

ANATOMY OF MINORITY DOMINANCE : GOVERNMENT AND 'AFRICAN' LITERATURE IN
RHODESIA, 1933-1940

by

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Introducing the second reading of the Sedition Bill (1936) the Southern Rhodesian Minister of Justice and Defence told the House:

I anticipate that the major criticism of this measure will be that it is one which is long overdue. There is no doubt that for want of such a measure we as a Colony have suffered too long the introduction and the spread of subversive and seditious propaganda and literature in this Colony, much of which unfortunately has taken root in the native mind. It may be found difficult to eradicate the harm already done, but at any rate, it is high time that we provided some means of restraint ...¹

This summarises the Government's stand on the issue of literature aimed at an African readership, and it illuminates community power relationships and conflicting interests. The European had entered the country through conquest and had assumed the ascendant position in the political, economic and social fields. In the interests of preserving the system of white domination it was necessary and imperative that measures be introduced to ensure, in the words of Mnyanda, that the African is kept 'in the dark in regard to his social, economic and political rights'.² The move was not so much, as then commonly contended, because 'the average Native accepts everything he reads as gospel truth',³ as the contention, so bluntly advanced by the Minister of Justice and Defence, that the dissemination of certain types of literature among Africans would drive them to 'subvert good governments',⁴ to overthrow the whole social structure in which the stratifications ran along the colour line and the depressed stratum was expected, though negatively, to query the validity of that social system. If no steps were taken to check the growth of this challenge 'it may be found difficult to eradicate the harm' for all time and this would have sounded the deathknell of white domination.

A defensive mechanism of this nature would stand condemned by itself unless it has some logical, if not moral, justification. Some excuse had to be advanced for introducing restrictive legislation and it had to be such as would have effectively clouded the more obvious purpose, the need to retain the plural society in its existing form by keeping the underdog, in this case the Africans, pliant. The easiest defence of any restrictive legislation for Africans could be found in the contention, though so dubiously tenable, that such legislation or regulation was designed to protect the Africans from themselves. The African was uncivilised, incapable of self-protection, ran the tenet. He was entering the alien world and coming face to face with the alien instruments of the white man. In that case, 'it would be most unfair if they [the Africans] were left unprotected'⁵ from dangerous means of expression - which they did not understand. Even if the African had genuine grievances, 'it is not always that the African can

1 Debates of the House of Assembly 7, XVIII, 1, 1022, 23 Apr. 1936.

2 B.J. Mnyanda, In Search of Truth, (Bombay, Hind Kitabs, 1954), 120.

3 Ibid., 119.

4 Debates, XVIII, 1, 1032, 23 Apr. 1936.

5 Ibid.

wisely express it or wisely state the remedy'.¹ According to this orthodox philosophy, therefore, the African needed the unfettered guidance and leadership of the European.

Nowhere is this philosophy more aptly expressed than in the Bantu Mirror, a weekly newspaper started in 1932 by members from the Associated Bantu Press of South Africa under the name, Native Mirror which changed to Bantu Mirror in 1936.² Though this newspaper was stated as 'a Native Newspaper to give news to and reflect the views of the Bantu people',³ it was anything but 'native'. There was everything official to it to make it completely unAfrican. The paper received an annual subsidy of £180 from the Government;⁴ its contents were subject to censorship by the Department of Native Affairs through the good offices of the Provincial Native Commissioner;⁵ it was managed by F.L. Hadfield, formerly an M.P. in the Coghlan Parliament,⁶ and a member of the Advisory Board of the Department of Native Development⁷ a body which had no Africans on it. The Bantu Mirror thus in effect became the organ of the Native Department. A few quotes will illustrate the proactivities of this paper:

Ran one column of the Mirror:

You are all agreed that a white man is superior to us in all details and envy him as well as ape most of his doings; we want to come to his level.⁸

As if this were no sufficient definition of African powerlessness this blunt emphasis still needed reinforcement in another column:

It is indeed futile or better still, it is the height of sentimentalism to imagine that European hegemony in Africa will be broken within measurable time; for we are, even with good education, incapable of self government.⁹

Even if these quotes are presented as African letters to the editor and therefore expressing independent African views, the editorial columns themselves betray the nature of material that would be acceptable. The issue of 14 March, 1936 had this comment on the Native Preachers Bill:

All Africans will know of the harm that is being done by preachers of the Watch Tower movement and other sects who teach people to despise their rulers, and encourage them to break the laws.¹⁰

The paper does not in the least indicate the reaction of 'all Africans' to this teaching, nor does it show the attitude of 'all Africans' to 'the laws' and thus assumes 'all Africans' are already aware of 'the harm'. If they regarded the teaching as harmful it would not be easy to explain how the Watch Tower movement would 'encourage them to break the laws'. In the same issue the editor had this comment on the Sedition Bill:

This is especially designed to stop the distribution among unlightened people of literature which is full of false

1 Mnyanda, In Search of Truth, 127.

2 Bantu Mirror, 15 Feb. 1936.

3 Ibid., 4 July 1936.

4 N[ational] A[rchives of] R[hodesia, Salisbury], S1542/L11/7, Sec[retary] to the Treasury to C[chief] N[ative] C[ommissioner] and the Auditor-General, 16 Apr. 1936.

5 NAR, S1906 [Howman Commission: Evidence (F.L. Hadfield), 1944]

6 D.J. Murray, The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia, (London, O.U.P. 1970), 248.

7 NAR, S1542/N3/2/Gen [Minutes of the Southern Rhodesia Advisory Board for Native Development held on] 29 Sept. 1938.

8 Bantu Mirror, 18 September 1943. . 9 Ibid., 6 Feb. 1943

10 Ibid., 14 March 1936.

teaching and intended to stir them up to disobey the laws of the country.¹

The very people who can detect the harm in Watch Tower literature are still unenlightened enough to be stirred 'up to disobey the laws of the country'.

That these bills were defensive legislation comes out even clearer in the Mirror's comment on the Native Registration Bill (1936):

The specific purpose of the Bill was to protect the natives from themselves and to protect the whites.²

The moral justification advanced in support of the bills - we must protect the natives - thus degenerates into an open admission that the authorities had surrendered to themselves the right to pursue an unabashed commandeering of the basic freedoms of the black masses. The reaction of the leaders of African opinion to the bills makes a mockery of this professed intention to protect the Africans. In a resolution sent to the Chief Native Commissioner, Charles Bullock, the Rev. Munjoma, A. Jacha, J. Samkange, J.B. Mkandawiri and N. Martin protested that certain sections of the Natives Registration Bill were 'very hard on the African community' because they hindered lawful business in the locations.³ The second part of the resolution deals with the Native Preachers Bill:

This Convention respectfully protests against the introduction of such a bill as this, its view being that to restrict Religious freedom in preaching or in teaching is inconsistent with British freedom and with Christian liberty.⁴

Official comment on these protests found its way to publicity through the hand of the Mirror's editor who found it appropriate to reassure the Africans:

The Bill to prevent Sedition will not prevent the selling of newspapers and other literature unless they undermine law and order.⁵

For a paper that was established by a European firm to 'mould Bantu life into the best possible form'⁶ and to present 'all' news 'unless it is really injurious to the Bantu thought and life'⁷ the editorial comments appearing above should not be surprising. The paper was commissioned by the Government, through the annual subsidy, to keep the Africans loyal.

