

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

JS-12
Kenya's Threatened Security

P.O. Box 5113
Nairobi, Kenya
29 Feb 64

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New York 17, New York

Dear Mr. Nolte:

The crises of revolution and mutiny that jarred East Africa have now subsided, leaving behind a badly shaken Kenya Government, surprised by the swiftness of the events and worried about the state of its national security. Its concern is valid, for after barely two months of independence, the stability of the country is in grave danger.

The biggest threat to Kenya's security is the general unrest among her people, stemming from unemployment, landlessness and unfulfilled expectations.

The decline in industrial employment began after the Lancaster House Conference in 1960 when, in a wave of dismay and fear at the prospects of an African Kenya, European business confidence plunged. (See JS-6). Foreign capital looked elsewhere and local funds left the country, with the result that the "Total Number of Persons Reported in Employment" dropped from 622,150 in June 1960 to an estimated 500,000 at the end of 1963.

But it is the less apparent underemployment (or "concealed unemployment" as the important Government Sessional Paper No.10 of 1959/60 called it) in the African subsistence farming areas that causes the greatest number of jobless. Traditionally, the women worked the land, leaving the men free to protect them against raiding neighbours or to go on raids themselves. Today, the men leave the reserves to find work or stay there only part of the year to cultivate their land and then look for jobs elsewhere. Their constant movement in and out of the African agricultural areas makes an accurate unemployment figure impossible, and, although the Government says bravely that there are only "70,000 to 100,000" out of work, the actual number is far, far higher. To make matters worse, the results of the 1962 census show that this indeterminate number is swollen annually by the 65,000 who leave school. (See JS-9).

Many thousands of the unemployed, mostly Kikuyus, wander through the European farming areas in the Rift Valley Region, looking for work. Others, after being laid off because of the cut-back in European farming, simply refuse to leave their employer's

property. Having seen their tribesmen get European land through the Settlement Schemes, they are convinced that if they stay where they are, the farms will eventually be divided amongst them. They make farming uncomfortable and increasingly unprofitable by thefts, by harassment, and by weakening the already shaky discipline of the men still working. The problem is large; a senior police official estimates that there are some 250,000 Kikuyus, employed and unemployed, in the Rift Valley, with more seeping in all the time from the crowded Central Region.

As in other countries, unemployment is most concentrated in the cities; people from the rural areas flock to Nairobi and Mombasa, drawn by the higher wages there. A few are lucky enough to find work, but most join the thousands of jobless who came before them, some of whom have turned to crime, others of whom sit about, idle and bitter, ready to follow any leader or doctrine that promises them a better situation.

The ruling Kanu (Kenya African National Union) Government must take some blame for these feelings of discontent, for, during the prolonged period of electioneering before one party took charge of the country, many of its politicians promised their constituents the moon. Now, after Independence, people feel let down with a bump. They want to know what happened to the free medical care, the free education, the end of foreign economic domination. They see Europeans and Asians living in the same houses with the same servants and the same big cars, protected, they think, by a Government elected to help Africans, not foreigners. They see their Ministers jolling in the back of glistening new chauffeur-driven Mercedes and suspect that the "Uhuru" benefits stop right there. The most vocal dissatisfaction comes from the party Youth Wings, groups of young men (from 16 to 35) organized by politicians to act as their ushers at rallies, as their vote collectors, or, often, as their strong-arm men. Although the Kanu Constitution says that the Youth Wings should come under the supervision of Kanu's Organizing Secretary, in practice, there is no central control; each Kanu branch has its own youth group. This lack of organization is most obvious in Nairobi, the party's headquarters, where there are two, one supporting Oginga Odinga (the Minister for Home Affairs), the other Tom Mboya (the Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs). Promises of pay, prestige, and overseas education lured many into the Youth Wings, but now that the campaigning is over, the daily three shillings wage has gone with the free uniforms and the sense of importance and few of the youths have received scholarships. They feel neglected and are dangerously sullen.

Cabinet members have told me that the Kenyatta Government knows the people are agitated and realizes that the solution to the underlying problem of unemployment is a flourishing economy. While admitting, they say, that this requires long-term planning, the Government is convinced that immediate corrective measures are needed first. Therefore, it has announced a series of crash programs

to provide, as the Minister for Labor says, "A breathing period during which investment will be attracted to the country." The initial one seems to have been part propaganda-- to give the people hope-- and part genuine program. It is a £100 million, five-year agricultural development scheme which the Minister for Agriculture claims will employ all the available labor in less than two years. It is, in outline, a laudable idea, but to make it work the Government must first find an extra £100 million.

