134</sup> Under the ‘whips’ headline was an Illingworth cartoon showing terrified, screaming, running or cowering Africans being chased by policemen with truncheons and long whips. In the cartoon, the Africans did look very much like victims; the police, stern and brutal. ‘Horrificed women’, Younghusband wrote, ‘terrified screaming children watch their husbands and fathers being dragged out of the mean dwellings and flogged with whips and beaten with long riot batons, running between the shanties, chased by the police lashing at them mercilessly. Those who resist are shot down’.

For O’Driscoll and Younghusband, amongst others, Langa and Nyanga represented turning points, and it was not until then that the British press depicted the South African police as truly brutal. This probably reflected the fact that few journalists had witnessed Sharpeville. Yet it also reflected the nature of the new violence; and showed how some sorts of brutality were deemed more acceptable than others at the end of empire. ‘Scenes of people rioting, being shot, beaten with batons and generally dragged about’ is ‘bad enough’, Younghusband thinks, but ‘there was

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<sup>130</sup> HC Deb 05 April 1960, vol 621, cols 191-2.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, col 192.

<sup>132</sup> For example: *News Chronicle*, 6 April 1960, p. 5.

<sup>133</sup> HC Deb 05 April 1960, vol 621, cols 192-3.

<sup>134</sup> *Mail*, 6 April 1960, p. 10.

something about the use of whips that took away a man's dignity, treating him as any decent person would not even treat a dog, that placed an instant barrier between me and the government of my country at that time'.<sup>135</sup> It was the premeditated nature of the violence in Cape Town which the *News Chronicle* chose to highlight: 'The apologists for the South African Government have argued that the slaughter at Sharpeville was the result of a mob threatening a police station. This may be part of the story and panic among the outnumbered, if heavily armed, police can possibly be urged in mitigation. No such plea can be offered for the punitive raids made on African townships near Capetown'.<sup>136</sup>

*The Times* and the *Telegraph*, both hitherto relatively restrained in their criticism, became far more outspoken as a result of the raids on the townships. In an editorial on 6 April entitled 'Terrorism in Cape Town', the *Telegraph* explained that 'this indiscriminate police brutality, conducted openly in the main streets of the South African capital, and extolled by Ministers in Parliament, marks a clear decision by Dr. Verwoerd to institute a bloody reign of terror... the price Dr. Verwoerd will have to pay is final, irrevocable and explicit adoption of the rule of force and force alone, which means in effect declaration of civil war'.<sup>137</sup> The paper had previously urged caution and had emphasised the importance of keeping South Africa within the Commonwealth. It now thought that apartheid 'looks like becoming an emetic which may make it difficult for the Commonwealth to prevent South Africa from being spewed out'.<sup>138</sup> Two days later, the paper urged serious, and very uncharacteristic, consideration of embarking on a sports boycott.<sup>139</sup>

In its editorial of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 'The Coming Harvest', *The Times* felt so strongly that it thought it had no option but to quote poetry in order to capture 'the moral of the nightmare sixteen days that have passed since the revolution began in South Africa'.<sup>140</sup> After citing part of Roy Campbell's poem on 'the Zulu girl suckling her child', it asked how Verwoerd 'and his faithful backwoodsmen' could 'be so mad as to think that they can cow a proud, fighting race into subjection'. 'Will nothing teach them that the world has left the nineteenth century behind?', it lamented: 'Dingaan's Impis were mowed down by the muskets of Pretorius at Blood River and

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<sup>135</sup> Correspondence with Younghusband, May 2013.

<sup>136</sup> *News Chronicle*, 6 April 1960, p. 6.

<sup>137</sup> *Telegraph*, 6 April 1960, p. 12.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Telegraph*, 8 April 1960, p. 12.

<sup>140</sup> *Times*, 6 April 1960, p. 13.

that crowning victory is kept as an annual holiday in the Union... The events of the last fortnight have made it certain that a Dingaan's day of reckoning is round the corner. If it is to be peaceful – as it could be – there must be a speedy change'.<sup>141</sup>

As a consequence of Langa and Nyanga, not Sharpeville, stories of police brutality and African victimhood came to dominate British newspaper coverage of South Africa. Yet even with the police so firmly in the spotlight, this never did affect the papers' core emphasis, which was African power, and the dangers, for black and white, of resisting what was now a truly continent-wide process of African emancipation. Against the backdrop of events in South Africa, Britain's own recent changes in policy shone out like sunbeams.

On 8 April, under the watchful gaze of Hastings Banda, the recently released leader of the Malawi Congress Party, sitting up in the public gallery,<sup>142</sup> the Commons unanimously agreed to a resolution proposed by Labour's John Stonehouse 'deploring the present racist policies' of the South African Government, and '(urging) Her Majesty's Government to take the opportunity at the forthcoming Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference to bring home to the South African Government the strong feelings of British people on this question'.<sup>143</sup> It also '(restated)' the 'firm belief' of the House 'that peace and tranquillity in South Africa can only be secured in the long run on the basis of freedom and equality and a full respect for the inherent dignity and humanity of all men'.<sup>144</sup> On the Government side, certainly this represented a departure from previous statements. Yet, the UN, its most worrying fixture, had come and gone; and it continued to urge restraint. Stonehouse, possibly with an eye to the complexity of the situation, yet still keen to accrue political points, had framed the motion 'in such a way that it would unite the House rather than divide it'.<sup>145</sup> A large number of MPs left before the debate had finished (which was 4pm). The *Telegraph* reporter noted that of the total of 630 MPs, 'only about 40 were in their places when the motion was put'.<sup>146</sup> 'Although it

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<sup>141</sup> The Battle of Blood River was fought on 16 December 1838 between 470 Voortrekkers, led by Andries Pretorius, and 15,000-20,000 Zulus. Dingaan was their king. Approximately 3,000 Zulus died. 'Impi' means regiment.

<sup>142</sup> *News Chronicle*, 9 April 1960, p. 7.

<sup>143</sup> For the text of the resolution see end of the debate in: HC Deb 08 April 1960, vol 621, col 843.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, col 781.

<sup>146</sup> *Telegraph*, 9 April 1960, fp.

was sponsored by a Labour member', the correspondent added, 'the final attendance of Conservatives was bigger than that on the Opposition side'.<sup>147</sup>

6. Relations between the South African Government and the British and South African English-language presses, and the implications of the State of Emergency

If British newspaper articles had little transformative impact on the British Government, the same cannot be said of their influence on the Government of South Africa, whose response from the end of March was relentless. According to the *Express*, the authorities tried to ban press photographers from the funeral of the Sharpeville victims.<sup>148</sup> The *Herald* reported that the police had threatened correspondents when they had tried to take pictures and report on the arrival of African prisoners at Johannesburg Central Jail.<sup>149</sup> In Cape Town, the police barred journalists from entering the two townships at the heart of the action: Langa and Nyanga.<sup>150</sup> And, most significantly, under the State of Emergency, the Government introduced new powers to enable it to censor the press.<sup>151</sup>

For South African newspapers these moves represented an important, but not a revolutionary change from those of previous years. The freedom of South African English-language papers, in particular, to publish what they wanted had been curtailed for some time because of the cultivation of an atmosphere of intimidation, and legislation such as the Suppression of Communism Act, under which journalists such as Patrick Duncan had been detained.<sup>152</sup> Benjamin Pogrund, who worked for an English-language paper in 1960, the *Rand Daily Mail*, recalled that 'Over the years the English-language press was a particular target for the Nationalists' on the grounds that it was 'unpatriotic, disloyal, given to telling outright lies, and controlled by foreign-owned gold mining companies. The fact that so much of the ownership resided in Britain for so long, that the presence and influence of British-born editors and journalists was so strong for even longer, and that so much of the news revolved

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> *Express*, 31 March 1960, p. 9.

<sup>149</sup> *Herald*, 31 March 1960, p. 8 (article begins on fp).

<sup>150</sup> *Mail*, 6 April 1960, p. 10.

<sup>151</sup> For example: *News Chronicle*, 31 March 1960, fp.

<sup>152</sup> Pogrund, *War of Words*, p. 42.

around London, fuelled their cause'.<sup>153</sup> After the Nationalist victory at the polls in 1948, the inroads into press freedom began. 'New laws and extensions of old laws', Pogrand writes, meant that even by the time of Sharpeville 'at least twelve statutes were in place that in one way or another denied or inhibited press freedoms'.<sup>154</sup> The commission of inquiry into the press, set up in January 1951, and which ran for over a decade, Pogrand thought cast a particularly dark shadow.<sup>155</sup>

Foreign journalists were also affected during this earlier period. Pogrand notes that the commission started compiling dossiers on both local and overseas correspondents from the beginning of the fifties.<sup>156</sup> Yet until the declaration of the State of Emergency in 1960, the South African Government had not censored reports filed from South Africa for overseas newspapers. Indeed, one of the possible attractions for some South African journalists of stringing for British and other foreign publications was that doing so enabled them to circumvent the usual restrictions which affected their day-to-day work for the South African press. Because British papers were sold in South Africa, moreover, stringing for them or writing in to them was a potential way for South Africans to communicate with other South Africans that which would otherwise have remained 'hushed up'. This had been part of Reeves' thinking when he had released details of the testimony of the Sharpeville survivors to overseas journalists in the week following the massacre. During this period, Anthony Sampson, in Johannesburg for the *Observer*, commented on how quickly foreign newspapers sold out.<sup>157</sup>

With the State of Emergency some of this changed. On 1 April, journalists reported Eric Louw's warning that it was now possible to infringe the emergency laws in dispatches to overseas papers.<sup>158</sup> It became an offence to disclose the identity of a person arrested or detained, without the written permission of the Minister of Justice, and there were no exceptions for journalists. The Government also forbade anyone to write anything considered critical or subversive, on penalty of imprisonment.

Many journalists were not initially willing to comply with these new regulations, as illustrated by the nature of British press treatment of police action in

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-91.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>157</sup> *Observer*, 17 April 1960, p. 8.

<sup>158</sup> For example: *Mirror*, 1 April 1960, fp; *Mail*, 1 April, fp.



Langa and Nyanga. Yet this prompted a further onslaught, at first verbal, then ‘official’, which proved more effective. At the end of that week (8 April), Phillips recalled that Louw ‘was stung into attacking foreign correspondents for sending “wildly exaggerated and in many cases completely untrue reports to their newspapers and agencies”’.<sup>159</sup> Blumberg remembered that ‘Official outbursts against foreign correspondents culminated in Parliament with Dr. Verwoerd announcing that there seemed to be “a source of information in Cape Town; this we are determined to deal with”’.<sup>160</sup> Because of the nature of the relationship between the overseas, including the British, press and South African English-language papers, stringers were not immune to attack. Indeed, they were often singled out as the source of the trouble. Younghusband recalls ‘a parliamentary debate when a few of us sitting in the press gallery were pointed to by...Louw who said: “There they sit, Mr Speaker, so-called South Africans who would sell the good name of their country for 30 pieces of silver!”’.<sup>161</sup>

The reports of Sharpeville, Langa and Nyanga which appeared in British and other overseas papers, some of which were written by South Africans, provided a pretext for the expression of more latent thoughts and fears that cut to the very heart of white South African society. As in the Federation, British newspaper reports fuelled pre-existing fears, informed settler narratives of ‘self’ and ‘community’, and provided a means by which the ruling white minority avoided having to address more difficult issues, such as African discontent. In Parliament on 30 March, the country’s Minister of Transport claimed that ‘British newspapers’ (meaning South African English-language newspapers) were ‘still fighting the Anglo-Boer War’: ‘they have never forgotten that these despicable Boers succeeded, 46 years after the Treaty of Vereeniging, in taking over the reigns (sic) of government in South Africa’.<sup>162</sup> The reports of South African English-language newspapers, English-speaking journalists, and foreign – particularly British – papers fed into a debate within white society on the causes of the present trouble, which, on the Government

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<sup>159</sup> Phillips, *Tragedy*, p. 187.

<sup>160</sup> Blumberg, *White Madam*, p. 35.

<sup>161</sup> Correspondence with Younghusband, May 2013.

<sup>162</sup> ‘Assembly Debates, 30 March 1960’, piece 384, Section B: Documents, Gail M. Gerhart Interviews and documents (A2422), Wits. Reference is on p. 4428 of the original book, which Gerhart has photocopied.

side, included ‘agitation’ and the cultivation of grievances amongst Africans.<sup>163</sup> The centrality of Younghusband and Uys, both Afrikaners, to British press coverage of South Africa during these weeks, also points to the importance of situating Afrikaans-speakers at the heart of the story of the fight against apartheid, a dynamic which has been somewhat neglected by the historiography. Younghusband had become a journalist out of ‘a pursuit of adventure and excitement’, initially, and he regarded Fleet Street as a sort of ‘Mecca’.<sup>164</sup> Though his roots remained firmly Afrikaner, he also felt a degree of spiritual affinity with Britain, born of an early interest in British literature, and the influence of an inspirational school teacher from England.<sup>165</sup>

Two days following Louw’s attack in Parliament on foreign press reporting of Langa and Nyanga (the 9<sup>th</sup>) came the first arrest of a foreign correspondent under the State of Emergency. At seven in the morning ‘two obvious plain-clothes policemen’ knocked on the door of Phillips’s bedroom in Durban’s Edward Hotel, and after ‘(probing) his files and belongings’ (some of which they took), drove him to Durban jail.<sup>166</sup> Phillips thought that there were three possible explanations for his arrest. It was either ‘A warning to all foreign correspondents and a threat to their sources of information’; ‘A vindictive action revealing the jittery state of the white-supremacy Government and the dominant position of its national police chief, General Rademeyer’; or ‘Because of the investigation I had commenced into the sinister secret society – the Afrikaner-Broederbond’.<sup>167</sup> Phillips thought that ‘The timing and content of my last report on Nyanga was also relevant’.<sup>168</sup> He had filed a report on Nyanga from Durban, which had been retained by Post Office staff.<sup>169</sup> Phillips had been to Nyanga, but he had not been present at the event he reported. He defended his actions by pointing out that no correspondents had been allowed into the township that day.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> See ‘Assembly Debates’ for the whole period discussed here: Section B: Documents, Gail M. Gerhart Interviews and documents (A2422), Wits.

<sup>164</sup> Correspondence with Younghusband, May 2013.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Phillips, *Tragedy*, pp. 187-9.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>170</sup> His report on Nyanga was subsequently published in the *Telegraph*, but as the first page had been confiscated, this version also had to be ‘reconstructed...from memory to the best of his ability’. *Telegraph*, 16 April 1960, fp. When in Africa, he had apparently phoned the *Star*’s Cape Town correspondent, for information with which to write his article.

The South African Government may have over-emphasised the degree to which foreign journalists, certainly knowingly, distorted events in South Africa when they wrote their reports. Indeed, a likely reason why they so feared the stringer, whose accounts were in many ways so similar, was that he or she did 'know' South Africa and could thus not be so easily repudiated. Foreign journalists were often a soft target. Echoing the cases of the Federation and of Ghana, the Government also seemed most sensitive to the most critical or sensational aspects of coverage, which in some ways gave them a false picture of the whole.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, as the Philips' case indicates, the South African Government was not entirely erroneous in its accusations, and nor did it accuse without reason. It seemed profoundly anxious at foreign journalists' approach to covering the country. In the case of Britain, the South African Government feared press bias, and thought it saw evidence of double standards, as with the relative 'under reporting' of the deaths of white policemen at Cato Manor at the start of the year, for example, and in the way that British papers reported Britain in Africa.<sup>172</sup> The exception was the *Express*, which was alone in putting the perspective of the Afrikaners (as it saw it) to British readers and in invoking the argument that no country was without sin. For the rest, it is true that British journalists rarely, if ever, portrayed events in the British Empire in as negative a light as those in South Africa. In addition, British journalists often showed a stunning lack of awareness of the forces that British imperialism had set in motion in South Africa; namely, that they had settled part of it and that it remained a British dominion.

At the time of Langa and Nyanga, B. P. J. Erasmus, Information Officer at South Africa House in London, thought that 'the tabloids and left-wingers' were 'mercilessly (exploiting) every single event, incident or word' in a 'grim internecine circulation war', that correspondents mixed comment with fact, that journalists ridiculed Government spokesmen, such as the Minister of Justice, and that Africans such as Kgosana were eulogised.<sup>173</sup> He thought the 'worst report' had been Stephen Barber's, but he was most concerned by the response of *The Times* and the *Telegraph*, 'up to then two considerable voices of reason in the wilderness of blanket vituperation'. Erasmus had measured *The Times*'s editorial of 6 April, which he put

<sup>171</sup> As, for instance, in BTS 35/4/1 ('Summaries of press comments on South African affairs by the Ambassador, London'), National Archives of South Africa (hereafter NASA).

<sup>172</sup> As in BTS 35/4/1; and BTS 35/6 vol 8, NASA.

<sup>173</sup> 'British Press Comment: April 2-8, 1960', BTS 35/4/1 vol 8, NASA.

at 25 inches, commenting that 'it must have been one of the longest the paper had ever written on any one subject'. Journalists' perspectives flew in the face of British Government reticence, and belied the myth of Commonwealth solidarity it strove to promote. The British press appeared to have a different, far more idealised, conception of what the Commonwealth should represent.