Some semblance of liberalism had, however, to be maintained in the interest of averting a backfire in the system of control. African reactions to the several bills passed in the 1930s appear in the Mirror only because there was no other acceptable local channel through which they could be voiced and even when they do, they are anything but the true feelings of the common African. Subsidised by the Government, the Mirror could not ignore the Bullock axe - 'criticism which tended to create disregard for law and order should be avoided'.⁸ But an 'African' paper had to maintain a

1 Ibid., 14 Mar. 1936.

2 Ibid., 11 Apr. 1936.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 4 July 1936.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., 24 Oct. 1936.

semblance of independence for, as the secretary of the Native Department put it in 1951, any knowledge of close cooperation between 'African' newspapers and the Native Department was to be kept private since the effectiveness of the papers depended on their supposed independence.¹ Thus a certain amount of African criticism had to be published to smokescreen the paper's dependence on and subservience to the Government. Otherwise the Bantu Mirror was an exponent of government policy, hence of white Rhodesian fears and hopes. The native must be 'protected' from endorsing 'dangerous' ideas falling which white rule and interests would be jeopardised. To the African, it was put as sheer official benevolence.

The 'white' papers of the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company, already enjoying monopoly of circulation that they have never lost, and, then presumed little read by Africans, can be taken to have voiced white Rhodesia's hopes and fears. It was commonly assumed that the circulation of these papers - The Rhodesia Herald, The Sunday Mail, the Bulawayo Chronicle, The News, The Umtali Post - among Africans was so small² as to be insignificant. Thus the Company's editorials were framed as if the Europeans were quarantined from African reaction. Thus the true feelings of the Europeans on various policy issues will be read here, unfettered by concern for African reaction. In spite of Gale's assertion that the Company's journalists were kept out of the tutelage of any political party,³ the papers did send their leaders and commentaries to the Government and received a reply.⁴ One of its editors, S. Veats, even went to jail in 1933 for refusing to reveal the identity of his correspondents,⁵ which shows that even for this paper, official control was not very lax. The Company's journalists were consequently less independent of Government control than Gale would want to assert. In any way, what wrangles there were between Government and the Company were internal to the white community. As will be illustrated below, the Company was rarely at variance with official government thinking especially in matters of native policy. A few editorials will illustrate the point.

At a time when Chief Native Commissioner Carbutt was bellowing on the dangers of rapid native development, the Rhodesia Herald was claiming that speeches in Parliament showed 'a genuine desire to do justice to native interests'.⁷ A typical example of the twisted philosophy of this newspaper at this time, and one which shows how near the Government the paper was, is given here:

We have seen how a conflict of interests is likely to arise when progress brings native competition into what the European regards as his rightful preserve, and how the too-rapid and insufficiently-assimilated teaching of the European may sometimes lead to a false progress, which in the upshot sets back rather than advances native development ... However careful the training, there are

1 NAR, RH12/2/4/2/6, Secr. [for] Nat[ive] Aff[airs] to Secr., Rhodesia Feder[ated] Chamb[ers] of Com[merce], n.d. Jun. 1951.

2 [Annual] Rep[ort] of the C.N.C. [for the Year] 1950. (CSR9-1951).

3 W.D. Gale, The Rhodesia Press, (Salisbury, Rhodesian Printing and Publishing, 1962), 136.

4 Debates, XXIII, 2641, 29 Oct. 1943.

5 Gale, Rhodesian Press, 150.

6 Rep. C.N.C., 1933 (CSR9-1934).

7 Rh/odesia/ Her/ald, 31 May 1935.

times when the native who has undergone that training finds environment too strong for him and fails to carry out the function for which he has been trained.¹

What emerges out of this jumble may be as follows: rapid training of the native will bring him into competition with the European; this is objectionable. Too rapid training of the native leads to false progress on his part. Therefore competition with the European will lead to false progress. What the editor wanted to say was: the native will be trained but not sufficiently enough as to make him challenge the European - which was the philosophy of the Government. The wisdom of training an African to become useless, 'however careful the training', is of course, dubious.

A further example of white training, always in self-defence, is revealed in the Herald's comment on the Copperbelt disturbances of 1935. The Commission of Inquiry set up to enquire into the disturbances raised a storm of controversy regarding its composition. Putting government servants on such a Commission² seems to have been the best the Northern Rhodesia Government could do to the cause of justice. Such a commission could not place the blame for the disturbance on the Government's door. As was to be expected, the Commission pulled itself out of the embarrassment by pointing to fictitious agitators and the Watch Tower movement.³ The truth could be elsewhere. The President of the Northern Rhodesia Missionary Conference, the Rev. J.G. Soulsby, pointed out: that the Government had increased native tax on the Copperbelt without due regard to the fact that 'taxation must be graded according to income'; that the Africans had not been consulted prior to the introduction of the increase; that insufficient notice had been given to the Africans; that the Commission of Inquiry had not been independent of Government manipulation; that the urban Africans on the Copperbelt had a right to reject indirect rule.⁴

While the Herald agreed with the missionaries on the composition of the Commission of Inquiry, it had a different verdict on the disturbances:

Reports from the North have referred to the effect of new taxation on the minds of the natives on the mines. While it cannot be too greatly emphasized that anything new in the way of legislation needs careful explanation beforehand to the native, we doubt whether this new taxation was so much the cause of the disturbances as the excuse. The manner in which the trouble began and spread bore the hallmark of the agitator, who could be trusted to make the most of any act of government not appealing to a section of the native community.⁵

In this period the easiest thing to see behind any African protest movement was the agitator. He was to be found inside every crowd of protesting Africans, whether demonstrating for more pay, against hunger, or against industrial maltreatment. In his absence, the African was happiest.

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., 14 Jun. 1935.

3 Debates, XVI, 1, 1030, 23 Apr. 1936.

4 Rh. Her. 14 Jun. 1935.

5 Ibid.

This is what the Minister of Justice and Defence was referring to when he said 'it would be unfair if they were left unprotected'.

