

2170/11/2

I refer to your letter from Rudolph Benecke (Spectator, 27th November) in which he quotes your article of the 18th September by Randolph Vigne, an article in which you clearly associated yourself and your paper with the views and policies of Vigne.

Mr. Benecke points out that the friends and colleagues of Vigne have admitted in the law-courts of South Africa that Vigne was a saboteur, that he advocated the use of violence and that by supporting Vigne you yourselves are supporters of sabotage and violence. Mr. Benecke goes on to suggest that, as Vigne's guilt has been legally proved, you dissociate yourself from his views.

Your reply is interesting. I quote '... We have no intention of dissociating ourselves from Mr. Vigne's article, nor of doubting his word. Perhaps Mr. Benecke would not doubt it either if he had other sources than what is said in the South African courts.'

The facts are therefore irrefutable. You believe the word of Vigne but not that of the South African law-courts.

As an Englishwoman, married to a professor of law at one of South Africa's principal universities, who was himself a founder member of the South African Liberal party, and one moreover who has known personally Randolph Vigne, Neville Rubin, John Lang and others of these gentry who have incited students and other idealistic young people to violence and then slunk to safety out of the country, leaving them to face alone the consequences of their crimes, I ask you to state publicly in the pages of your paper, the concise and irrefutable proof which causes you to believe, (as you so clearly state that you do believe) the word of Vigne rather than that of the South African courts of law.

You refer ~~to~~ Mr. Benecke to your article headed 'Torture and South Africa'. This article makes exciting reading but again is based, so far as the reader is able to ascertain, on the word of Vigne and other such traitors, saboteurs and cowards whose own self-interest is obviously best served by blackening the name of the South African courts of law.

If you yourself are unable to visit South Africa or send reliable emissaries to find out what is really happening in this country, I suggest that you refrain from making slanderous statements such as those I have quoted from your reply (27th November) to Mr. Benecke. Alternatively, I can readily supply you with a list of eminent British and American lawyers who have ~~visited South~~ visited South Africa within the last ten years whose word you would perhaps be prepared to consider as well as that of Mr. Vigne and his friends.

One final point emerges. In your article 'Torture and South Africa', the 'facts' of which are based entirely on allegations and dubious interpretation of events, (when prisoners escape from Dartmoor or Winson Green prisons, is this too because of torture inflicted on them by those who hold them in custody, or does this happen only in South Africa?), you go on to say, (again I quote your text) 'This is a matter which South Africans themselves can perfectly well put right.'

Supposing it to be true, how can South Africans put it right? What more can legally be done than has already been done? No-one can be more bitterly opposed to the Ninety-Day Bill and certain other legislations of the Nationalist government than the official opposition and vast numbers of ordinary South Africans. I do not know to what extent you yourselves are prepared to accept the word of Hansard, but for those of us who do, its pages for the last fifteen years speak for themselves.

If however, you find yourselves unable to believe this official Parliamentary record, I would be glad if you would provide us with a blue-print for 'putting matters right perfectly well.' And while you are about it I suggest that you send copies of it to Ghana, the Congo, Zanzibar, Kenya, Ceylon, Algeria, Russia and Communist China. They too might find it useful.

Ruth Chaudhry Pinn