The day of Phillips' arrest, the Government paper, *Die Burger*, published an article which the *Observer* thought summed up the strong feeling of Government supporters towards foreign correspondents following Langa and Nyanga.<sup>174</sup> According to the *Observer*, *Die Burger* had stated that: 'if there is there is one thing every right-minded South African with red-blood in his veins would have liked to do this week it was to take the group of visiting British journalists by their neck and throw them out of the country after giving them a sound thrashing with the rhino-hide sjamboks they discovered in such large numbers in Cape Town'.

Later that day, David Pratt, a South African trout farmer originally from Britain, shot Verwoerd twice in the head at an agricultural show just outside Johannesburg. The fact that Pratt was British some Afrikaners viewed as evidence of treachery on the part of the South African English-speaking community, a characterisation which both mirrored and fed into their views of the role of stringers. Pratt's actions were unanimously and unreservedly condemned in the British press, and he was generally dismissed as a lunatic. Yet coming so soon after Langa and Nyanga, some Afrikaners perceived a connection between foreign press and local English-language press reporting of the police raids and the assassination attempt, which fed tensions between the Afrikaans- and English-speaking communities. Philips recalled that Louw 'tried to prove that the misguided man who had shot at the Prime Minister had been inspired by reading "sensational newspaper reports"'.<sup>175</sup> Tom Hopkinson's wife was assaulted by 'a heavily built woman' at a garden party of Afrikaner friends when news of the assassination attempt came over the radio.<sup>176</sup> Blumberg recalled that 'five toughs' had beaten up 'a liberal journalist' from the *Cape Times* after 'a bar discussion on apartheid' that day.<sup>177</sup> The *Rand Daily Mail* and the *Star* received bomb threats.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> *Observer*, 10 April 1960, fp.

<sup>175</sup> Phillips, *Tragedy*, p. 128.

<sup>176</sup> Hopkinson, *Fiery*, p. 284.

<sup>177</sup> Blumberg, *White Madam*, p. 17.

<sup>178</sup> *Express*, 11 April 1960, fp.

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, the arrests hit the British press directly, when two men from the C.I.D. came to Blumberg's home in Cape Town to escort her to Caledon Square police station, and from there to Roeland Street Jail.<sup>179</sup> Although no specific reason for her arrest was ever given, the reasons she and her husband cite are telling for what they reveal of the role of stringers and the British press during these critical weeks. Mackenzie thought that his wife had been arrested as 'part of the Government campaign to intimidate the Press, particularly foreign correspondents, who had been able, without the local emergency restrictions on which the South African Press choked, to disclose unwelcome facts freely'. He also believed 'the authorities were annoyed because they thought (Blumberg) went out of (her) way to introduce travelling correspondents to articulate African and Coloured leaders they tried to keep silent and hidden'.<sup>180</sup> Blumberg highlighted the possible significance of her being 'South African born', which meant that 'they could hold on to me as long as they liked without other Governments being able to force them to release or deport me';<sup>181</sup> the role of 'vengefulness in choosing me as a representative of the hated Labour Press';<sup>182</sup> and the authorities' desire for information about 'African strike leaders'.<sup>183</sup>

A number of stringers who reported from Cape Town during this period were indeed able to forge strong links with Africans, in addition to the Liberal Party and others involved in the fight against apartheid, and, as we have seen, these connections were reflected in British newspaper coverage. The influence cut both ways. The British press was far more receptive in March 1960 than it had ever been to publishing the views of African leaders, and doing so made for interesting news. Even in the early fifties, when Anthony Sampson returned from South Africa, he was 'astonished to find that (he) was marketable' in Fleet Street, and that the right-leaning *Mail* was particularly keen to snap him up.<sup>184</sup> In many ways, then, these links were distinctly advantageous for journalists. When Younghusband began freelancing for the *Daily Mail*, he attributed the fact that his stories 'were getting good display in Britain' to his 'connections with *Drum* magazine and the contacts

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<sup>179</sup> Blumberg, *White Madam*, pp. 37-48.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> Blumberg, *White Madam*, pp. 140-1.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>184</sup> Sampson, *Anatomist*, p. 43. For Sampson's account of his life-changing experiences at *Drum*, see: Anthony Sampson, *Drum: An African Adventure – and Afterwards* (London, 1956).

made with the assistance of Howard (Lawrence) and other black colleagues on our staff'.<sup>185</sup> Younghusband thought that his scoops at the time of Sharpeville led the *Mail* to believe he had 'a certain magic of great value and that they had better buy it – and they offered me the job I held on their staff for the next 13 years'.<sup>186</sup>

Yet these connections invited harassment too. Two days after Blumberg's arrest, Younghusband also became the subject of police attention. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, he told *Mail* readers that in his absence, four members of the security branch had 'searched (his) office' at *Drum*, 'opened cables and personal correspondence', and had informed his colleagues that they intended to find him.<sup>187</sup> Younghusband wrote that he gave himself up at police headquarters later that day 'expecting the worst'. He was released after a ten-minute interrogation, but the spectre of further action lingered. Younghusband was told to 'stick around'.

The arrests, threats, raids and restrictions caused profound anxiety not only amongst South African journalists, who bore the brunt of the new emergency laws, but also within the British press. On 20 April, a deputation from the National Union of Journalists visited South Africa House to deliver a copy of a resolution registering their 'horror' at events in South Africa and their 'abhorrence of racial policies'.<sup>188</sup> It expressed concern at the South African authorities' interference with the press by threats, the detention of journalists and the suppression of publications; and asked the South African Government to enable journalists freely to report events in the Union. A separate resolution protested against the imprisonment of Blumberg and Phillips. The situation looked desperate.

Indeed, the State of Emergency was having such an impact, on both Africans and Europeans, that very soon most British papers conceded that the National Party and Verwoerd (even with two bullets in the head) had won the 'first round'. Passes had been reinstated, hundreds of people had been arrested and detained, and police intimidation was rife. 'This isn't the gale yet', a headline to one of Anthony Sampson's articles told *Observer* readers: 'For the time being the Africans have been crushed'.<sup>189</sup> Sampson chose to quote an African teacher, 'gazing sadly into his brandy glass' to illustrate the point. "This isn't it", the man mourned: "They

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<sup>185</sup> Peter Younghusband, *Every Meal a Banquet, Every Night a Honeymoon: Unforgettable African Experiences* (Jeppestown, 2003), p. 136. Parenthesis and its contents added.

<sup>186</sup> Correspondence with Younghusband, May 2013.

<sup>187</sup> *Mail*, 14 April 1960, p. 13.

<sup>188</sup> *Herald*, 21 April 1960, p. 5.

<sup>189</sup> *Observer*, 24 April 1960, p. 7.

seemed to think that it was round the corner. The guys have been busy talking about the wind of change, how it was going to be a gale or a hurricane of change. It never seemed to occur to them that it might be only a breeze”.<sup>190</sup>

The effects of these developments on subsequent British press reporting of South Africa were numerous. It became a harder country to cover. Foreign journalists hoping to enter it were vetted more stringently. Many were refused visas. Those who decided on ‘a full-frontal approach to Jan Smuts airport without visas were unceremoniously “bounced”’, Christopher Munnion recalled,<sup>191</sup> and ‘Those who slipped through the net were followed day and night by agents of the new Bureau of State Security – BOSS... Phones were tapped, cables were intercepted and mail was tampered with and opened. The upshot...was that most stories emanating from the correspondents who had managed to get into South Africa concentrated on the efforts and heroics in dodging BOSS rather than the critical social and political issues facing the country’.<sup>192</sup> Even by the end of the second week of April, there were signs that the Emergency had indeed begun to affect the nature of British press treatment of the country in this way for it focused intensely on the arrests of Phillips and Blumberg over and above the issue of African action and apartheid.

South African journalists operated under the same conditions, but daily, and they had families in the country to protect and support. Younghusband recalls that ‘although absolute press censorship never arrived’ during the apartheid era, ‘certain newspapers or issues were banned at times and eventually with more than 90 restrictive laws to contend with editors faced an almost daily risk of fines or prison’.<sup>193</sup> Some were influenced or intimidated by Government pressure. Some ploughed on regardless. Others, who felt particularly threatened, or whose *raison d’être* was putting a stop to apartheid, chose to go into exile to work freely if they felt this impossible to achieve from within. Importantly, there was also less to cover. British press reporting of events in colonial Africa had long ridden on the back of African action, usually as it clashed with the machinery of the State. Under the Emergency, most prominent African leaders had been detained, indefinitely, and the protests subsided.

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid. Also see: Sampson, *Anatomist*, p. 98.

<sup>191</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, pp. 441-2.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 442.

<sup>193</sup> Correspondence with Younghusband, May 2013.

## Conclusion

This chapter supports the view that the British press criticised the South African Government and the system of apartheid strongly during these weeks. Yet it argues that the press portrayed Sharpeville and the events which followed it as a story of African action, power and violence just as much as, if not more than, African victimhood. The chapter also suggests that the British press displayed far greater ambiguity on the subject of direct responsibility for the deaths, and a greater lack of consensus, particularly initially, on appropriate international, including British, responses to the issue of white violence.

Press content was born of more than a sense of shock and horror at the deaths, or a cultural or moral revulsion against apartheid. The emphasis on African power at Sharpeville and after resulted from African efforts to stimulate a change locally. It also stemmed from the nature of the press's central narratological frames for Central and Southern Africa by 1960, which turned on the relation between African (as opposed to white) action, violence and opinion and the necessity of decolonisation, the perspective which informed its critique of the South African state; as well as the specific ways in which the British press produced its South Africa coverage, which hinged on its close relations with the South African English-language press, many of whose writers were in daily contact with the PAC and other African nationalist organisations, tracking their operations. Directly following the massacre, the difficulties inherent in covering unexpected events influenced journalists' focus on African action and violence, too, because it forced the press to look to official South African police reports of the incident for information. The British press's initial ambiguity, and its lack of consensus on how Britain should respond to the issue of white violence also reflected the specific dynamics, and limitations, involved in evaluating unexpected events. Yet the limits of the press's vision for South Africa, and the political perspectives of some British journalists and editors were also continued key influences.

The references to African violence Thörn identifies in some newspapers did not therefore merely provide a possibility to express support for one section of the anti-apartheid movement whilst repudiating those activists regarded as too militant. Instead, they formed an integral part of journalists' understanding of the dangers of apartheid. The 'certain silences' which he mentions, moreover, such as the absence



of comment on the desirability of full democracy, reflected more than 'tacit assumptions' regarding the limits of change in South Africa within a rising tide of increasingly critical discourse. 'Silences' were fundamentally more active in genesis and effect, playing into a context in which apartheid thrived.

The impact of coverage was more complex, then, than existing studies indicate in their focus on the international, including British, dynamic, global public opinion, and the rise of the anti-apartheid movement. In the case of the British press, coverage appeared to have a greater impact in South Africa than in Britain, and in Britain it may even have encouraged passivity at key moments.

During these weeks, the British press provided a space for a number of South African journalists, English-speakers and anti-apartheid activists residing in South Africa, in addition to some African leaders, to pursue political, career, and other objectives. Their articles rebounded, fomenting division, circulating opposition views in the context of stringent internal censorship; and fuelling debates in white society on the causes of the troubles, which, in the Union Government's view, included agitation and the cultivation of African grievances by English-speakers and 'sell-outs'. British press content also stimulated the South African Government's desire to crack down further on press and other freedoms. It blew the myth of Commonwealth solidarity the British Government was vainly trying to promote. It helped turn South Africa in on itself; thus, in the short-term contributing to the consolidation of apartheid.

In Britain, the implications of coverage were less transformative, chiefly because interested organisations or institutions, such as the British Government, the Labour Party, and anti-apartheid activists, had their eyes and interests fixed on places other than the British press and public sphere. In its initial ambiguity on direct responsibility for the deaths, however, and its lack of consensus on appropriate international responses to the issue of white violence, it may have played a small consoling or constraining role in relation to the British Government's reluctance to condemn the behaviour of the South African authorities. At some critical points, moreover, its emphasis on specific instances of African action and power contributed to the view that an African victory was imminent or at the very least achievable, a narrative which may have augured against public support for meaningful intervention. The press also plied British readers with a selective, self-affirming

narrative, which may have eased the mental burden both of responsibility and of inaction.

Lastly, it is hoped that the emphasis this chapter has placed on the South African dimension to British press coverage of Sharpeville as well as the ways in which British newspapers were affected by the train of events, sits better with the subsequent trajectory of South Africa/world relations during the 'silent sixties' than does an emphasis on the transformative impact of press coverage in Britain.



A view from inside the fence, facing south-west, immediately after the shootings. Reeves, *Shooting at Sharpeville*. Illustration following p. 64.

This photo appeared in all of the papers following the massacre, but I have found it hard to reproduce these images effectively.

Daily Mirror
THURSDAY MAR. 31 1960
2s
No. 17,508

Fury in South Africa
30,000 MARCH IN SILENT ANGER

THE tide of anger—and fear—rose dramatically in South Africa yesterday when 30,000 Africans, enraged by the arrest of scores of their leaders, marched on Capetown.

This picture shows part of the huge, defiant mass which formed up in the heart of the city. Angry but orderly, determined but unarmed, they surrounded the police headquarters. Troops and armoured cars rushed to guard Capetown's Parliament building. But the marchers, having made their massive, silent show of strength, went quietly home.

Verwoerd takes emergency powers after a day of shocks and mounting tension in South Africa

## THE MARCH OF CHANGE

### Comment

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 1960

#### AT BREAKING POINT

THE clouds lower over South Africa. One feels an ominous tension as before a savage storm. What has been seen in other countries is now happening here. The mass arrest, the state of emergency, the mounting demonstrations.

At this, the world rapidly moves in. It is the United Nations, the African States, the British Commonwealth, the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Nations, the African States, the British Commonwealth, the United States, the Soviet Union.

Austerity Of previous centuries we have known it, as we do now. It is a time when we have to choose between two paths. One is the path of peace and order, the other is the path of chaos and war.



On, on they stride, 30 abreast, towards Capetown... this was the head of the 30,000-strong army of Africans

3,000,000 whites ask: Are we at the brink?

Daily Mail men on the spot report

I WALK WITH THE SEETHING 30,000

£1,000,000 insurance stamps swindle

Prince Philip (IN MAG AND SOFT HAT) answers 999 call

PRINCE PHILIP went out on a 999 call with the police last night. He had gone to Letchworth police station in the heat of the day to report a missing car. The car was found in the garden of a house in the village of Letchworth.

Hoofbeats

He spent an hour looking for a horse to ride. The horse was found in the garden of a house in the village of Letchworth.

Fascinated

Later Prince Philip scored through a 10 a.m. White House ceremony.

THE CHRISTENING-APRIL 8

#### PREMIER FLIES WITH GREETING

Mr. Verwoerd flew to London to meet the Queen and the Prince of Wales. He was accompanied by his wife and children.

DAILY MAIL: FLEET ST. 6000

TELEPHONE: 01-253 1234

7th and 8th Floor, Fleet St.

From top to bottom: Mirror, 31 March 1960, fp; Mail, 31 March 1960, fp.





## Chapter 6

### *Supporting the Belgians on the Congo, 1960*

On 30 June 1960, the Belgian Congo became independent Congo, with Patrice Lumumba as its first Prime Minister. Within a week, the Army had mutinied. Within two weeks, its richest province, Katanga, had declared its independence from the central government, under the leadership of Moïse Tshombe. The diamond-rich province of South Kasai followed suit, ushered out by its leader, Albert Kalonji. The country descended into violence as Congolese political factions and interested Belgians grappled for power in the face of the efforts of the central government to retain control. The UN mounted a huge peace-keeping operation. The West feared Russian intervention. The Russians feared Western intervention. Cold War tensions spiralled. The President, Joseph Kasavubu, dismissed Lumumba as Prime Minister, appointed a new one, Joseph Iléo, and reshuffled the Army. Lumumba dismissed Kasavubu. Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, the (new) Army chief dismissed them both. Within eight months, Lumumba would be dead, the country he once presided over metaphorically consigned to the scrap-heap of history.<sup>1</sup> In many ways, there it has remained ever since, cited by historians and political commentators alike as the ultimate ‘failed state’, at war with itself and others; bejewelled and resource-rich, poor, preyed upon, conflicted and conflictual.

A number of core reasons have been put forward to explain this calamitous series of events. One concerns the character of Belgian colonial rule, both historically and immediately prior to independence.<sup>2</sup> During the nineteenth century, King Leopold II’s notorious regime helped to condition a pattern of brutality, resource extraction and foreign intervention. Belgium’s ‘paternal’ approach to colonial governance in subsequent years had the devastating effect of inhibiting the growth of national political parties until the eleventh hour; before which the colonial government channelled African political aspirations, somewhat divisively, into

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the works cited below, two good overviews of this period can be found in: Ch. Didier Gondola, *The History of Congo* (Westport, Connecticut, USA, 2002); Martin Meredith, *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (London, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Specifically, Alan P. Merriam, *Congo: Background of Conflict* (Evanston, Illinois, USA, 1961); and Colin Legum, *Congo Disaster* (Harmondsworth, 1961), although most other works cited here include substantial sections on this dynamic. For a brilliant exposition of the nature of King Leopold II’s rule, see: Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Basingstoke, 2006).