That the Printing and Publishing Company calmly floated in the current official thinking and thus actively participated in the conspiracy to keep the Africans malleable is also to be borne in the Company's endorsement of Rhodesian apartheid. The Rhodesia Herald, the leading of the Company's newspapers, had no qualms in expressing the Hugginsian concept of two pyramids, while tacitly avoiding mention of the implications of 'the sea of black'¹ by pointing to the different levels of civilisation between black and white as the determinants in the formulation of a device for harmonising the conflicting interests in the plural society. According to the Rhodesia Herald:

The fact has to be faced that in Southern Rhodesia today there are two immigrant races the Bantu and the European who have made their homes in the country. The European is on a higher plane of civilisation than is the Bantu, and opportunity to live on that plane at a reasonable standard must in fairness be granted to him. Whatever the possibilities of the native, his cultural development in bulk is far less than that of the white man ... The only alternative ... is the policy ... by which each race has full opportunity for development in its own areas ...²

The editor must have had a copy of Huggins's speeches on his table while writing this editorial. The need to 'protect' the natives becomes, in the light of this editorial, an expression of white bewilderment regarding how best to reconcile conflicting black-white interests. But in a society of economic inequalities born of inequitable land apportionment and industrial legislation based on skin-colour, ideological jargonry like 'each race has full opportunity for development in its own areas' should be viewed as what it was - a jargon. It was a tenuous means of clouding reality, the reality that the dominant minority sought to preserve its ascendant socio-economic position from the black challenge by suppressing the latter in the name of protecting them. The defensive mechanism erected, often with professedly moralistic goals, behind legislation dealing with media for popular expression was meant to shroud reality before the Africans.

The most effective means of checking African expression of discontent was to determine what they should know - and not know, and to prevent them wherever possible, from showing that they knew something, if that knowledge had negative implications on the continued existence of the plural society in its stratified form. This control entailed a three-pronged strategy; strict control of imported literature; control of local newspapers aimed at the black readership; and the dissemination of official propaganda.

1 Huggins had liked the position of the European in Rhodesia as 'an island in a sea of black' - the common fear of whites being swamped by Africans.

2 Rh.Her., 8 Apr. 1938.

ANATOMY OF CONTROL

That there hardly existed a truly native opposition press in Southern Rhodesia in the period under examination was due to several factors. One factor - and that explains the absence of an African-owned newspaper - was the poverty of the Africans themselves. Even if one was started, it was bound to peter into its natural death as advertisers did not then realise the value of the African market and thus were very reluctant to allocate their advertising expenditure to the African newspapers.¹ But the most important factor, and one which is the subject of this paper, was that successive Rhodesian governments unswervingly maintained a low ceiling over what 'African' newspapers could publish. That these papers were owned and run by European firms was no argument in favour of relaxed control. What mattered most was the fact that they were aimed at the black readership. As in all other fields, the authorities introduced and entrenched what Mnyanda has termed 'news segregation'.² This control had several dimensions:

- i. parliamentary legislation;
- ii direct censorship by the Provincial Native Commissioner;
- iii direct manipulation of appointments to the newspapers management;
- iv a direct Government subsidy to 'African' newspapers.

Each of these will find an example in the period under examination.

It was control that even the press bodies readily accepted. Concluding his request to the Chief Native Commissioner, Charles Bullock, for permission to include the Native Department's brief notes in the Bantu Mirror, the Manager, F.L. Hadfield, reassured:

We should quite recognise that the continuance of the privilege would be contingent upon our good behaviour.³

Two years later, when it appeared the hand of the Native Department had sunk too deep in the affairs of the newspaper, Hadfield wrote Bullock a rather uncharacteristic letter:

... I have found that the restriction of articles deemed to be of an unsettling character and sent to us by advanced natives is militating against the sale of them. They have clearly expressed the opinion that articles they consider justly critical of Government, find no place in the paper and among one considerable group some will no longer write to the paper.⁴

The fact was that the Provincial Native Commissioner, who censored the contents of 'African' newspapers on behalf of the Native Department,⁵ did not have to compromise with the newspaper management on what a paper should carry. The fate of all articles lay in his hands and no verdict overruled his. The Native Department was decidedly blunt on censorship. At a meeting of the Advisory Board for Native Development held in Bulawayo in 1936, Charles Bullock ruled that:

... criticism which tended to create disregard for law and order should be avoided.⁶

1 National Affairs, 1, 11, C.A.G. Paver, lecture, Feb. 1951, 2.

2 Mnyanda, In Search of Truth, 119.

3 NAR, S1542/L11, Hadfield to C.N.C., 11 Feb. 1936.

4 Ibid., L11/1, Hadfield to C.N.C., 11 May 1937.

5 NAR, S1906.

6 Bantu Mirror, 24 Oct. 1936.

Huggins's remarks on the same occasion added some philosophical flavour to this brand of conventional wisdom. Since the mentality of the African was more backward than that of the European, he stated, 'much greater care should be used than with a developed race'.¹

The position of African Newspapers Ltd., which owned the Bantu Mirror reflects the degree of Official control on literature for Africans. As the Chief Information Officer in the Native Department. J.F. Bowles, was to admit in 1951, African Newspapers Ltd:

frequently consults with this Department, which fully supports its policy of providing sound and wholesome literature for Africans and believes it is efficiently fulfilling a most useful function in this respect.²

What African Newspapers therefore did was not to publish what Africans thought and said but rather to request the Native Department, the Government, to supply it with what information the Government wanted known to the Africans. Granted that a newspaper is founded to project a definite brand of thinking it is, at least traditionally, expected to be an input-output system. It should be the mirror of its readership. African Newspapers Ltd was nowhere near this model in this period. The excessive intervention of the Native Department into its newspapers made them anything except what they should have been - African newspapers. What Tom Hopkinson says of newspapers in Africa generally applies equally to so-called African newspapers in Rhodesia in the 1930s. He observed that newspapers simply appeared as things which Europeans bought and read, and continued:

In general, so far as they [newspapers] expressed political opinions, they supported the white rulers without question. They ignored the black man's opinions, his social life and cultural achievements; ridiculed his political organisations, and attacked his up-and-coming leaders.³

What has already been quoted from the Bantu Mirror makes it even more fitting to the pattern given above. When Carey Paver, managing director of African Newspapers stated that African Newspapers Ltd:

owed allegiance to no party, aiming at guarding the Africans' interests

and equipping

Africans for the responsibilities of freedom and democracy,⁴

he was doing much less than justice to the truth. Although the firm was technically independent of the Native Department, it closely cooperated with it. The collusion was to be revealed, not to the Africans, but to the Rhodesia Federated Chambers of Commerce in June 1951 when Bowles warned that the close relationship between African Newspapers and the Native Department was to be kept strictly private since the effectiveness of the newspapers depended on their supposed autonomy.⁵ In public, the management unashamedly