Next, the Government published a "National Youth Service" plan which, according to the official release, would initially enlist 3,000 youths into six regional units of 500 for, "work on projects of national importance, such as roads, dams, irrigation schemes, etc. and to take part in courses of instruction" Later, if successful, the units will be expanded. Again, the idea is good, but the execution questionable: the Minister for Labor admits that it will be "some little time" before the Service will be in operation. In further attempts to find jobs for the youth, the Government said it would take 500 into the police force and 2000 into the army. Unfortunately, the numbers are so small that the measures will have little real effect on the morale of the youths or on unemployment.

Two weeks later, the Government, "in acceptance of the fact that the unemployment problem has now become so serious as to constitute a national emergency", made public an agreement between itself, the Federation of Kenya Employers and the Kenya Federation of Labour. Private industry (including farmers) and the Government agreed to increase their work forces by 10% and 15% respectively while guaranteeing that there would be no lay-offs or, in the case of industry, lock-outs, for twelve months. The Unions promised that they would accept a wage freeze for this period and said that they would not call any strikes or go-slow actions. They also agreed to the establishment of an Industrial Court, the awards of which will be binding in all disputes which can not be solved through the normal negotiating process. Finally, the three parties stipulated that they would form a committee within nine months, "to review the situation and make arrangements for a return to normal relations at the end of the twelve months period." Discreetly placed in the middle of the text is a paragraph which states that if the Unions or the Employers do not abide by the terms of the pact, the Government will pass emergency legislation to make sure that they do.

Previously, both labor and management would have objected to such Government interference in their affairs, but, knowing the seriousness of the unemployment situation they realize that the pact is, in fact, job and stability insurance. They know too that disagreement would have done them no good; the Government simply would have passed a law without their advice that could have been far harsher.

Unemployment, although difficult to measure, is at least easy

to see, one has merely to drive through any populated area. It is more difficult to spot the subversion that can turn the unrest of the jobless into a major security problem. The Zanzibar coup put the Government on its guard and made it realize that there were foreigners in Kenya about whom it really knew nothing. "Thirty Chinese were in the Kisumu Hotel in December. What were they doing there? We did not know and were worried", one Minister admitted to me. The mysterious Chinese have disappeared since then and the apprehensive Government has prevented several more from entering the country. In addition, it announced recently that the size of all foreign missions, save those of Commonwealth countries, would be restricted to ten people. (It is not yet clear how this will affect the U.S. Embassy, U.S.I.A. or A.I.D.). Although the Government will not say so directly, it appears that this move is directed against the Communists. Another Minister told me, leaving little question about the objects of his remark: "We are not blind to the actions of certain countries here." It is strange, then, that the same Government seems unconcerned about the numbers of students who have gone to Communist universities, some of whom may return to Kenya with the express purpose of unseating the very people who sent them.

One of the first targets of any attempted subversion would be tribal antagonisms. No matter what may be said officially about the unity of Kenya, tribalism is still a prime diversive force and, therefore, an important security consideration. The two largest tribes, the Kikuyu and the Luo, vie for top Government posts, while the Kalenjin tribes and the Masai angrily accuse the Kikuyu of usurping their land. In the background, providing a dismal continuo, the timeless feuding of the Turkana, the Samburu, and the other northern tribes continues without pause.

In organizing his Cabinet, Jomo Kenyatta clearly aimed for a tribal balance; there are 5 Kikuyus, 4 Luos, a Kisii, a Taita and so on. Speaking broadly, the Cabinet has split subsequently into two tribal groups; the Kikuyu, led by the Prime Minister, and the Luo, led by Oginga Odinga, who is now far more powerful than his tribesman Tom Mboya. Odinga, in the opinion of some experienced observers here, is himself a threat to security. He has used the large amounts of money he has received from the Russians (the police say that they have the numbers of checks sent him from the Russian Embassy in Tanganyika) and from the Red Chinese to build up the most effective personal political organization in Kenya. Of late, it is claimed, his money has won the allegiance of a large percentage of the Opposition members of Parliament who have defected to the ruling Kanu party, including Paul Ngei, the leader of the Wakamba. These moves suggest that Odinga is trying to gain power by constitutional means, yet the same observers think that if he fails in this way he will not hesitate to act unconstitutionally. They see his hand in the mutiny of the 11th Battalion of the Kenya Army, and suspect that, with Achieng Oneko, the Minister for Information and a fellow Luo, he persuaded a cashiered Army officer, ex-Lt. Owino, to stir up trouble in the Battalion.

