

THE KENYA CRISIS

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Is there a *political* solution to the troubles of Kenya—a solution, that is, within the framework of existing parties and party-political activity? That, of course, is what the vast majority of Europeans in Kenya have never believed: they have traditionally held—they hold it still—the idea that political change should never be allowed to reduce their dominant control of the country's affairs. Their immediate response to Mau Mau, typically enough, was to abolish all African political organizations: only after that did they turn their attention to military repression. Their crisis is therefore a chronic one.

But it goes through different phases. Before examining the present phase, let us have a look at the last one: at the "emergency" and the consequences of the "emergency". By the middle of last summer the British Government seemed confident that the repression had largely done its work. "The most striking thing about Kenya today," said Mr. John Hare, Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, last June, "is that while the Emergency is not yet over, the end is at least in sight and militant Mau Mau is affecting the life of the Colony less and less. The latest estimate of terrorist strength is not much more than 1,000, compared with 1,750 only three months ago. There are now only five major leaders at large as against about fifty a year ago." Mau Mau, since then, has continued to weaken month by month, and in October the Government could triumphantly announce the capture of Dedan Kimathi, perhaps the most important of the five leaders still at large.

Thousands were still in concentration camps and prisons. A couple of months later the Heaton Report put it this way: "Valuable work has been done in the last three years in the rehabilitation of thousands of members of Mau Mau. At the height of the emergency some 72,000 members of Mau Mau were in detention and prison camps in the Colony. The number of members of Mau Mau still in detention and in prison camps now is about 44,000, and they are being released at an average rate of 1,500 a month. By the middle of 1957 the bulk of the short- and middle-term Mau Mau convicts will have finished their prison sentences, and those remaining will be, for the most

part, those convicted of the more serious criminal offences, and therefore best dealt with by ordinary prison methods. . . .”

So there would seem to be some grounds for the British Government's confidence; and some hope that the severity of the repression may be alleviated in the near future—and even, conceivably, that non-European politics may begin again. Is it surprising that the repression has “paid off”? On the contrary, what is surprising is that African resistance should have lasted so long. When the history of all this comes to be written, then it will be seen, I fancy, that the Mau Mau rebellion—however morally disgusting in many of its manifestations and however politically misguided—was after all, a turning point. It will have left its deep indelible mark. For this was no mere murderous eruption, soon mastered, soon put down—just one more “trouble” in the story of so many “troubles”. Severity on one side was more than matched by severity on the other. Nothing shows this better than the bleak statistical answer provided last summer by the Minister of State for the Colonies, to a question from Mr. Fenner Brockway on the number of executions carried out since the fighting began. This answer is worth quoting in full:

Charges	Period			Total
	20/10/52 to 19/7/55	20/7/55 to 31/12/55	1/1/56 to 31/3/56	20/10/52 to 31/3/56
Murder - - - -	257	32	8	297
Unlawful Possession of Fire-arms - - -	288	32	17	337
Unlawful Possession of Arm. and Explosives -	87	8		95
Consorting with Terrorists	219	3		222
Furthering Terrorism -	8			8
Demanding Supplies for Terrorists - - - -	2			2
Totals - - - -	909	79	27	1,015

This table shows that for nearly three and a half years the Europeans in Kenya were hanging Africans at the rate of nearly one a day. It is perhaps the best (if also the most painful) comment on the real nature of the emergency.

Now it might be expected, in face of all this bloodletting, that the governors of Kenya would submit themselves to a pretty severe course of self-examination. For whatever shape Mau Mau may have taken in the course of the fighting, nobody really doubts that it took its rise from African despair at ever being able to secure peaceful change. For years before the emergency was declared, after all, every intelligent European in Kenya (and even every unintelligent European, and there are plenty of those) was perfectly well aware of the existence of profound African grievances. They might differ on the nature and justification of the grievances: they knew the grievances were there. Those who wanted to could easily discover what Africans felt about their lot, and what they really wanted. They needed only to consult one or other of the sensible and well-informed leaders of the Kenya African Union; or read the political literature which the Union put out from time to time. There was absolutely no excuse for European ignorance—except European indolence, irresponsibility, and prejudice.

But indolence, irresponsibility, and prejudice must surely be stirred by the last few years in Kenya? Yes, up to a point, they have been; but the point is not very far. Great energy has been spent in providing abstruse anthropological and magical explanations for Mau Mau. We have had a Royal Commission which has issued a learned and immensely long report. Retired Governors have descanted sadly in the columns of *The Times*. British Ministers have fiddled with the *minutiae* of constitutional change. But the results are extraordinarily small in terms of genuine change. Amazingly enough, the Kenya political position remains today very like it was before. With a few fresh reservations, a little less insolence, a modified arrogance, most Kenya Europeans are saying (and evidently thinking) much the same things they said and thought before. Their triple objectives are unchanged: they wanted, and they still want, to shift responsibility for Kenya from Whitehall to Nairobi; to build into any conceivable future constitution a cast-iron guarantee that they, the Europeans, shall remain the real government of the country; and to concede to Africans no more than the shadow and the fringe of what Africans want in terms of land and livelihood, social and political rights, unquestioned equality of human status.

This year we have seen small constitutional changes. Africans are given a little more political representation in a closely controlled legislative Council: but the apparent concession is at

once paralleled by an increase in European political representation. Kenya still lags far behind the political practice and ideology both of Uganda and Tanganyika. Its Legislative Council is still packed with Europeans who completely dominate it in every field of its work or authority. These Europeans, as I say, are still faithful to their past ideas and prejudices.