1 Ibid.

2 NAR, RH12/2/4/2/6, Secr. Nat. Aff. to Secr., Rhodesia Feder. Chamb. Com., n.d. Jun. 1951.

3 T. Hopkinson, 'The Press in Africa', in C. Legum, Africa Handbook, (Middlesex, England, Penguin, 1969), 576.

4 National Affairs, I, 11, [C.A.G. Paver, lecture, Feb. 1951], 2.

5 NAR, RH12/2/4/2/6, Secr. Nat. Aff. to Secr., Rhodesia Feder. Chamb. Com., n.d. Jun. 1951.

maintained that the newspapers were a 'commercial undertaking receiving no subsidy'.¹

Within a period of only ten years there were several cases of direct Government control of literature aimed at the African readership. But Government action in this period must be viewed not as unprompted initiatives but as reactions to situations the authorities had not been prepared to meet. The dominating feature of the 1930s was the breathless campaign against imported literature. This is the period of the separatist fever when churches, political and trade union organizations of all descriptions led by various elements of the emerging black intelligentsia dominated the African scene. Most of these movements had their origins outside the country - Bamuchapi preachers from Nyasaland,² Garveyism from Britain,³ Communism from South Africa,⁴ the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union from South Africa, the Watch Tower Movement from Nyasaland and South Africa,⁵ and the several brands of Zionism from South Africa and the United States.⁷ That these organizations smelt of racial exclusivism and black activism made them automatically suspect, if not downright dangerous, in the eyes of the Rhodesian authorities.

With these organizations naturally came foreign-printed literature and, what appeared even more dangerous, an infusion into the African mind, the knowledge that the media for expressing his grievances, then effectively denied him inside Rhodesia, could be obtained elsewhere. It became common practice among educated Africans to correspond with papers in South Africa and their ideas found their way back to Rhodesia through the post box - a dangerous circumvention of the Provincial Native Commissioner's axe. In a letter to Bullock in May 1937 Hadfield observed of educated Africans:

The course they sometimes follow is to send these articles to Southern papers which circulate here but which of course have nothing like the circulation [of the Bantu Mirror]. I felt you should know this.⁸

Legislation had to be introduced to deal with this evasion.

What is surprising is not the introduction of the Sedition Bill at all but the fact that it was introduced and passed in 1936 - four years after a draft had been prepared.⁹ News of the existence of the draft four years before the Bill was introduced comes from Col. Carbutt's confidential communication with the Commissioner of Police (December 1934). He revealed:

... the Prime Minister has given definite instructions that a Bill is to be introduced at the next Session of Parliament

1 National Affairs, I, xi, 2.
2 Rep. C.N.C. 1935, (CSR7-1936)
3 NAR, S1542/L11, [Chief] Super/[Intendent] C.I.D. to Staff Officer, 2 Feb. 1936.
4 Ibid., L11, C.N.C. to M[inister] of Nat. Aff., 2 Oct. 1934.
5 Ibid., N[ative] C[ommissioner] (Umtali) to C.N.C., 29 Jun. 1935.
6 Debates, XVI, I, 1027, 23 Apr. 1936.
7 NAR, S138/140; NAR, S1542/M/8/D, C.N.C. to Staff Officer, B.S.A.P., 4 Sept. 1937.
8 NAR, S1542/L11/1.
9 Ibid., L11, C.N.C. to Com[missioner of] Police, 21 Dec. 1934.

dealing with the above matter [subversive Propaganda and Literature]. The draft prepared in 1932 is favoured, but the Department of Justice has the matter under consideration and will no doubt decide whether to amend the Customs Act, which entails also an amendment to the Post Office Act, to make the amendment effective, or whether an entirely new Bill will be presented to Parliament.¹

As late as December 1934 the Government seems to have been undecided as to how to deal with literature considered subversive by way of legislation - whether amendments to the existing relevant legislation would leave no loopholes or whether entirely new legislation would be more effective. Available evidence seems to indicate that even as late as March 1936 the Government had not yet picked its way out of the maze of alternatives. To introduce the Native Preachers Bill on 16th March, 1936 and carry it no further than the first reading - it was withdrawn that very same day² - and then to introduce the Sedition Bill on the very same day is indicative of the confusion reigning in the top circles of authority. But that the Government had long contemplated bringing in a restrictive measure is borne in Carbutt's letter above. Enough had taken place before 1936 to alarm the Government.

In the 1930s the Communist Party of South Africa and the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of the same country sought to extend their tentacles north of the Limpopo to attract the adherence of the tiny proletariat emerging there. They made contact with the few educated Africans - most of them foreigners from either north of the Zambezi, or South Africa residing in Rhodesia - to whom they sent Communist and trade union literature through the post.

It would be highly speculative to forward any assessment of the chances of a really revolutionary movement emerging in Southern Rhodesia at this time as the persons connected with these movements were subjected to draconian measures before they had gone very far. The persons connected with these movements were reformist - more concerned to show responsibility than revolutionary fervour. As Murray Steele has put it, these leaders 'behaved in a thoroughly constitutional manner.'³ Masoja Ndlovu an I.C.U. leader was even telling his rural audiences: 'I am not inciting you against the Government'.⁴ Even more significant was the numerical factor. The rantings of a few educated individuals made little impression on illiterate masses who were more conscious of their grievances than of the means of effecting redress of those grievances. As Steele observes,

The number of Africans who actively participated in Native political organizations was only a minute fraction of the total population.⁵

But the views of an independent academic, writing some forty years afterwards, cannot be forced on a worried government that cared less about the degree of the danger than the fact, as they saw it, that there was danger at all. It mattered little how few the activists were, or how

1 Ibid.

2 The Bill was introduced before the Sedition Bill and was withdrawn without having taken place on it.

3 M.C. Steele, 'The Foundations of a Native Policy', (Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1972), 170.

4 NAR, S138/55, Super. Nat. to C.N.C., 16 Feb. 1931.

5 Steele, 'Foundation', 157.

reformist they were. Any criticism was equated with opposition; opposition with disloyalty; disloyalty with open revolt. To the administration the danger was there.

On 23rd June, 1934, Malikongwa Shoko, a Tswana teacher at Tegwani, Plumtree, wrote to the Johannesburg-based Communist newspaper, Umsebenzi, explaining the stand he had taken up with regard to the harrassment of teachers by police.¹ A week later a reply came back addressed to 'Comrade' Malikongwa enclosing a promise of a dozen copies of Umsebenzi.² The newspapers did arrive for they were later seized by the Rev. Percy Ibbotson of Tegwani who handed them to the Native Commissioner (Plumtree).³ The paper was unquestionably Communist. Displaying the Hammer and Sickle on its title, the paper claimed there was 'No Unemployment in the Soviet Union.'⁴ Once in the hands of the authorities, the paper sparked off a campaign against Malikongwa and a witch-hunt for suspected Communists.