Those who know him say that despite his financial indebtedness to the Communists, Odinga is his own boss, and puts his own interests high above Communism. Still, if he were to lead Kenya, it seems likely that his previous relationships with the East would scare off most of the investors who remained interested in Kenya, thus weakening her stability further.

But the Prime Minister has other worries beside Mr. Odinga. The border dispute with Somalia (See JS-3) remains no nearer solution than when he took office last June. Since then, in fact, because of the indiscriminate raids of Somali bandits known as "shifta", the two countries have actually come closer to open conflict. And although the Kenvatta Government declared a state of emergency in the area last December, sending units of the Kenya Army and extra police to repel the shifta, the raids continue without pause. It is difficult to understand what the Somali Government hopes to gain by encouraging them. Certainly, the immediate effect of the killings and thefts appears to be a souring of the accord that once existed between the Kenya Somalis and Somalia. The former boycotted Kenya's general election last May, but now their elders and chiefs have asked that elections be held next month. I do not think that they have lost their desire to unite with Somalia, rather, they believe that Kenya can provide the protection and development they need at the moment.

In more advanced countries, the Army and the Police could be expected to contain such a security threat as Somalia, but unfortunately, this is not so in Kenya. Here, the two forces are themselves security problems. The Army that the British left Kenya was already weak; it had only 3,500 men, its weapons were old, it had no artillery or air support, its pay was low (the base rate is \$14.70 per month), and its promotion slow. The mutiny of the 11th Battalion will make it weaker in two ways. First, this Battalion cannot be as efficient as the two others for a long time because the Prime Minister has removed its rebellious soldiers and substituted raw recruits. Second, if Uganda is any guide, there is bound to be a replacement of British officers by Africans who may be eager and able, but who simply do not have enough experience to do their jobs as well as their predecessors.

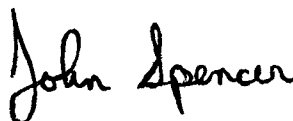
The 11,000 man Kenya Police Force, roughly as large as the Tanganyika and Uganda Police combined, appears to be more stable than the Army. Policemen get more pay (\$22.40 is the monthly base wage without allowances) and better housing than the soldiers and, significantly, far more Africans are in positions of authority; at the end of this year over 85% of the force will be African. Though as a result its morale and discipline are good, some senior police officers are concerned. One told me, "Our men clearly sympathized with the mutineers at first, but the minute we gave them something to do, they forgot about it. They're good chaps, actually, but their loyalty has never really been tested. This worries us."

I am told that it also worries the Kenyatta Government, which, since the revolution and the mutinies, realizes how fragile the post-colonial regimes in East Africa really are, however much popular support they may seem to command. In Kenya, the new Government came to power with a two-thirds majority, increased later by a series of desertions from the Opposition, which gave it, by the beginning of the year, 97 seats to its rival's 25. Because of this, it believed that the country was solidly behind it; now it is not sure. Like the majority of the new African countries, it had a serene confidence in its ability to play off East and West without losing its own sovereignty. But, after seeing Communist-trained revolutionaries in Zanzibar, after hearing Chou En-lai tell the Somalis that, "Revolutionary prospects are excellent throughout Africa", and after watching the Chinese move quietly around Kenya talking to Mau Mau leaders and other dissidents; it wonders. Right now, the Government cannot put much faith in the loyalty of the Army or the police, which means that, in effect, British troops are the real base of the Kenyatta administration's power. The Prime Minister has said, and repeated, that he wanted all British forces out of Kenya within a year after Independence, but, in spite of the political appeal of this stand, I question whether he can maintain it. Clearly it seems to me he must make some sort of military arrangement, either with Britain, with other Commonwealth countries, or with the Organization of African Unity, which will not leave Kenya dependent on her own Army or police alone.

To add to the Government's difficulties, there is a real chance that the steps it has taken to reduce unemployment, to provide the desired "breathing space", will not work. The measures to increase the labor force, even if administered in the most efficient way, can provide jobs for only a fraction of those out of work. Furthermore, in return for the European farmers' compliance, the Government promised to help them evict the unemployed who refuse to leave their farms. I question whether this is politically feasible. Even if it is, where do those ejected go without becoming a greater threat to security?

Perhaps this is too pessimistic. If Mr. Kenyatta can persuade the British to keep their troops here, there is a chance that he will get the "breathing space" he wants. The reassuring presence of the British Army would hearten the two groups Kenya needs most for a strong economy; the European farmers, most of whom are discouraged now and want to leave, and the foreign investors.

Sincerely,



John Spencer