

THE KENYA QUESTION MARK

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KENYA'S future is dominated by a massive question mark. No one can really forecast the role of the ageing Jomo Kenyatta, who waits patiently in restriction for the release which will bring him back into active national politics. It is impossible to say for certain how he will react to the context of contemporary Kenya, or what he is now like after his years of imprisonment and restriction.

The general elections of February this year implemented the Macleod constitution of 1960, when grudging agreement had been reached between the Africans, the moderate 'Blundellite' Europeans and the British Colonial Government. The Africans were to have their first elected majority in the Legislative Council, but they were not to have control over Kenya's 'Cabinet', the Executive Council.

In the Executive Council the Africans were to be outnumbered by 8 to 4; 3 Ministries were reserved for elected Europeans, 4 for European officials, 1 for an Asian and 4 for elected Africans. Furthermore, it was the Governor of Kenya and not the African Members who would select the Executive.

Thus Iain Macleod had allowed for African advance; but he had left sufficient power in the hands of the Kenya Governor to carry on the government without the co-operation of the African Members, should difficulties arise. The African parties had been able to organise on a nation-wide basis since the end of the Kenya Emergency. The electoral roll was wide enough to furnish most Africans with the vote, though the African constituencies were somewhat strangely composed. As *'The Economist'* commented afterwards: "It is certain that never again will 7,700 Masai be allowed to return two Members while 82,000 Kikuyu voters around Nyeri are represented by only one."

At the same time, the moderate Europeans—supporters of Michael Blundell's New Kenya Party—won some concessions at Lancaster House. A complex electoral system was devised to help them return to the Legislative Council. They had to win a minimum of 25% of the votes of their own European community in a primary election; but once they had accomplished this, they were almost certain of being swept to power on the

common roll, when the vast majority of voters in their constituencies would be Africans.

When the election campaign started, late in 1960, the contests for the African seats became the centre of interest in Kenya. The most stolid Kenya settler could see that the future of the country would soon lie firmly in the hands of the African majority. 1960 was virtually the first year that the settler newspapers had followed the intricacies of African politics with close attention, and the elections provided headline news.

There were already two well-established African parties. The Kenya African National Union (K.A.N.U.) was the more militant nationalist movement. It had leaders of international standing in James Gichuru, Tom Mboya, Dr. Gikonyo Kiano and A. O. Oginga Odinga. These leaders had connections with the Pan-African political movement and had from time to time received wide publicity in the world's press.

K.A.N.U. was essentially an urban party. It was overwhelmingly strong in Nairobi and even in the port town of Mombasa, situated in the middle of its rival—the Kenya African Democratic Union—dominated coastline. The Kikuyu tribe (more than a million strong) saw K.A.N.U. as the logical successor to the Kenya African Union of pre-Mau Mau days. They also supported it because its leaders were conscious of the Kikuyu need for urban employment as an outlet for traditional Kikuyu land pressure. Finally, K.A.N.U. enjoyed the reputation of being Kenyatta's party. This was a tremendous advantage to the party in Kikuyuland and among literate Africans throughout the country.

The rival Kenya African Democratic Union (K.A.D.U.) was formed largely as a reaction to K.A.N.U. Its followers came from most of the smaller tribes, which feared that the Kikuyu and Luo would gain absolute control of K.A.N.U.; the party itself was founded by the leaders of small tribal associations—Ronald Ngala, Masinde Muliro and John Keen—who formed K.A.D.U. at a time when K.A.N.U. looked as if it would unify the Africans of Kenya into one single nationalist movement.

K.A.D.U. leaders made much of their 'democracy' compared with the 'dictatorship' of K.A.N.U.; their party was certainly organised without internal rivalry or dissension. The K.A.D.U. leaders also claimed that their K.A.N.U. counterparts were difficult associates. Ronald Ngala described Tom Mboya as "quite impossible to work with".

