

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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Mau Mau This Year

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Dear Mr. Rogers:

Since my last letter about Kenya ("Dilemma in Kenya," December 20, 1952), the Colony has remained anything but quiet. There has been no general uprising, and only six more Europeans have been murdered. The actual violence has been predominantly intra-native and continues to be confined almost entirely to the Kikuyu tribe and the Kikuyu inhabited areas. The variant machinery for combating Mau Mau has been elaborated, with more troops and better organization as the Emergency settles into its sixth month. But only the most optimistic would say things are more hopeful now than a day, a week, or six months ago.

Inevitably great energies have been devoted to discussions and announcements of remedial action. Since the end of last year a single military "Co-ordinator" has officiated at the Governor's elbow in an attempt to integrate the police reserve, army and territorial units which have appeared to be all too autonomous. Several special advisory councils exist, the most pertinent of which is the Kenya Emergency Council, composed of selected official and unofficial members, including Mr. E.W. Mathu, a Kikuyu, Mr. I.E. Nathoo, an Indian Moslem, Sheriff Abdullah Salim, an Arab, Mr. A.B. Patell, an Indian, the two European unofficial members of Executive Council Mr. Michael Blundell and Mr. W.B. Havelock, and the Members for Law and Order, Agriculture, Finance and African Affairs. The meetings of this council are presided over by the Chief Secretary and are attended by the Co-ordinator. Charges of "interference" by London have been answered by the Colonial Secretary with assurance that Her Majesty's Government, while not relaxing ultimate control, has no intention of trying to manipulate "in detail" the emergency in Kenya.

New measures and powers have been announced. The death penalty can now be given to anyone convicted of administering the Mau Mau oath. In designated areas under the Emergency Regulations police officers and police may shoot after duly warning any suspected person who fails to halt.

The Government has assumed wide powers to control the movement and positioning of displaced Kikuyus, with the Member for Agriculture and Natural Resources as coordinator. European farmers have been given the right to evict suspected Kikuyu squatters, and labor transit camps have been set up by Government. Kikuyu continue to flow back into the reserves.

By the end of February 25,000 were moving or had moved - voluntarily or under compulsion - from the lower Rift Valley alone. About the same time several thousand were moving from Tanganyika where a registration program and screening had been instituted by Government and where rumors had arisen that Kikuyu once registered in Tanganyika would lose all land rights in their own reserves. When the evacuations are forceably accomplished, transportation is provided. Many of the volunteer repatriates are moving on foot, by bus, on bicycle and by railroad, with the railways in several cases crowded temporarily beyond capacity. The implications of the movement were recognized by the Governor who in mid-February announced that the influx of many thousands of Kikuyu might create "a horde of hungry men, women and children wandering around the country." He also said that they could "soon become desperate and swell the numbers of existing gangs and form new ones." On the suggestion of Mr. Mathu, an advisory committee on the movement of Kikuyu has been set up.

Further restrictions were invoked in early March on the movement and residence of all adult Kikuyu and Embu tribesmen in the Kikuyu Native Land Unit and other areas in the Central Province. They cannot leave, without a special permit, their home districts, or farm or forest areas where employed, and they cannot travel from one place to another in the Province except within towns or on such routes and at such hours as determined by the administration. In Nairobi Kikuyus must have a properly endorsed employment card showing they are currently employed, or a valid resident's pass. A program of photographic identification cards fiercely opposed by local bodies of natives has been instituted and is being enforced in the face of considerable resistance among Kikuyu outside the reserves.

