

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

JBG-19
Carnegie Group, I

Makerere College
Kampala, Uganda
East Africa
22 May 1951

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 18, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The group of American professors, who came to East Africa to observe first hand the economic and sociological problems of the area, departed by air from Dar es Salaam on May 9th. I had accompanied them during some two months of travel through Uganda, Tanganyika and Kenya. A number of difficulties had been encountered en route (like the heaviest rains in thirty years) which caused some alterations in plans and prevented the visiting of several desirable spots. But I believe the members will all feel that in terms of new experience and knowledge the trip was successful.

From my own point of view the association was of course all to the good. After nine months of seeing East Africa through my own eyes it was valuable to be able to compare notes with the members. It was as though the faculty of a good university, with all the disciplines essential for appraisal of this area at this stage represented, had come here to exchange ideas and to constructively criticise my interpretations. In between helping the group to move around, and introducing them to a number of officials and friends, I was able to enjoy hearing a historian, a psychologist, an economist, and a professor of political science individually appraise the East African scene.

The party as you know was composed of Professor C. W. de Kiewiet, President-Elect of Rochester University, Professor M. K. Bennett, Director of the Food Research Institute, Stanford, Professor R. B. MacLeod, Department of Psychology, Cornell, and Professor Roland Young of the Department of Political Science, Northwestern. Professor de Kiewiet was the head of the party.

I was not, of course, near to each member of the party during all of his travels, and their observations were more extensive and more detailed than the odd journal notes which I made. But I do not think the members will mind my sketching an account of the portions of their observations in which I participated; and I trust they will forgive any errors of date or fact. All of our notes were recorded in hotels, rest houses, and on the roads, under conditions not always conducive to precision.

The group's first period of observation was in Kampala and vicinity from March 12th through March 17th. During this time some aspects of settled-community life were observed, and an itinerary was planned for the remainder of the month. This was

a 'settling-in' period, but in looking through my notes now I see a number of worth-while doings.

There was an informal and unplanned interview of Professor de Kiewiet with the manager of Barclays Bank, Kampala, where we learned that there was presently a shortage of silver coins because the natives prefer them to paper which will not stand burying in the packed earth of a mud hut floor; that this could not be due to Indian silversmiths grabbing the coins as they did the Victorian coinage (present shillings being token types of cupro-nickel); that the bank lends money to Africans at five per cent interest, less than the local loan-shark rate which sometimes runs more than 18 per cent; and that the bank had several thousand small savings accounts for natives.

Several medical authorities were conversed with, one of them provoking much thought by relating the low-protein diet of some natives to the philosophy of the objectives of Society: "...Certainly a lack of protein causes what we call lethargy, but is it not possible that this lower output of creative energy actually fits a man for life in a static, restricted tribal community...?" Some magistrate-level and high court doings were observed; there was a good look at the East African Institute of Social Research and an introduction of the members to native and government authorities at a party at the house of the Institute Director Dr. Audrey Richards; and at the Secretariat, Entebbe, with the advice of Mr. Cartland of the Office of the Chief Secretary, a limited advance itinerary was finalized.

At Jinja we saw some housing and town planning projects, and the work thus far on the hydro-electric scheme to dam the Nile and raise the level of Lake Victoria several feet. At the plantation operated by my friend Mr. Scott we saw coffee and rubber growing and processing; and at the big sugar plantation at Lugazi we were shown around by Indian Supervisors. We heard that the plantation land is held in mixed tenure: some freehold, some Crown land leased for 99, 49, and 29 years. We also were told by the local labor authority Mr. Walker that bonuses did not seem to do much good with native labor here - extra amounts of money or food doing little to stimulate productivity. He said that native values conceived but one reward worthy of increased effort, and that reward would always be leisure itself.

Routine doings in the town, like mailing packages, buying clothes, sending telegrams, put the members of the group into informative touch with Indian clerks, shopkeepers, and various minor officials - all of which helped to form a picture of the difficulties of doing business or administering inter-racially. And our relations with Seninde, a Baganda I had taken on at the suggestion of Fred Williams of the Resident's Office as a general factotum and interpreter, began to provide the group with a caricatured example of the uncomfortable and unattractive type of 'African Emergent' - the ex-tribesman taking over the white man's ways. Hiring Seninde proved to be one of the mistakes of my life, but there was a salvage of a few laughs.

There were a few visits to the headquarters of gombololo, or local, and saza, or county-level, chiefs - looking at their offices, courts, jails. This rounded out the first week of the group in East Africa. On the morning of Sunday 18th March we loaded the safari kit into my truck, the party into the rented Chevrolet, and drove southward along the west shore of Victoria Nyanza.

On the way down we had the experience of being invited in by an Indian bar proprietor, at Masaka, for a drink on the house. On arriving at Bukoba, across the Tanganyika border, we were greeted by the District Commissioner Tim Harris at the Lake Hotel. During the morning and early afternoon we were shown the hospital; and Professor Bennett, who was to remain in the town for the next few days, was taken round the area, shown through the District Office, and was introduced to a number of Protestant and Catholic missionaries.

While calling the first night at the house of the Medical Officer I happily ran into Hans Cory, a Tanganyika government anthropologist who was at Bukoba for the purpose of persuading the local natives to accept the institution of local (gombololo) councils as a means of popular representation. He had us over to the rest house next morning after breakfast, and gave us his views on theoretical versus applied anthropology; on the folkways of Tanganyika Africans and their effect on the "acceptance-speed" - how fast they could receive and digest the devices of democratic government; on the long history of (his) anthropological efforts before they were recognized by Government as being of any value. He concluded with the suggestion that it might be wise for some of our group to visit the Wasukuma or some other Tanganyika tribe, and observe the workings of a Western-Tribal synthesized native government.

