

AFRICA NEWS

A Weekly Digest of African Affairs



Too Many Decibels

Brian Wright, 3, blocks his ears as the choir sings during the installation ceremonies of the Most Rev. Anthony M. Pilla at St. John Cathedral. Brian is the grandson of Willie Wright, a soloist in the choir. UPI Photo

ve festivities at the Norfolk.

Another theory revolves around the Norfolk's public image as a colonial symbol still linked to the white expatriate community, which maintains considerable influence in this former British colony. The story of another

mass killing at the hotel almost sixty years ago is well-known among Kenyans. Some seven thousand Kenyans gathered then to protest the imprisonment of the country's first major nationalist leader, Harry Thuku. One of the women present, Mary Wanjiru,

challenged the men to prove they were not afraid to confront the colonialists. Police as well as other whites opened fire on the crowd from the Norfolk slaying 21 of the demonstrators, including Wanjiru.

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Alabama Death Penalty Opposed By SCLC

The following statement has been released by Joseph E. Lowery, national president, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and John Nettles, Alabama State president, SCLC:

MONTGOMERY, AL.—The recent action of the Supreme Court of the State of Alabama affirming the death penalty is disappointing and disconcerting. We condemn capital punishment. It is cruel and inhuman by nature; irreversible in implementation; and discriminates against the poor and non-white in administration.

The legalized sanction of the killing of a human being as a means of resolving social problems sets an example of violence that has deadly reverberations throughout our imperiled civilization. The survival of the world is sorely threatened by violence, and unless we put an end to violence, violence will put an end to us. The death penalty denies the sacredness of human life, while offering no proven deterrence to crime.

We find especially disappointing, the opinion of Justice Adams that we must no longer fear racial discrimination in the imposition of the death penalty. We strongly refute such an assertion. While we find it somewhat painful to repudiate the opinion of one we love and respect and who has attained a high office he deserves, nevertheless, our responsibility to conscience, and our calling as advocates of the poor and as lovers of justice demand that we cry out against that which denies the moral imperatives of our faith and ignores the lessons of history.

The indisputable fact is that in Alabama the decision to seek the death

penalty in criminal cases is still (as always) and all-white decision. The district attorneys who make the decision, in all 38 judicial circuits in Alabama are white! The indisputable fact is that while blacks comprise approximately 25 per cent of the population, sixty per cent of the inmates on death row are black. The indisputable fact is that the presiding officer in each case to be tried under the death penalty structure, in Alabama, will be white! Every circuit judge who tries criminal cases in Alabama is white! (And always has been). There is only one circuit judge in Alabama who is black and he tries only cases related to domestic affairs.

In virtually every case in Alabama involving a black defendant (and a white alleged victim), the district attorney "strikes" the available blacks from jury service.

When Tommie Lee Hines was tried recently in Birmingham (where Mr. Adams was Hines' attorney), the district attorney used every single challenge afforded him by law to "strike" blacks from the jury. As a result, only one black juror served on the case in spite of the fact that one of three residents in the community is black.

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ZIMBABWE Government Press To Run Newspapers

SALISBURY [AN] When mining magnate Cecil Rhodes established a colonial outpost here in 1890, one of his first moves was to start a newspaper for the community of whites he brought up from South Africa.

Ninety years later, in his eighth month as prime minister of independent Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe has brought an end to white South African control of this country's press. Last week the government purchased controlling interest in the nation's only newspaper chain from South Africa's newspaper giant, the Argus Company.

The move was not unexpected. At the time of independence, says minister of Information Nathan Shamuyarira, the government "had informed the Argus Company that Zimbabwe was no longer the colonial appendage of South Africa that Rhodesia was, and that ownership and management of our press by a South African company was totally unacceptable. It was an infringement upon our national independence, and in view of South Africa's hostility toward our new government, it could be a security risk."

Even since independence, the press had continued to cater to the readership of Zimbabwe's minority white population. On the day of the press acquisition, for example, the *Herald* in Salisbury printed a front-page story on the courtship of Diana Spencer by Britain's Prince Charles. And on several occasions in the past few months, the press has come under strong government criticism for exaggerated, and irresponsible scare stories on internal political conflict.

It took some time, however, to work out the mechanism for a takeover. British financier Tiny Rowland, whose Lonrho company has wide-ranging investments in South Africa and several black African countries, offered to invest more than \$7 million in a daily newspaper that would be loyal to the government.

But Rowland's investments in South Africa, his reputation as a wheeler-dealer, and his previous ties with Mugabe rival, Home Affairs Minister Joshua Nkomo, made that offer an unattractive one.