But there was disagreement between the Attorney-General's office on the one hand and Carbutt and the Chief Superintendent of Natives (Bulawayo) on the other on the most effective means of dealing with the dissemination of Malikongwa's literature once and for all. Since Malikongwa was a Tswana he could be dealt with under Section 2(3) of the Immigrants Regulation Ordinance of 1914 under which he could be deported.⁵ But there was more to the issue. In a letter to the Chief Native Commissioner dated 29th September, 1934, the Chief Superintendent of Natives suggested that:

it would be better to prosecute, and make an example of, him. If deported, he would merely start up again on our border, and thus spread his doctrines into this Colony.⁶

Three days later, Carbutt wrote to the Prime Minister echoing the Chief Superintendent's view.⁷ But when the Prime Minister inquired from the Attorney-General if a prosecution be instituted,⁸ he was told that an abortive prosecution would be worse than none.

Papers have been submitted to the Executive Council with a view to having him deported,⁹

he was told. In support of its decision, the Department of Justice had observed that

Umsebenzi is a registered newspaper [in South Africa] and ... there have been no prosecutions in regard to publication.¹⁰

If Rhodesia was to follow the Union, they could not prosecute Malikongwa. In the end they had to resort to the Immigrants Regulation Ordinance, and Malikongwa was deported in October 1934, by an order signed by the Governor.¹¹

1 NAR, S1542/L11, Act/ing/ Director of Nat. Developments to Super. CID, 10 Dec. 1934.

2 Ibid., Editor, Umsebenzi to Malikongwa, 30 Jun. 1934

3 Ibid., N.C. (Plumtree) to Super. Nat. (Bulawayo), 22 Sept. 1934.

4 Umsebenzi, 1 Sept. 1934.

5 L11, Super. CID to Staff Officer, 28 Sept. 1934.

6 Ibid., Super. Nat. to C.N.C., 29 Sept. 1934.

7 Ibid., C.N.C. to M. of Nat. Aff., 2 Oct. 1934.

8 Ibid., M. of Nat. Aff., to Dept. of Justice, 4 Oct. 1934.

9 Ibid., Attorney-General to P/rime Minister's Sec., 6 Oct. 1934.

10 Ibid., Dept. of Justice to PM's Sec., 8 Oct. 1934.

11 Ibid., PM's Sec. to C.N.C., 8 Oct. 1934.

Relieved at having had the matter resolved, the Chief Superintendent, C.I.D. wrote the Superintendent of Natives:

In my opinion, in the interests of natives of Southern Rhodesia, it is necessary as a temporary measure during their stage of evolution, to prohibit the dissemination of subversive literature amongst them and, in doing so, I realise that any such action would be in the nature of an expedient.¹

That it was expedient was echoed by the Superintendent of Natives (Bulawayo) in a letter to the Chief Native Commissioner:

... I agree with the Chief Superintendent, C.I.D., that their [subversive newspapers] circulation should be prohibited while we are in a position to do so.²

The prohibition was not of course, 'in the interests of natives' but rather in the interests of the other community. The benevolence expressed above did not exist in a community that lived in terror of the sea of black'.

The Malikonwa episode, having been sparked off by the harrassment of African teachers by police without the prior knowledge of the Director of Native Development, invited a rebuke from the Director which he put in no uncertain terms in a letter to the Chief Superintendent, C.I.D., two months after the incident.

I should be very grateful [he wrote] if in future you would report any action taken by you against native teachers in this country direct to this office. The importance of knowing anything affecting a teacher is obvious, and it appears that the most certain way of obtaining information is by a direct report from you ...³

The significance of the Malikonwa incident was its revelation of the loopholes in what Rhodesian legislation dealt with subversive literature. Long before the incident, the Attorney-General had ruled that there was no power under the Customs Act to seize objectionable literature.⁴ If a suitable amendment could be made to the Customs Act, it

... would give us power to seize and prohibit the import of this [subversive] type of literature.⁵

The question was whether to introduce new legislation or to amend the Customs Act. A bewildered Government found itself passing an entirely new Bill - the Sedition Bill - on 3rd July, 1936.⁶

The reason lies in the fact that an amendment to the Customs Act would have affected only imported literature and would not have checked the occasional scaterings of the local newspapers into independent criticism. Editors could be careless regarding what they could publish without

1 Ibid., PM's Secr. to C.N.C., 8 Oct. 1934.

2 Ibid., Super. Nat. to C.N.C., 25 Oct. 1934.

3 Ibid., Act. Director of Nat. Development to Super. CID, 10 Dec. 1934.

4 Ibid., Com. Police to C.N.C., 12 Dec. 1934.

5 Ibid.

6 Sedition Act, No. 41 (1936).

the sanction of the Provincial Native Commissioner or the Superintendents of Natives. One such occasion is worth looking at.

In April 1934 the firm of Philpott and Collins requested the Superintendent of Natives (Bulawayo) for permission to start a newspaper in Sindebele for Africans in Bulawayo. The Superintendent sought the opinion of his chief, Carbutt, who granted the request but with one proviso:

... it would be desirable that any articles with a political bias should be put before you before publication.¹

Philpott and Collins accepted the censorship:

... our proposal to publish a weekly newspaper for natives in Bulawayo has been sanctioned subject to our obtaining the services of Mr. S.W. Greer or someone of his standing to act in an advisory capacity and to scrutinise all articles and publications.²

It would appear that the firm admitted in more of the odour of the Native Department than the Department had requested to blow in for not only was W.R. Benzies, Superintendent of Natives (Bulawayo), made the censor of all political articles, but also S.W. Greer, recently of the Native Department, who became editor of the paper, Inkanyezi (Bantu Star).³ The paper was first published on 20th July, 1934.⁴

Exactly one month after, Carbutt was already on the editor's neck - on this occasion, over the most innocuous article that could be found in an 'African' newspaper. The article in question was J.B. Soneni's in the Inkanyezi issue of 17 August in which Soneni questioned the accuracy of addressing a European as 'nkosi' (King) when such a title had been reserved for royalty only.⁵ To what extent such an article could be conceived as 'political' or 'contentious' is anyone's guess, but the fact is Carbutt demanded to know if Benzies had been shown the article before publication,⁶ whereupon the latter reminded the manager of Inkanyezi to see to it that all political articles were submitted to the Chief Superintendent of Natives before publication. He continued:

... your correspondent's remarks [Soneni's] are contentious and political, and calculated to create a quite undesirable attitude towards the Government of this country, and Europeans in general, by your readers.⁷

The only merit of this statement lies in the humour that it generates in the reader. To defend himself before his chief, Benzies had to write back:

I did not see the letter referred to before publication, as I was absent on duty.⁸

The matter was allowed to rest but the warning of what was to be expected was candid enough.