The rest of the morning was filled with taking in the sights of the town, banana groves, dukas, and the lake shore. In the afternoon (March 19th) the group less professor Bennett, who was down for the moment with an intestinal bug which was to bother the party several times, drove south to Biharamulo.

(Seninde, our African Emergent, held up the group's departure because he had taken the car and driver off to fetch his kit and camp bed from the African hotel, because he had some letters to mail and some friends at the post office to say good bye to. He finally appeared, complete with tropical sun helmet and goldrimmed sun glasses, and the American scholars were then allowed to carry on with their trip. Unhappy, living by his wits, concerned mostly with the forms rather than the functions of the white society he was trying to emulate, he was demonstrably unlike our two Jaluo kit boys - irritating, unattractive, but I think representative of a type who could marshall the votes at the first Uganda general election. By now he had me completely defeated: he could listen with stolid tribesman's calm to my pleas, admonishment or shouted abuse - and then continue to do as he pleased. We didn't fire him out of

pure fear - that he would howl of injustice to his Baganda neighbors and take advantage of our American identity; but with some reason we could rationalize that it was worth 300 shillings a month just to have such a specimen close at hand...)

At Biharamulo the party was housed in the D. C. boma, the old German fort described in an earlier letter. With customary hospitality Ronald Smith, my good friend since a year ago at Oxford, threw his district open. We all were able to see and talk to his local paramount chief; and those especially interested were able to go through office records of trials, of local economic and agricultural doings, and the District Book. The Book is a compilation of all the important facts, containing chapters on administration, economics, and local anthropology. We walked around Biharamulo minor settled area, saw government and native housing, watched the tilling, maize grinding, cooking and beer-making.

We visited the local White Fathers mission and school, and the Native Authority school; and on the same day we had a lengthy chat with Ntare, paramount chief of the Wazinza, and his younger and more effective relative who, through action by the D.C., had recently been allotted half of the responsibilities of the chiefdom. (A chief's duties in Biharamulo are considered half temporal, the conduct of affairs among the living, and half spiritual, the conduct of relations with the spirits of ancestors and the gods; and the D.C. seen to it that Ntare would be left to deal with the more important side - the spiritual. The hope is that the younger sub-chief, less beer-sodden and less polygamous than Ntare, would prove more energetic.) When we talked with him, Ronald Smith interpreting, he did seem relatively bright and alert. He knew there was a United Nations, he had read about it in some Dar es Salaam leaflets; and he stood by with courteous dignity while Ntare presented the leader of the party of Americans with a beaded chief's cane. At the end of our interview, after one of us had told him there were over 150 million people in the United States, and I had added with an air of boast that this held true despite the noteworthy fact that American men were allowed only one wife each, the young sub-chief promptly countered: "Do you limit yourselves to one wife because you have fewer women (here he grinned and looked outside the window at Ntare's collection) or because you have more sense than we?"

We left Ntare's compound, with one demi-European style house, and a number of native huts - one of which was built over his father's grave as a widow's home for his mother - with a perhaps improved estimate of the distance Native Authority, here, would have to go before it could organize and control to any effective degree - on its own.

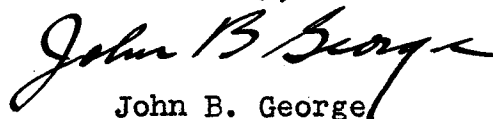
We made a short trip down to the lake shore - MacLeod having expressed a desire to see some bush and some game, and the others having approved - and I introduced the party to my eccentric friend Mr. Cooper, the game ranger. Several of the party were taken for a ride uncomfortably close to a school of Hippo - at one point right across the backs of two, submerged - in a small aluminum

outboard; and at night Cooper took MacLeod out in the same boat, got him within a few feet of a twelve foot crocodile, and set the brute flailing with its tail, lashing the midnight waters to foam, with an unfatal shot from his .3. Robbie said later that he could recommend the sport of jacklighting crocks to any one really interested in excitement. The highlight of this side-junket was some good shooting by de Kiewiet; he relieved the local meat shortage by killing two big antelope - a topi and a roan - with three well placed shots from my rifle. The walk Dick and I took to see these animals, some twenty miles, gave him a good look at the East African bush and a chance, again, to observe natives at the business they know best. (It was on this walk that we saw the game scouts eating the bee brood and honey).

Young told me that he thought the look at things at the District level had been excellent briefing for later high-level observations; and I got the impression that the group in general had felt the trip to Biharamulo had provided a valuable introduction to East Africa. In the first twelve days - we returned north from Biharamulo on March 25th - the party had had a good look at city and wilds: at Kampala where native authority is developed to a relatively high degree and where there are factories and big stores; and at Biharamulo where there are herds of zebra, loin-clothed natives carrying spears, and a Native Authority over 60,000 souls who had heard of, but did not know the location or function of, the United Nations Organization.

Back at Bukoba we spent the night of the 25th, and picked up Merrill Bennet, who had been interestingly filling his time with visits to the local native hospitals, administrative offices, and missions. He had also checked the local native food habits, looked in their kitchens, and had visited several of the banana plots and talked to the owners. The entire group went back north, but by a different route, farther west through Kigezi District, to Kampala. This leg of the journey, and the remainder into northern Uganda, Kenya, and Tanganyika again, will fill a couple of later newsletters.

Sincerely,



John B. George