Nearly all of the 33 African elected seats were contested. In some places party discipline broke down altogether, and two or three candidates of the same party stood against each other in the same constituencies. K.A.N.U. was particularly afflicted by internal strife, with the result that branch offices and national headquarters were frequently unable to agree on which candidate to support.

Members of both parties, and the majority of independent candidates, were in agreement on basic issues. They all wanted immediate independence, rapid Africanisation and the release of Jomo Kenyatta, and there was little to differentiate between them except their personal ability and past records.

Despite gloomy predictions in European quarters, each African candidate did not try to outbid the other in extremism. On the contrary, the election campaigns ran smoothly and without racial incidents. Nor were there any reports of intimidation or violence among Africans, while many African leaders, who were fighting stern election battles, actually found time to make 'responsible' statements about the need for foreign investment, the future of Europeans and other such delicate subjects. The lack of real issues to divide the candidates, however, led instead to intense personal rivalry between them. Internecine warfare in K.A.N.U. itself was as bitter as it was unexpected in a party trying to win an election campaign.

The long smouldering ill-feeling between the fiery Oginga Odinga and his associates on the one side, and Tom Mboya and James Gichuru on the other, blazed openly during the election campaign.

Oginga Odinga is of the same generation as James Gichuru; both men are nearing their fifties. He is a former schoolteacher, solid, bald, with fierce shining eyes. To the outsider his approach to politics seems to be flamboyantly emotional. His speeches in the Legislative Council, however, delivered in a high-pitched stream of words and punctuated by vigorous gesticulations, show a keen instinct for what is politically apt. Odinga has a charming manner, abundant hospitality and generosity; he is almost worshipped in his home country of Central Nyanza.

Odinga's chief rival, since in 1957 they first came together in the Legislative Council, has been Tom Mboya. Odinga is bitterly angry at the reputation Mboya has acquired internationally as leader of the African Elected Members, and he has an intense personal dislike for his fellow Luo tribesman.

Tom Mboya, a glamorous young leader of thirty, is someone who glitters with pragmatic, logical brilliance. His ability in the fields of negotiation, disputation, platform oratory, and interviewmanship is well enough known and unquestioned even by his enemies, but he suffers the misfortune of seeming to be self-assured to the point of open arrogance. Whatever reasons there are for it, he has acquired the reputation of being "quite impossible to work with."

In the past Odinga has persistently pursued a policy opposed to that followed by Mboya. When Mboya cultivated the friendship of the United States for assistance in the fields of higher education and trade unions, Odinga was reported to have sought the help of China. And when Mboya committed himself to the Western-orientated International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Odinga vigorously supported the independent All African Trade Union Federation. Whatever the personal rivalry, Odinga appears to follow a general political line to the left of Mboya, attacking such association with the West as appears to compromise his demands for an unaffiliated Africa.

Odinga indeed spoke on the election platforms of Dr. Waiyaki, a young Kikuyu doctor of medicine, who had decided to oppose Mboya in the Nairobi East constituency. Another who spoke with Waiyaki was Dr. Kiano, once a close friend of Mboya.

Mboya, in his turn, supported F. W. Odede, the veteran politician recently released from detention, in Odinga's constituency. He also made an attempt, a few weeks before the elections, to have Odinga expelled from K.A.N.U. In this he had the support of the stolid, weighty-worded party President, James Gichuru, who signed a statement giving reasons why he thought Odinga should leave the party. The K.A.N.U. Executive Council, however, tottering on the brink of elections, preserved some semblance of internal unity by producing a statement which skated over differences and called for a stop to dissension.

Many educated Africans took Odinga's part in his quarrel with Mboya. Prominent among them were the remnants of the 'Ginger Group'—a body of young men in K.A.N.U. who were trying to get the party to adopt more militant policies—and the Kikuyu élite, living in Nairobi and working in the professions and government service. But this unpopularity of Mboya with the Nairobi élite was more than balanced by his immense following among the mass of Nairobi workers.

When polling took place, the K.A.D.U. leadership was, to

all intents and purposes, united; but K.A.N.U. was still quarrelling, despite attempts by men of the centre, like Mwai Kibaki, to avoid a headlong clash.