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- 1 L11, C.N.C. to Super. Nat., 26 Apr. 1934.
 - 2 Ibid., Philpott and Collins to C.N.C., 11 May 1934.
 - 3 Ibid., Philpott and Collins to M. of Nat. Aff., 20 Jul 1934.
 - 4 Ibid.
 - 5 Inkanyezi, 17 Aug. 1934.
 - 6 L11, C.N.C. to Super. Nat., 21 Aug. 1934.
 - 7 Ibid., Super. Nat. to Manager, Inkanyezi, 23 Aug. 1934.
 - 8 Ibid., Super. Nat. to C.N.C., 25 Aug. 1934.

Unlike Nyasaland, in which country the responsible Government officials have been just and given us the opportunity to organise and carry on the work, the Governments of Northern and Southern Rhodesia persist in their attitude of refusing / permission to European Witnesses from the Union to enter these parts of South-Central Africa to organise the work. In spite of opposition and persecution, Jehovah's Witnesses in these countries go bravely on.¹

This obviously smelt ^{of} opposition and obstinacy. In another publication, Deliverance, it was stated:

The so-called Christian Churches have forsaken the Lord and have joined hands with the Devil, and now they seek solace at his hand by communing with the wicked spirits.²

The self-professed protagonists of Western Christian civilization would be the last to condone this vilification of themselves. But there was even more in these publications. An extract from Light read:

The British Empire is the seventh world power, and the Chief one responsible for the promotion and formation of the image of the 'Beast'. The Devil gave the beast, that is to say, his earthly organization, this throne or seat, and it has occupied it from the beginning ... at all times Satan has deceived the people and induced them to believe that the 'Beast' constitutes the higher powers. No empire on earth has ever so completely induced the people to believe this falsehood as the British Empire.³

and further,

'The Beast' is anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Kingdom, and beasts are owning and controlling the earth. 'The False Prophet' therefore is the Anglo-American Empire⁴

In The Kingdom, it was stated:

Within a brief space of time and within the present generation 'Christendom' and the nations that rule therein shall be completely destroyed. This will be done not by the fighting of the common people against the rich, but by Christ Jesus as the instrument of destruction in the mighty hand of Jehovah God.⁵

The flamboyance of these Messianic outpourings were too much for a government that had recently witnessed a bloody episode to the north of it and allegedly brought about by the mouthings of this same movement.⁶ In yet another publication, Golden Age, the Witnesses struck nearer home:

The Roman Catholic Hierarchy, the Presbyterian denomination, through its missionaries, on account of the fact that David Livingstone, a Presbyterian, was the first white man in these parts, the officer of the copper interests and the strong arm squad [police, soldiers, and the law] were responsible for the murders at Luanshya.⁷

1 Debates, XVI, I, 1027, 23 Apr. 1936.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 1029, 23 Apr. 1936.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 1030, 23 Apr. 1936.

7 Ibid.

This was obviously too much. The Shamva Mine Strike of 1927¹ was still too fresh in the minds of the authorities for them to keep calm. Nor had they forgotten the Christmas riots in Bulawayo in 1929 spearheaded by the I.C.U.. Shouts like '... the white man thinks the country is his. You must not accept that, the country belongs to you'² had been greeted with roars of approval. The loyalty of the Rhodesian Africans was not to be taken for granted. Thus, it was contended that what had occurred in Northern Rhodesia in 1935 could easily occur in the South if the Watch Tower Movement was allowed to distribute its literature. The report of the Commission of inquiry into the Copperbelt disturbances only strengthen the case against the Witnesses. Its 114th Finding read:

The Commission found that the teachings and literature of the Watch Tower bring civil and spiritual authority, especially Native authority, into contempt: that it is dangerously subversive, and that it is an important predisposing cause of the recent disturbances.³

Such a report is coming only two years after a Southern Rhodesia Government Notice had ruled that teachers in kraal schools would be subjected to the tutelage of the chiefs, a means of strangling the normally less⁴ compliant intelligentsia by strengthening traditional authority. Watch Tower teachings would disrupt this arrangement. It was Watch Tower literature which spurred the Government to legislative action in 1936.

The Sedition Act (No.41 of 1936), repealed under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act (No.53 of 1960),⁵ is a very interesting enactment if only for attempts made to make it watertight. The Bill was introduced in the House on the same day as the Native Preachers Bill which was withdrawn after the first reading. The Native Preacher Bill was withdrawn most likely because, in the absence of legislation against sedition, it would have left loopholes which seditious elements could exploit. As a corollary, the Sedition Bill absorbed the Preachers Bill in its entirety and went further to close whatever loopholes the Preachers Bill could have left unsealed. In the words of V.A. Lewis, the Minister of Justice and Defence,

Most of the other objects aimed at under the Preachers Bill can be met under clause 9 of the Sedition Bill⁷, because any person who utters any seditious words, and therefore is preaching sedition, can be punished, and under our definition of seditious, I think we meet most of the evils that were aimed at in the Native Preachers Bill.⁶

While this paper cannot resist laying claim to impartiality the sanction to make moral judgements cannot be denied to it. It is very difficult, if not downright impossible, to examine fully the contents and implications of this legislation without drawing moral judgements. Even to say that the prevailing circumstances demanded such a measure is to make a moral judgement because the legislators claimed their target was immoral. The fears of the legislators have been mentioned and the reasons why there were those fears. The ascendant of the two communities in Rhodesia, sought to

1 The Shamva Mine Strike of 1927 had almost the same significance in Southern Rhodesia as the Copperbelt Disturbances had north of the Zambezi.

2 NAR, S138/55, Com. Police to Secr. Law Dept., 8 Feb. 1932.

3 Debates, XVI, I, 1030.

4 Southern Rhodesia Gov[ernment] Notice No.644, 20 Oct. 1933.

5 Law and Order (Maintenance) Act. No.53 (1960).

6 Debates, XVI, I, 1026, 23 Apr. 1936.

maintain its position by keeping the other below.

The Sedition Act of 1936 is the first of a string of legislative measures the arbitrary nature of which can only equal the remorselessness of the legislators. The Bill was introduced

to suppress seditious utterances, newspapers, books, pictures, gramophone records and offensive ceremonies.

Its definition of 'publication' reads:

any book, paper, newspaper, pamphlet, magazine, periodical, letterpress, writing, print, picture, engraving, lithograph, photograph, painting, drawing or other similar representation, and any gramophone record or other similar mechanical means of reproducing speech.

Protagonists of the freedom of expression would be overreaching themselves if they were to quarrel with the all-embracing nature of this definition since each article on the list could be deliberately used for subversive purposes. It is the definition of 'sedition' with which they should quarrel - as did some of the participants in the debate on the Bill.

Sub-section (a) of Section 2 of the Principal Act defines 'seditious intention' as an intention

to bring His Majesty or the Governor of the Colony in person into hatred or contempt.