In the arrangement decided upon, Zimbabwe bought the South African-held shares with a grant of \$8 million from the government of Nigeria, to which Mugabe made an official visit in December. The shares will be transferred to the Zimbabwean Mass Media Trust, a government-created board which will run the Argus papers free from direct state control.

Black editors are expected to replace the currently all-white senior editorial staff. Though black journalists are still few in number, there is already a Union of Zimbabwean Journalists which has welcomed the takeover.

The country's newspapers had not enjoyed much freedom of press under the former white-minority regime, which imposed strict censorship. But the new move has aroused fears that white South African influence may now be replaced by strict government-controlled newspapers.

Leader's of Zimbabwe's minority political parties have condemned the government's acquisition, with former prime minister Ian Smith calling the move yet another step toward a one-party state. The most outspoken criticism, however, has come from Joshua

Nkomo, leader of the minority party in the coalition government. Home Affairs Minister Nkomo said the government's press purchase was tragic, and expressed surprise that Nigeria, with probably the freest press in Africa, would give money to a purchase that will result in a muzzled press in Zimbabwe.

Nkomo is particularly bitter because he and his party are for the most part frozen out of news programs on state-run radio and television broadcasts, which instead concentrate on the activities of Mugabe's ZANU party. The Nkomo criticism followed by a ministry of information spokesman's comment terming it "reactionary, nonsensical and hysterical," poses a new threat to reconciliation between Nkomo's and Mugabe's parties. After increased tension last year, a joint Central Committee meeting held on December 19 had brought an encouraging note of reconciliation.

Mugabe's party still argues that the interest of the Zimbabwean masses will be best represented without involvement of private capital in the control of key newspapers, and maintains that the trust board will include fair representation of minority parties. Information minister Shamuyarira, a former journalist with a Ph.D. in political science from Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School, says the government does not want to stifle criticism, but will insist that the media reflect more accurately Zimbabwean reality and an independent African perspective.

KENYA Hotel Bombing Still A Mystery

NAIROBI [AN] The Norfolk Hotel bombing here on New Year's eve has presented Kenya with one of the more baffling and shocking incidents in its recent history. The explosion, which rocked the one-time colonial gathering place, has left at least fifteen people dead, 85 injured (mostly foreigners) and many questions unanswered.

The alleged bomber, known here as the "Maltese Falcon," is said to have flown out of the country hours before the fatal blast. Kenyan police, working with the Western-based Interpol police agency, first identified him as Muhammad Akhila, then as Muradi Aksali, an "Arab terrorist" traveling on a forged Maltese passport, and finally as Qaddura Mohammad Abd-el-Hamid, a Moroccan national traveling on a forged Maltese passport.

The Kenyan government says he checked into the hotel on December 23 and was assigned Room 203. He requested instead Room 7, the source of the blast. He left the hotel about 11 a.m. on December 31 and did not return.

The mid-evening explosion was so powerful that thirteen people in the dining hall directly under Room 7 were killed instantly. Two others died later at the Nairobi hospital, and 24 people are still undergoing hospital treatment, three of them in intensive care.

The bomb totally destroyed the two-floor unit of thirteen luxury double bedrooms, a conference complex and a 150-seat restaurant below, and sent fire raging through the hotel complex.

Questions seemed to surround the incident almost from the moment of the blast. Nearby observers reported sighting a plane (some said two) in the skies above the hotel minutes before the explosion. This sparked reports in the international press of aerial sabotage. Strongly denied by Police Commissioner

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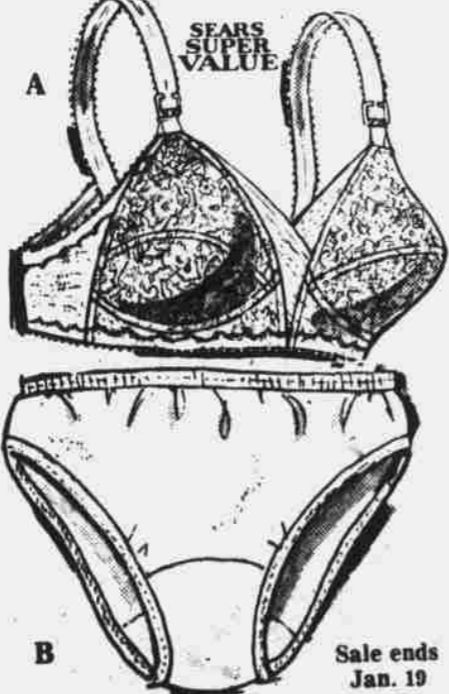
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