‘ethnic’ form. The fact that there are a vast number of ethnic groupings in the Congo, dating back to the pre-colonial era, made matters worse.<sup>3</sup> A second explanation concerns personal agency at the time, in the form of the actions of Lumumba and his Congolese political opponents.<sup>4</sup> In the case of the latter, these are considered to have reflected the potency of ethnic nationalisms, regional interests and the pursuit of personal power. In the case of Lumumba, the majority of works (and most are early studies) detail factors such as ‘the instability of Lumumba’s personality’ and his ‘ruthless impatience’.<sup>5</sup> A third factor relates to external (non-) intervention in all its forms in the Congo at and following independence.<sup>6</sup> Earlier works in this category focused on the difficulties facing the UN and that organisation’s apparent failure in the face of forces greater than itself. Yet more recent studies have elucidated the very effectiveness not of overt, but of covert foreign intervention in the Congo, including efforts by senior UN officials, the Belgian Government and the West to influence the outcome in ways initially unfavourable to Congolese national integrity.

A last factor, which is particularly important for this chapter’s analysis, centres on the politics of identity and of identity construction. Works in this category posit the existence of a direct and demonstrable relationship between identities as constructed and the inception and trajectory of the crisis.<sup>7</sup> Kevin C. Dunn, for example, has shown how three groups (the Belgian Government, the U.S. Government and Lumumba) battled to ‘author’ Congolese identity during these critical months, each promoting their own narrative, chiefly through the media: one, a colonial narrative of paternalism and ownership (Belgium); two, a narrative of Cold War competition, Congolese barbarity and chaos (the U.S.); and three, a narrative of colonial exploitation, repression and resource extraction (Lumumba). Because of the ways in which identities, as understood, motivate or facilitate certain

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<sup>3</sup> Rene Lemarchand, *Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo* (London, 1964).

<sup>4</sup> As above. Also see Colin Legum’s Introduction to Patrice Lumumba, *Congo My Country* (London, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. xv.

<sup>6</sup> Early works on the role of the UN include: Legum, *Congo Disaster*, and Ernest W. Lefever, *Crisis in the Congo: A United Nations Force in Action* (Washington D.C., 1965). For an analysis of the British role, which makes the case for Britain’s general ineffectiveness in keeping with what the author regards as the country’s declining role in international affairs, see: Alan James, *Britain and the Congo Crisis, 1960-63* (Basingstoke, 1996). And for a more recent work on the effectiveness of covert UN, Belgian and Western action throughout the crisis, see: Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London, 2001). Also see: S. J. G. Clarke, *The Congo Mercenary: A History and Analysis* (Braamfontein, South Africa, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> Kevin C. Dunn, *Imagining the Congo: The International Relations of Identity* (Basingstoke, 2003).

political manoeuvres in any given situation, Dunn argues, and because of the inability in the case of the Congo of Lumumba to access ‘discursive space’, first Belgian and then international intervention taken in opposition to the Congolese government and its Prime Minister occurred without significant obstruction, fomenting division.

The frequency with which the words ‘chaos’, ‘anarchy’, ‘heart of Africa’, and ‘darkest Africa’ occur even within the historical works cited here, and the fact that many of these terms are rooted in literary and other works of a much earlier period,<sup>8</sup> appear to confirm the importance of Dunn’s observations because they suggest that cultural and other tropes of a certain kind indeed exist or existed whenever the Congo was and is discussed, framing the responses of outsiders. The Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe, has famously written on the subject of depictions of Africa which prevail in the West and the damage they do.<sup>9</sup> It is notable that Achebe’s seminal work on this topic, *An Image of Africa*, focuses on the Congo and is a critique of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.

This chapter examines the nature and role of British press coverage of the Congo in the country’s first few months of independence. It aims to complement Dunn’s work by concentrating on the coverage of one country (Britain) as opposed to three (Britain, Belgium and the US), enabling a fuller and deeper examination of a range of papers as opposed to one (*The Times*), and by drawing on additional sources, including archival records. Newspaper articles from left- and right-leaning mainstream British papers have been consulted, both ‘popular’ and ‘serious’; the memoirs and other writings of British journalists and editors; the archive of *The Times*; the records of the British Government; the memoirs of British politicians; and the speeches of Lumumba.

In addition to its being a further case study which takes us chronologically further on in time and which provides an opportunity to gain extra insight into the role of the British press at the end of empire, the Congo is included in this thesis because it provides an opportunity to engage with the question most often asked of this author at seminars; that is, how did the British press present Britain in

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<sup>8</sup> Such as Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (London, 1899). For a brilliant exposition of the root of some of this imagery, see: Patrick Brantlinger, ‘Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent’, *Critical Inquiry*, 12: 1 (1985), pp. 166-203.

<sup>9</sup> Chinua Achebe, *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness* (London, 2010). Penguin edition. First given as a lecture in the U.S. in 1975, and first published 1977.



comparison to other European colonial powers during decolonisation? It is also considered significant because of the extent to which the Congo has been etched into British journalistic folklore.

This chapter argues that the primary significance of British press coverage of the Congo during this period was that it helped impede Lumumba's ability to rule. In this, it has much in common with Dunn. Yet it presents a different set of reasons, which, in the case of the British press, it suggests, had less to do with the ability of the primary actors to access 'discursive space' than it had to the internal workings of British newspapers, the British press's partiality, and the ways in which journalists experienced events on the ground. Moreover, it questions the extent to which representations of the Congo of the three types Dunn discusses, including historical cultural, truly guided or defined international media responses to the Congo crisis. It asks whether we need to expand our understanding of the significance of newspaper texts in this instance to include other, more specific representations of individual day-to-day events.

British press treatment concentrated on Congolese political and other divisions, violence against whites, the credibility of the different regions' competing claims to sovereignty, and tensions between the Belgians and Tshombe on the one hand, and the UN on the other. In this, it anticipated the earlier historiography. Yet crucially, too, the press made little attempt to investigate the full significance of those of Belgium's behind-the-scenes or more underhand activities (or those of senior UN officials) of which it was aware.

These pro-Belgian, anti-Lumumba characteristics were born of a variety of editorial, cultural, institutional and experiential factors influencing British journalists; although, over time, the features detailed above also produced a set of narratological frames and descriptive terminology, which made subsequent anti-Lumumba, pro-Belgian interpretations of local events appear the most plausible. One of the reasons why this case study is particularly interesting is that it provides an opportunity to analyse the birth, I would argue, of a set of press 'frames' for a particular country. It seems that British journalists were far less able in the case of the Congo, as compared to the other countries and territories discussed in this thesis, to draw on previously-formulated contextual understanding or fully-fledged views of the events they were reporting. Historically, they also had far less of a physical presence. The jam-packed nature of the continual, momentous series of events

outlined earlier makes it easy to identify the significance British editors and journalists attached to previous, yet arguably almost contemporaneous, comment and content when interpreting incidents. This is partly what made the crisis itself, and British press coverage of it, so significant.

It had a number of important effects, not only regarding helping set the pattern, arguably, for later press readings of events in the Congo, Zaire and the DRC.<sup>10</sup> Most fundamentally, it lent support to the idea of external intervention whilst obscuring the full extent of that intervention in practice, contributing to an international socio-political environment in which the West was able to act with impunity and Lumumba found few, and even lost some, allies. It also served to advance the cause of Lumumba's Congolese political opponents. The divisive role British newspaper coverage played in local events can therefore be said to have mirrored its role elsewhere in Africa during this period.

Throughout it all, as elsewhere, too, Britain came across well, partly because of the press's positive portrayal of parallel constitutional developments in British colonial territories such as Nyasaland, but also – crucially – due to its depiction of the British and/or Western role in the Congo itself. Importantly, journalists set Britain firmly on the side of Belgium, rather than in opposition to it. This is not to suggest that the British Government viewed British press coverage in entirely positive terms, for it was the source of some diplomatic tension. Yet it can be said to have been perceived as less damaging to British interests than British press coverage of other regions, such as Ghana and the Federation.

#### 1. The first ten days: Division, rape and rescue efforts

Numerous reports of African-on-African violence, Congolese political rivalry, and even talk of secession for regions in the lead-up to independence framed the British press's coverage of the independent Congo's first two weeks. The lead-up to the elections of May to June, and then their implementation, were portrayed as having been very violent,<sup>11</sup> and the results were understood to have been

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<sup>10</sup> All names for the former Belgian Congo during periods in its history.

<sup>11</sup> *Guardian*, 6 May 1960, p. 13; *Guardian*, 14 May 1960, p. 7; *Mail*, 14 May 1960, p. 11; *Express*, 14 May 1960, p. 2; *Guardian*, 24 May 1960, p. 9.

inconclusive.<sup>12</sup> No one leader had won a majority of the vote, although Lumumba and his party, the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), had won the most seats. Readers were told that Lumumba's political opponents had challenged the result and that their supporters had clashed with those of the MNC in the streets.<sup>13</sup> The subsequent political settlement, which involved the creation of a coalition of sorts, with one of Lumumba's chief opponents, Joseph Kasavubu, appointed as President, was regarded as having brought much-needed relief; the result in large part, so correspondents indicated, of Belgian diplomatic interventions in favour of unity.<sup>14</sup> Yet tensions were understood to remain, marring the lead-up to the big day, and hanging over the festivities like a storm cloud.<sup>15</sup> Moïse Tshombe, the leader of the region of Katanga, was reported as having threatened secession.<sup>16</sup> Europeans were said to have been threatened in the streets, news which only added to the sense of imminent doom.<sup>17</sup>

To some extent, these reports merely reflected the course of events on the ground. Violence did occur in the streets, no one leader had won a majority of the votes, and a coalition was created just in the nick of time through negotiations in which the Belgians had played an important role. Tshombe had talked of secession. And Europeans had been threatened. Yet there were important omissions in such a story. The press's emphasis on African division; and its neglect, in some cases, of the part played by Africans, including Lumumba, in the creation of the coalition, together with the attention given the Belgian role, gave life to the view that the differences that existed between the Congolese political leaders were somehow innate or irreconcilable, and that external intervention was the prime cohesive force. This early 'framing' of the Congo was important because it helped to cultivate a climate of opinion in which the subsequent violence and division was permitted to be regarded as little more than an inevitable consequence of the country's fractured political composition. In a pattern which would repeat itself, notably, too, the press devoted little space to the underhand ways in which Belgium helped forge the

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<sup>12</sup> *Mail*, 26 May 1960, p. 15; *Mail*, 4 June 1960, p. 5; *Mail*, 9 June 1960, p. 11; *Guardian*, 9 June 1960, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Mail*, 20 June 1960, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Observer*, 26 June 1960, p. 6; *Mail*, 28 June 1960, p. 9; *Express*, 28 June 1960, p. 2; *Express*, 29 June 1960, p. 2; *Guardian*, 29 June 1960, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> *Mail*, 14 June 1960, p. 9; *Express*, 14 June 1960, p. 2.; *Guardian*, 15 June 1960, fp.

<sup>17</sup> *Mirror*, 5 May 1960, p. 3; *Mail*, 5 May 1960, p. 13; *Express*, 30 May 1960, p. 2.

political settlement, which included its modification of the Basic Law to placate a restive Tshombe as well as to protect their own interests, and which, as de Witte has argued, helped pave the way for the eventual secession of the region.<sup>18</sup>

On the specific issue of Katanga, the nature of British press content had repercussions in Whitehall. The Foreign Office feared press interest chiefly because of the particular way in which Katanga, a region of the Congo which bordered Northern Rhodesia, had recently appeared in British newspapers. The word 'Katanga' had entered the public domain back in March (1960) as the direct result of an interview Rene MacColl had conducted with Sir Roy Welensky, in which the Federal Premier had spoken of the possibility of a link-up.<sup>19</sup> This had caused a small diplomatic hiatus, when the Belgian Ambassador to Britain had contacted the Foreign Office to ask for clarification.<sup>20</sup> The British Consul-General in Leopoldville reported that the *Express* article had received wide publicity there, too, causing 'a few cases of mingled alarm and outrage by Congo leaders'.<sup>21</sup> Because of the ways in which MacColl, and then further newspaper correspondents and their papers and other interested parties homed in on 'Katanga' from March, the region was marked out as 'different' in the British press imagination, contributing to the overall image of differentiation within the Congo prior to independence. Importantly, this was despite the fact that the genesis of the idea of a link-up was to be found with Belgian mine directors, not Africans.<sup>22</sup> Although some British papers, such as *The Times*, privately displayed awareness of these Belgian manoeuvres,<sup>23</sup> the British press made very little effort to explore them in coverage.

The theme of 'division' that characterised press coverage of the Congo in the lead-up to independence therefore reflected more than the replication of 'tribal' or 'paternal' stereotypes of the kind Dunn discusses, because journalists were also responding to observable events in which tribal and other political groupings were undeniably significant. It was also the product of other recent, observable dynamics such as the place of 'Katanga' in the press imagination by June, as well as the over-

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<sup>18</sup> De Witte, *Assassination of Lumumba*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>19</sup> "There's going to be hell because I've told you this", *Express*, 2 March 1960.

<sup>20</sup> Confidential Foreign Office memorandum by H.T.C. Smith, 18 March 1960, FO 371/146632/1015/64.

<sup>21</sup> British Consul-General, Leopoldville, to the Foreign Office, 7 March 1960, FO 371/146630/1015/39.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Also Oliver Woods to the editor, 10 March 1960, MEM/Zaire file 1958-1961, TNL Archive.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. (TNL Archive).

reliance of British newspapers on news agencies and the reports of Brussels's correspondents for their Congo coverage at this stage,<sup>24</sup> which affected their ability to assess the situation independently. The uniformity across British newspapers at this point is significant. The majority of British papers did not have their own correspondent stationed in the Congo. Those which did, did not necessarily select employees on the basis of their being well-versed in the history of the politics of the region. This may have made them more reliant on 'official' sources. David Holden, a journalist at *The Times*, noted that Arslan Humbaraci, *The Times*'s Leopoldville stringer, had at the time of his appointment (June 1960) 'been in Africa for only a few months, but... he is very experienced, especially in the Middle East... and Far East'.<sup>25</sup> By the end of August, he had disappeared.<sup>26</sup>

Against this backdrop came coverage of the independence celebrations at the very end of June. The two events which garnered the most press attention were, first, the snatching of King Baudouin's sword as he rode through Leopoldville;<sup>27</sup> and second, Lumumba's speech to gathered dignitaries on Independence Day.<sup>28</sup> Both were reported as needless affronts to the departing Belgians: the first rather amusing; the second much more serious. Journalists quoted Lumumba's now-famous speech extensively, documenting many of the leader's accusations concerning the brutal nature of Belgian colonial rule.<sup>29</sup> Correspondents had been handed a copy of the text before the ceremony, which probably enabled them to do this (although Lumumba was said to have added parts, upon hearing Baudouin's speech).<sup>30</sup> Press reports tended not to quote either the King's speech or President Kasavubu's, both of which journalists regarded as rather nondescript.

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<sup>24</sup> On the Left, the *Guardian* used Reuters and British United Press, or published reports from 'a' correspondent. The *Mirror* sent some reports from Brussels. The left-leaning popular press, overall, published anonymous accounts, which suggests that these pieces were not the work of their own correspondents. Most reports, including those from the news agencies and from Belgium, documented 'official' announcements, primarily from governments and/or politicians.

<sup>25</sup> Memorandum from Mr. Holden to Mr. Woods and Mr. Buist, n.d., but attached to (and prior to) Memorandum from J. S. Buist to Mr. Pope, 15 June 1960: 'Correspondent in Leopoldville, Congo', TT/FN/1/JSB/1/Correspondence with Humbaraci, Arslan, TNL Archive.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Holden to Buist, 21 August 1960 (Hotel Stanley, Leopoldville), TT/FN/1/JSB/1/Correspondence with Holden, David, TNL Archive.

<sup>27</sup> *Times*, 30 June 1960, p. 12; *Guardian*, 30 June 1960, fp; *Express*, 30 June 1960, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Herald*, 1 July 1960, fp; *Times*, 1 July 1960, p. 12; *Guardian*, 1 July 1960, fp; *Express*, 1 July 1960, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> A copy of this speech ('Speech at proclamation of independence') can be found in Jean Van Lierde (ed.), *Lumumba Speaks: The Speeches and Writings of Patrice Lumumba, 1958-1961* (Boston, U.S., 1972), pp. 220-4.

<sup>30</sup> De Witte, *Assassination of Lumumba*, p. 2.

This was significant because the King's speech was equally 'surprising' in that it functioned as a positive potted history of Belgian colonial rule in the Congo.<sup>31</sup> The privileging of the content of Lumumba's speech in reports, and their critical nature, suggests that more lay behind press depictions of events than the ability of the major actors to access discursive space, although the Belgians' earlier monopoly on the supply of information from the Congo had very likely left a representational legacy. Indeed, it was Lumumba's forceful, unapologetic entry *into* discursive space that was the story on Independence Day, a view which chimed with the private Belgian response according to historians,<sup>32</sup> and which marked the new leader out as a resentful hothead who was predicted to cause trouble and who, some journalists seemed to believe, probably hated all white people. During this week, the press discussed Belgium's failure adequately to prepare the Congo for independence. Yet this did not translate into sympathy for Lumumba or any emotional attachment to the content of his speech, pointing to the presence of a certain amount of ignorance on the part of British journalists of the full history of Belgian colonial rule in Central Africa, as well as the possible lack of a legacy in Britain of the efforts of the Congo Reform Movement to alter perceptions.<sup>33</sup> Although it cannot be ruled out, there appeared to be no specific Belgian mediation behind the production of this critical narrative, 200 foreign correspondents having travelled to Leopoldville for the ceremony.<sup>34</sup> Lumumba was alarmed by aspects of the local and international response to his speech, issuing an apologetic 'compensatory speech' later that day and then,<sup>35</sup> subsequently, clarifying certain of his views on, for instance, white people, which he believed had been distorted by both the Belgians and the media.<sup>36</sup>

What most concerned Lumumba, however, on the topic of international perceptions of events in the Congo during this period, would be the media's portrayal of the actions of the Congolese Army and of his ability to control it. Two days following Independence Day, the Army 'mutinied' against its white officers, whose Belgian head, General Emile Janssens, was unwilling to countenance

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<sup>31</sup> Meredith, *State of Africa*, p. 93.

