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Over the Hump?

Poste Restante
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Dear Mr. Rogers:

The month of April in Kenya ended on an unpleasant note, with the announcement that the Emergency was continuing to cost some £250,000 per month with little tangible evidence that the Mau Mau gangs were not matching any and all improvements in the security forces organization. Now in the middle of June there is wide belief and some evidence that the Emergency may be over the hump. Greater numbers of casualties are being inflicted on the gangs; security forces and home guards are becoming better trained and organized; and the realities of the situation - as evidenced by the proscription of the Kenya African Union (KAU) - are being faced more consistently by the Government. On the 14th of May the Director of Information said that the Emergency could be viewed with a "balanced optimism." The Colony's affairs were "not out of the wood but on the way." The Colonial Secretary's insistence in London that things are improved in Kenya - in so far as the decline in violence and disorder is concerned - is based upon facts as well as hopes.

According to Major General Hinde's estimates at the end of May, some 50,000 to 60,000 unemployed and likely dissident Kikuyu had returned to the reserves, inevitably providing more fodder for Mau Mau. He estimated that the east side of the Aberdares then sheltered perhaps 1,000 terrorists with about 150 firearms. Although single gangs were reported growing larger, he did not believe there was sufficient coordination among the gangs to pool a large fraction of these firearms for a single raid. He felt that police posts with twenty armed men could be independently secure. Also he denied any indication of material "outside" assistance to any of the Mau Mau operations.

The bloodshed, among natives, continued. It was reported on the 5th of May that a 200 strong gang killed nineteen loyalist Kikuyu guards in the Nyeri area. Eleven loyalists were killed in Mau Mau raids reported June 1st. A Consolata Fathers' Mission near the Aberdares, 35 miles north of Fort Hall, from which the Fathers had been evacuated on government orders several days previously, was wrecked and plundered by a Mau Mau gang at the end of May. In a clever move to disrupt essential motor mobility of security forces, terrorists have been destroying bridges and digging trenches across roads in the reserves. On Saturday, May 23rd, at Elburgon a European police reservist was shot in the face and seriously injured by a gang of some

fourteen who were later killed or captured with their improvised weapons. The weapons included a hand-held tube made from the stem of a gourd bound with metal to chamber a twelve gauge shotgun shell. This weapon, fired while being gripped in the left hand by striking a stone against the base of the cartridge, is typical of several primitive adaptations devised by Mau Mau in order to utilize every available round of ammunition. Small explosive bombs have also been found in terrorist possession near Nyeri along with several homemade guns.

A serious hint of westward Mau Mau spread was provided in the arrest on May 13th of John Adalla Akhanyala, a Nyanza Kenya African Union official suspected of sowing the seeds of Mau Mau in North Nyanza. Further surveillance of the activities of KAU officials continued to bear out the travesty of that party's legal position as an organ of legitimate native expression. There is also some fear of the movement spreading eastward to the coast. On the 28th of May a constable named Koinange was reported missing for ten days from his post in Mombasa, and his absence was thought connected with Mau Mau activity. The theft of two revolvers has caused the Mombasa police to issue special instructions regarding the safekeeping of firearms, informing the public that such weapons should be safeguarded in Mombasa as carefully as they would be up-country. Similarly disturbing was the testimony of three captives that Somalis and "Asiatics" had been involved in the Naivasha police raid. The terrorist gangs themselves have been known to contain scattered non-Kikuyu members, and the Luo and Wakamba tribes are not free from suspicion. Practically speaking, the Mau Mau movement remains confined to the Kikuyu tribe, but the oath and the romantic appeal of banditry could appeal to other African dissidents. I believe that the absence of large numbers of rural Europeans - families and individuals living alone far from help - in the non-Kikuyu areas may account for the almost complete confinement of anti-European violence to Kikuyu areas.

Anti-Mau Mau operations have been stepped up and security forces are now bolstered in the knowledge that they are killing and wounding noticeably larger numbers of the enemy. On June 1st 54 dead and 16 Mau Mau were reported, covering several days' operations. By June 6th this number had doubled. On June 2nd alone 24 Mau Mau were killed. One large terrorist gang was bloodily repulsed in an attack on a police post near Nyeri. A bren gun was left behind with fourteen bodies when the terrorists withdrew, and several blue overcoats similar to those used by the police were found on the bodies. Another gang of twenty-eight, which had requisitioned food and shelter from squatter Kikuyu who then informed the police, was captured with their four firearms while sleeping in the squatters' two huts. They had been much harrassed, were very tired and hungry, indicating that the lives of the gangs are becoming less pleasant as home guard and police actions become more effective. On May 12th it was reported (likely an exaggeration) that a gang having an assembled strength of 500 had suffered 50 dead in a single engagement with a security platoon. Large scale police raids and screening were continued, a notable one taking place in Kiambu where 70 out of 800 were detained. Major General

Hinde, citing a marked change in activities since the Naivasha police station raid, said in late May that the loss of arms by security forces had been negligible. On the 27th of May, in addition to further security gains, an important Mau Mau leader self-styled "Brigadier Simba" was killed some 30 miles west of Nanyuki. Though not of the stature of Dedan Kimathi (who sometimes calls himself "General Russia") or another (or several) unknown Kikuyu referred to as "General China," his death was a definite attainment for the security forces.