A just criticism of the Governor (he was not infallible), whether published in a newspaper or written privately could be punishable under this sub-section.

Sub-section (b) of the same section reads:

to excite disaffection against His Majesty or the Governor in person or the Government or constitution of the Colony as by law established or the administration of justice therein.

To 'excite disaffection' against 'the administration of justice' could mean writing to a newspaper protesting against the injustice in the Industrial Conciliation Act (1934) and to excite disaffection against the constitution could mean writing to a newspaper protesting against the absence of black representation in Parliament - all of which an unauthoritarian government would not have taken as serious.

Sub-section (e) of the same section betrays the fears of a minority whose dominance over the majority hinges on the subservience of the latter. If one were to

engender or promote feelings of hostility between the European inhabitants of the Colony on the one hand and any other section of the inhabitants of the Colony on the other hand ...

he would be guilty of an offence and charged under this sub-section, literature which 'engendered' any feelings of hostility between Europeans and others would be suppressed. The selectivity of this sub-section, i.e. 'the European inhabitants of the Colony on the one hand', was aimed against letters to the press, normally by Africans, challenging the morality of white dominance.

To show that the 'Government has been misled or mistaken in any

[my emphasis] measure 'was punishable under sub-section (e)(i). Do not criticise, was the message, even if the 'measure' unjustly wounded you. Perhaps the Southern Rhodesian Government, like the Queen, could do no wrong.

Under Section 3 the Governor could publish an order in the Gazette prohibiting the importation of all literature 'which he deems to be seditious - in effect what the Huggins Government deemed to be seditious. No subsequent issues of the newspaper or magazine would be imported provided at the next session of Parliament the Minister concerned presented the offensive issues of the magazine or newspaper before Parliament for its approval of a resumption in importation. Naturally, they would disapprove any further importation irrespective of the tone of subsequent issues. Customs officials were given the right to search and detain any packages they suspected to contain seditious literature.

Section 5 gave the Postmaster-General the right to open any packages or letter suspected to contain seditious material, thus sealing the loop-hole in the Post Office Ordinance of 1922.

Section 6 gave permission to the appropriate officials to seize and detain literature suspected seditious. The addressee could forfeit the publications unless within thirty days of being notified of the seizure he produced evidence or proved before the High Court that such literature was not seditious.

Section 7 dealt with a very well-known side of the problem, i.e. that most objectionable literature came through the agency of educated foreigners residing in the country. Any foreigner convicted by the High Court under this act and deemed an undesirable immigrant of the Colony would be removed from the Colony or be locked up pending deportation. There could be no appeal against deportation except if the convicted had lived in the Colony for seven years and had not within those seven years, been convicted under this Act. This section reinforced the Immigrants Regulation Ordinance of 1914 and effectively removed the vacillation characteristic of the Malikongwa incident.

Under Section 8, any person who utters any seditious words 'or writes, prepares, produces, prints, publishes, imports, sells, offers for sale or distributes any seditious publication' or obstructs police engaged in searching a package, would be guilty of an offence, and liable to a fine of £100 or to a year's imprisonment or both.

To make a lengthy comment on the contents and implications of this legislative measure is to imply that the message was unclear. The Africans were told in this enactment to avoid criticism of the system under which they were living. When Mnyanda says the bill was 'camouflaged so that [it] might not appear to be differential legislation', before the eyes of the Imperial Government, he is examining the measure in a vacuum, ignoring the Parliamentary debates on the Bill and the fact that this was not the first differential legislation. It was a 'Native Bill' because the legislators said so. The reserved clauses in the 1923 Constitution had not prevented the passing of nakedly discriminatory bills like the Land Apportionment, The Maize Control, and The Industrial Conciliation bills.¹ If the British Government did not lift a finger

¹ Perhaps there has been more than necessary comment on Britain's failure to make use of the clauses in the 1923 Constitution to prevent discriminatory legislation against the Africans. That the Imperial Government did not use these clauses is to be ascribed less to inability than to the British Government's determination to leave white Rhodesians to deal with any internal (cont. next page)

to rescue the Africans from such legislation it was even less likely to rescue them from the Sedition Act. Quite clearly, the Parliament of Southern Rhodesia passed the bill as a 'Native Bill'. The speech by the Minister of Justice and Defence has been partly quoted at the beginning of this paper and shows the target of the Bill, and enough has been quoted from Debates and confidential correspondence to show that the Bill was primarily aimed at the Africans.

Armed with this measure, the Government proceeded to deal with all publications deemed undesirable. On 18th December, 1936, a Government Notice No.935 (1936) had the following Watch Tower publications banned under Section 3 of the Sedition Act: The Kingdom, Beyond the Grave, The Final War, Angels, Jehovah, Righteous Ruler, Supremacy, Deliverance, The Harp of God, Government, Where are the Dead?, Creation, Riches, Preparation¹ and this notice remained in force until fourteen years later.

This is not to suggest that the campaign against seditious literature was over. The period following the passing of the Bill still saw the emergence of several churches 'in Zion', most of them based in South Africa and the United States. As late as September, 1937, Bullock was writing to the Staff Officer, B.S.A.P. in the following vein:

I am under the impression that the gentleman whose photograph appears on the certificate [presumably a preacher's certificate] is 'Judge' F.F. Rutherford, the author of a number of books [including the fourteen publications banned under Notice No.935] published by the Watch Tower and Bible Tract Society, ... If this impression is correct it would appear probable that the various separatist 'Churches in Zion' are connected with the main American organization for disseminating propaganda, and for the distribution of the Society's literature.²

This could mean that some literature of 'objectionable character' could still be found in circulation, having escaped the eyes of the customs officers and the Postmaster-General. However watertight legislation might be it does not stamp out crime once and for all.

To be noted is the fact that this legislation was especially aimed at literature imported into the country. The five sections (3-7) empowering officials to deal with such literature and crimes connected with it deal specifically with imported literature. That the Huggins Government had to pass the Libel Act in 1939 meant that the Sedition Act had left defamation and libel untouched. The fact that on one occasion the authorities took the unusual step of having a newspaper editor dismissed for publishing a defamatory letter meant that they had had no legislation to deal with defamation.

In January 1937, an African, simply named as 'Native Kilfort', submitted a 'defamatory' letter to the Bantu Mirror for publication. It is not clear whether the Provincial Native Commissioner saw the letter

(cont. from last page)

situation as they saw fit. At a time when Britain was withdrawing from her colonial commitments - by giving dominion status - it was unlikely that she would intervene in Rhodesia on matters purely internal.

1 Gov. Notice No.935 (1936).

2 S1542/M/8/D, C.N.C. to Staff Officer, 4 Sept. 1937.

or not before publication. The letter was definitely published in the Archives for it came to the notice of the Department of Justice, who raised the matter with Bullock. The latter in turn raised the matter with the Superintendent of Natives (Bulawayo),¹ who in turn interviewed Hadfield. The contents of the interview are unknown but what probably took place is revealed in Bullock's letter to the Department of Justice, dated January 11, 1937.

