

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

JBG-33
Mau Mau Notes, to Nov. 23

Thika, Kenya
25 November 1952

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The terrorism of Mau Mau continues. On Thursday (November 20) the Chief Secretary announced in the Legislative Council new measures to combat lawlessness. These include 1) the construction of new police stations at closer intervals to be manned on a permanent basis; 2) closer administration of Kikuyu areas through the establishment of special smaller stations whose officers, relieved of office work, would be able to make tours and maintain closer contact with the people; 3) high-level examination of secret intelligence services (Two days earlier, following a personal request from the Governor, Sir Percy Sillitoe, head of M.I. 5, Britain's secret service organization, arrived in Nairobi to advise on security and intelligence); 4) the procurement of an expert on psychological warfare to "root out the harm done" to Africans' minds; 5) the obligatory registration of all Kikuyu; 6) a proposed bill for the close control of independent schools; and 7) new regulations to bring immediate retribution to the inhabitants of limited areas in which Mau Mau crimes occur.

Under these new regulations, which this morning's East African Standard reports have now been sanctioned by the Governor and have become part of the Emergency Regulations, a District Officer may, when the inhabitants of an area have failed to take reasonable steps to prevent a crime or the escape of a criminal or have been furthering the objects of an unlawful society, mete out collective punishment by seizing cattle and vehicles and by closing shops, markets or dwelling places for as long as two weeks, or punish an individual resident laborer for the same offences.

Military and police are active. Before dawn on Friday (November 21) police and troops carried out one of the most intricate operations of the emergency. They raided an almost inaccessible illegal Kikuyu settlement - one of the birth-places of the Mau Mau movement and a suspected Mau Mau hideout - 9,000 feet up on the Mau Escarpment west of Naivasha. A few days earlier the government announced the capture of the personnel from a Mau Mau "court" as it was in session. This was the first concrete evidence the government had of courts sitting although notices purporting to come from them had been discovered earlier.

There is some evidence of increasing anti-Mau Mau feeling. Cleansing ceremonies¹ intended to purge their participants of the Mau Mau oath, initiated

1. The cleansing ritual varies somewhat in different Kikuyu areas, but generally follows this pattern. A small hole is dug in the ground and lined with banana leaves. A goat is killed and the semi-digested grass of the stomach, mixed with blood, certain leaves and herbs and parts of the dried genitalia of other animals, is poured into the lined hole. The mixture is stirred by an accepted witch doctor, and the individual to be cleansed squats opposite him across the hole. A wooden ladle or stick is lifted and placed, after the subject has repeated a special cleansing vow, on the subject's tongue. He then vomits, or merely gags, and thus coughs up his Mau Mau oath.

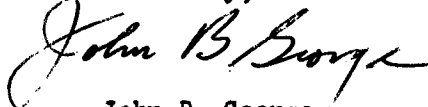
by Kikuyu elders and encouraged by the government, have been held throughout the Kikuyu area, and African anti-Mau Mau "resistance groups" have been formed in certain divisions. In Meru District 175 people - described as flooding the office - have confessed to the District Commissioner their connections with the Mau Mau.

But the violence goes on. On Wednesday (November 19) between fifteen and twenty Africans, at least four of whom were armed, carried out a daylight raid on a European farm about fifteen miles from Thompson's Falls - very similar to that which took place at another farm twenty miles away on the previous Friday, which I mentioned in my last letter. The same day in the Kiambu reserve just north of Nairobi a mundu mugo, an elderly African who had carried out a number of "cleansing" ceremonies and who intended to conduct a ceremony the following morning to absolve some 500 Africans of the Mau Mau oath, was slashed about the head when attacked by a party of Kikuyus with pangas. This should answer a big question regarding the validity of cleansing ceremonies. At news conferences in Nairobi I have heard newsmen repeatedly ask government spokesmen to commit themselves as to the effectiveness of the cleansing oath. Government officers seemed unsure, except for the Information Officer, Mr. Reiss, who claimed the oaths were effective. Certainly, when the witch doctor is accepted and sincere enough to perform the ritual properly, the patient considers himself morally and spiritually unbound of his Mau Mau oath. He realizes, though, that he is not rendered immune to physical revenge by Mau Mau adherents.

Saturday (November 22) the bodies of a headman and two tribal policemen were found slashed and mutilated in the Fort Hall area. And on the same night a gang of about six Kikuyus armed with pangas attacked an elderly couple, Commander and Dr. Meiklejohn in their farm house about seven miles from Thompson's Falls. Dr. Meiklejohn, although her left wrist was cut to the bone and she had been slashed about the face and body, drove to the Thompson's Falls police station. Commander Meiklejohn, who was found on the second floor where he had gone for his shotgun after the attack, died yesterday morning in the Thompson's Falls hospital, and his wife's condition is still reported as critical.

The Europeans have by no means regained their lost confidence. Obviously in affected areas no European living in an isolated farm house can consider himself thoroughly safe unless he has a weapon in his hand, evening and night. A gun ready at bedside is not enough. Getting through the mosquito net has been a fatal delay. The elderly Meiklejohn couple had hand weapons in the room with them but not under their napkins as they were dining. The matter is being treated with apparent calm this far north of Nairobi. Except for a good deal of police traffic on the roads business seems moving normally. The police, reinforced at points by civilian members of the Police Reserve, feel more ready than before to keep order. I feel that the situation is a little worse than a week ago.

Sincerely,



John B. George

1. A "white" witch-doctor who practices legally, curing instead of afflicting.