New Crisis Looms in Kenya

by I. Coz

BEFORE Maudling gave up his position as Colonial Secretary in the recent British cabinet changes to become the new Chancellor, he delivered two pithy speeches which seem to be written in the book of Kenyan history. The first was to announce that the elections would be held in 1961. There would then be a long period of self-government, with real government in British hands. No date had yet been fixed for Kenya's independence. In the meantime, the British government was forced to concede that it is now not likely until the end of this year.

The second speech was to announce a freehand land law for 230 million acres, or nearly one-third of the three million acres of European mixed-farming land in the White Highlands during the four years of 1947-51. The Government case is that this scheme will provide farms of 70,000 African landless families during this period, namely one half of the existing 150,000 landless families.

These two declarations are part of a single strategy, the first to be followed by the British rulers to put their land scheme into operation and the second an attempt to commit and advance the new independent Kenya to continue paying out millions to the European settlers.

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Constitution before any date could be set for Kenya's independence. Maudling's experience in Kenya comes to an end, and in the House of Lords in May this year, he seemed to be well armed to sweep the poll if elections took place this year. Even L. S. and M. in some quarters of the Kenya government (one of the few backwoodsmen) had to admit to the House of Lords in May this year, "It seems to be widely taken for granted that Kenya is in the end likely to be the beneficiary of the majority of the electorate."

To safeguard against this Lord Salisbury (friend of Welensky and Taboroh) emphasized that "It should be made clear to the African political leaders, and to the European population and everyone else that there will be no general election in Kenya until the details of a new constitution have been agreed.

Maudling's strategy was to win the support of the noble lords. KADU knows it has no chance in any election, but it is possible that it will be no longer an active political force in the country in 1956. So its leaders are fighting for every possible means to prevent an agreement with RANU on a new constitution and to hold on to the power of the old constitution. During Maudling's visit in July, it voiced a demand for a permanent coalition, and that this should be entwined in the new Kenya constitution.

Though both parties prior to the election were pledged not to form a government until KANU was re-elected, KADU broke this pledge and joined hands with Sir Michael Bhindel (Prime Minister of Kenya) and other Europeans and formed a minority government. From this it is clear that government is of British interest and that the British have been the chief instrument of British strategy and to create and widen the divisions in Kenya. At the end of the London talks in March, 1961, Maudling presented an offer to the leaders of KANU and KADU to form a coalition government and to agree to an agreement on the future constitution before any date could be set for Kenya's independence.

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