Police activity has been intensified with one raid in a crowded native sector of Nairobi involving the surprise seizure and screening of 2,000 natives. More specific action has been taken in fixing the Colony's emergency manpower problems. A European Director of Manpower has been appointed and all Britains in the Colony, ages 18 to 35, are now liable to be called up for service in the Kenya Regiment, the Kenya Police Reserve or the Prisons Service. The small European community is feeling the pinch, with considerable complaint by Nairobi business houses that their men are being pulled out without regard for equal distribution of the load among various industries. Many men work in Nairobi at store counters or in offices wearing police reserve or army uniforms, ready for a call or to leave for routine patrol or security duty part time during the day or evening. Following the recent visit of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, more British troops have been flown to Kenya. These include about 1,200 men, mainly of the First Battalion of the Royal East Kent Regiment (The Buffs whom I remember admiringly from Burma) and the Headquarters elements of the 39th Infantry Brigade. The strength in the disaffected areas will thus be raised to two brigades, numerically equal to two American regiments. Recruitment and arming of native home guard units in the reserves is being undertaken, but is, of course, limited by uncertainties as to which native would remain loyal and which may already belong to the secret society.

The financing of the emergency has been discussed in Legislative Council and the press. In the middle of January another £750,000 was allotted for

the emergency, raising the total to £1,500,000 to date. The Member for Finance announced that the emergency was costing approximately £135,000 per month. These expenditures do not include expenses of moving the British troops; the £135,000 monthly total is made up primarily by Police, Kenya Regiment and related military claims. The Member feels the load can be carried for some time without an increase in taxes.

Considering the tremendous psychological damage that has resulted, the actual number of Europeans killed has been tiny. To date there have been only nine fatalities, the last of which occurred in early February. Numerous threats are outstanding, and several attempts have aborted, the farmers now being more alert and better armed. From the small number of white casualties a first onlooker could assume that race distinction has had little to do with the violence.

In part as a result of the above mentioned migrations of landless natives, the list of crimes in the native areas has lengthened fearfully. A steady volume of reports - of dead bodies found, of isolated huts burned, of eight men and three women killed during the Christmas holidays, of an Asian Constable shot in the back in a Nairobi crowd, of small police posts raided - has poured in. More recently the violences have shown an ominous quality of organization and direction. Raiding parties now exist in strengths of more than a hundred, well-directed and controlled, and by past standards very well armed with captured firearms. The two most significant raids yet performed occurred on a single day a week ago Thursday.

The most vindictive and savage was a raid by perhaps 500 terrorists directed at the homes and families of Africans loyal to the Government in the Uplands sector of the Kiambu District. The accounts of hackings of women, mutilations of children strain the Western reader's imagination, putting the raid, in which approximately one hundred women, children and old people were killed, in the category of the worst atrocities that a civil war could possibly produce. Eyewitnesses described how arms and legs were hacked off children while their mothers looked on, how pregnant women were disembowelled. The raid was unquestionably as much motivated by hatred, revenge and terrorism as by any idea of military gain. Yet there was a clear element of organization evident in timing and in the attempt to wipe out the families of all the tribesmen in a particular locality who had remained obedient to the Government. The East African Standard reporter naively (or to mislead) stated that the raiders had slipped up in that the young men of the attacked community, home guard members, were out on duty at the time and therefore were not killed. Anyone even reasonably informed would suspect that this timing was intentional; the raiders knew exactly who was present and who was not present, and had the armed younger men been at home, the raid most likely would have been postponed.

Though resulting in fewer deaths and given less space in the reporting, the second raid - or, rather, full-scale guerilla attack - was far more significant. Using trucks, a well-directed and well-armed party of terrorists stormed the large Naivasha police station. They drove into the compound, engaged the several African police with rifle fire, broke into the stores, and made off with 34 rifles, 16 light machine carbines, and some 20,000 rounds of ammunition. An undisclosed portion of the ammunition and a few of the arms were recovered later, but the remainder - the largest single

haul to date and enough to mount further guerilla attacks on anything short of military strong points - is now in terrorist hands. The scattered farm guards, the settlers with their revolvers, the few armed guards with supply trucks can now be overwhelmed. Even small military patrols could be attacked. In one area now a leader of terrorists, Dedan Kimathi, has had a minor Robin Hood legend built around him and has a £500 reward on his head. Recently he robbed an Indian truck, standing apart from his force of forty men and directing the robbery from a distance. With arms and equipment slipping in larger quantities into the hands of such better organized terrorists, the problem assumes military rather than police proportions.