Partly as the result of the more aggressive tactics of security forces and the wider employment of air bombing and strafing in selected areas, tribesmen in several districts were coming forward to confess Mau Mau attachments. There were over 5,000 confessions in the Kikuyu reserve during the early part of May. Often they talked freely, revealing names of members of Mau Mau gangs. The increased cooperation from natives and better information has been invaluable to the police and military.

By the middle of May the anti-Mau Mau Kikuyu home guard forces had been recruited to a total strength of 9,000 (4,000 in Nyeri, 2,000 in Fort Hall, and 3,000 in Kiambu District). Special badges bearing a cross, a sword, and a torch have been devised to be issued to the anti-Mau Mau native forces. With European emergency recruitment approaching a target figure of 450 men, the needed corps of officers could be provided and the police and police reserve units were filling out. (The civilian firms in Kenya have followed the manpower policy of the Kenya Government and the East Africa High Commission in forbidding further home leave of European employees for the period June to December, 1953. Officers already on leave will be required to return after a maximum of three months in the country of leave.)

Reinforcing the stepped-up program of the security forces were a number of stiffening administrative measures. An independent East Africa Command is to be formed separate from the Middle East Command and answering directly to the War Office in the UK.¹ General Sir George Erskine has been named Commander-in-Chief. General Erskine will be in overall charge of Emergency operations, General Hinde, the Director of Operations, becoming subordinate. Sir Frederick Crawford, the Governor of the Seychelles and much experienced in East Africa, has been appointed Deputy Governor of Kenya and is expected to relieve Sir Evelyn Baring of the inordinate strain of administration during the Emergency. The long criticized separation of police reserve components was terminated at upper levels by integration of their formerly separate provincial and certain subordinate headquarters. Instead of running his old duplicative setup, the Kenya Police Reserve commander of each area now became deputy to his regular (Kenya Police) opposite number, concentrating the responsibility in one man's hands. This is in response to a tide of criticism of the plethora of separate

1. This move may have as much to do with the issues of the Canal Zone, Egypt and the Sudan as with the Emergency in Kenya.

command channels and committees, many of which General Erskine is expected to quash.

On May 16th the Kenya Legislative Council passed a new act placing a death penalty upon any intentional aid to persons reasonably suspect of terrorist intent. Drastic new firearms legislation is also being implemented in Kenya with firearms certificates being required in addition to licenses. The earlier system of firearms registration and licensing was of a careless frontier type satisfactory for the days when rifles could be left standing in the corners of a farm house but very dangerous now.

Pressure from the Europeans and African loyalists for "summary justice" has been continuous. A new measure providing for the speeding up of the normal processes of criminal justice, without abandoning the principles of British justice and safeguards for the accused, comes into effect today. The new regulation, the outcome of discussions with the Secretary of State for the Colonies during his recent visit to Kenya, provides for the setting up of Courts of Emergency Assize, staffed by additional judges, in the affected areas of the Central Province to try persons charged with certain categories of serious Mau Mau offences. Trials will proceed without preliminary inquiries or committals of the accused, and the judge will be required to record only what evidence he considers sufficient to apprise the Court of Appeal of the material circumstances, rather than the full details of the evidence. The accused will have the right to be represented by an advocate and to appeal (although the regulation provides for the summary rejection of any appeal by a single judge of the Court of Appeal if, on reviewing the evidence, he believes it was lodged without sufficient grounds).

The Kenya African Union is proscribed as being so infected with Mau Mau that it can no longer serve as a legitimate body for the expression of native opinion. The Government has stated that many KAU members are not Mau Mau and that the formation of legitimate tribal parties to serve in its stead will be facilitated. Mr. W.W.W. Awori, last President of the party, has accepted the move saying that it was no surprise, but he now insists that an intertribal organization acceptable to Government should be sought after, rather than individual tribal organizations. Here Mr. Awori adheres to the shiboleth that KAU was truly an intertribal rather than an almost entirely Kikuyu organization.