<sup>32</sup> De Witte, *Assassination of Lumumba*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>33</sup> For the Congo Reform Campaign, see: E.D. Morel, *History of the Congo Reform Movement* (Oxford, 1968); Kevin Grant, 'Christian Critics of Empire: Missionaries, Lantern Lectures, and the Congo Reform Campaign in Britain', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29: 2 (2001), pp. 27-58.

<sup>34</sup> *Guardian*, 2 July 1960, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Speech delivered at luncheon, 30 June 1960, in Van Lierde (ed.), *Lumumba Speaks*, pp. 225-6.

<sup>36</sup> Press conference in New York, 25 July 1960, in *ibid.*, pp. 285-307.

Africanisation of the command structure.<sup>37</sup> The press religiously documented the course of the mutiny, including the soldiers' use of violence against their white officers, the rape of officers' wives and other white women, including nuns, and the subsequent out-flux of refugees into Brazzaville (French Congo), Uganda, Angola and Northern Rhodesia.<sup>38</sup> The soldiers were referred to as 'rebels' or 'mutineers' throughout, a term which seemed appropriate initially in the context of their defiance of authority, but which stuck, with significant consequences. It affected the press's portrayal of subsequent events, because the national army, when in battle either with secessionist elements within the Congo or Belgian troops (or the UN), as 'rebels' tended in news reports not to appear as part of the legal machinery of government, undercutting its claim to legitimacy and, to the extent to which international perceptions were important, thus perhaps denting its efficacy.<sup>39</sup> Press reports of the rape of white women, and of nuns in particular, some journalists regard as the defining moment of the crisis, an event so significant that the Congo was never able to re-define itself internationally.<sup>40</sup>

Lumumba certainly believed this to be so in the first few weeks of independence, when he travelled to the U.S. with the specific intention of informing international opinion, at the UN and more widely, of the reality of the situation on the ground.<sup>41</sup> At a press conference at the end of July, he explained that Belgium was waging a campaign of disinformation against his government, which had at its core the assertion that Lumumba, and in fact all Congolese, disliked Europeans.<sup>42</sup> He did not deny that attacks against whites had occurred, but he asked his listeners not to privilege stories of violence, including rape, over others, and reassured them both that the Congo was not 'anti-European' and that the mutinous soldiers had had more on their minds, with gripes against Congolese politicians and economic grievances also significant factors. Even if the media's reports of rape and other forms of violence had not in fact changed international opinion on the Congo, they still had a direct effect on the course of the crisis because they played a role in

<sup>37</sup> Gondola, *History of Congo*, p. 118.

<sup>38</sup> For example: *Express*, 7 July 1960, p. 2; *Mail*, 7 July 1960, p. 5; *Express*, 8 July 1960, fp; *Herald*, 8 July 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 8 July 1960, p. 24; *Mail*, 8 July 1960, fp; *Times*, 8 July 1960, p. 12; *Guardian*, 8 July 1960, fp; *Express*, 9 July 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 9 July 1960, p. 3; *Guardian*, 9 July 1960, fp; *Herald*, 11 July 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 11 July 1960, fp.

<sup>39</sup> Ioan Davies, 'The Congo and the Press', *New Left Review* 11/1960, vol. 6, pp. 50-53, p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 102.

<sup>41</sup> Press conference in New York, 25 July 1960, in Van Lierde (ed.), *Lumumba Speaks*, p. 285.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 285-307.

Lumumba's decision to leave the country.<sup>43</sup> The Congo was left without its Prime Minister at a critical time, which may have aided and abetted disorder and division. Lumumba had had some success, when touring the country with Kasavubu in the days following the mutiny, in restoring a sense of calm to the areas he visited,<sup>44</sup> something which changed in his absence. Some journalists later criticised Lumumba for 'wandering' around the world at this time,<sup>45</sup> suggesting that they continued to possess little cognizance of the significance of the international dimension to the crisis's genesis, a view which readers' interpretations may have mirrored.

Was Lumumba right in claiming either that British and other foreign newspapers had devoted a disproportionate amount of space to reports of violence against white people or that the Belgian Government was behind it? Certainly, some commentators at the time indicated that atrocity stories had to be treated with reserve.<sup>46</sup> Others thought that the stories of rape, in particular, had been 'somewhat exaggerated'.<sup>47</sup> Most reporters, particularly initially, based their articles on interviews with Belgian and other white, European refugees many of whom by their own admission had fled the disaster spots before any disaster had occurred, and were thus merely reproducing stories they had heard from others. At this time, most journalists found it hard to access the areas in which the majority of the violence had occurred and were unable alternatively to contact residents over the airwaves, partly because the main communication lines had been cut at the time of the mutiny.<sup>48</sup>

Yet, there were enough first-hand accounts of rapes in the days which followed, either as a result of journalists' efforts to visit the disaster spots or as a result of these women becoming refugees themselves and thus leaving the areas that were cut off, to justify their presence in British newspapers. Even the sceptics, such as Humbaraci, who had told a member of the editorial team at *The Times* that 'the Belgians had brought some of this on themselves', with their 'loose' morals and 'provocative attire', acknowledged that the rape count had been high, putting it at

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Report to the Chamber on the situation in the Republic, 15 July 1960, in Van Lierde (ed.), *Lumumba Speaks*, pp. 237-71, followed by other addresses and radio broadcasts made to Congolese citizens and soldiers throughout the country during the middle of July.

<sup>45</sup> *Mail*, 9 August 1960, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Colin Legum, *Congo Disaster* (Harmondsworth, 1961), pp. 113-6.

<sup>47</sup> Confidential memorandum detailing the private opinions of Arslan Humbaraci, *The Times*' stringer based in Leopoldville, 3 August 1960, MEM/Zaire file 1958-1961, TNL Archive.

<sup>48</sup> As documented in: *Herald*, 7 July 1960, p. 7.



approximately 300.<sup>49</sup> Whether these stories were given a disproportionate amount of space in relation to stories, for example, of African deaths, is an important question and one must answer in the affirmative to some extent, but then, given the size of the European community, perhaps not. All of the European women in some camps were affected. Certainly, and remarkably, newspapers paid no real attention to news of a Belgian attempt on the Prime Minister's life at this time, a story which one might consider important!<sup>50</sup>

On the question of whether the Belgian Government was responsible for the proliferation of the reports of violence against whites appearing in the British and other foreign media, it would seem that this was only partly the case. The Belgian Government was certainly keen to foster these stories by issuing press releases to this effect, particularly in the context of justifying a Belgian military intervention entirely in support, so they explained, of the survivors.<sup>51</sup> Yet its most comprehensive efforts in this regard began at the end of July, after all the press reports had appeared, with an important press conference detailing the nature of the atrocities meted out to their countrymen and women.<sup>52</sup> This was followed by the publication of a large booklet containing the same horrific information, which they sent out internationally, including to the Foreign Office.<sup>53</sup> However, most British journalists based their accounts on the stories of refugees and victims of violence as opposed to the communiques of the Belgian Government.

They were influenced by a number of factors. One turned on the editorial directives of the journalists' superiors, particularly in the case of popular papers whose businesses thrived on sensation.<sup>54</sup> The centrality of this factor in the Congo case is encapsulated in the title of Ed Behr's memoir "*Anyone Here been Raped and Speaks English?*", words which Behr attributes to a BBC man roaming around Leopoldville airport in the aftermath of the mutiny seeking out potential interviewees.<sup>55</sup> A second factor concerned physical access to stories, because most press representatives were stationed in the cities that refugees fled to, particularly

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<sup>49</sup> (Humbaraci). Confidential memorandum, 3 August 1960, TNL Archive.

<sup>50</sup> *Herald*, 9 July 1960, fp.

<sup>51</sup> These are referred to in the above reports.

<sup>52</sup> 'Congo July 1960 Evidence' (30-page booklet), including 'Statement by Mr. Merchiers, Belgian Minister of Justice, at the Press Conference held on 28.7.1960', FO 371/146645/1015/360.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, pp. 99-119.

<sup>55</sup> Ed Behr, "*Anyone Here been Raped and Speaks English?*" *A Foreign Correspondent's Life behind the Lines* (London, 1986), p. 136.

Brazzaville, but also Ndola in Northern Rhodesia, and Leopoldville. This is borne out by the content of the datelines of the stories which appeared in the press, but it is also confirmed by archival evidence, such as in the case of *Times*. During June and July, Humbaraci was based in Leopoldville, but he had also been provided with a house for his family in (safer) Brazzaville, across the river in French Congo.<sup>56</sup> Holden stayed at the Hotel Stanley in Leopoldville.<sup>57</sup> Hotels appeared to be the site of some action, much camaraderie and a certain amount of ‘living it up’,<sup>58</sup> which is one reason why journalists may not have wanted to venture far, although there were also numerous transport and communications difficulties, which shall be discussed in the following section.

The apparently ‘simple’ nature of the story was a third contributory factor behind the press attention given the reports of rape and the white exodus. Judging from the nature of their reports, many journalists approached the story at the level of individuals or ‘human interest’, which required of its writers and readers very little background knowledge of Congolese political and other events. Accounts were often devoid of context, and photos were numerous. Humbaraci confirmed the significance of this factor in his private conversation with Holden. His emphasis on the loose morals of the Belgian women suggested that he interpreted the violence with reference to immediate, observable (even cultural?) dynamics, rather than deeper, bigger, older ones; most glaringly, the system of power and control which colonial rule entailed and which the African soldiers were, arguably, attempting to upend.

A fourth factor concerned journalists’ own negative experiences as white people living in the Congo during these weeks, which many documented and which may have confirmed for them the sense that aggression against whites was a story that had to be told. On 9 July, John Starr wrote an article for the *Mail* entitled ‘I am searched in street at gunpoint’.<sup>59</sup> Starr wrote that he had been ‘frisked’ by ‘mutineers’ whom he suspected were searching ‘any white’. Overall, journalists’ representations of white settlers in the case of the Congo were markedly different from their depictions of the European communities of the Federation and South

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<sup>56</sup> TT/FN/1/JSB/1/Correspondence with Humbaraci, Arslan, TNL Archive.

<sup>57</sup> TT/FN/1/JSB/1/Correspondence with Holden, David, TNL Archive.

<sup>58</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*. This subject lies behind the title to Peter Younghusband’s book *Every Meal a Banquet*.

<sup>59</sup> *Mail*, 9 July 1960, p. 7.

Africa,<sup>60</sup> although ‘white vulnerability’ stories which failed to tie up with papers’ editorial messages had appeared in popular press coverage at the time of the declaration of the State of Emergency in Nyasaland in March 1959. In the Congo example, reports from the field and editorials meshed.

Against this backdrop, Belgian rescue efforts were heavily publicised, receiving sympathetic treatment across the British press.<sup>61</sup> In contrast, newspapers devoted little page space to the violence of Belgian soldiers against Congolese, as in Matadi on 11 July, when Belgian troops wreaked havoc in the city, killing approximately thirty Africans, including civilians.<sup>62</sup> Neither did newspapers expend much energy analysing Lumumba’s protestations about the nature of Belgian military (and other) intervention. Judging by the nature of editorial comment on these issues, the omissions stemmed from the fact that the press viewed Belgian violence against the backdrop of the violence of the mutineers, which was understood to have preceded, if not necessitated, it.<sup>63</sup> Reports tended to focus on easily observable day-to-day events and practicalities, such as saving Belgian lives, as opposed to their interrogation or historical contextualisation. This reflected not only perhaps Britain’s sense of a shared historical experience with Belgium, which may have inhibited the production of overly critical reports, but also the editorial imperatives or directives of British newspapers. Over these weeks, *The Times*’s foreign editor continually sent instructions to its new stringer to focus on ‘what is happening’ over ‘background’ and ‘(speculation)’ because of the paper’s limited size as well as the costs of cabling long analyses.<sup>64</sup> In the specific case of Matadi, neglecting to describe or to question the nature of Belgian intervention might also be attributed to Belgian efforts to restrict access to the site, as well as to the emergence on the very same day of ‘new’ news, with Tshombe’s announcement that Katanga had seceded from the Republic.

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<sup>60</sup> See chapters two to five.

<sup>61</sup> *Mail*, 11 July 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 11 July 1960, fp; *Herald*, 11 July 1960, fp; *Express*, 11 July 1960, fp.

<sup>62</sup> The *Mail* revealed this only in subsequent weeks.

<sup>63</sup> *Mirror* editorial, 12 July 1960, p. 2; *Mail* editorial, 12 July 1960, fp.

<sup>64</sup> TT/FN/1/JSB/1/Correspondence with Humbaraci, Arslan, TNL Archive.

## 2. Mid-July to mid-August: Secession, violence, and the role of the UN

Importantly, many papers portrayed the substance of Tshombe's declaration as an established fact. From this moment on, journalists described Katanga to have seceded, or even to be independent.<sup>65</sup> While some referred to Tshombe more neutrally as the new Congo 'strong-man', others quickly dubbed him 'Premier' and some even 'Prime Minister'. This had a number of significant consequences, the most important of which was that it lent extra power and credence to one of Lumumba's political opponents, whose challenges became 'realities' largely because of the ways in which they were understood by outsiders, including the media, which then propagated them. According to an article in the *Herald* two days later (the 14<sup>th</sup>), Tshombe had himself been alarmed at the media response to his words, claiming that he had been 'misunderstood', and that what he actually wanted was more power for his region in a federated Congo.<sup>66</sup>

It should not be forgotten, moreover, when considering the role of the press in this specific case, that the Congo is vast, not particularly heavily populated and that internal telegraphic or telephonic communications for most people were not well-developed in 1960. This was partly what prompted Lumumba and Kasavubu physically to visit areas of unrest following the mutiny. In reporting, interpreting, and propagating the statements of Lumumba's political opponents throughout this period, then, the press also helped nationalise or universalise that which might otherwise have remained local, and as Tshombe's nervy initial response to coverage indicated, this was not simply the result of politicians' (including his) skilful attempts at media manipulation. A further significant point is that the press tended to portray the secession of Katanga, certainly initially, as an internal Congolese affair dominated by the person of Tshombe, despite the heavy Belgian presence in the region noted by the majority of correspondents. This continued to give life to the view that the division of the Congo was at heart the consequence of the Katangan people's claim to self-determination, a view which historians have shown to be manifestly untrue.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Initial front-page reports of the secession appeared on 12 July: *Times*, p. 12; *Herald*, fp; *Express*, fp; *Mirror*, p. 12; *Mail*, fp.

<sup>66</sup> *Herald*, 14 July 1960, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> De Witte, for example, highlights the Belgian role.

Again, there seemed to be more at play behind these representations than journalists' re-envisioning earlier colonial narratives. Editorial content suggested that the press's portrayal of the secession of Katanga as an internal Congolese affair stemmed from its earlier framing of the crisis. The secession appeared as logically contiguous with the earlier election result, the difficult negotiations which followed, and the street violence which accompanied them. It also appeared consistent with earlier Belgian efforts to 'unite' that which would otherwise supposedly have fractured. Notably, too, the secession of Katanga received far more coverage than the subsequent secession of South Kasai, whose name had not entered the public domain to such an extent in the months prior to Kalonji's announcement. The press's portrayal of Tshombe's declaration as an established fact can be attributed to the continued pressure on foreign correspondents to report 'what was happening' day-to-day, as well as partly perhaps to the difficulties they faced in this new era of 'independence' in transcribing in recognisable form the course and character of events in post-colonial African states for British metropolitan audiences, a complication which seems to have been uppermost in a number of journalists' minds.<sup>68</sup>

Contributing to the image of crisis, back in the Republic were further reports from white refugees of brutalities meted out by the Army rebels, which attracted significant coverage, and the story of a sensational clash between 'Belgian paratroopers' and 'mutinous Congolese troops' inside Leopoldville airport (N'Djili), which both were fighting for, and which the majority of British popular papers gave front-page treatment.<sup>69</sup> N'Djili was easily accessible, most correspondents being based in the city. This story further illustrates the sorts of pressures, competitive and otherwise, on British journalists to produce action-packed sensational reports as opposed to political or background analyses, introduced if possible with the line 'I was there as...'. The event appears to have been etched into British journalists' memories for this reason. George Gale was in the airport for the *Express* at the time of the clash, when he heard the phone ring, so the story goes.<sup>70</sup> A Belgian airport official answered it, and handed the phone to Gale. It was Sandy Gall of *Reuters*.

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<sup>68</sup> Described well in: Henry Tanner, 'Congo: Reporter's Nightmare', *Nieman Reports*; Winter 1999/2000; 53/54, 4/1; Proquest Business Collection, pp. 187-9.

<sup>69</sup> *Mail*, 14 July 1960, fp; *Express*, 14 July 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 15 July 1960, fp & bp.