In March, true enough, there will be elections at which Africans will be able to vote for their half-dozen representatives on the Legislative Council: about 450,000 (out of a total African population of over 5 millions) are expected to be eligible for the voting roll. And one of Kenya's Ministers, Mr. Vasey, has gone so far as to declare himself in support of progress towards a common electoral roll (a voting list, that is, common to all racial communities); although it was clear from what he said that the progress would be nothing if not extremely slow. But these things do not in the least satisfy African (or Asian) aspirations. Europeans may have thought it a big thing to admit Africans to "parity of representation"—they meant, of course, in numbers, not in real influence: but Africans no longer accept parity. They point to neighbouring countries and ask for much more than parity. Said a very moderate African leader not long ago on this point—he was Mr. Kodhek of the Nairobi District African Congress: "What the Africans wanted was to modify the Lyttleton Plan (for constitutional change) now to allow two additional Africans in the Legislative Council and one additional African Minister with a Portfolio. The non-African said that we could not have these at their expense, and that any changes must include increases in their own numbers to keep Africans in the third place in their own country." The brutal fact is that the political balance of power in Kenya has not shifted at all: or, if it has, then it has shifted *towards* the Europeans, not away from them. This must seem a curious way of trying to make peace.

No wonder, then, that leading Africans in Kenya declare that European ambitions and intentions are unchanged. One of them, Mr. Tom Mboya, writing lately in *Drum*, remarked that the "basic racial attitude of the Europeans has not altered" despite the changes which had taken place since the emergency. "Today, many people talk of the need for Europeans to make concessions and gestures which will help to win confidence in European leadership. But the African does not ask for concessions, nor need gestures of European generosity. He is not asking for privileges. The African asks for his rights. He seeks to establish

equality of all individuals, black, brown or white. In this demand there can be no half-way compromise, for it is either absolute equality or superiority of one over the other.

"It is because of this," continued Mr. Mboya, "that I believe that the whole idea of multi-racialism or partnership is bound to fail. Both these terms are open to a variety of interpretations, but in their East and Central African context they mean recognition of participation of all racial groups in the Government. They consist not of the recognition of individual citizenship rights but of group rights. . . ." Now it is just these "group rights" that Europeans in Kenya will not recognise: or, if they do recognise them, then they recognise them only on a "multi-racial" basis. Africans can have certain rights, that is, provided that these are "African rights". They cannot have *human rights* like everyone else. But this, as Mr. Mboya also said, is the best way to perpetuate and inflame racialism. "Insistence on a 'multi-racial' Government," said Mr. Mboya, and surely he was right, "will in fact help to promote racialism, and hence create even greater dangers to the Europeans than they at present recognise."

The *politics and parties* of Kenya are still, therefore, what they were before: a flimsy camouflage for European autocracy. Behind and beyond that autocracy the non-European peoples of Kenya suffer and persist, thinking their own thoughts, hoping their own hopes, expecting little from their masters—and waiting, no doubt, for the day when those masters shall at last have lost their power. On all that, there is little that can usefully be said. In the political foreground, meanwhile, the settlers have divided into two main political groupings—respectively, the followers of Mr. Michael Blundell and the Independence Group that is led by Group-Captain Briggs. In last autumn's elections the Independence Group won eight of the fourteen European "elected seats" in the Legislative Council, and the followers of Mr. Blundell won the rest, the Capricorn and Federal Independence Party's candidates being defeated. Now Mr. Blundell's views are reasonably well known. What does this newly constituted—and rather successful—Independence Group want for Kenya? It wants—and these, please note, are the more "progressive" of the settlers—exactly what the Kenya settlers have always wanted.

"We intend to press", said a pre-electoral statement signed by its leaders, "for progressive transfer of executive authority

from the Colonial Office to the Government of Kenya, and for the progressive removal of restrictions on the legislative authority of the Legislative Council of Kenya. This implies no desire to cut adrift from the Imperial connexion"—the Kenya settlers, you see, are not quite so arrogant as they used to be—" (for) that must be maintained, not only for purposes of defence and foreign relations, but also by reason of our affection and loyalty for the Queen and fellow-countrymen in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth." The fellow-countrymen in the United Kingdom, after all, provided most of the money and most of the soldiers in the late "emergency".

"But"—and here comes the main point—"we must aim at full control of our internal affairs at the earliest possible date. We would agree to the Colonial Office reserving power of veto in respect of racial legislation."

Even the Kenya settlers know that the Colonial Office has had that veto in Southern Rhodesia since 1923, and has never once used it. But "we are opposed to any scheme of provincial independence which might go so far as to deprive Europeans of leadership and control of the Colony as a whole". And that's that: the majority group of Europeans is hereby serving notice on the world that it wants, and means to have, exactly what its fathers and forefathers wanted. Can Africans in Kenya be blamed for despairing of ever getting sense out of such people?

Yet in spite of all these limitations, there is certain to be a political struggle in Kenya over the coming months and years. No solution may be possible within the present framework of parties and constitutional rights—everything confirms that this is true: then, in that case, the framework will have to be changed. And if it cannot be changed then it will have to be shattered. Though nothing may shift in the minds of Kenya settlers, a great deal shifts in the minds of Africans: and a great deal shifts in the world that lies beyond the racial barriers of Africa. In spite of their loud declarations of self-confidence, the Kenya settlers are no longer the self-elected supermen they once believed themselves to be: and for all their crippling losses, the Africans of Kenya are no longer the mere *objects* of policy. There exists, today, an African public opinion. It has learnt from its experiences and its sufferings. It is becoming mature. It will not be set aside, casually, contemptuously, for much longer.