Apart from the intensified arming and organization of terrorists there have been broad hints that the movement may be spreading. A great point was made recently of attaching "no political significance" to the panga attack by a lone African on two Europeans in Kisumu. This town, bordering Lake Victoria, is far west of the 200 mile circle touching Nairobi which has delimited the Mau Mau violence. The area around Kisumu is the home of the Jaluos tribe, next to the Kikuyu in terms of urbanization and European contact. Onoko, one of the defendants with Kenyatta at the Kapenguria trials is a Jaluos. Odede, recently interned, is also a Jaluos and was the Legislative Council representative of that area. He recently ceremonially enrobed Mr. D.N. Fritt, the Defense Counsel at the Kapenguria trials of Kenyatta and others, as a Kikuyu tribal elder before some 2,000 cheering Africans.

The reactions of Europeans to these further developments in the emergency have revealed greater cleavages within the European community. The utterances of the few African leaders who remained audienced have followed a predictable line.

On the African side, the new Acting President of the Kenya African Union, Mr. W.W.W. Awori, who replaced Mr. Walter Odede, recently interned, who replaced Mr. Kenyatta, earlier interned, has made several commitments to the press, the essence being that a better atmosphere needed to be created in Kenya. His method of creating this atmosphere would be to withdraw all troops from Kenya, disband African home guard units, restore "freedom" to the African press and allow African leaders to address public meetings. He was further described in the authoritative East African Standard as having said that the Mau Mau terrorists who had no other alternative but to resort to force because of social injustice would "disappear". He denied having had advance knowledge of Mau Mau prior to the emergency, a stand similar to that taken by other African political leaders, and an ignorance which could have been possible only through incredible naivete.

In an earlier letter I spoke of the "European dominated government," referring to the obvious European political predominance in the Colony. Since the Europeans here cannot fully agree on methods of handling the emergency, and since their government officials and political leaders are divided into three neighboring but boundaried camps, this needs some spelling out.

Administration of the Colony is handled in the main by Civil Servants, who are not allowed to vote or overtly participate in politics and whose local business operations and property ownership are minimized by strict regulations. This corps of professional officers, or bureaucracy if you will, is blamed today for an academic approach to the problem. The "setting up of committees," the "due prior consultation of all factions concerned," the overly-objective approach - these traditional bureaucratic impediments, say most of the settlers, have paralyzed the Colony and allowed the Mau Mau movement to spread on like a grass fire. The dignity and coolness of this group, which refuses to climb aboard any "shoot all the Kikuyu" bandwagon has been very frustrating to settlers with livestock being hamstrung and property being destroyed. An example of this aloofness was the refusal of the Governor to speak to a crowd of Europeans who gathered outside Government House following the Ruck murders.

The man who did go out and speak to the crowd, Michael Blundell, represents a second group of European leaders - the European elected members of Legislative Council. Elected from European voting districts they comprise the most influential bloc in Legislative Council, and are always free to vote according to conscience (unlike the nominated non-official members who must respond to the government whip when applied, or resign). These members, generally men of substance, are organized, and the voters of their constituencies are also kept in bloc, to great degree, through an Electors Union. This Union, claiming legitimately to represent the interests of Europeans who make their homes in the Colony, has lately been concerned with the formulation of proposals for a constitution for an Independent Kenya, free from Colonial Office control. Its aim has been to gain ever increasing powers for the elected members, and ultimately an independent government for Kenya under European leadership. The elected members have had a difficult time, lately, keeping the Union together. Their better knowledge of the difficulties facing the Government has made them somewhat sympathetic with the civil servants, while their constituencies have become increasingly outraged over the demonstrated inability of the Government to protect their lives and property. In outlying areas many settlers have thrown up their hands at government inaction, condemned the Government as incompetent to help them locally, and set up the equivalent of our old West vigilantes to protect themselves, placing the leaders in a difficult middle position.