I return your papers [he wrote] together with a report from the Superintendent of Natives, Bulawayo, and a letter from Mr Hadfield, from which it will be seen that the Native Editor who was responsible for the publication of the letter in question is under notice of dismissal as from the end of this month.²

When the continuance of the Government's annual subsidy to the Bantu Mirror depended, as Hadfield had put it, 'upon our good behaviour', Hadfield had no option but to dance to his master's voice. The Mirror was bound to curry favour with the Government for commercial considerations and thus its native editors must not "make Government view 'African newspapers' with disfavour".³ Criticism of the Government which the authorities saw as unforgivable resulted in a prompt dismissal of the editor. This was a case of direct Government interference in appointments to the newspaper management.

The significance of this incident lies less in the draconian action taken than in what had led to it - the publication of a defamatory letter. The loophole left in the Act of 1936 - if the authorities had meant to leave any - had now to be sealed. Under section 3 of the Libel Act (No. 41 of 1939),

Any person who publishes a defamatory libel shall be guilty of an offence and liable to imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years, or to a fine not exceeding five hundred pounds or to both.

Five hundred pounds or two years imprisonment appear excessive punishment but section 8 of the Act does not make matters any softer. No magistrate's court would have

jurisdiction in any case in which any person is charged with publishing a defamatory libel unless such case, after a preparatory examination has been duly taken therein, has been remitted for trial to such court by the Attorney-General.

The fact that the lower strata of the judicature were effectively prevented from dealing with this issue illuminates the gravity with which defamation was viewed.

Having examined the various forms of control Government exercised over what Africans read, it might be appropriate to have a brief look at the kind of stuff the authorities considered 'wholesome' and fit for Africans. It will be seen that this 'desirable' literature was almost always on the defensive - thus confirming the thesis of this paper: that Government control of 'African' literature was a defensive reaction, most times carried to absurd lengths, to ensure that the underdog lived in the

1 S1542/L11/16, C.N.C. to Super. Nat., 5 Jun. 1937.

2 L11/16, C.N.C. to Secr., Dept. of Justice, 11 Jun. 1937.

3 Mnyanda, In Search of Truth, 121.

illusion that the shape of the social system had no negative implications on his development. The Bantu Mirror is singled out in this instance for several reasons. It had the largest circulation (1500 weekly and 4000 for its monthly issues)¹ among the very few 'African' papers in the period under review; its connections with the Government, already revealed, made it the link between Government and the Africans (The Native Department bought and supplied copies of the paper to each African teacher and agricultural demonstrator in the country).²

What therefore follows can be taken as the 'wholesome literature' the authorities considered desirable for Africans.

The Mirror's view on segregation and African development were Hugginsism and Carbuttism newspaper print. The paper reminded the Africans that

... the raising of a race is a slow and difficult business ...
To build too quickly means that the house will fall.³

Answering African criticisms that segregation was in the interests of the European, the paper defended segregation. It 'has been applied for the benefit of Africans. It is not all one-sided'.⁴ The paper's comment on the Land Apportionment is very interesting and will be quoted at length:

Our rulers in Great Britain, (the paper explained) have learned that unless backward races receive protection they are apt to be submerged by the more advanced and progressive colonising race. For a very long time past, therefore, they have insisted, when granting a charter or a constitution to a country, that Adequate Reserve shall be set aside for the Natives of the territory. The simple dictionary meaning of segregation is - to separate from others. We do not contend that these Reserves are always adequate, though they appeared to the Imperial Government to be so at the time. But look at the word - Reserves, - i.e. reserved for the Natives, the land is segregated, set apart, for the Natives, and the Whites are segregated from these Reserves. Only madmen would contend that the Imperial Government was wrong in insisting on these reservations.⁵

This is in 1937, when the universal complaints among the Africans were: that the Europeans had taken the best parts of the country; that the reserves were inadequate; that the African Purchase land was too small compared with that of the European. The simple fact that the apportionment was the exclusive work of the settler Government was drowned by references to 'the Imperial Government' and 'our rulers in Great Britain'. An even stronger comment was forthcoming. The paper contended that

Some of the things [segregatory legislation] were done very long ago and our present rulers had nothing to do with them. What we claim and what we believe is that these segregatory measures were about the best that could be taken when they took place ...⁶

1 L11, Secr. Nat. Aff. to Chief Secr., (Nairobi), 1 Jul. 1939.

2 These copies were supplied free.

3 Bantu Mirror, editorial, 26 Jun. 1937.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 3 Jul. 1937.

6 Ibid., 17 Jul. 1937.

If these segregatory measures were intolerable to 'our present rulers' there was nothing that could prevent them from removing them. The measures were therefore in the interests of 'our present rulers' and were a hardship to the Africans at whom this defensive explanation was aimed.

In defence of white political domination over the Africans, the paper was quite blunt:

... there will for a time, perhaps a good while be some limit placed upon the political rights of Africans that is not placed upon European who fully understood and appreciate the democratic method,¹

and

The Bantu Mirror certainly does not prefer the autocratic method, but thinks that, the Natives, having for generations been accustomed to the autocratic method under their chiefs, may find it difficult to fully understand and adopt the democratic method.²

This kind of literature, in defence of the status quo, is what Bowles was to call 'sound and wholesome literature for Africans', a literature that was telling Africans that they would never get what they were asking for or be what they so earnestly wanted to be. It is not surprising that educated Africans found themselves writing to South African newspapers, as Hadfield pointed out.

CONCLUSION

In a colonial situation in which the socio-economic stratifications coincide with the racial stratification, the conflict of socio-economic interests between the racial strata is as inevitable as the existence of the racial strata is a fact. Naturally the ascendant stratum will be as interested in the maintenance of the status quo as the depressed stratum will be interested in having the system changed to ameliorate its own position.

In southern Rhodesia, the white community held the reins of power and used them in an attempt to keep the African pliant. Africans had to be kept in the dark regarding their political, economic, and social needs or they had, if they knew these, to be prevented from showing that their hardships demanded remedy. To effect this, the Government imposed strict censorship on news media meant for Africans, took legislative steps to prohibit foreign literature aimed at Africans from being imported, took draconian action against Africans in any way connected with 'seditious literature', sometimes directly interfered with appointments to newspaper managements, and turned an independent newspaper company into its own organ by feeding it with an annual subsidy. Most important, as this paper has tried to illustrate, the authorities were, almost habitually, reacting to situations they had not been prepared to meet and this tended to make them take such fright that they tended to be perhaps too harsh.

1 Ibid., 18 Sept. 1937.

2 Ibid., 30 Oct. 1937.



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