<sup>70</sup> *Express*, 14 July 1960, fp.

Gale's report contained a prominent reference to the *Reuters*' man phoning him to find out what was happening, a move which caused Gall considerable grief.<sup>71</sup>

The way the British press represented the story more generally also illustrates its partiality for victims with white skins and the continued significance of its earlier framing of the crisis, including the use of specific terminology to refer to the different sets of combatants, but also the prevalence from independence of tales of white victimhood and survival. Some of the white civilians present during the airport clash had been the victims of the sexual and other violence of the mutiny. The story's focus might also have reflected the influence of editors. Despite the extended descriptions in newspaper reports of Belgian violence throughout the airport drama, the general sense the articles conveyed, reinforced by now iconic shots of nuns cowering on the floor and white women on stretchers, all waiting for flights to Belgium,<sup>72</sup> was of Europeans under siege. Developments in the British Empire provided a welcome contrast. The same day, the press gave prominence to Hastings Banda's politically astute remarks that 'the Congo terror' would not occur in an independent Nyasaland because 'the British have treated us too fairly for that'.<sup>73</sup>

During the following week, the airport drama continued, now with the Belgians firmly in control, with a visit by Lumumba and Kasavubu, who were passing through on their way to Stanleyville. The story illustrates the extent to which British journalists continued to overlook the unwanted or illegal Belgian presence in the Congo, as well as their continued indifference to Belgian attacks, verbal or otherwise, on Lumumba's person, and their affinity for European victims. A report Lumumba made on 15 July to the Chamber of Deputies, which included a discussion of this incident, clearly illustrates the extent to which Belgians retained control of vast amounts of the country.<sup>74</sup> The two men had just attempted to fly to Elisabethville, the capital of Katanga, but a group of Belgian military personnel had refused them permission to land. They had then been refused permission to fly to Stanleyville, where they had hoped to return, being flown on to Leopoldville against their wishes. There, they sought to charter a Sabena plane back to Stanleyville,

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<sup>71</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 105.

<sup>72</sup> For example: *Mirror*, 15 July 1960, fp & bp; *Express*, 15 July 1960, fp; *Mail*, 15 July 1960, fp & p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> *Mail*, 15 July 1960, p. 7.

<sup>74</sup> 'Report to the Chamber on the situation in the Republic', 15 July 1960, in Van Lierde (ed.), *Lumumba Speaks*.

which they eventually secured, hoping to fly from Ndolo airfield (in Leopoldville) but being asked to return to N'Djili.

It was here that the incident occurred, which Lumumba regarded as a 'ridiculous' Belgian 'trap'.<sup>75</sup> When he and Kasavubu returned, 'The Belgian troops stared at us in a very peculiar way', he explained: 'Then all the Europeans at the airport surrounded us and called us "apes," "murderers," "hoodlums," "thieves," and so on... some of them spat in my face and pulled my beard, and one of them jostled me and took my glasses. We endured other humiliations, as the Belgian soldiers stood by and watched in amusement'.<sup>76</sup> 'There were foreign journalists present', Lumumba added: 'Instead of telling the world about this, they have come to ask us for statements, for press conferences! What are we to do?' Lumumba was wrong in one regard; and right in another. The press had certainly reported the attack on Lumumba, including the punch the Prime Minister had received to the face, but had chosen to foreground the Belgian cries at the time of the assault of 'How would you like it if someone raped your wife?' and Lumumba's response, all smiles and impassivity so they said, which journalists regarded as an affront to the victims, and which appeared to mark a definitive moment in the popular press's portrayal of the Prime Minister.<sup>77</sup> Lumumba's account signifies that this was due to the way in which the Belgians successfully manipulated the media presence at the airport, but the partiality of the British press and its earlier framing of the crisis also remained significant factors. In addition, the absence from the left-leaning popular press of a more sympathetic narrative during these months, in the *Mirror*'s case, seems to have reflected Donald Wise's recent move from the *Express*, in addition to the absence of a desire on the part of the paper's management to restrain him in the production of prolific yet rather ill-informed, sensational pieces. Wise had a healthy disregard for *Mirror* readers, whose lips, he told his colleagues "move... as they read".<sup>78</sup>

Although the press began to devote more space during this slightly later period to reports of Belgian misdeeds, these kinds of stories never became dominant features of coverage. The one big exception was a series of pieces Arthur Cook wrote for the *Mail* on the incidents which had occurred in Matadi on 11 July. In the

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> *Mirror*, 15 July 1960, bp; *Express*, 15 July 1960, fp; *Mail*, 15 July 1960, fp; *Herald*, 15 July 1960, fp.

<sup>78</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 118.

following week, Cook had travelled to the port to gather the stories of Congolese survivors, which told of brutal Belgian reprisals in the wake of the mutiny, in which thirty Africans had died.<sup>79</sup> Cook's first report sparked a UN investigation.<sup>80</sup> *The Times*' special correspondent in Leopoldville, James Bishop, also wrote an article referring to Belgian 'reprisals',<sup>81</sup> a move which caused the Belgian Government to complain to both the paper and the Foreign Office.<sup>82</sup> In general, however, both critical articles on Belgian operations, and the testimony of Congolese civilians, were noticeably absent from British newspapers.

Against this backdrop of secession and continued violence, the press viewed the prospect of UN intervention favourably.<sup>83</sup> Again, this was not because British journalists regarded the Belgian military presence either as inadvisable or ineffective or divisive. The press displayed little sympathy with Lumumba's claim that UN troops were needed to help end Belgian aggression against the Congo, most editors remarking that any sensible country, faced with African attacks on its civilians, would have responded in exactly the same fashion. But there was certainly a fear of racial clashes at this historical moment, as exemplified by press treatment of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa,<sup>84</sup> which seemed to inform the press's opinion that intervention by a neutral, international body, such as the UN, represented the best way forward; and it gave considerable support to the UN operation.

Significantly, however, this editorial support co-existed on the page with reports from the field which may in fact have dented the organisation's capacity for effective action, thus potentially bolstering the Belgian case for an on-going colonial presence and continuing to undermine that of the elected Congolese central government. Two kinds of reports had this effect. The first were reports which highlighted the British role, such as those which documented the tremendous effectiveness, so correspondents claimed, of General Alexander's leadership in the

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<sup>79</sup> *Mail*, 20 July 1960, p. 9; *Mail*, 21 July 1960, p. 9.

<sup>80</sup> *Mail*, 22 July 1960, p. 11; *Mail*, 23 July 1960, p. 7.

<sup>81</sup> *Times*, 20 July 1960, p. 12.

<sup>82</sup> Memorandum from Oliver Woods to the editor, 21 July 1960, MEM/Zaire file 1958-1961, TNL Archive. FO 371/146753/1671/2 & 1671/3.

<sup>83</sup> *Mail*, 9 July 1960, fp; *Guardian*, 11 July 1960, p. 6; *Mail*, 12 July 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 12 July 1960, p. 2; *Times*, 15 July 1960, p. 13; *Guardian*, 17 July 1960, p. 8; *Mirror*, 21 July 1960, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> See Chapter Five.



first few days (before a Swedish General, General von Horn, took over).<sup>85</sup> General Alexander was the British commander of the Ghanaian forces sent to the Congo as part of the UN operation. The way in which certain sections of the British press, such as the *Express*, a paper much-hated in African nationalist circles, homed in on the British role, vaunting the exploits of Alexander, caused some to remark that it was virtually 'kill(ing)' the organisation's efficacy because it had the effect of breeding distrust as to the 'real' nature of UN operations.<sup>86</sup>

The second category of reports which may have dented the UN's capacity for effective action were those which sensationalised or valorised Tshombe's defiance of the organisation in his refusing initially to permit UN troops (and even UN officials) access to Katanga.<sup>87</sup> The production of these reports can be attributed partly to the press's penchant for conflict or sensation. Yet by this stage journalists appear also to have begun to be influenced by Tshombe's rather successful public relations efforts,<sup>88</sup> which may have included ready access to his residence. For some, the links were close, and Katanga's defiance of the UN was mediated by the British press in more than one sense. At one point, Peter Younghusband told *Mail* readers that he had contacted Tshombe late at night to deliver the first news that the UN had decided to postpone its entry date.<sup>89</sup> 'He was asleep', the reporter explained: 'I sent in a message, and he replied with a polite note thanking me and saying he was going back to sleep. Soon his bedroom light went out again'.

Some journalists later spoke of Katanga as an oasis of calm in an otherwise turbulent region,<sup>90</sup> there being no real sense amongst British journalists that the secession had itself sparked violence. When first reports of 'tribal' conflict in South Kasai emerged, the violence was presented as the consequence of the eruption of an 'ancient enmity' between two groups, the Lulua and Baluba, which was said to have 'reignited' following the Belgian exodus.<sup>91</sup> Yet the violence was closely connected to Katanga's secession. Tshombe's declaration had devastated the ability of the

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<sup>85</sup> *Express*, 16 July 1960, fp; *Mail*, 16 July 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 16 July 1960, p. 3; *Guardian*, 16 July 1960, fp; *Guardian*, 17 July 1960, p. 4; *Express*, 18 July 1960, p. 2; *Mail*, 18 July 1960, p. 9; *Mirror*, 18 July 1960, fp.

<sup>86</sup> Confidential memorandum detailing the private opinions of Humbaraci, 3 August 1960, MEM/Zaire file 1958-1961, TNL Archive.

<sup>87</sup> *Herald*, 26 July 1960, p. 4; *Mail*, 4 August 1960, fp; *Mail*, 6 August 1960, fp; *Express*, 8 August 1960, fp and also article on p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> As noted also in Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>89</sup> *Mail*, 6 August 1960, fp.

<sup>90</sup> *Express*, 6 August 1960, fp.

<sup>91</sup> *Herald*, 1 August 1960, fp.

central government to assert its authority and to deter further secessionist movements in other provinces,<sup>92</sup> including Kasai, where, following Kalonji's declaration, the minority Baluba (of which Kalonji was one) clashed with the majority Lulua, who supported Congolese integrity as articulated by Lumumba's MNC.<sup>93</sup> In northern Katanga, where the Baluba were also in a minority, the group held fast to the idea of Congolese integrity to save their skins, yet in doing so found themselves the object of attacks by Tshombe's army as it marched north to consolidate CONAKAT's hold over the province.<sup>94</sup>

This border region became the site of much violence over the weeks and months to come, attracting considerable, yet fluctuating, press interest. The area was certainly difficult to cover. The *Herald's* Anthony Carthew had been the first newspaperman since independence to reach Luluabourg, the capital of Kasai, yet to do so he wrote that he had had to fly 500 miles from Leopoldville, 'hitch-hike airlifts for 1,000 miles', and 'travel hundreds of miles by car', with only two oranges for sustenance.<sup>95</sup> He had then had to fly '500 miles' to find a cable office to send his story. Carthew's account may have been embellished as part of the journalistic tradition of producing stories 'hard-won under fire'.<sup>96</sup> Yet it did not appear to be unrepresentative of the experiences of most foreign correspondents, as internal letters and memoranda circulated at *The Times*, for example, attested to.<sup>97</sup> Transport and communications difficulties affected the ability of most foreign correspondents to stray too far from Leopoldville. The TELEX machine appeared to the source of much apprehension; and safety was also a concern. The British ambassador to the Congo, Ian Scott, thought that this factor fuelled the production of 'highly coloured accounts' because journalists had to rely on their own imaginations for copy.<sup>98</sup> Yet the obverse was also true, as Carthew's lively report from the scene demonstrated.

His portrayal of the violence in Kasai as the eruption of an ancient enmity might be attributed to editorial pressures on correspondents for sensational stories. Yet perhaps more importantly, it also appeared to stem from the fact that he did not

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<sup>92</sup> Gondola, *History of Congo*, p. 123.

<sup>93</sup> Legum, *Congo Disaster*, p. 123.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 124. Tshombe's party. Confederation des associations tribales du Katanga.

<sup>95</sup> *Herald*, 1 August 1960, fp.

<sup>96</sup> The phrase is taken from Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 104.

<sup>97</sup> TT/FN/1/JSB/1/Correspondence with Holden, David, TNL Archive.

<sup>98</sup> 'Observations on the press and the sources from which correspondents obtain their information', Ian Scott, Leopoldville, to the Earl of Home, 8 November 1960, FO 371/146753/1671/8.

interrogate events deeply. His report, like those from the region which followed, continued to ply British readers with the view that at the heart of the Congo's crisis lay deeply-rooted Congolese political and other divisions as opposed to the more contemporaneous developments that de Witte amongst others has explored, and which included the actions of Tshombe and Kalonji and their Belgian and other Western (financial) supporters. In doing so, the British press continued to promote the view that the secession of the two regions was either inevitable, or just, or both. The absence of a more nuanced or interrogative press narrative benefited the Belgians and the UN over Lumumba, who continued to find little international support for his protestations both on the nature of the Belgian presence and on the role of the UN, an organisation whose mandate the Congolese Prime Minister criticised on the basis that its ostensible impartiality, its inability to involve itself in 'internal disputes', had very partial consequences in that it effectively consolidated the territorial division of the country.

Significantly, these narratives continued to exist alongside an awareness on the part of the press both of the Belgian presence in key areas of the Congo such as Katanga, and even, at this slightly later date, of its true significance - in the sense that some journalists came to understand the secession of the region as having involved the actions of Belgians.<sup>99</sup> In other words, these issues came to exist in 'discursive space'. Yet when the Belgian presence or role was discussed, either editorially or within news reports, it tended to be portrayed sympathetically either as a continuation of the initial Belgian response to the mutiny and the attacks on Belgian civilians; or as a logical state of affairs given the region's vast material resources in which Belgium had a financial stake; or as an irrelevancy in the sense that it was viewed as a symptom of Congolese political division as opposed to one of its very causes. Notably, however, the press's sense of affinity with Belgium's plight never quite extended to negative depictions of events in Britain's own empire. On 5 August, for example, even the left-leaning *Mirror*, commenting on the successful conclusion of the constitutional discussions on Nyasaland, was quick to draw the distinction.<sup>100</sup> Hitherto, the paper had criticised the Government's slow handling of the crisis in Central Africa. It now chose to emphasise the preparatory

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<sup>99</sup> *Herald*, 26 July 1960, p. 4; *Mail* editorial, 26 July 1960, fp. Also: Confidential memorandum by James Bishop, received 27 July 1960; and Memorandum from David Holden, correspondent in Leopoldville, to the editor, 9 November 1960, both in MEM/Zaire file 1958-1961, TNL Archive.

<sup>100</sup> *Mirror*, 5 August 1960, p. 2.

aspect. ‘What a contrast to the chaos in the Congo, where the Belgians did nothing to prepare Africans for independence until it was too late’, the paper declared, ‘What a contrast to the smack-the-Africans-down policy of the South African Government. Mr. Macleod and the Nyasaland leaders show themselves men of vision.’

### 3. Mid-August to October: Leopoldville as storm centre, violence in South Kasai, and Lumumba under fire

The following week, the press began to report instances of African violence against Lumumba, who had by now returned from the U.S.<sup>101</sup> These articles appeared in the context of reports of continued violence more generally in Leopoldville involving clashes between MNC supporters and members of the ABAKO party, the Alliance des Bakongo, of which Kasavubu was the head. Again, these sorts of reports reinforced the view that Congolese political and other divisions lay at the heart of the crisis, and by their very prevalence effectively obscured the Belgian or Western role in fomenting the conflict. They also reinforced the view that Lumumba himself was deeply unpopular amongst the Congolese people, journalists’ vivid descriptions of the Prime Minister’s face-to-face interactions with these men on the street leaving perhaps an even stronger impression on readers than their earlier reports of happenings at the high political level, which had involved the announcements of politicians.

In one sense, these reports purely reflected the train of events on the ground. Yet, thinking in terms of Congo coverage as a whole, significantly, they also stemmed from the constraints on British and other foreign correspondents’ freedom of movement, which meant that they were often confined to the capital, a city in which support for Lumumba had never been strong, being an ABAKO stronghold.<sup>102</sup> Arguably, the prevalence of reports from Leopoldville meant that the British press conveyed an unrepresentative picture of the Prime Minister’s popularity in the country at large. Congolese troops and MNC supporters were also beginning to confront British and other foreign journalists at this stage,<sup>103</sup> an acknowledgement, perhaps, that this was the case; yet also, counter-productively, fuelling a vicious

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<sup>101</sup> *Guardian*, 11 August 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 11 August 1960, fp; *Mail*, 11 August 1960, fp; *Herald*, 11 August 1960, fp; *Express*, 11 August 1960, fp; *Times*, 11 August 1960, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> Gondola, *History of Congo*, pp. 103-4.

<sup>103</sup> *Mail*, 11 August 1960, fp.

circle of distrust that then informed subsequent press reports of events in which these men were protagonists.

Against this backdrop of continued dissent and violence, the press received the news of the eventual entry of the UN to Katanga and then to the whole of the Congo with a sigh of relief, again lending editorial support to the UN operation. News reports from the field, however, continued to paint a more equivocal picture in which the UN often appeared as the object of derision or ridicule. Importantly, the press portrayed the entry of the UN to Katanga not as a victory for the organisation, but rather, a concession on the part of Tshombe.<sup>104</sup> When Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, landed on the tarmac at Elisabethville airport, with Tshombe there to greet him, journalists such as Younghusband noticed a certain frostiness between the two men, which became the focus of their reports.<sup>105</sup> The first category of articles (on Tshombe's concessions) may have continued to dent the organisation's capacity for effective action, by bolstering or valorising the exploits of its opponents and the contempt with which the latter held it. The second category of articles (on the character of the relationship between the two men) appears to have contributed to a background context which had the effect of undercutting the validity of Lumumba's subsequent accusations on the subject of collusion between certain UN officials, Tshombe and the Belgians, again contributing to an overall picture that obscured the issue of Western intrigue, and in the eyes of observers only turned the Congo in on itself once more.