The settlers undertaking and supporting the vigilantes idea make up a third group. Many of them have joined an organization - dubbed a "splinter" off the Electors Union by the more conservative - called the United Kenya Protection Association. In the several meetings held to date, the organization has pressed demands including the treatment of the disorders as an armed rebellion by the Kikuyu Tribe, the confinement of Kikuyu in villages, the better coordination of Police and Police Reserve components, an increase in the severity of punishments, and the cessation of all unofficial movement of Kikuyu. At one of their meetings a demand was made that the Kikuyu Tribe

1. The Ruck couple and their child who were killed along with an African servant on North Kinangop on January 24.

be forced to pay for the entire emergency, and in default - since it was a result of the maladministration of their colonial government - the people of England should pay. Actual action taken by the organization has included the recruiting of "commandos" which are now serving with the Kenya Police Reserve, the provision of a pool of farm guards, and the setting up of a message center in Nakuru to facilitate quick follow-up on reported farm raids, cattle hamstringing, and other attacks. They have also issued a booklet of advice on protecting a house from raid at night, and have arranged for the interchange of now scarce labor to harvest crops. The organization has served a purpose in expressing the true feelings of many settlers, and some of the measures it demanded have now been enacted. But it represents a third category of European opinion, distinct from the civil servants and even from the Elected Members, in its tendency to take the law into its own hands. The range of opinion, from the civil servant who remains responsive to the government of his homeland, liberty-loving England, and the settler who has made his home in Africa and who has had long experience with native labor, is often as vast as between the Carpetbagger and the southern landowner after the Civil War.

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A common tendency of observers here is to omit mention of the Indians, whose important role in the economic life of Kenya has been outlined in previous letters. Being a propertied, trading, and clerical class, with some of their ranks as rich as the wealthier Europeans and some merely poor artisans and skilled workmen, they superficially appear to be sandwiched between a white aristocracy and an underprivileged mass of African natives. To an extent this over-simplification is true. The Indians are propertied enough and sufficiently economics-conscious to dread any disruption of the law and order now maintained through European influence and leadership. Having no military tradition, and being somewhat allergic to the smell of gunpowder, the Indians of East Africa have sound doubts about being able to survive and hang on to their property should the Europeans go. The Mau Mau oath is directed against the Europeans, but much of the gangsterism - especially where loot was desired - has struck at Indian traders and store owners in outlying towns and in Nairobi. On the other hand, every attempt by Europeans to gain powers against the Africans which could later be applied against Asians tends to create a temporary Afro-Asian alliance. The Indians' ability to agree and compromise is considerable, and a large number of Europeans have it in their heads that wealthy Indians are behind the Mau Mau, rubbing their hands as they watch the price of European owned property dive, ready to buy up and tighten their grip on the economy of the area. This deserves a long second thought because, though the Indians in the larger towns are culturally self sufficient and mingle less with Africans than do the Europeans, they have shown in the outlying areas a ready tendency to socialize, to fraternize, and even to mix blood with the Africans. Nobody knows exactly where the Indians stand.

1. In 1948 there were 90,528 Indians and 7,159 Goans in Kenya.

This enumeration of developments and reactions could be followed by endless comments and speculation. I confine myself to three aspects, the state of Mau Mau tactical organization, the likelihood of spread of the movement, and the extent to which it is powered and directed by racial hatred.

While the Mau Mau terrorism has not been shaken into anything like a unified military organization, some of its elements have certainly approached the standards of the best Cicero gangs of the Chicago prohibition era. Esprit is inspired by the goal of driving out the white man; and a well recognized gangster code has been demonstrated in the frequent killings of stool pigeons, the murder of Senior Chief Waruhiu in his car and Chief Hinga in hospital. The fear of revenge which kept witnesses muzzled in Illinois courts, attributed there to the vindictive character of the Italian gangster element, has a strong Kikuyu counterpart. It now appears that these factors of esprit and code have helped weld the gangs into more effective units, under the convenient label of Mau Mau. A rule book for a Mau Mau platoon was recently captured. From all appearances, the gangs now are schooled and, likely, drilled in tactics, which will enable them better to exploit the guerrilla advantage of perfect intelligence - which they have enjoyed all along. As police and army methods are improved and securities tightened, the corps of gangsters becomes more experienced, better armed, better led, and - as clearly shown in the Naivasha police station raid - more deadly.