The elections removed none of the principal conflicting personalities from the Legislative Council. On the contrary, all the main African leaders were returned in their own constituencies. Tom Mboya won by such a large majority that his four opponents, including Dr. Waiyaki, lost their deposits. This meant that he had persuaded the Kikuyu, who formed more than half his electorate, to ignore their fellow tribesman. It also showed that Odinga and the Kikuyu élite had supported Waiyaki in vain.

But Odinga was returned in Nyanza Central—a two member constituency—with an overwhelming majority, while Mboya's old rival, Clement Argwings Khodeck, was returned as the second candidate. Meanwhile Mboya's candidate, F. W. Odede, polled only a handful of votes.

James Gichuru had been returned unopposed at Kiambu in Kikuyuland, and Dr. Kiano won handsomely in another Kikuyu seat, while the leader of K.A.D.U., Ronald Ngala, had a sweeping victory on the coast. Thus all of the first-rank African leaders found themselves back in the Legislative Council.

As to the parties themselves, K.A.N.U. won a definite, but by no means devastating victory, over K.A.D.U. It won 18 seats while K.A.D.U. won 11, with the 4 remaining Members being Independents. One Independent then joined K.A.D.U., bringing its total to 12.

Later the Legislative Council, sitting as an electoral college, elected 4 Africans, 4 Asians and 4 Europeans as 'national members'. Here again K.A.N.U. exhibited disunity in its support of candidates, and three of the four Africans elected identified themselves with K.A.D.U. The final strength of the parties was accordingly 19 for K.A.N.U. and 15 for K.A.D.U. Whatever the composition of the two parties in the Legislative Council however, there could be no doubt that K.A.N.U. had emerged from the elections by far the stronger African movement in the country. It had polled some three times as many votes as K.A.D.U.—467,472 to 142,580—and been prevented from sweeping the African elected seats in the Legislative Council only by a combination of its own internal differences and the idiosyncrasy of the electoral delimitations.

With the completion of the elections, the Kenyatta issue again flared into dominance. K.A.N.U. refused to participate in the formation of any government until Kenyatta was released. K.A.D.U. at first refused as well; but after consultations with the Colonial Secretary, the party announced that it would agree to help in the formation of a government. The Governor of Kenya then announced that Kenyatta would be moved from Maralal to Kiambu district, only a few miles outside Nairobi, where a house would be built for him. K.A.D.U. was clearly counting on being able to present itself to the electorate as having been responsible for accomplishing concessions from the colonial administration and was clearly calculating on being in a position to present land and political reforms which would increase its standing as a nationalist movement with the Africans of the country. At the end of April it was announced that Ronald Ngala would become Leader of Government Business and Minister of Education; Masinde Muliro, Minister of Commerce and Industry; and a third member of K.A.D.U., T. Arap Towett, Minister of Labour and Housing. Ngala offered one Ministry—reportedly that of Commerce and Industry—to a K.A.N.U. Member, but this was rejected. There were reported differences among the K.A.N.U. Members over participation in any government, but by the end of April it appeared that the large bulk of the party would have nothing to do with the administration until Kenyatta was released.

Whatever the present constitutional standing of K.A.D.U., it remains unlikely at the moment that it will seriously be able to compete with K.A.N.U. as the major African nationalist party. It is on the release of Kenyatta himself and the part that he will play in Kenya politics that so much depends. There seems little question that Kenyatta himself would bring to K.A.N.U. the unity that it so calamitously lacks at the moment, forging its factions behind him into an effective political force. Precisely which of the factions—if any—he is likely to support remains uncertain. He doubtless recognises the urgency of a united K.A.N.U. and is likely to do all the leading himself, with all the elements in the party falling into step behind him. Certainly he must be released at once. The British Government cannot keep the acknowledged leader of the Kenya Africans much longer in restriction without shouldering all responsibility for a racial crisis that will once more rack the country.