The subsequent raids, at the behest of Lumumba, by Congolese troops of UN offices in the hope of finding Belgian 'spies' the British popular press generally treated with extreme scepticism bordering on ridicule.<sup>106</sup> Sections of the Western media's portrayal of Lumumba as 'irrational' or 'mad' from this period on, together with press calls for his removal, must therefore be understood not purely as part of a U.S.-imposed narrative inspired by cold war politics, as Dunn has suggested, but also in the context of a specifically press-generated narrative which centred on tensions between the Prime Minister's opponents - in this case, Tshombe and the Belgians on the one hand, and the UN on the other. It was specifically press-generated because British and other foreign journalists were able to witness events

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<sup>104</sup> *Express*, 10 August 1960, fp; *Herald*, 10 August 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 10 August 1960, fp.

<sup>105</sup> *Mail*, 13 August 1960, p. 7.

<sup>106</sup> *Mirror*, 17 September 1960, p. 20; *Herald*, 9 September 1960, fp.

on the ground, including the nature of interactions between men, at much closer quarters than any other international observers, and those interactions formed their sources.<sup>107</sup> Journalists' experiences at Lumumba's press conferences probably only added to this general picture of confusion or unreasonableness, some having to wait hours longer than they had been told for the man to arrive.<sup>108</sup> Others had been arrested by Lumumba's men.<sup>109</sup>

Fuelling this story of internal Congolese dissent and division, which lent tacit support to the idea of external intervention whilst obscuring the full extent of that intervention in practice, were further reports of what was happening in South Kasai, as more journalists, possibly inspired by Carthew's example, made strenuous efforts to reach the region, chartering flights to the 'trouble spots'.<sup>110</sup> Correspondents continued both to document the violence between Lulua and Baluba and to tie the conflict to ancient tribal enmities. Added to this, were fresh reports of the violence of the Congolese national army, which had entered the region in order to try to bring about the end of its secession.<sup>111</sup>

Brutality and chaos were the dominant tropes the press used to describe what was happening in the area on all sides, at once a reflection of what they were seeing, yet also continuing to betray a certain degree of ignorance of the root causes, and thus the full significance, of the conflict. Journalists were still under pressure to get out of the area quickly in order to file their stories, which prevented them from engaging deeply in the politics of the region. They also appear at this time to have been spooked by the death in Bakwanga, the capital of South Kasai, of a foreign (U.S.) journalist, who, wearing 'a khaki outfit which had a paramilitary look about it', had apparently been mistaken for a Belgian soldier and shot.<sup>112</sup> The press's initial framing of events in the Congo as a fractious struggle prior to, at, and then immediately following independence may also have lain behind the production of this narrative of chaos and tribal enmity; as might editorial pressures on correspondents to report 'what was happening' over background analyses; and also the very 'foreignness' of the place, which some journalists later said defied objective

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<sup>107</sup> As at Elisabethville airport, the scene of much drama!

<sup>108</sup> 'Observations on the press', Scott to Earl of Home, 8 November 1960, FO 371/146753/1671/8.

<sup>109</sup> The *Mail*'s Arthur Cook, for example. *Mail*, 17 August 1960, p. 7. Also the *Express*'s George Gale. *Express*, 3 September 1960, fp & 8 September 1960, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, pp. 108-11.

<sup>111</sup> *Mirror*, 1 September 1960, p. 20; *Herald*, 3 September 1960, fp; *Express*, 2 September 1960, fp.

<sup>112</sup> Munnion, *Banana Sunday*, p. 111.

analysis, lending itself to anecdotal accounts which conveyed a 'mood' as opposed to historical or political evaluations based on familiar, Western, models or frames of reference.<sup>113</sup>

Importantly, the character of the violence just over the border in northern Katanga received far less press attention. That which did appear tended to be very unfavourable to Lumumba's national army in the sense that its entry to the region, after its incursion into South Kasai, was presented as an 'invasion' rather than as an operation by the state to restore the republic's territorial integrity, following the perceived failure of UN operations in this regard.<sup>114</sup> Additionally, the violence of Tshombe's army against the Baluba in the north tended not to be reported. This appeared to owe something to the extent of Tshombe and the Belgians' hold over the region, which made the free movement of outsiders, such as press reporters, difficult.<sup>115</sup> British journalists had to rely on official press releases for information if they were not as intrepid as men such as Younghusband, who wrote that he braved the crocodile-infested waters of the river that separated the two regions to gain access to the territory.<sup>116</sup> This over-reliance on official statements, in addition to the testimony of a continuing deluge of white refugees, seems to have led to the replication both of specific terminology such as 'invasion', and of descriptions of the nature of the violence, in which Tshombe's troops were supposedly primarily fighting an incursion and 'drug-crazed tribesmen' as opposed to additionally repressing a minority.<sup>117</sup>

Back in Leopoldville, riots and violence against the person of Lumumba continued to attract considerable press interest.<sup>118</sup> Journalists continued to be handled 'roughly' by Congolese troops, possibly reinforcing a sense of solidarity with the opposition. And then in the midst of this came news that Kasavubu had

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<sup>113</sup> As described in Tanner, 'Congo: Reporter's Nightmare'. Ed Behr's chapter on the Congo crisis in *"Anyone Here been Raped?"* is also striking for its lack of chronological description, forming instead a collection of anecdotes, each with a 'message'. Also: Ulf Himmelstrand, 'The problem of cultural translation in the reporting of African social realities', in Olav Stokke (ed.), *Reporting Africa* (Uppsala, Sweden, 1971), pp. 117-33.

<sup>114</sup> *Express*, 18 August 1960, p. 2; *Mail*, 26 August 1960, p. 9; *Express*, 29 August 1960, fp; *Herald*, 30 August 1960, p. 2; *Herald*, 10 September 1960, p. 2; *Express*, 10 September 1960, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> As noted by Anthony Carthew in *Herald*, 9 August 1960, p. 4.

<sup>116</sup> *Mail*, 5 September 1960, fp.

<sup>117</sup> Quote is from *Herald*, 15 September 1960, p. 2.

<sup>118</sup> *Mirror*, 26 August 1960, p. 20; *Express*, 26 August 1960, fp; *Herald*, 26 August 1960, fp.

sacked the Prime Minister, and had appointed a new one (Ileo) in his place.<sup>119</sup> The British press reported Kasavubu's announcement in much the same way that it had previously documented Tshombe's statement that Katanga had seceded from the Republic; in other words, by reporting his claims as established facts, rather than as insubstantial or illegal challenges to the authority of the elected leader of the country. Although journalists also reported Lumumba's subsequent refutation of Kasavubu's assertion, together with Lumumba's announcement that he had decided to dismiss Kasavubu from office, British press treatment of these events did continue to undercut Lumumba's authority, making it more difficult for him to govern the country, if only because they made the Congolese leadership seem faltering or vacillating, even ridiculous, in the eyes of the world. That there was more to Lumumba's crisis here than Kasavubu's actions is suggested by the Prime Minister's decision to try to restrict journalists' access to radio stations and cable offices at this time because it suggests that he regarded the mediation and dissemination of stories by the international press as an integral part of their formulation.<sup>120</sup> Again, the press failed to report the Belgian role in Kasavubu's machinations, so that the crisis in the Congo appeared once again as a purely home-grown affair.

Over the following few days, the stories appearing in British newspapers displayed further continuity with earlier press narratives. Congolese troops were reported to have beaten up a group of U.S. and Canadian airmen, working with the UN, whom they accused of being 'spies', a claim the press regarded with deep suspicion, choosing instead to present the story as one of white victimhood and survival.<sup>121</sup> The UN was reported as having tightened its grip on the capital, and over the Congo more generally, where it had seized as many airports and radio stations as it had been able to.<sup>122</sup> The British role, this time in the guise of a 21-year-old Lieutenant, who defied Lumumba (and thus ostensibly headed off a crisis), by denying the Congolese Prime Minister access to Leopoldville radio station, was again vaunted in papers such as the *Express*.<sup>123</sup> Lumumba's parliamentary victory, in which members expressed their support for the Congolese leader, attracted some,

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<sup>119</sup> *Mirror*, 6 September 1960, fp; *Mail*, 6 September 1960, fp; *Herald*, 6 September 1960, fp; *Express*, 6 September 1960, fp.

<sup>120</sup> This is noted in the *Herald* article, 6 September 1960, fp.

<sup>121</sup> *Mirror*, 30 August 1960, p. 20.

<sup>122</sup> *Herald*, 7 September 1960, fp.

<sup>123</sup> *Express*, 12 September 1960, fp. Also: *Mirror*, 12 September 1960, bp; *Mail*, 12 September 1960, fp; *Herald*, 12 September 1960, fp.



but little page space, and where it was publicised, the news tended at once to be overshadowed by more negative stories, such as the Prime Minister's adoption of 'dictator powers' (his declaration of a state of emergency),<sup>124</sup> which recalled the press's portrayal of independent Ghana during 1957,<sup>125</sup> and his unreasonable, in the opinion of the press, call on the UN to depart tout de suite.

Then came one of the most important stories of all in light of the subsequent future political trajectory of the country: the announcement from the (new) head of the army, Mobutu, that he had decided to sack both Lumumba and Kasavubu and govern the Congo himself.<sup>126</sup> It followed hot on the heels of an embarrassing story the popular press gave front-page treatment, involving the apparent 'arrest' of Lumumba by the army, his 'release' and his subsequent efforts to 'seize' Leopoldville radio station, where he was reported as wishing to deny the claim that he had been arrested earlier on.<sup>127</sup> The ways in which the press reported Mobutu's announcement reflected its earlier coverage of Tshombe's announcement regarding Katanga's secession, and Kasavubu's statement concerning the dismissal of Lumumba, in that it tended to portray the substance of his claims as credible. Again, this bolstered the power of Lumumba's opponents, for although the press also reported Lumumba's subsequent denial of all of the above, the very fact that these competing narratives continually emanated from the Congo painted its leadership as vacillating and incompetent. Arguably, Mobutu and his backers were well aware of this, and manipulated the media presence for their own ends.<sup>128</sup>

Journalists followed Lumumba throughout Leopoldville during these weeks, often waiting for him outside his residence, and then tailing him when he left.<sup>129</sup> This may have been irritating for the Prime Minister and likely accounted for some of the 'irrationality' correspondents thought they saw in him. Given the extent of the press attendance, reports of Congolese 'mobs' protesting in the area near his house were therefore plentiful, as were those which documented the presence of Congolese troops, by now opposed to their Prime Minister, standing around ominously, waiting

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<sup>124</sup> *Herald*, 14 September 1960, fp; *Express*, 14 September 1960, fp.

<sup>125</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>126</sup> *Mail*, 15 September 1960, fp; *Herald*, 15 September 1960, fp; *Express*, 15 September 1960, fp. Mobutu became President in 1965.

<sup>127</sup> *Mirror*, 13 September 1960, fp; *Mail*, 13 September 1960, fp; *Herald*, 13 September 1960, fp.

<sup>128</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September a 'news flash received in Reuter's Brussels office from Leopoldville' reported that Lumumba was 'in flight...his whereabouts...unknown'. *Mirror*, 17 September 1960, p. 20. This news also appeared in other papers.

<sup>129</sup> As noted, for example, in Behr, "Anyone Here been Raped", p. 142.

to arrest him journalists thought, eyeballing the UN troops that formed a protective cordon.<sup>130</sup> Again, the profusion of these reports may have owed something to the fact that transport and communications difficulties across the Congo confined much of the press to Leopoldville. Yet by this time, there was also a sense amongst some correspondents that even if they could or should leave, it would now be unwise to do so because they anticipated the imminent death of the Prime Minister, a story they were loath to miss.<sup>131</sup> Importantly, there was no press outcry; just an acceptance that his death would soon come to pass, and also that he had been lucky to live so long. The *Herald's* Dennis Eisenberg soon dubbed him 'four-lives Lumumba'.<sup>132</sup>

These characteristics had implications for the subsequent ways in which British readers understood Lumumba's later disappearance and then his eventual assassination at the hands of the Belgians. Press portrayals of the extent and nature of Congolese opposition to Lumumba's rule, as exemplified by reports of the heavy mob and troop presence outside the Prime Minister's residence, provided an interpretive context or frame in which the agents of Lumumba's doom appeared obviously to be his own countrymen. At that later date, and again, the British press would not perform the independent or interrogative analysis they perhaps could or should have done, reflecting its extreme and continued partiality. Although Tshombe did not inform journalists of Lumumba's death until three weeks after it had occurred,<sup>133</sup> sections of the press were aware of it, and also of its true nature, including the involvement of Belgian officers. Yet they displayed a strong disinclination to make anything of it. When an internal memorandum on the subject of Lumumba's death and the role of the Belgians was circulated at *The Times*, the author, Oliver Woods, wrote that his only objective was to make the information known within the office: 'He was shot kneeling over a shallow grave by a Belgian captain whose name is in the hands of the UN', Woods explained, casually adding that 'It will probably come out when a commission of inquiry is sent'.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>130</sup> *Mirror*, 7 September 1960, fp; *Mirror*, 16 September 1960, bp; *Mail*, 19 September 1960, p. 8.

<sup>131</sup> Holden (in Leopoldville) to John Buist, foreign news editor, 26 August 1960, TT/FN/1/JSB/1/Correspondence with Holden, David, TNL Archive.

<sup>132</sup> *Herald*, 16 September 1960, fp.

<sup>133</sup> Gondola, *History of Congo*, p. 127.

<sup>134</sup> Copy of letter from Mr. Woods (in Brazzaville) to Mr. McDonald, 15 February 1961, marked 'confidential', MEM/Zaire file 1958-1961, TNL Archive.

## Conclusion

British press coverage of the Congo between June and October 1960 can be characterised as anti-Lumumba and/or pro-Belgian. British newspapers presented the country as tribally diverse, extremely politically divided, and violent. They devoted more page space to African-on-African violence, and to white, European victims of Congolese violence than to Africans who suffered at the hands of the Belgians. They portrayed Belgian intervention as understandable, if not wholly desirable; whilst describing UN intervention as desirable, if not wholly effective. They lauded the British role, depicted Lumumba as unpopular, vacillating and erratic, and devoted much page space to the verbal challenges of his opponents. They also made little attempt to investigate the full significance of Belgium's behind-the-scenes or more underhand activities (or those of senior UN officials) of which they were aware.

British press coverage of the Congo's first few months of independence therefore contributed to Lumumba's difficulties. Most important was its continual emphasis on internal Congolese dissent and division, which lent tacit support to the idea of external intervention whilst obscuring the full extent of that intervention in practice. British newspaper articles also advanced the cause of Lumumba's political opponents, contributing to nationalising or globalising their reach by propagating (and thereby lending credence to) their verbal challenges to Lumumba's authority. At the beginning of the crisis, press depictions of the Army mutiny contributed to Lumumba's decision to leave the Congo at a critical time, further aiding and abetting disorder and division. Subsequently, the right-leaning press's lauding of the British UN role, and journalists' decision to sensationalise or valorise Tshombe's defiance of the UN, helped dent the organisation's capacity for effective action, both locally, and on the global stage, which further bolstered the Belgian case for a continued colonial presence and undermined the position of the elected Congolese central government.

In addition to its playing a divisive role in local events in a manner reminiscent of its role in other regions of Africa during decolonisation, the British press continued to perform the function of mediating Britain's actions favourably to its readers. This was due partly to its portrayal of the actions of Belgium and the West, with which the press associated Britain to some degree; and partly to its

depictions of parallel constitutional developments in British colonial territories such as Nyasaland. Despite this, press coverage continued to cause the British Government a degree of anxiety, but this was far less marked than in relation to the British colonial territories discussed in Chapters One to Four.

Although these press representations stemmed partly from the ability of the primary actors to access 'discursive' space, as Dunn has argued, this factor alone cannot fully account for the nature of British press coverage of the Congo during 1960. The British press displayed a consistent awareness of 'the other side' to the story throughout these months, as articulated by men such as Lumumba, but also the result of some journalists' investigative and other communicative efforts or attempts at historicisation. Similarly, it is true that British journalists used historically-rooted words, imagery or tropes to describe the violence in the Congo, as dark or tribal, for instance; and that they talked indirectly of paternalism and ownership; and directly of Congolese barbarity and chaos, narratives which Dunn attributes to the Belgians and the U.S. respectively. Yet the historically-rooted words and imagery of the *Heart of Darkness* kind appeared not to be the factor from which coverage flowed, but rather, in the absence of understanding, a descriptive tool; whilst the second and third characteristics were present only partly because of the efforts of these two countries (U.S., Belgium) to deluge the media with their points of view. Of perhaps more importance to the production of coverage over the British press as a whole were the internal workings of British newspapers, the ways in which journalists experienced events on the ground, and the press's partiality, which included its indirect racism and its insufficient knowledge of the country. These were factors whose significance snowballed over the months as journalists interpreted new events in the light of their previous 'frames' of reference.