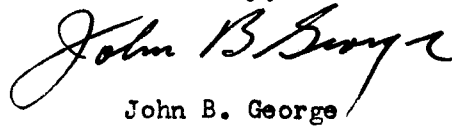
The possible spread of the Mau Mau movement into other areas makes up the most pressing question. The panga attack in Kisumu, plus the arrest of two African political leaders of the District, has set the whites in an area far west of the Mau Mau center to worrying. A kindred straw in the wind was the firing of several shots at an Asian's car near the Uganda border just north of the Kisumu area. Rumors have been afoot that this tribe, the Jaluo, closely behind the Kikuyu in terms of education and European contact, is proving receptive to Mau Mau influence. Here where I live in northern Tanganyika, too, the Africans (except for the Masai) have more sympathy with the Kikuyu than they dare express to whites. A neighboring white woman, who lives alone surrounded by African servants and laborers, was recently approached by her several houseboys and solicitously informed that "she would not be harmed and need not worry." Her boys are Wameru, the tribe which recently petitioned the United Nations regarding land alienation. One needs to have lived in Kenya or Tanganyika these past few years to appreciate the change in racial relations this illustrates. All over East Africa the African laborers, unproductive and low paid except in a demographic sense, have chatted about their white employers - the gods now humanized - around night cooking fires. An increasing number dream of a time when they can drive automobiles, wear expensive clothes, and be rich enough to spend two days' salary on an airmail postage stamp. If the terrorism succeeds in Kenya, gaining land and salary concessions to better the already lush lot of that city bred race of truck drivers, house servants, and clerks, other tribes, with similar motivations of land hunger and native ambition, may give the method a trial.

1. This appraisal of the Kikuyu was by a Wanderobo guide.

The tiny number of Europeans killed might lead some to believe that no racial hatred predominates in the Mau Mau. I consider this a fallacy. The Mau Mau oath - the binding strength of the gangsterism in Kenya - is expressly anti-European. The keynote and objective of terrorism is the expulsion of whites from Kenya. Perhaps, in Mau Mau thinking, the unity of the tribe must be achieved first - with a later goal of enlisting other tribes against the Europeans. Meanwhile the weeding out of the chicken-hearted and the Quislings could be an expedient first step. Another explanation lies in the greater alertness and the better armed state of the Europeans, even on their farms - especially since many suspect Kikuyu have been driven back to the reserves. The terrorists for the time being can seek easier and more accessible targets in neighbor blacks who refuse to join them against the white-dominated government. Mr. John Gunther, with whom I recently was privileged to exchange a few views, agreed with my opinion that the killing of Africans to date has been, in a vital sense, the execution of Europeans in effigy.

People who know Africa very well have scattered proposals. The chiefs at the scene of the Uplands massacre advance as an only means of wiping out Mau Mau the idea of public executions. Hang or shoot the Mau Mau criminals in front of the loyal Kikuyu. "That will give us more heart than anything else." This is a solution unacceptable to Government. Our friend, Henry Fosbrooke, the Senior Sociologist for the Tanganyika Government, mentioned that in his view the only possible answer - though only a short range solution - would involve a concession from the settlers themselves - a "giving until it hurts." He means land. In the settlers' present frame of mind, the acceptance of such a suggestion would be unthinkable; and to other tribes, equally land hungry, such concession would be - in this observer's opinion - an invitation to mass throat-cutting. Kenya's dilemma grows.

Sincerely,



John B. George

F.S. As I write, the verdict of the Kapenguria trials comes in. Jomo Kenyatta and all his co-defendants have been found guilty, he of managing and being a member of Mau Mau, they of membership and assisting in the management. Sentences of seven and three years at hard labor were given for the two charges, to be served concurrently. Kenyatta is regarded as a messiah by many Kikuyu. Crowds of natives have cheered the few appearances in Nairobi of his Defense Counsel Mr. Fritt. Nothing may happen - but this widespread adulation could result in something far beyond the control of the police.

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