

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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Conference of Kenya  
Electors' Union

c/o Barclays Bank  
Queensway  
Nairobi, Kenya  
September 17, 1953

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

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Fighting continues in the forests of the Aberdares and Mount Kenya, and in Nairobi's meeting rooms and editorial pages. An eventual military victory by the government in the fight against Mau Mau itself can now be predicted with certainty. But no certainty exists in regard to Kenya's political battles, fought largely along racial lines. Kenya never seems to be quiet in this respect and the last several weeks were no exception.

Foremost on the political scene was the 10th annual conference of the Electors' Union and the expected fuss that it stirred up.

Nearly 100 delegates, representing the 4,000 members of the all-European voters' association,\* and about 150 spectators filled Memorial Hall, where the Legislative Council meets, for the three-day meeting. Most speeches were temperate in tone---or at least temperate by Kenya standards. Some of the old-timers said they missed the fiery oratory of the old days and declared sadly that men were men then. The newcomers, many of whom came to Kenya after World War II, replied that the old days are over and that moderation and compromise are needed now. Woman delegates played a big role in the conference. Among the resolutions adopted, these two were of significance:

---"That this conference considers that the minimum figure of net European immigration, including continental Europeans, should be 30,000 in the next five years. While realizing the full implications of planning for the social requirements of this new population, it considers that in addition to the ordinary expected unplanned flow of immigrants such as has taken place up to date, government must make the most strenuous efforts to provide employment for European workers on farms, in forests and public services; and in addition to encourage by some means large schemes of economic development in the country to absorb workers and professional persons of all grades.

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\* There are 14,764 Europeans on the voting roll in Kenya, but a large number---roughly estimated at 3,000 --- are government officials, who, though they may vote, are forbidden to indulge in political activity.

"In order to facilitate the immigration envisaged above, existing deterrents to intending European immigration should be removed and at the end of four years if these immigrants prove satisfactory as individuals they must become Kenyan subjects (sic).

"This conference also considers that there should be no further Asian immigration except in the case of temporary employment of key men."

---"That this conference is of the opinion that the authorities are not yet prosecuting the Emergency with efficiency and despatch."

Addressing the conference on the opening day, Mr. Michael Blundell, leader of the European elected members of the Legislative Council,\* presented "Nine Principles" agreed upon by the elected Europeans. He said it was intended that they should serve "as signposts for the development of the country." They have not been translated into policy yet, Mr. Blundell said, but he added that he hopes this will be done. He also declared that the government's surrender offer to Mau Mau members has the full backing of the elected Europeans. The "Nine Principles," which later were unanimously adopted as representing the view of the conference, were:

1. To build a strong and prosperous state which will be a bulwark of the Commonwealth in British Africa, maintaining British traditions of loyalty to the Crown, justice and freedom.

2. To promote and maintain the Christian ethic.

3. To develop opportunities for all loyal subjects, irrespective of race, to advance in accordance with character and ability.

4. To maintain and encourage private enterprise unless it conflicts with the security of the state or threatens the proper development of its resources.

5. To promote a sense of security for all races, and in particular to maintain the special rights of racial communities in those areas established for their respective use by treaty, ordinance or Order-in-Council. Concurrently to develop areas of common opportunity.

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\* There are 14 European elected members, 6 Asian elected members, 6 appointed African members and 2 Arab members, for a total of 28 on the unofficial side of the Legislative Council and 26 ex-officio members.

6. To safeguard the proper interests of each race from exploitation by any other, and to promote racial harmony and friendliness.

7. To protect the direction of affairs in Kenya from the extremes of party political influence overseas.

8. To ensure that the direction of affairs in Kenya shall pass progressively to those resident locally.

9. To foster and develop friendly relations between our own and other territories of East and Central Africa with the ultimate object of federation.

Opening the debate on immigration, a delegate said: "The only hope for Kenya is a white reserve and we must rule it. Let us be generous and liberal to the other races that live in this country, but let us rule it." There are about 3,000 white farms in Kenya and "If our community is to survive, this number must be increased." He said Indians had dreams of an Indian Raj in Africa which would be unacceptable to Europeans. Modern Hinduism is the antithesis of Christianity, he said. Britons pioneered this land without force of arms and they have a right to say who will live in it and who will rule. "We must not share that responsibility with any other race." But, he said, along with this right they have an obligation to develop the land. Where a farmer was not making full use of his land, some of it should be acquired by government and given to new settlers, he said.

Another delegate said while he personally is opposed to further Asian immigration, he would like to see the third sentence of the resolution (opposing such immigration) deleted because "that third sentence going to the press will cause racial ill feeling."

Mr. W. B. Havelock, chairman of the European Elected Members' Organization, rose to say he was sure he was speaking for all his colleagues in approving the resolution. "In principle, all elected members are opposed to further Asian immigration," he declared.

