

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

DER - 8

Tanganyikan District I

October 25, 1953
c/o Barclays Bank
Queensway
Nairobi, Kenya
(Mailed from Kondoa,
Tanganyika)

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

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Much of the land in Kondoa District lays raw and barren under the harsh equatorial sun. The district, in Tanganyika's Central Province, 225 miles south of the Kenya border, has suffered much erosion. Winds whip up clouds of dust and dust devils frequently twist their way across the desolate landscape. Each year, rains carry away more and more of the precious topsoil and carve deeper and deeper gulleys into the rocky slopes and valleys.

The land was not always like this---once it was fertile and covered with vegetation, and still is amazingly productive when given half a chance. But erosion has left a deep mark. Man is to blame. Overgrazing, destruction of the forests and other ignorant practices of the African peasant have turned it into what it now is.

About half of the 5,750-square-mile district has been untouched. It remains what it always had been---thick bush. Uninhabited by man, the bulk of this area is infested with tsetse fly and through it roam herds of elephant and antelope, rhino and other game.

Kondoa town, the headquarters of District Commissioner Cecil Winnington-Ingram and his staff, is different from the surrounding semi-desert. Twenty thousand gallons of clear, cool water bubble up hourly from a spring in the town, bringing life and greenery to the area. The spring is almost hidden in tall, deep green banana and maize plants. Then there is the Kondoa River. During the rainy season it may swell to 100 yards in width. It never dries up completely and at this time of the year, just before the new rains, there still is a tiny trickle of water in what otherwise is a river of sand.

Palm trees brought in from the Coast grow along the river and throughout the little (population: 1,580) town. Mud and wattle native houses and tiny dukas or stores line the sandy streets. Tropical flowers bloom and huge shade trees protect a sleepy citizenry from the sun. A tame monkey scampers around on the duka roofs. Because of the altitude (4,000-odd feet), the nights are cool.

Most of Kondoa's Africans are Muslims, converted by the Arab ivory hunters who settled here. Some of the others are Christians and the rest remain Pagan animists. Many of the African Muslims have adopted the kanzu or long white gown and the red, tasseled fez or tarbushi of the Arabs. Instead of the tarbushi, some wear the kofia or white skull cap, often intricately embroidered, of the Arabs.

There are three mosques in Kondoa, a Church Missionary Society (Church of England) church with an African parson and a mission of the Italian Catholic fathers of the Passionist Order.

Kondoa's dukas are operated by Arabs and Indians. The dukas have little to offer the buyer and what they have is covered with dust collected during the long journey on Africa's Great North Road from Arusha, 173 miles to the north or from Dodoma, the provincial headquarters 104 miles to the south. But, except for the handful of European officials and missionaries,* no one has much money, so the lack of goods makes little difference. And one gets used to dust in East Africa.

There are no telephones and no railroads in Kondoa. There is a landing strip 825 yards long for small aircraft and the other day a tiny plane put down to fill his tanks with gasoline. An experienced traveler, he carried his own. Kondoa has no aviation gas. The pilot was on his way from Rhodesia to Nairobi. It was quite an event---the first plane to land here during the year. Life proceeds at an easy pace in Kondoa and all would be serene if it were not for---Mau Mau!

* There are 81 Europeans in Kondoa District, all missionaries and officials and their dependents, 117 Indians, 254 Arabs, 90 Somalis and 4 Goans. The African population is estimated at 154,000.

Mau Mau invades the town at about 10:30 each morning, followed by a churning fury of dust. Frightened Africans scatter as Mau Mau roars around snake-like bends in the road, splashes through the inch or so of water at the river ford and comes to a grinding halt in front of the duka of Mr. Gordhanbhai A. Patel. "Mau Mau!" exclaims the African duka idler.

An outsider might be inclined to call it just another bus---or at least a 4 1/2 ton Mercedes-Benz truck fitted with a rattletrap bus body bearing the information: "Paramount Bus Co., Arusha to Dodoma." But the town's Africans, shaken in body and soul by its speed and considering it dangerous, have labeled it Mau Mau. Further, some of them whisper, the driver is thought to be a Kikuyu!