# My escape from the Congo

A BRITISH  
WIFE TELLS  
OF NIGHT  
OF TERROR

THE first British woman to fly home from the riot-torn Congo, 35-year-old Mrs. Barbara Seidelin, told of a week-end of terror when she arrived at London Airport yesterday with her four young children.

She described how her family were besieged in a block of flats in Elisabethville, capital of the Kasai Province, by a mob of African rebels.

Mrs. Seidelin told how her husband, Eric, and Belgian officers fired back at the rioters until paratroopers came to the rescue. Then she went to her parents' home at Amberley, near Stroud, Glos.

'SEND IN  
U.S.  
TROOPS'  
PLEA

CONTINUED FROM  
PAGE ONE

the U.S. It was revealed that U.S. troops and planes have already been alerted, should they be needed.

Mr. Dig Humphreys, the U.S. Secretary General, announced that he is planning to send a team of civilians and police to the Congo before the end of this week.

The Congo appeal to the U.S. was made in the absence of President Eisenhower.

He had flown to Elisabethville, the capital of Katanga, but his plane was not allowed to land. Though the whereabouts were not known.



Escape to happiness . . . Mrs. Seidelin and her children rest at the airport.

From top to bottom: *Herald*, 13 July 1960, p. 7; *Mirror*, 15 July 1960, fp.

**Daily Mirror**

23rd. Friday, July 15, 1960 No. 17,578

# UNDER FIRE!

## In the Congo city of fear

**THEY** went to an airport to board a plane. . . . But they found themselves trapped in a fierce battle.

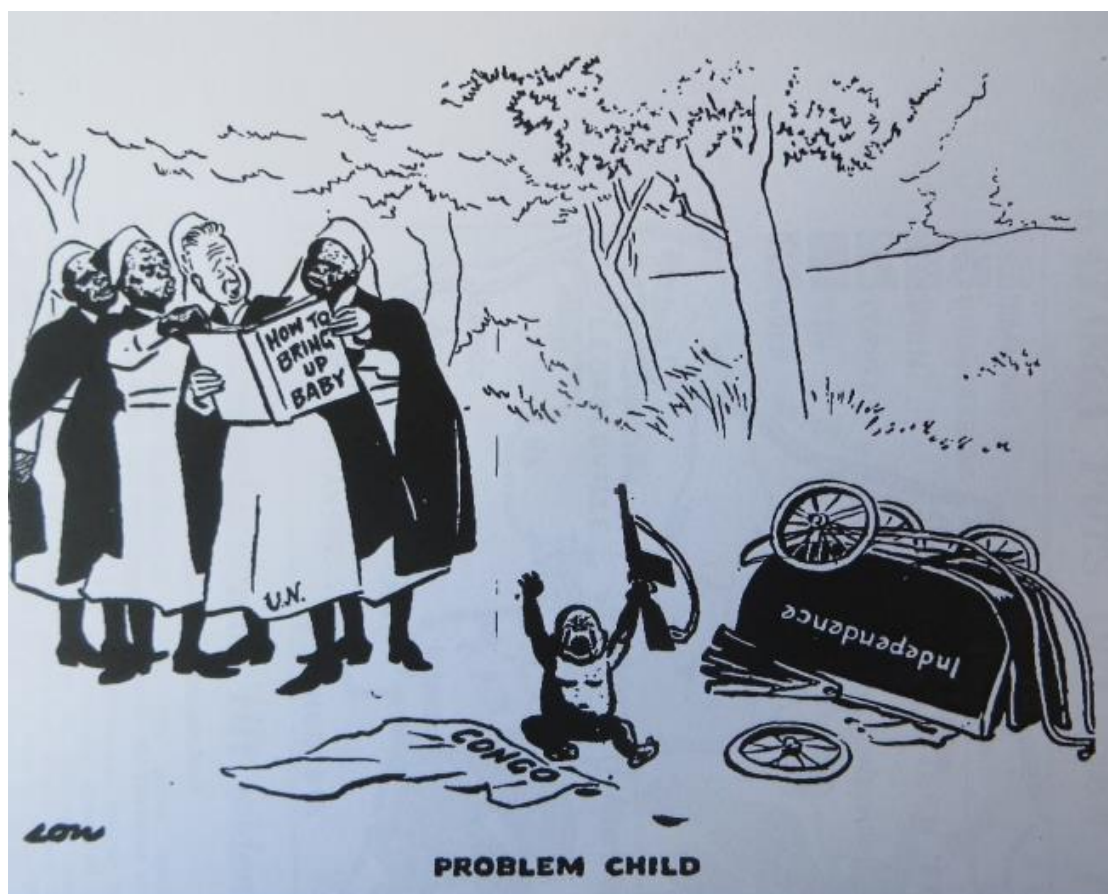
Tommy-guns rattled. . . . There was a burst of hand grenades. . . . And in this picture the group of white-robed nuns—with a woman and children—crouch below a window in the airport reception building. As they huddle, time but calm, troops are fighting only yards away.

**Unruffled**

For this is in the city of fear—Leopoldville, the capital of the Congo. . . . Belgian paratroopers are battling with mutinous Congolese troops for control of the airport.

When the gun-and-grenade battle ended the airport was in Belgian hands—and the nuns, still calm and unruffled, sat about comforting women and children trapped, like them, by the fighting.

● Congo P.M. stayed in the face: Rack Pops.



From top to bottom:  
*Guardian*, 19 July 1960, fp;  
*Express*, 19 July 1960, fp.





**PHOTONews** Action pictures of battle on road to Katanga

## LUMUMBA'S INVADERS

**Belgians fly to stop them**

From KINSHASA, BELGIUM: LUMUMBA'S invasion troops—300 strong—have advanced 10 miles into the breakaway province of Katanga tonight.

Belgians above their heads, they waded the Lualaba River near the border a few hours ago.

They are believed to be the advance guard of a larger force—some reports say 500 men—coming at the Katanga town of Kinshasa.

**Guns loaded**

The advance force of 300 men, some of whom are armed with machine guns, are believed to be moving towards the town of Kinshasa.

**'Sacked'**

A report from Kinshasa says that the town has been sacked by the invaders.

**Picture thief creeps out**

While the picture was being taken, a man was seen creeping out of the bushes.

**Foot may go back on list**

Belgians may go back on the list of countries to be invaded.

**ON-SPOT FINES ANGER DRIVERS**

By BASH GARDNER

ON-SPOT fines for parking in the wrong place have caused a lot of anger among drivers.

**Godfrey Winn could have gone anywhere! HE CHOSE SCOTLAND Why?**

YOU'VE got the chance to meet Godfrey Winn. He's a famous actor and he's coming to Scotland.

**4.30 a.m. LATEST BUS CRASH KILLS 23**

A bus crashed into a wall at 4.30 a.m. today, killing 23 people.

**Painted in half the time**

...and what a lovely finish!

Clockwise from top left:  
*Express*, 9 August 1960, fp;  
*Observer*, 21 August 1960, p. 4; *Express*, 10 September 1960, fp.



**Daily Mirror** Lumumba lynched—Report  
Lumumba in hiding—Report  
Lumumba dead—Report... NOW

215d. Monday, September 19, 1960 \* No. 17,654

# HE'S BACK!

## —and I'm in charge, says Mr Lumumba

From DONALD WISE, Brazzaville, Sunday

**PATRICE LUMUMBA**, the Congo Premier who refuses to be sacked, made a dramatic re-appearance today—after a weekend in which he had been reported lynched... in hiding... dead.

This morning his personal secretary assured me: "He is fit and working flat-out."

Shortly afterwards, a grey saloon car from the Guinea Embassy drew up at the Premier's residence in Leopoldville and out stepped Mr. Lumumba.

Then, speaking from the balcony of the house, he told reporters that he was still in control.

He said he had asked for a United Nations plane to take him to New York "so that I can take charge of our delegation at the United Nations Organisation."

### Next move? 'Appearance at the UN'

has signed a statement of reconciliation with me."

A spokesman for Kasavubu told me later that this was untrue.

As Lumumba was talking, one of his followers was said to have tried to shoot Colonel Mobutu. The bid was foiled and the Colonel later remarked: "I am in complete control."

### 'A Mistake'

Discussing Colonel Mobutu—the Army "strong man" who announced last week that he was taking over—Mr. Lumumba promised to "remove" him.

It was Colonel Mobutu who ordered Russian and Czech officials to quit the new republic—and they did so on Saturday.

This was all a "mistake," said Mr. Lumumba who promised that he would take steps to put it right.

Of President Kasavubu—who has "appointed" another Premier in the Congo—Mr. Lumumba said: "I've been advised that Kasavubu has signed a statement of reconciliation with me."

A spokesman for Kasavubu told me later that this was untrue.

As Lumumba was talking, one of his followers was said to have tried to shoot Colonel Mobutu. The bid was foiled and the Colonel later remarked: "I am in complete control."

IN NEW YORK the UN General Assembly opened its second Congo Crisis emergency session. Delegates feared that Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld might resign following Soviet attacks on him.

But observers expect that the Afro-Asian nations will back "Dag's" Congo policy.



The Premier who refuses to be sacked—PATRICE LUMUMBA, aged 34

From top to bottom: *Mirror*,  
19 September 1960, fp;  
*Mirror*, 13 October 1960, p. 3.



## Conclusion

This thesis has sought to identify the relationship between British newspaper coverage of Africa from 1957 to 1960 and the process of decolonisation. It has spoken to historiographical debates on the role of the British press at the end of empire, the significance of British low politics or public opinion to decolonisation, and the cultural impact of the end of empire in Britain. Overall, it has suggested that press content and, relatedly, public opinion, bore a more significant relation to the process of decolonisation than most studies have either suggested or assumed. It examined the role of press content with respect to three main readerships: the British Government; groups in Africa; and the British public. Further, in some contrast to existing works on the press, which focus on its interactions with the British Government, the thesis has described newspaper content as the embodiment of a range of influences, with more room for the individual and collective agency of papers, journalists and editors.

### 1. British newspapers, the British Government, and British policy

Firstly, newspaper content influenced Macmillan and the Government on matters of policy. Existing studies have tended to investigate, and also to highlight the opposite; namely, the impact of the British Government on British newspapers.<sup>1</sup> Concerning the direct influence of the press on the Government, the thesis concentrated on two regions: the white settler colonies of Central and South Africa. Regarding Central Africa, it found that over the period as a whole, influence flowed from the press to politics; politicians seemed nervous and frustrated in their dealings with British newspapers; and many of the actions they took were reactive. Although chapters two, three and four discussed everyday interactions between the press and British politicians and officials, at the same time they began to draw out some of the neglected connections between press coverage, public opinion and more substantive changes in British colonial policy towards decolonisation, which existing works have either examined in terms of alternative factors,<sup>2</sup> or have more directly stipulated bore

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<sup>1</sup> Carruthers, *Winning Hearts*; Shaw, *Eden, Suez*; Lewis and Murphy, ““Old Pals””.

<sup>2</sup> Hyam, *Declining Empire*; Hemming, ‘Macmillan’; Butler, *Britain and Empire*; Murphy, *Party Politics*.

little relation to public opinion.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the thesis has attempted to begin to define - as well as to emphasise - the possible significance of the special constitutional relation between the British Parliament, British public opinion and political developments in British Central Africa up to and throughout 1960. Concurrently, it underscored the Government's inherent (though pliable) conservatism on Central African affairs. The appointment of the Monckton Commission, it suggested, represented at once a response to British public, including press, debate on Federation, and a vain attempt to condition the views of these important groups in favour of the continuance of the structure. Throughout this period, the Government also displayed interest in public discussions on Banda, the prospect or importance of his release, and the terms thereof, and there is evidence to suggest that these informed British policy.

Concerning South Africa, Chapter Three argued that British newspaper coverage of the country during 1959, and of the tour, played a role in influencing Macmillan to speak out on apartheid in Cape Town in February 1960. This was the consequence partly of its own criticisms, but also due to its efforts to publicise the views of South Africans opposed to the system. Also, by expressing their concern over the tour itinerary, and by knowing and making known the fact that Macmillan had received requests for meetings from the ANC and other groups opposed to apartheid, the press prompted the British Government to push for an expanded tour programme, with room to meet Africans and white liberals. In short, the British press helped to set the agenda for British policy towards white settler colonies at the end of empire. In the case of the Federation, I would argue, further investigation would reveal more interconnections over the *longue durée*.

Any assessment of the influence of newspaper content on the British Government should, however, be expanded to include more than demonstrations of a direct causative relationship between newspaper articles and Government policy, for the press affected the achievement of British policy goals in other, more indirect, ways as well.

During the period 1957 to 1960, for example, press content functioned as an irritant, and an obstacle in the path of the British Government's claim to sole authorship of 'Britain's view' in Africa. During 1957, the Government worried that

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<sup>3</sup> Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good*; Howe, *Anticolonialism*; Owen, 'Critics of Empire'; Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*.

newspaper coverage of Ghana was furthering the cause of those groups within the country which argued that the Commonwealth was a mud-slinging organisation that it might be well-advised to leave. For large sections of the white communities of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, over the period as a whole, newspaper articles in Britain undercut British Government pronouncements, due to the specific nature of settler fears concerning the relation between press content, public opinion and British policy. A similar dynamic was noticeable in South Africa directly following the tour, when British press responses to the 'wind of change' speech resonated within Nationalist circles to a degree Macmillan's words had not. Press depictions of the speech helped to synthesise its meaning and lift it to a 'higher plane', which, though arguably beneficial for the British Government in some respects, was not entirely what was either envisaged or desired. Similarly, British press coverage of South Africa in the period immediately following the Sharpeville massacre strained Anglo-South African relations.

This is not to say that the British Government failed entirely to influence British newspapers. The conclusions reached here confirm that the Government tried to influence the press, particularly in regard to Kenya and Nyasaland during 1959, the focus of previous studies; and did so somewhat successfully. The thesis also finds much evidence of the special position of Kenya in the imagination of both the Government and the press, and in the case of the latter, suggests that this reflected, in large part, the Government's propaganda efforts during the fifties. Additionally, although this thesis's focus is the period 1957 to 1960, the research on which it is based points to the importance, prior to these years, of the probable relative monopoly on the supply of information on Africa as a whole, of the British Government, its allies or supporters of the Empire. This is significant for my analysis because it helped to inform the press's commentary in later years.

However, in all of these cases, as elsewhere, the agency of the British journalists and editors should also be acknowledged. The Government's media management strategy for Kenya and Nyasaland during 1959, and related events in Britain, for example, was not the only important factor which lay behind either the press's overall diminution of the issue of British colonial misconduct, or the relatively progressive views that large sections of the press expressed on the future of the Federation. Rather, Chapter Two described press content as the embodiment of a range of different influences, including 'internal' or 'press-related'.

In regard to the Government and its allies' probable monopoly on information on Africa over preceding years, this dynamic cannot be characterised as wholly Government-induced, for it seemed also to stem from the press's relative lack of a sustained physical presence and its consequential over-reliance for stories on stringers drawn from the resident white settler community. The possibility that right-leaning papers had more money to send correspondents abroad in the period preceding decolonisation could also be relevant. Yet, notwithstanding these points, neither should it be assumed that the press was utterly unable to override the dynamics which the past had set in motion. The relative dearth of critical comment on British colonial rule in British newspapers in these later years, for example, must also be attributed to journalists' failure fully to investigate background causes, a dynamic which was partly linked to editorial imperatives, which, in turn, centred on the press's preference for information on 'what is happening', and on future-oriented opinion pieces.

## 2. The African dimension to British newspaper coverage of decolonisation

Here, the thesis has continued to underscore the significance of British low politics and British press or public opinion to the process of decolonisation, this time through the analysis of African and white settler responses to newspaper content. No previous studies have investigated this dynamic because they have analysed British press/reader relations in national terms.<sup>4</sup>

In Africa, British press coverage fomented a mix of anxiety, conflict and division among competing social and political groups. In Ghana, during 1957, the British right-leaning press, in particular, championed the cause of the main opposition party, the NLM, which forged links with British journalists. The British press's extremely harsh critique of Nkrumah's rule immediately following independence made Ghana harder to govern, and, relatedly, damaged the image of the newly-independent state overseas, which worried the new Prime Minister. British press intervention also fuelled fears of lingering colonialism or neo-colonialism locally, fostered distrust between supporters of the governing party and white capitalists, and caused a degree of career-related anxiety for British expatriates

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<sup>4</sup> Carruthers, *Winning Hearts*; Shaw, *Eden, Suez*; Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media*; Lewis, "Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Mau Mau"; Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid*.

such as Bing, which may have tested the capacity of the newly-independent country to entice and retain these sorts of advisers.

For large sections of the white settler communities of the Federation, newspaper content fuelled fears as to the future direction of British colonial policy. British newspaper articles invigorated profoundly defensive, resentful, desperate, yet proud, settler narratives of 'self' and 'community'. Press content provided a means by which settlers were able to avoid having to confront more difficult issues, such as African discontent. Yet, at the same time, the Federal Government, for one, sensed that its focus on African agency played a role in denting the morale of settler groupings. By providing ready access to the British public, the British press offered a means by which African nationalist organisations, such as the MCP, challenged the rule of white settlers in ways which allowed them to circumvent the Federal, colonial and, indeed, the British governments.