He said Asians are competing for jobs with more advanced Africans. The economic capacity of the colony to absorb more Asians was limited. "Poor school training and lax parental supervision" are producing an unemployable type of Asian. Further, he said, it will be difficult to shape the political and social life of

the colony on lines of Western civilization if further "outside influences" are permitted. He then went on to say that European immigration should be encouraged because (1) "The European is the backbone of western civilization in Africa," (2) "They provide leadership to manpower," (3) "They have the initiative and technical skill," and (4) "They are loyal to the Crown in time of war."

He cited figures showing that 1,819 Europeans and their dependents entered the colony in 1949, compared with 2,033 during 1952. The comparable Asian figures are 6,704 for 1949 and 3,843 for 1952. He said 2,239 Europeans were granted temporary permits to take jobs in the colony in 1949, compared with 1,989 in 1952. For Asians, the figures were 2,389 during 1949 and 403 in 1952, he said. He added that most men issued such permits later are allowed to remain in the colony permanently. The decrease in Asian immigration was due, he said, to "the government accepting in principle the reasons I have cited." (Kenya's population is given at 40,000 Europeans, 158,000-Asians and 5,500,000 Africans.)

The resolution was passed with one dissenting vote.

The debate on the resolution criticizing the government's handling of the Emergency began with a delegate declaring: "British justice has fallen down." He cited cases when Mau Mau terrorists escaped punishment because their convictions were set aside because of technical errors. "The loyal Kikuyu cannot understand this," he said. "They know the man is guilty and they can't understand how the legal foibles of lawyers can get them off. If a man is guilty, he's guilty, and why waste time with all these appeals and cross-appeals... I do not criticize the government as a whole, but speed is needed... Mau Mau is in many ways stronger now than at the start."

A delegate from Mount Kenya seconded the motion saying: "Conditions are definitely worse." He criticized what he said is the use of bugles by British troops in the forests to keep contact with each other. This tips off the enemy. He also complained that British draftees can be heard saying in pubs, "Why don't we give the land to the Africans---it's theirs ---and get out of here."

At that point, a woman delegate rose and moved that the meeting go into committee---i.e. exclude the press---for the rest of the debate on the motion. If too much were said in the press of errors and shortcomings of the government being pointed out, the "faith" of the loyal African might well be lost, she declared. Her motion was carried 29 to 2 and the faith of the African thus safeguarded, the press adjourned for coffee. The discussion lasted two hours and the original motion was carried without opposition.

Later on, at another private session, the conference approved a motion requesting the European elected members to formulate a plan for the future government of Kenya, suggesting immediate as well as long-term objectives. A delegate, commenting to reporters later on the debate, said: "One speaker wanted a clear announcement of white domination, but the leader of the elected members (Mr. Blundell) said he did not accept that." The resolution as adopted asked only that a plan be formulated.

Another resolution adopted called for the admission of 50 peasant families from East Germany for a pilot plan at the community of Ol Kalou and government loans for their passage, education and housing.

Sponsors of the plan say these East Germans would be employed on European farms as laborers "doing 12 hours' work a day if necessary." The men would be paid £15 a month (\$42.45)\* and would be given a few acres for growing foodstuffs for their families, and would have permission to keep cattle. It is also suggested that daughters of the immigrants could do housework and look after the children of the employers---for £5 (\$14.15) a month. One of the supporters of the plan, Mr. Humphrey Slade, member of the Legislative Council from the Aberdares, has said: "We cannot afford to be as dependent on the Africans as we have been. Africans need someone to work with them if they are really going to understand us."

A woman delegate, speaking in behalf of the resolution, said East Germans were selected as they are "always anti-Communist and they have demonstrated it."

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\* This is approximately the wage of an African clerk or responsible employe in other fields. A European farm manager---who does supervisory work ---earns about £40 (\$113.20) plus his keep.

She said she was not opposed to British immigration, but added that many British draftees come from a class that harbors "Communist" ideas.

Mr. Havelock then rose to protest that this was "derogatory." He said: "On the whole, I don't think the British National Serviceman has done us any harm. In fact, he is doing us a lot of good. I stand behind the British serviceman." The woman apologized, saying she had not meant all British servicemen, but was thinking of only a few instances.

In the opening speech at the conference, Major A. G. Keyser, former leader of the European Elected Members in the Legislative Council, said: "Last year attempts were made to start a political party here, which would lead to a rival party. Nothing could weaken the position of the European community here more than to resort to party politics."