Patel, an Indian who acts as local agent for Paramount in addition to running the duka, is irked at the nickname. "Why do they call it Mau Mau?" I asked him as my cook, Ramazan, an Irangi tribesman, was buying the day's groceries from Mrs. Patel.

"Look," said Patel, waving his hands at the Africans in front of the duka. "They have to have a name for everything. Well, this bus is new---we just started up eight months ago---so they have to think up a name for it. They hear about this Mau Mau business in Kenya. They've never heard that name before so they decide to call the bus by that name. It's just a name, that's all. It doesn't mean a thing.

"They might just as well have called it Patel---or Reed---or Mickey Mouse."

Patel invited me to join him for a cup of tea. An African brought out chairs and we sat down next to the row of tables that serve as a counter. Mau Mau (the bus) is not dangerous, Patel said, but he added that it has to keep up with competition from the bus operated by Harchand Singh, the old established bus operator on the Arusha to Dodoma run. "Do they race on the roads as the Africans complain?" I asked. "Well," said Patel, "Mau Mau has to cover 277 miles with many, many stops to allow passengers, some of them encumbered with bicycles, chickens and baskets of produce, to get on and off. So sometimes there might be a little bit of a hurry. But we try to keep to 35---no, 30---miles an hour," Patel said.

By someone else I was told that Mau Mau and Harchand Singh's bus once were coming at opposite directions toward a narrow one-vehicle bridge. Each driver tooted angrily for the right of way. Neither gave quarter. Harchand Singh's bus took possession of the bridge first and Mau Mau had to take a header into the ditch.

Mau Mau came roaring up just as we were finishing our tea. Africans crowded aboard till it seemed there was not enough room for even one more chicken. I went out to photograph the spectacle, but before I could get the cover off the lens, Mau Mau was gone in a swirl of dust. Harchand Singh's driver, who had been crowding the last passenger aboard, took off in pursuit.

Back in the duka, I bought a bottle of Scotch for 27 shillings (\$3.78). "Oooo," exclaimed Ramazan after he had studied the receipt for two minutes. "What do you think this is, Ramazan---milk you buy for 30 cents (4 cents U. S.)?" Patel exploded in Swahili, fearful that Ramazan would ruin a sale.

Ramazan continued to be understandably amazed at my extravagance. I pay him 20 shillings (\$2.80) a week, which is above the local scale. The figure had been suggested by Ramazan---presumably as a bargaining point as he appeared a bit surprised when I agreed to it.

The nearby African market was crowded with Africans trading in produce they had carried to town on their heads. The pombe or African beer shop also was crowded and three drunken Masai moran or young warriors were indulging in horseplay in the middle of the street to the amusement of the villagers, who, however, kept at a discreet distance from the spear toting moran. One moran got hold of another's long, red ochred hair and spun him around. They seuffled in drunken friendliness for a while, then tottered back arm in arm to the pombe shop.

Given an even wider berth were a dozen young men of the Barabaig tribe who passed through the village. The tribe is noted for its ritual murders. Four Barabaig were hanged at Dodoma earlier this year for a series of ritual killings that ended 18 months ago and it was hoped then that this would end the custom. But recently the bodies of two African women were found, mutilated in the Barabaig fashion. As the Barabaig passed by, an Irangi said to me: "Watu wabaya!" ("Bad men!")

Driving back to my house, Ramazan complained about the current inflationary bride price. Fathers, he griped, now demand five cows, 10 goats and 40 shillings (\$5.60)---or more---for a daughter. Ramazan, who is 29, has one wife now and three children but wants at least one more wife. He is fairly well off by local standards, owning 30 cows and 20 goats. He amassed his fortune during the war as a cook in the King's African Rifles and saw service in Egypt, India and Burma.