Mr. Murumbi, the Acting Secretary of the proscribed KAU, still abroad, has continued his indictment of the Kenya whites, most recently commenting that the "imperialist stranglehold" on the blacks in Kenya is now complete. The "United African Nationalist Movement" is said to have plead in a letter to Professor S. Bokhari of Pakistan that the Kenya situation be brought before the UN as a threat to international security. On May 29th it was reported that Joseph William Kiwanuka, Editor of the Uganda Post, a Luganda language newspaper in Kampala, was charged with having published seditious material. An article had said that Justice Thacker was biased, being a settler, and that his appointment as magistrate was an injustice which Africans would not forget. The tone of the article was apparently sympathetic, even admiring, towards Jomo Kenyatta and his associates at the trial. The mention of Murumbi or of possible UN action

elicits anything from a cynical shrug to an enraged gasp from a Kenya European. Whatever Mr. Murumbi's intentions may have been, the effect of his utterances in India have been to confirm, in the minds of East African Europeans, the already established belief that KAU and Mau Mau were the same organization. Counter to this belief is an unsubdued feeling of oppression by a widening group of sensitive educated natives who are unable to say openly what they really think.

Among Legislative Council members, black and white, factional tensions continued to be revealed. Mr. Mathu, the African leader in Legco, protested the arbitrary razing of African houses in Nairobi slum locations. He claimed that in many cases the Africans evicted had paid rent to Asian landlords and could produce rent receipts. Michael Blundell, leader of European unofficial members, protested at a public meeting in Nairobi that the present disturbances in fact amounted to a state of rebellion, implying that the Government should so declare. Referring to the need in Kenya for a "western civilized future" and the need to "strive for integration of all territories under common ideals and common government" he decried Indian propaganda and Indian interference and said that it would be only fair for India to include - along with her recent protests regarding the treatment of Africans by the Kenya Government - an elucidation of the details of her relation with Kashmir. Blundell also condemned certain loopholes in recent emergency enactments. He wished the extant penalty of death for convicted Mau Mau oath administrators to be applicable without the present necessity of proving that the oath specifically pledged the oath-taker to commit a capital crime.

An indication of the difficult security position of the settlers was provided during an interview of settler representatives with Major General Hinde. The settlers asked of Hinde why the gangs in the Aberdares remained able to feed themselves, and what had the police done to cut off the food supply? Hinde replied that a partial answer to this might be for all cattle to be removed ten miles from the forest edge, which brought forth shouts of "no!" Quite understandably the settlers tend to criticize the police yet remain unwilling to abandon large parts of their land for security or "buffer" area purposes.


The continuing protest of the Asian community regarding its delimited role in the Emergency is very significant. Mr. C.B. Madan, non-Muslim Member of Legislative Council, repeated the established complaint that the Government was failing to make use of Asian manpower and urged that an Asian Director of Manpower should be appointed. Government should provide broader participation by Asians who now serve only in clerical and minor specialist roles. The idea of Asian combat units officered by Asians was mentioned, and the claim that instructors would be unavailable for training Asian combatants was opposed. In response to this pressure, a Government intention to form three or four self-contained Asian combat units has been announced. Not all Asians of military age will be registered for possible call up, but the younger bracket totalling 6,500 will be registered with a view to staffing the Asian combat units as well as filling clerical and other jobs in the security forces. Asians are not yet satisfied, and

complain that even such increased participation would not be commensurate with Asian importance within the East African community. Fear by Europeans of Asian competition and unjustified mistrust are alleged by Asians to be the real reasons. Military incompetence and unfitness would be the explanation given by most Europeans. The nature of European-Asian feelings is illustrated by the London remarks of Ibrahim Nathoo, an East African Asian (Muslim) spokesman, who especially thanked British journalists for their part during the Emergency in preventing the Kenya Government from handing over too much authority to the Europeans.

Also of political importance was the Kenya Government's action in declaring Mr. Peter Evans a prohibited immigrant, whereupon he left Kenya for Tanganyika. Mr. Evans (a British Inner Temple barrister) had submitted a report to the Governor attempting to prove the unjustified shooting of two Kikuyu prisoners by security forces in Kenya. It was officially announced, however, that his ejection from the Colony was solely because he had violated the limitations of his visitor's pass by accepting professional employment as a defense counsel at the Kapenguria trial. On May 25th it was announced that Mr. Evans planned to go to India. He was said to be planning to hold a series of press conferences there. He accused the Tanganyika Government, when it also declared him a prohibited immigrant, of giving in to Nairobi pressure. On 7th June he refused to board a ship in Mombasa, saying that his automobile and certain of his baggage had not been put on board. He was not forcibly placed aboard the vessel and was allowed to remain in detention at Fort Jesus Frison, Mombasa.

While a certain amount of optimism may be justified as regards an earlier restoration of law and order, or at least a termination of the worst of the violence, no sound observer can say that any fundamental differences have been reconciled. Rather, the Emergency so far has increased the cleavages and antagonisms between the three races and between numerous tribal factions. There has been a useful exposure of weaknesses and strengths. (The Government is taking time out, even in the heat of the Emergency, to give intensified attention to such things as African housing, education and the reclamation of land for resettlement.) The disease, so easily diagnosed, rages on; one or two of the symptoms are in way of being suppressed.

Sincerely,



John B. George

Rec'd New York
6/23/53.