Major Keyser was referring to the right wing Kenya Empire Party, which split away from the Electors' Union. The Electors' Union does not consider itself a political party, but rather as a non-partisan organization of voters. Its declared function is to consolidate European opinion, advise the elected members on the wishes of the European community and to press for "the right of the white community in Kenya to be consulted by and associated with the government in their joint responsibilities as trustees of the native African." The Kenya Empire Party demands, among other things, "home rule for Kenya under European settler leadership at the earliest possible moment." Members of the Electors' Union, while not objecting in principle to this and other aims of the Kenya Empire Party, feel that the party is too extreme and impatient and that a more moderate and liberal approach should be followed.

European editorial reaction to the conference was not altogether favorable.

The East African Standard said:

"Another in the lengthening series of 'statements of principles' made its appearance yesterday. Many of these declarations should surely go without saying.

"Promotion and maintenance of the Christian ethic in a community largely non-Christian and predominantly pagan is a matter of persuasion by high example...

"Maintenance and encouragement by private enterprise 'unless it conflicts with the security of the state or threatens the proper development of its resources' is a vague and meaningless statement probably intended as a sop to what is called 'Socialism.'"

The editorial congratulated Mr. Blundell for showing "an appreciation of the importance of good-will among the communities and for the development of opportunities for training in---and the exercise of---increasing responsibilities for the conduct of the affairs of the colony, especially in the fruitful field of local government both in the European and African areas."

The pro-settler Kenya Weekly News said:

"Let us cast aside the notion that the position of the European community in Kenya can be strengthened merely by immigration. They will always be a small minority, and no political advantage can possibly accrue merely from increasing the number of Europeans from 1 per cent to 2 per cent of the population.

"The position of the European community depends not on numbers but on the contribution which they will make to the economy and to the general weal of Kenya. It is clear that the rush of immigrants without a commensurate economic opportunity might greatly weaken that position."

Commenting on the Ol Kalou plan, the East African Standard said:

"It is not a scheme which has gained universal approval, partly because it is believed that there are parts of Europe other than Germany to be preferred in any plan to bring new immigrants, and partly because there appear to be considerable objections to importing Europeans on conditions which might create a class of white squatters. There is a natural and proper fear of anything which may create a 'poor white' problem."

Europeans generally were pleased that no split had taken place at the conference. There had been some speculation before the conference opened that this might occur, with the majority of the delegates siding with the moderates. The European community is too small to weaken its influence by a major rift, these Europeans said.

The Asian community, stung by the resolution on immigration, reacted promptly and vigorously. None seemed to be surprised by the resolution, but, community tempers being as touchy as they are in Kenya, this did not dampen their ire.

The Colonial Times, a weekly Asian newspaper, said the resolution "proves, if any proof was needed, that Europeans are not fit to be leaders of this colony. They are anxious to secure their own ends and are not bothered about the interests of other groups in the colony...

"Kenya is a British dependency---dependency of Britain---not of every individual Tom, Dick and Harry who happens to be born of British parents...

"The local Europeans must get it out of their heads that they are the rulers of this colony, because they are not rulers. They are ordinary British subjects like the Africans and the Asians."

Mr. Apa B. Pant, High Commissioner for the Government of India in East Africa, said to me: "I don't think it will be of great help in developing a democratic multi-racial society and the safest guarantee of any immigrant race here is the development of an integrated, multi-racial society."

A Pakistani merchant said angrily: "They couldn't have done more to stir up even more bitterness---and at this time, too."

An Indian clerk commented: "How can one outsider tell another outsider to stay out. I can understand how the Africans could say this, but not another outsider." He added that a politically dangerous situation could be created if the large mass of Asians are made to feel that they don't belong. "There are Europeans who are the finest sort of individuals, but unfortunately their policies as a body do not reflect this."

Many Africans regard European-Asian squabbling as something that doesn't concern them. But all were highly concerned about the suggestion that 30,000 Europeans should be admitted to the colony in the next five years. "If that much land and jobs are available, why don't they give them to us?" said an African acquaintance.

An anonymous writer who does a regular column known as "An African's Diary" in the Colonial Times, signing it "An African," said:

"I have for some time thought that if only a fair number of influential Europeans could live to the standards of Christianity of which we hear so much talk of, the present troubles that now hinder the country's progress would never have occurred.

"Perhaps in order to hasten the achievement of this worthy object at the shortest possible time, would it not be better to encourage the immigration of ordained priests rather than the proposed encouragement to 30,000 settlers to take up our land in the highlands?"

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Another in a series of rather comical letters signed by the name of Dedan Kimathi, one of the most important Mau Mau leaders, made its appearance recently. This one was sent to and published by Habari za Dunia ("News of the World"), a Nairobi Swahili language newspaper. The editor of the paper is W. W. W. Awori, African member of the Legislative Council and acting president of Jomo Kenyatta's Kenya African Union at the time of its proscription. The letter read (sic) in part:

"Sir-

"After a long journey going round throughout Africa for three months and also Palestine,\* I have found many things changed and evil increased a great deal.