That afternoon it rained for the first time in months. It hardly dampened down the dust, but it was joyfully received by Kondoa. Ramazan stood at the kitchen window and blew kisses at the dark clouds.

Life goes on this way in Kondoa with nothing more disturbing than Mau Mau's daily invasions. There is no Mau Mau of the Kenya variety and little or no anti-European feeling among Kondoa District's three tribes---the Warangi, the Waburunge and the Wasandawe.

The Warangi are considered the most advanced of the three, but still are nowhere near the level attained by other East African tribes such as Kenya's Kikuyu or the Wachagga to the northeast in Tanganyika. The British administrators here describe the Warangi as just beginning to develop a political consciousness, with the result that they are beginning to argue with the government officials. This is being encouraged by government as a step toward the development of political maturity.

Before the Germans took over Tanganyika' around 1885, the Warangi, as far as is known, had no central government. Rather they were grouped in small family units.

The Germans created sub-chiefs for the tribe. When the British captured Tanganyika in World War I, they appointed one of these sub-chiefs, Salim, as chief of the whole tribe.

After his death in 1947, his son, Heri*, was appointed chief. He seems to be popular with his people and on trips I took with him in the district he was greeted with much respect. He was described in one official report as combining "firmness and tact." Old Chief Salim was more noted for his firmness. It is said that even in his old age, he continued to wield a cane with righteous vigor on the backsides of erring tribesmen.

The Warangi are the largest of the three tribes, with 30,000 taxpayers, compared with 8,500 for the Wasandawe and 2,500 for the Waburunge. The Wasandawe are of anthropological interest as they are considered akin to the Bushmen of South Africa's Kalahari Desert. It is said they contain more of the aboriginal African stock than other Tanganyikan tribes. Their language is adorned with clucks and gutturals similar to those used by the Bushmen. They originally were a hunting and honey-gathering people, but now have taken up herding and somewhat ineffectual cultivation. They continue though with some hunting and honey-gathering.

The first contact made by these tribes with non-Africans is believed to have been with Arab ivory hunters who arrived in the last century. The area was not on the Arab slave routes and thus escaped the horrors inflicted on other East African tribes.

Records show that the Germans were in Kondoa in 1897 and that they posted medical, veterinary and police officers to the town in 1906. The Germans built a fort on the hill next to the river. South African troops captured Kondoa in 1916 and the Germans, retreating under fire, set the fort ablaze.

Only the picturesque double-storied officers' quarters remains of the fort today. It has become the boma or administrative headquarters. Among other relics of German rule are a "hanging" tree and several sturdy stone buildings now the homes of the British officials. In one, the old German police station, there are hooks in the ceiling from which Africans were strung up to be flogged.

The Arabs remained through German and British times and some intermarried with Africans. Relations between the two races are peaceful, though not entirely cordial. One elderly African said to me: "There is some intermarriage, but an African does not forget the treatment of the African in the old days. We are pulling together now, but we still remember the hardships given when we were their slaves."

* Africans have no family names as such, but take their fathers' name---thus: Heri son of (written s/o) Salim.

Islam, though, has drawn them together and they worship at the same mosques. Some of the Tanganyikan sheikhs or Muslim religious leaders are Africans. Suleman s/o Alally, a Somali who holds the responsible job of chief correspondence clerk at the boma, said to me he considers Islam better than Christianity for Africans because: "In the Muslim religion, there is no color bar. A black man can worship side by side with King Ibn Saud of Arabia. But in Tabora, you will find a Christian church where only Europeans go---I have seen it myself. If Europeans really followed Christianity, there could be no color bar."

In Kondoa itself there is no actual color bar and the government officials frequently invite Asians and Africans to their homes. Because of language differences and different customs though (Muslims for instance do not drink alcoholic beverages), close social relationships do not naturally follow.

Kondoa and Tanganyika as a whole have seen less development than neighboring Kenya. The British Protectorate over Kenya was declared in 1895, whereas British rule did not come to Tanganyika until many years later. Then the territory's status between the two world wars---that of a League of Nations mandate---served to retard development. Little money was invested because of its uncertain future; there were fears it would be handed back to Germany to appease Hitler.

