

# A PLAN FOR PEACE IN KENYA

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**K**ENYA today presents not an insoluble problem, but a problem which no-one is genuinely attempting to solve. So far as the Government, the Army, the Police Forces and the settlers (if not the whole 'White' community) are concerned, a position of deadlock seems to be accepted as inevitable and incurable. They carry on a war which they cannot win other than by the complete extermination of the African population, which would be too costly, too long drawn-out, and too dangerous for their position in other territories of Africa. But they do not know how to end it. Some often try to behave like Bismarck, but they forget that even he, lover of bayonets, knew that one could do anything with bayonets except sit on them.

What goes to create the *impasse*? To begin with, there is among the settlers and many other Whites an absolute 'White supremacy' attitude that goes far beyond mere colour bar. The settlers—so-called because they settle on the land, and not because they ever showed any disposition to any other kind of settlement—number a little over 3,000, say, with their families, 10,000. I cannot describe them more accurately than by quoting Mr. Cyril Dunn in the *Observer*: he wrote that 'among the settlers there are decent honest folk'. I agree with him.

For the settlers, and for a good many more of the small white population, but by no means for all of it, it is axiomatic that the African is, and should be, an inferior being; that he has no right to good land to cultivate, nor facilities to improve his cultivation, or to buy and use for himself the machinery which—when he works for starvation wages on 'white' farms in the White Highlands—he learns to use very well; that he should be barred from cultivating certain crops, and paid much less than Whites for other cash crops which he is permitted to grow. And when all these restrictions produce the inevitable result of poverty and apparent backwardness of the African, he is chided for it. And the White idea of wages for Africans who are driven by land-hunger to work for wages, is that by 1960 the wages should go up to a point where they will be adequate for a man and his wife, but not for his children. Following the publication of the *Report of the Committee on African Wages* (Carpenter Report), the Kenya Government decided to achieve with-

in five years an 'adult' wage sufficient for a man and his wife. It rejected the Committee's recommendation that a 'family' wage should include sufficient for a man, wife and two children on the ground that it 'would place too great a strain on the country's economy'. That is, in effect, an official declaration that all Africans who work for wages, and their families, should starve now, and for five years to come, but that thereafter not they but only their children should starve!

Over against that attitude comes the point of view of the Africans, who outnumber the settlers and their families by at least five hundred to one. None of them—until well on into the 'Emergency', now nearly two and a half years old—demanded that the Whites should leave Kenya at present. They ask for much less. They want a greater share in the government of their country. They want more land. They want better land, particularly in the White Highlands, those lovely fertile uplands lying in an ideal climate, on which hundreds of thousands of them work, at wages officially declared (as shown above) to be starvation wages, to grow and reap crops for the settlers, whose absolute refusal ever to let any African cultivate such lands for himself has just been expressly under-written by Mr. Lennox-Boyd, who has graduated from being chief supporter of Franco to become Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies. (And do not forget that over half these White Highlands are and have been for years lying *uncultivated*, waiting for White immigrants who may come some time.) The Africans want, too, machinery and loans to enable them to cultivate more fruitfully the lands they have and the better land the return of which they are demanding. They want freedom to grow all crops, and to be paid equally with the White for their cash crops. They want better education. And, for those who are not cultivators, they want opportunities to work in higher and better-paid posts than those to which they are now restricted, and a living wage for less-skilled workers.

Faced with these modest demands of the Africans, and with a body of settlers able to dominate the Government to a substantial extent, and endowed with an inflexibility and a political outlook which might have shocked even George III and Lord North, an explosion was bound to come. When it came, it presented the Whites and their Government with the problem which always confronts those whose colonialist behaviour provokes explosions. What were they to do? There were not many choices. Negotiate? Make concessions? Start a war?

The Government chose the last. For two and a half years it has been making war, the most savage and brutal war even in colonial records, in which there seems little prospect of victory for either side, for it is nearly always impossible to defeat men who are fighting in and for their own land. Much more serious, it is clear that a 'White' victory, if it could be won, would put any true solution, that is, any remedy for the grievances of the Africans, further off than ever. There would be a restoration of what one might call the '*instabilitas quo*', with the only question: when would the war start up again?

The attitude of the settlers is still, in the main, the same as it was at the outset. Whilst some settlers, tired of the war, would like to sell their farms and leave Kenya, the bulk of them are still determined to fight on to an inconclusive victory, largely at the expense of the British tax-payer, and at an incalculable loss to everyone in human and material values. The Government itself has gone no further in attempts to find a solution than to announce terms for surrender which are a complete farce, and which are generally regarded as a mere cover for an amnesty offer to the security forces who have committed atrocities against Africans.

This unsatisfactory position has developed in the last two or three months into a greater crisis. Torture of prisoners to extract evidence and other atrocities have either increased or been increasingly exposed. Colonel Young, the Commissioner of Police—who can be taken, from a long training in the Metropolitan Police, and wide experience in organising the police in Malaya, to be not particularly 'soft'—has resigned, and his resignation is officially stated to be due to dissatisfaction with abuses by the Government forces. The conduct of these forces has also been strongly condemned by Mr. Justice Holmes, of the Supreme Court of Kenya, whom a long period of service as judge and procurator-general in Egypt may equally acquit of undue fussiness.

More strikingly, more and more of the non-settler sections of the 'Whites' are becoming dissatisfied with the policy of the Government and of the settlers; and a certain number of the settlers want to cut their losses and leave the Colony. More important still, the Christian Churches have shown their indignation at the conduct of the fighting, and of the Government generally. The Moderator of the Church of Scotland in Kenya preached a very strong sermon on the matter on January 9, and the Church Missionary Society has published a strong pamphlet on the same lines. Governments in

Kenya and other colonies have so long relied on the Christian Churches as part of the apparatus of 'law and order' that this criticism from the Churches is of the greatest value and importance.

The position today is thus one of growing hopelessness for the present policies, growing division among the Whites, and growing uneasiness and sense of shame in Britain itself. But it is not yet one in which the Government of Kenya, still less that of Britain, shows any sign of a desire to seek any real solution, or to defy the settlers; and the Americans are apparently offering financial help to the Kenya Government.

In such a position, the British people owe it to themselves and to common humanity—and even those who want any Whites at all to remain in Kenya owe it to their own desires and interests—to insist on a solution being reached. How does one find solutions? Outside Pentagons and mental hospitals, the method of negotiation is commonly used. So let there be at once negotiations for a cease-fire, an amnesty for the resistance fighters and political prisoners, and a settlement of the just demands of the Africans. Let the Government be shown that it must not accept dictation from the settlers, who will attempt to resist such a solution. Settlers can no longer, in this epoch, be financed in a war to deny to Africans all the basic human rights to which Africans are as much entitled as anyone else. This is not only because such a war is bound to fail, and to drag the settlers into the sea with it, but because to fight for such things is an affront to human dignity which we will not tolerate.

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