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\* Mau Mau leaders frequently boast in their letters to police, government officials and their former employers of grandiose journeys. Police say they are sure that the Mau Mau areas are too well guarded for this. Besides, police say, they would know through Intelligence if this were true.

"For the return of peace and the return of a new Kenya I have told all leaders of the war in the forest areas to stop fighting again from August 1, 1953\*...

"Now it is only peace we want to maintain for the reason that we are people like others, we will find food as always but it is for peace alone, because we cannot live without food.\*\*

"Myself, being in Defence Council of the whole of Africa, Kenya Branch,\*\*\* and also being the President of all the branches, I ask the Government to remove the police and the K. A. R.\*\*\*\* in all areas, if peace and co-operation for all is wanted, and at once the fighting will stop...

"I am explaining clearly that there is no Mau Mau, but the poor man is the Mau Mau and if so, it is only Mau Mau which can finish Mau Mau, and not bombs and other weapons...

"If people are wantonly attacked in the towns and even in the Reserves, how can they put up with it without running to the forest?

"If the police and K.A.R. and Home Guards withhold food who can put up with hunger?

"If colour discrimination continues in Kenya, who will remain the underdog, for the African has eyes, ears and a brain?

"If it is better to die than to live in trouble, why should we put up with trouble in our hearts?...

"God who created everyone helps them and feeds them and protects them from trouble. If we humans do not know what the end of this trouble is going to be, God knew it even before it started. Let us pray to God to grant us peace in our hearts and loving kindness so that the present daily bloodshed may cease..."

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\* The fighting continues.

\*\* Prisoners have said that the policy of denying food to the terrorists has been most effective.

\*\*\* Awori said the Council is "an enigma to me."

\*\*\*\* King's African Rifles.

Mr. Awori turned the letter over to police. They said they were convinced from the handwriting that it was authentic. It had been mailed from Nyeri, in the Kikuyu area.

The police said Mr. Awori had failed to publish one paragraph of the letter, which read:

"When K.A.U. was proscribed, I congratulated the Kenya government and even now I congratulate them for because of that I received many askaris. Many Africans who were confined to Nairobi said they had been given the opportunity to follow me in the forests."

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So far the surrender offer announced on August 23 by General Sir George Erskine, Commander-in-Chief, East Africa, has not had any appreciable results.

General Erskine, however, cautioned at the time--- perhaps out of a feeling that he ought to play it safe---that no flood of surrenders was expected. "It's a way out for the waverer and a start to a psychological warfare campaign," he told newsmen.

Mau Mau members are offered their lives, but not their freedom, if they come in voluntarily waving a green branch. They are promised they will not be prosecuted for carrying arms and consorting with gangs---both capital offenses. "For everything else, if anything is against him, including murder, of course he's liable to the full course of the law," General Erskine said.

As of September 16 there had been seven surrenders of active Mau Mau terrorists and seven surrenders of Kikuyu who had been forced into service as food carriers by Mau Mau.

A spokesman for GHQ said two of the seven active terrorists may be prosecuted for crimes committed. One is Gathugu Muthura, who calls himself "General Kihinya." The authorities called him a "private thug with his own army." The terrorist who surrendered with him was his second in command. Muthura was not considered a ranking Mau Mau leader.

General Erskine estimates that there are 1,200 to 1,300 hard core Mau Mau fighters.

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The general's efforts to halt any trigger-happiness and brutality on the part of the European and African members of the security forces continues.

A European sergeant in the Kenya Regiment has been remanded by his commanding officer on a charge of murder. After a written summary of evidence has been compiled, General Erskine will decide whether to convene a general court martial. An African sergeant and an African lance corporal also have been arrested in the case. The three were taken into custody after an inquest into the deaths of two African prisoners last April.

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And then there are other troubles in Kenya. A lion had been nibbling at native cattle in the village of Oda in the Tana River District. Chief Funani and a party of young warriors approached the animal and the chief let him have it---with a load of birdshot.

The lion charged, possibly because of such presumption. But before the animal got his claws on the chief, a young warrior drove a six-foot spear into the lion. The lion was almost dead from 13 spear thrusts delivered by the warriors before the chief had unloaded the other chamber of birdshot from his shotgun.

A truck driven by an Indian trader collided with an elephant one night in the dense bush near Somarini. The truck, smashed badly, had to be abandoned. The elephant continued its journey.

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An amusing story has been making the rounds in Nairobi: An African was talking with a European. "Bwana," he said, "when you came here you had the Bible and we had the land. Now you have the land and we have the Bible."

Cordially,

*David E. Reed*

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