The lack of development can be seen in literacy and education. Practically all of the older men are illiterate or all but illiterate. Only among the younger men, who have benefited by schooling introduced by the British, is there any degree of literacy.

Omari, the African school supervisor for the district, said that only 5 to 10 per cent of all school-age children in the district are attending government schools or those mission schools which are registered by the government---i. e., receive financial aid in exchange for maintaining certain academic standards. He said only 5 per cent of the schoolchildren reach the ninth and tenth years of education and only 1 or 2 per cent get to the 11th and 12th years.

Perhaps another 40 per cent of school-age children are attending "bush schools" operated by the Passionist Mission, Omari said. He and other officials consider the academic standards of these schools as very low. Only what amounts to a year or two of schooling is given, they say.

School enrollment will increase as more schools are built. An average of five new schools---some government, some registered mission---are being opened each year.

Omari, son of an African sheikh named Muhaji, is regarded as highly capable by Kondoa's British officials. He is 31 and has had 10 years of schooling, plus two 2-month "refresher" courses. Instruction in his schools is carried on in Swahili, and Omari himself speaks English with difficulty.

In Kondoa, some of the older Africans say they preferred life under the Germans. The Germans were brutal sometimes, but you knew exactly where you stood. But with the easy-going British, one never knows what to do, the old folks complain.

Among others, particularly the younger men, there is another attitude---one more promising to African advancement and self-government. Typical of this is the view held by Sylvester, a sad-faced young Christian clerk at the boma. "I don't like to say it, but I realize we are backward and we need to learn. The English are different from the Germans---they are teaching us what we need to know."

The declared goal of British administration in Tanganyika is self government by all Tanganyikans within the Commonwealth and at Kondoa some first lessons are being given to prepare the Africans for their share in the task. A considerable degree of responsibility has been given to Africans such as Omari and Suleman.

On the side of representative government, the District Council was reorganized 15 months ago to give it a broader base. It now consists of eight elected members, eight nominated members and, on the "official" side, the three chiefs, four of the 13 sub-chiefs and 4 of the 63 village headmen. Winnington-Ingram serves as chairman. Eventually someone like Chief Heri may take over the chairmanship.

The nominated members are picked by Winnington-Ingram after conferring with various African leaders. He tries to select men considered to be influential and to be "go-getters" ---men not necessarily too satisfied with things. He has found that the nominated members tend to contribute more to District Council meetings than other members.

Subject to approval by the British administration, the District Council enacts by-laws, sets the local property tax rate* and decides on expenditures. (Total revenue last year of the Native Authority Treasury was £27,900 or \$78,957. Total expenditure was £24,400 or \$69,052. The balance in the treasury at year's end was £30,500 or \$86,315.)

The treasurer is Mfaume s/o Risasi, a 48-year-old member of the Wasumbwa tribe who received three years of schooling in German times. He handles all day to day business transactions and keeps the books. He speaks no English and keeps his written records in Swahili.

After the District Council has decided upon, say, construction of a new school building, the work is carried out by the Native Authority Works Department, headed by Mganga s/o Kingu, the 29-year-old department supervisor. Mganga has several artisans and at times up to 200 laborers working for him. He will select the site for the new building, work out the design and supervise the construction.

Mganga, an Mnyiramba tribesman, received seven years of schooling, then went to Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika's capital, for five years of training in carpentry at a government school. Returning to Kondoa, he spent three years as a carpenter for the Native Authority and has been supervisor for six years. He is a good soccer player and has played on the Tanganyika team for several years in the Gossage Cup matches between Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar.

Chiefs like Heri, in addition to implementing policy of the District Council and carrying out orders from the administration on government matters, have the responsibility of conducting their courts and hearing appeals from the sub-chiefs' courts. The native courts hear cases such as land disputes and misdemeanors. Winnington-Ingram and his District Officers or assistants---R. J. Hildesley and Don Barton---hear more serious cases. In crimes such as murder, they conduct preliminary hearings, then forward the transcript to a higher court for trial.