British newspaper content performed similar roles inside South Africa, particularly concerning settler narratives of 'self' and 'community', scapegoating, and the issue of African discontent. Yet there were also many important differences. The British press provided one means by which white South Africans opposed to apartheid, chiefly journalists and Cape Liberals, challenged the system. Their articles rebounded, fomenting division locally, in the context of stringent internal censorship, and helping to prompt the Union Government to crack down further on press and other freedoms. British newspaper articles also exploded the myth of Commonwealth solidarity. They exacerbated the tensions between the English- and Afrikaans-speaking communities, adding fuel to the fire of historical debates which stretched back to the Anglo-Boer War. They promoted the cause of the Africans. Yet, as in the Federation, white settlers responded by digging in their heels, which, in the short-term contributed to the prolongation of European colonial rule, and played a role in causing the State to augment the structures which kept dissenters, including Africans, at bay.

The British press also aggravated tension and division in the Congo following independence in 1960. Newspaper content advanced the cause of Lumumba's political opponents. It lent support to the idea of external intervention. Yet, at the same time, it obscured the full extent of the intervention in practice, thereby contributing to an international socio-political environment in which the West was able to act with impunity.

On the issue of why British newspaper content had these effects, it seems pertinent to ask whether the press merely catalogued, reflected or fuelled an existing state of affairs or trends that were occurring or would have occurred anyway.<sup>5</sup> At first glance, this might seem to be the case, as, for example, in South Africa, where British newspaper articles fed into debates within the white community which stretched back to the Anglo-Boer War; or, in the case of Ghana, where the NLM, already opposed to Nkrumah, exploited the British press to advance its cause. However, this thesis has offered reasons why we might not so readily accept such a view. In the case of South Africa, for example, internal debates on the nature of white society and the causes of African opposition to white minority rule can surely be traced back to the nineteenth century, but so can the British press, and it seems that the two had long been intertwined. In other words, these debates did not exist independently of the structures, mental or substantive, which helped to bring them to fruition and which sustained their momentum; and the British press informed both. Similarly, in the case of Ghana, although the NLM would surely have opposed Nkrumah and the CPP without the use of the British press, finding some other strategy, the British press was – in reality – one important means by which it did.

A related concern is whether or not the British press was merely ‘used’ by others, or whether it possessed, at the same time, an intrinsic kind of significance. The conclusions reached here confirm both views. African nationalists and white settler groupings certainly tried to influence British press treatment of Africa during this period, with varying degrees of success. Yet journalists and editors also displayed profound independent judgment, ‘external’ groupings had more success in getting their voices heard in papers whose political stance meshed with their own, and editorial imperatives were important factors affecting the nature of press content. Indeed, the sheer range of influences affecting press content during this period suggests that there might be no other way of usefully defining it than by describing it as uniquely ‘press’.

Lastly, it might be objected that the question which really needs answering is what relationship press content bore to the end (or not) of European colonial rule in Africa. In other words, how useful is this thesis’s emphasis on anxiety, conflict and division in Africa to understanding the role of the press in ‘decolonisation’ in the

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<sup>5</sup> This is, essentially, what both Howe and Owen emphasise in *Anticolonialism*, and ‘Critics of Empire’, respectively, though not in relation to the press.

most 'essential' or common use of that term? The first point to make is that this thesis has focused on decolonisation as a process, which extends to the study of post-colonial states; as well as on what the range of events associated with the end of empire meant to large groups locally, as opposed to the reasons which lay behind the formal act of devolution.<sup>6</sup> Anxiety, conflict and division were, it argues, integral to the 'lived experience' of decolonisation of the majority of these overseas readerships in their interactions with the British press.

Nevertheless, the conclusions reached here suggest that, with caveats, British press content bore a 'positive' relation to the end of empire (hence the anxiety among white settler communities). Without the press, fewer dissenting voices would have been heard, and powerful groupings would have been better able to proceed as they wished. As mentioned in the previous section, this thesis has also explored some tangible links between newspaper content and British policy, which moved the latter 'forward'.

But the relationship of press coverage to the end of empire cannot be described purely in terms either of an upward, or of a plain, liberal, trajectory. In the years which form the focus of this study, the white settler response translated into retrenchment, which, in the short-term, contributed to the prolongation of white minority rule. Further, press content was in tune with African aims, as official (and other) histories of British newspapers have claimed.<sup>7</sup> Yet, it should not be assumed that 'liberal' comments reflected a liberal turn on the part of all of those concerned, for journalists' views on African nationalism and empire were also informed by older, racial fears centring on African violence, as well as a hard-nosed pragmatism. At times, political partisanship was also very much in evidence, particularly in the popular press, journalists often directly replicating the views of either the Conservative Party or the Labour Party, whose public stance on Africa differed greatly during these months. Adding to the complexity was the important matter of the disjuncture between editorial comment and the nature of news reports, which meant that different facets of press coverage performed different and sometimes opposing functions simultaneously.

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<sup>6</sup> Here, I have been influenced by the volume *Living the End of Empire*, edited by Gewald et al.

<sup>7</sup> Cockett, *David Astor*; Hart-Davis, *House the Berrys Built*; McDonald, *History of the Times*; Edelman, *Mirror: Political History*; Taylor, *Changing Faces*.



Neither should it be assumed that British newspapers supported the post-colonial states. Indeed, it seems that the press was inclined, in many ways, to oppose ruling nationalist parties, due to the historical ties of right-leaning papers, for instance, to ‘traditional’ ruling groups in African societies such as Ghana, which tended to assume the role of the opposition at independence; the press’s interrogative nature in general; and the difficulties most journalists experienced in fully comprehending the challenges faced by newly-independent countries.

### 3. The cultural impact of the end of empire in Britain

This element of my thesis has striven, essentially, to build on the conclusions reached in Lewis’s article, “‘Daddy Wouldn’t Buy Me a Mau Mau’”, because it is in full agreement with it. These conclusions concern British newspapers’ potential role in Britain’s peaceful decolonisation. Although, therefore, the thesis does not dispute the specific arguments of works by Ward, Schwarz, and Webster, which focus on the links between decolonisation and increased British domestic fears or anxieties,<sup>8</sup> its overall emphasis differs. It is in agreement with all of these writers, however, in their emphasis on ‘impact’, as opposed to the study by Sandbrook, for example, in which the historian claims that the British public knew little and cared less about events in the colonies.<sup>9</sup> The research conducted here suggests that the public had a great deal of Africa-related material available to them through the press, which indicated that editors believed the subject interested consumers.

This thesis suggests that the likely overall impact of British press coverage on the British newspaper-reading public was that it mitigated feelings of loss, regret, weakness and decline. There were two dimensions to this. Firstly, as Lewis argues in her Kenya piece, the newspapers presented British readers with helpful ideas compatible with the trend to decolonisation, such as those which centred on the rise of African nationalism and the increasing obsolescence of empire.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, they depicted Britain’s involvement in the process in non-negative terms. In “‘White Man in a Wood Pile’” Lewis discusses the probable implications of the press’s

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<sup>8</sup> Ward, ‘Introduction’ in Ward (ed.), *British Culture*; Schwarz, *White Man’s World*; Schwarz, “‘The Only White Man in There’”; Webster, *Englishness and Empire*; Webster, “‘There’ll Always Be an England’”.

<sup>9</sup> Sandbrook, *Never Had it so Good*.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, “‘Daddy Wouldn’t Buy Me a Mau Mau’”.

positive portrayal of Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech in similar terms;<sup>11</sup> and Darwin has emphasised the importance of Macmillan's skilful use of 'the Commonwealth concept'.<sup>12</sup> This thesis discusses these two dynamics, but it has also extended the second (on Britain's involvement) to include an appreciation of the press's non-negative portrayal of British limitations and even misdemeanours.

During 1957, the press described both Ghana's transition to independence and the celebrations in March in triumphant, self-affirming terms. In subsequent weeks and months, it sorely criticised Nkrumah and the CPP, enlightening its readers on the errors and underhand activities of Africans, yet offering them very little information on comparable moves taken by the British colonial state in preceding years, nor insight into the possible relation between colonial rule and the nature or strictures of the post-colonial state. Although some sections of the press certainly displayed anxiety over Ghana's apparent rejection of symbolic links with Britain following independence, these moves prompted little self-reflection. Rather, they merely appeared as proof, in the right-leaning press, in particular, of mounting authoritarianism, and thus also of the relative serenity and stability of the colonial period.

Concerning the issue of colonial brutality in Kenya and Nyasaland during 1959, to cite a further example, Chapter Two found that British newspaper content tended to undercut its potency and, in the case of Central Africa, in particular, to distance it from the metropole. In the case of the Federation, the presence of white settlers allowed for the conceptual separation of Britain and British people from unsavoury aspects of the decolonisation process. In both of these regions, too, as in Ghana, newspapers portrayed Britain's role, historically, either in positive or in non-negative terms. This was also the case in regard to South Africa. There, most British papers held enlightened British colonialism up against the white racialism of the Afrikaner state. It might be objected that it would not have been either natural or practicable to document Britain's misdeeds at every corner. This view must be acknowledged. Yet newspapers did offer their readers interpretations on the causes of things, which suggests that we must interrogate the meaning of any omissions.

The material presented here might also prompt a fresh reading of the role of non-Anglo-centric depictions of events in Africa, which may have soothed British

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<sup>11</sup> Lewis, "White Man".

<sup>12</sup> Darwin, 'Fear of Falling'.

readers' understanding of their country's involvement in the decolonisation process, the most prominent of which centred on African action or African nationalism. Indeed, African action was the central prism through which the British press depicted, and seemed to understand, the events of these years. Overall, African nationalism appeared as a powerful, organic, elemental force,<sup>13</sup> which, I would argue, promoted the view that developments in Africa at the end of empire were born as much of an innate, and now burgeoning, human desire to be free as of any specific abuses or other characteristics of European colonial rule. Most British journalists discussed the events of these years in terms of accruals, which included beginnings, the formation and onward march of nations and nationalism, independence and the bestowing of freedom rather than finalities, metropolitan decline, or the 'end of empire'. Although it might be argued that the focus on African nationalism and power served only to throw Britain's relative decline into relief, on the contrary, it seemed that, for the most part, journalists supported, even championed, the cause of the Africans and, helpfully, tied it to Britain's future influence.

It is important to consider the significance of the contradictory nature of some of the above representations, many of which appeared simultaneously in the same paper. At the Ghana independence celebrations, for instance, the sense conveyed by Nkrumah and other Ghanaians that Ghana loved Britain was taken as evidence of the latter's virtues. Yet just weeks later, the sense conveyed by Nkrumah and other Ghanaians that Ghana did not love Britain was also taken as evidence of Britain's virtues because of how British papers characterised the nature of the CPP's rule at that time (but of which they had very strong inklings years before, and so also at the time of the independence celebrations). This would appear to confirm the centrality to British journalists of what Lewis has taken care to emphasise in a number of her works; that is, the liberal image of the British Empire at home,<sup>14</sup> for part of what the press seemed to be doing during these years was interpreting the process of decolonisation in light of that core belief. On top of this, however, we might also factor in extraneous, region-specific factors affecting news coverage, because these often worked to the same end, either consciously, as in the

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<sup>13</sup> As described best by Lewis in "Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me a Mau Mau".

<sup>14</sup> As in "White Man"; and 'The British Empire and world history: welfare imperialism and "soft" power in the rise and fall of colonial rule' in James Midgley and David Piachaud (eds.), *Colonialism and Welfare: Social Policy and the British Imperial Legacy* (Cheltenham, 2011), pp. 17-35.

case of the NLM, which flattered Britain, thus exploiting its emotional weakness; or unconsciously, as, for example, in instances where the comparatively light British press presence in preceding years affected the institution's ability fully to contextualise events in the period 1957 to 1960.

On the issue of why the British press presented its readers with ideas compatible with the trend to decolonisation and with either positive or non-negative views on Britain's involvement in the process, the thesis therefore acknowledges, even highlights, the importance of the change in thinking in Britain towards a more liberal consensus, which Lewis discusses in her Kenya piece. Yet it also emphasises the significance of conservative patterns of thought, including pragmatism, and the legacy of embedded ways of thinking about race and the Empire. It also examined the non-ideological ways in which the press channelled these helpful impressions to readers, and which included a discussion of the press's narratological and contextual framing of events to which practical editorial imperatives contributed.

Lastly, although this thesis focuses on a short time-frame of three years, and therefore cannot comment on the likely impact, culturally, of decolonisation in Britain in subsequent years,<sup>15</sup> it is hoped that its identification of historically-rooted patterns of interpretation and of reporting, and of patterns and trends in coverage, such as those which worked to uphold Britain, in particular, might inform our understanding, albeit tentatively, of later developments.

#### 4. Further, non-press-related characteristics of the experience of decolonisation<sup>16</sup>

Chapter Four discussed some further non-press-related characteristics of the process of decolonisation, which this study of the role of the British press brings to light, and which the historiography tends not to accentuate. The first of these concerned the significance of ordinary people and publics to developments. In Central Africa, for example, both white settlers and African nationalists regarded the British public (and themselves) as motors of historical change, and this belief informed their actions. From 1957 to 1960, these groups appeared not to experience

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<sup>15</sup> Howe suspects that the impact may have been 'delayed'. See 'Internal Decolonization?'.

<sup>16</sup> In using the British press as a lens through which to reassess the validity of accepted historical interpretations, this thesis adopts Lewis's approach in "White Man".

‘the end of empire’ as a high-level political affair; but rather, a process in which the day-to-day actions of ordinary citizens were perceived as ‘game-changing’.

The second characteristic the chapter discussed concerned the sense of contingency which suffused each moment. It seems that for groups in Africa, as in Britain, the future was not conceived of as pre-ordained, even in 1960. The thesis as a whole moves away from the themes of momentum, of planning and of inevitability, which characterise grand narratives of the experience of decolonisation. Rather, it emphasises that the ‘end of empire’ was experienced as an event with a range of possible outcomes, and, in this, is therefore in agreement with Stockwell and Butler’s introductory commentary to their edited volume, *The Wind of Change*.<sup>17</sup>

Thirdly, and relatedly, and as Lewis and Darwin, for example, have argued, the thesis has suggested that the British Government’s handling of the business of decolonisation was not always smooth, but could be muddled at times, and even amusing.<sup>18</sup> This was best exemplified by the case of ‘the Blantyre riot’ and its fall-out. But this thesis’s emphasis on the reactive nature of British colonial policy on Federation, in particular, and the nature of the British Government’s day-to-day dealings with British journalists over the period as a whole, also throw into relief the jittery mental state of members of the Government when it came to African or colonial affairs, and the resultant dichotomous nature of some of the policies they pursued.

Fourthly, the chapter foregrounded the significance of African action, including violence, both to the very process of decolonisation, and to British perceptions of it. By focusing on British strategies and viewpoints, imperial histories typically promote the British, as opposed to the African, place in the order of things, even when African actions are discussed. There are also many representations of the events of these years which do not foreground Africans that are common to British popular perceptions of the decolonisation process, such as the association of colonial brutality with Sharpeville and the events of 1959.<sup>19</sup> Yet this thesis has indicated that British popular perceptions of both sets of events concentrated as much, if not more, on African action, power and violence as on white brutality; and not, primarily, it would appear, because journalists regarded

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<sup>17</sup> Stockwell and Butler, ‘Introduction’ in Stockwell and Butler (eds.), *The Wind of Change*.

<sup>18</sup> Darwin, *Empire Project*; Lewis, “‘White Man’”.

<sup>19</sup> As discussed in chapters two and five.

Africans as ‘lesser’, although racial perceptions undoubtedly played a role. The Blantyre incident also provided an illustration of when and how historical actors in positions of power, though understanding African actions to be crucial, effectively wrote them out of the official government record. Although the conclusions this thesis reaches, both in relation to Blantyre and more generally, suggest that British politicians considered white responses, including those of the British press, public and Parliament, to be more significant than African action at certain pivotal moments, and that these were therefore critical motors of historical change, newspaper coverage of Africa over the period as a whole is useful in reminding us that white actions cannot be understood without reference to African nationalism.

Although, therefore, many of the tropes which are said to characterise Western understanding of Africa today were present in British newspaper coverage of Africa during the period 1957 to 1960, such as those which centre on African violence, and race; the image of Africa as ‘the hopeless continent’ was far less so. Rather, Africa appeared to be regarded as an extremely important continent, whose people were understood to be ultimately in control of their own destiny, and whose ‘love’ and ‘trust’, it was believed to be very ill-advised to jeopardise.

Lastly, this chapter underscored the significance of ‘imaginaries’, such as representation, perceptions, image, hopes and fears, to the historical process. In other words, the thesis adds to a discussion of the importance of events and actions, a bigger appreciation, it is hoped, of the significance of what did not happen, what was said or believed to have happened, and what it was feared would happen. This thesis’s focus on mediation brings to the fore the moments at which words and actions were ‘lost in translation’, why and with what effect. Mediation played a significant role in the historical outcomes, often in surprising ways, due to the nature and the range of the influences which affected the process; and provides a lens through which we can better understand the thoughts and behaviours of important groupings. Indeed, part of what it felt like to live the end of empire appeared to lie less with the nodules of an historical timeline, or physically with certain prominent people and places, than the spaces which resided in between such poles as British policy and rhetoric, British policy and the British public sphere, the locality and the metropole, representation and reality, and African action and white appropriation. Fundamentally, this echoed the experiences of Sampson in Germany in the

immediate aftermath of the Second World War, and in South Africa, and which contributed to his desire to pursue a career in journalism.

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