* Each adult male pays a head tax of 16 shillings (\$2.24)---set by the central government, and the District Council's local rate of 4 to 30 shillings (\$0.56 to \$4.20).

The other day, while on a four-day foot safari in the district with Winnington-Ingram, I decided to climb Mkonga Mountain, also known as Ghost Mountain. It is the highest point in the district (nearly 7,200 feet) and the top, blessed by a good rainfall from low clouds, is covered with forest. The top also is the dwelling place for various sometimes evil spirits who, the Africans say, must be placated with an offering if one wants to venture into their lair.

Winnington-Ingram and I were camped at the time at Haubi, a tiny village next to a lake and near the foot of the mountain. He was to hold a baraza or "Town Hall meeting" with the local Africans later in the morning, then walk to another village called Pahi for another baraza the next day. I was to descend on the other side of the mountain and meet him at Pahi toward dinnertime.

With three porters, I started up at 9:15 a.m. One carried a pair of field glasses, one carried my lunch and the other carried my jacket. The first hour was spent hiking up the eroded lower slopes of the mountain. Higher up we passed through a strip of thick bush. Then, at 11 a.m., we reached the rain forest.

There was an instant change. The bush had been hot and dusty, but in the forest the air was cool and moist. Towering podo trees blotted out the sun. Underneath this canopy, the earth, no longer bare and cracked, was black, soggy and covered with lush vegetation.

Near the top we made our first offering to the Spirits. The first porter plucked a few blades of grass and handed me one. Then he spat on his blade and placed it in the hollow of a tree. I did likewise.

If one fails to do this, I was told in Swahili and pidgin English, one will be bewitched. He may be charged by a buffalo (be-buffaloed?)---there are many of them dwelling in the forest---or he may get lost or fall off a precipice. The porter stopped at three more trees to repeat the process, then, satisfied that the magic was powerful enough, led the way to the top.

We had lunch at the highest point---atop a huge boulder from which one gets a view of 40 to 50 miles in all directions. In the center of the boulder was a mound of stones and the Africans started pulling the mound apart. What was this? The shrine of the Spirits? An ancestral worship altar? The last stone was removed and I looked at what they wanted me to see--- a small metal plate with the words: "Tanganyika Triangulation Survey."

Below the boulder a buffalo crashed around in the brush. I wished that I had a rifle to go with the blades of grass. But the buffalo kept his distance.

When we got to the bottom of the mountain and had started down the road to Pahi, six miles away, I realized that I had been bewitched anyway. I had left my exposure meter on the top. Prompted by a 10 shilling reward (\$1.40), two of the weary porters climbed back to look for it. I got to Pahi at 6 p.m. and they showed up at 8:30---with the meter.

Back in Kondoa, I found that the village had been having peace for a few days. Mau Mau had broken down in front of Patel's duka. "Mau Mau mgonjwa," Ramazan declared gleefully ("Mau Mau's sick!").

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From Nairobi comes news that the boycotts by the African population against riding on busses, smoking in public and patronizing Asian restaurants are continuing.* When troops were moved into the city on September 30, there were hopes, based on the fact that a few more Africans were venturing aboard busses, that the boycotts might be ending. But these hopes have since been dispelled.

More barbed wire is going up in Nairobi. The authorities are fencing in seven of the African locations. They said the fences were not designed to keep loyal Africans in the locations, but to prevent gangsters from roaming from one to another.

* Reported in DER - 7.

A 76-year-old European civilian, Colonel Reginald Turner, died recently in a hospital of panga wounds received a fortnight earlier in his home in Nairobi. He lived alone and an African servant found him lying in bed. He had been slashed the night before and had lain there wounded and dazed till the servant came. The attack was attributed to Mau Mau.

October 20 was the first anniversary of the Emergency in Kenya.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David E. Reed". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

David E. Reed

Received New York 11/2/53.