
Gli scritti di Eileen Fletcher sulla repressione britannica in Kenya (4-18 maggio 1956)

a cura di

Bruna Bianchi

Il 4 maggio 1956 comparve sul periodico pacifista “Peace News. The International Pacifist Weekly” un articolo a firma di Eileen Fletcher: *Kenya’s Concentration Camps. An Eyewitness Account*. In tre pagine fitte, corredate da numerose immagini, l’autrice, che per sedici mesi aveva ricoperto l’incarico di sovrintendente alla “riabilitazione” al campo di Kamiti, portava a conoscenza dell’opinione pubblica la terribile realtà della repressione britannica della rivolta Mau Mau (Land Freedom Army). Durante quella campagna sanguinosa, che causò centinaia di migliaia di morti, furono violate le convenzioni internazionali sui diritti umani e sul trattamento dei prigionieri di guerra, si fece ricorso alla detenzione senza processo, alla deportazione in campi di concentramento e in riserve, alla tortura, al lavoro forzato, alle esecuzioni sommarie.

Al primo articolo in cui venivano descritte le condizioni nei campi, nei centri di detenzione e di screening, nei villaggi “di emergenza” che Eileen Fletcher aveva visitato nel corso della sua attività in Kenya, ne seguirono altri due, rispettivamente l’11 e il 18 maggio: *Truth about Kenya. Where Justice Lies Buried e White Supremacy in Kenya*. Gli articoli furono poi raccolti in un opuscolo a cura del Movement for Colonial Freedom con il titolo: *Truth about Kenya. An Eyewitness Account by Eileen Fletcher Former Reahabilitation Officer Kenya Government*; l’opuscolo fu messo in vendita a uno scellino.

Eileen Fletcher, originaria del Middlesex, quacchera, impegnata da vent’anni nel lavoro sociale, in particolare nell’assistenza psicologica e psichiatrica, aveva ricoperto importanti incarichi pubblici. Durante il conflitto trascorse due anni in Uganda come responsabile dell’educazione e dell’assistenza in un campo che accoglieva tremila profughi polacchi. Quando, sempre durante il conflitto, venne destinata ad un altro incarico che avrebbe implicato una sua diretta partecipazione allo sforzo bellico, Eileen Fletcher diede le dimissioni.

Sono quacchera e obiettrice di coscienza per convinzione religiosa. Durante la guerra ho dovuto dare le dimissioni da un incarico governativo che occupavo da dieci anni perdendo tutti i miei diritti pensionistici quando improvvisamente mi fu chiesto di fornire consigli alle aziende industriali sul modo di aumentare la produzione di guerra!

Nel dicembre del 1954 fu chiamata da Thomas Garrett Askwith a collaborare al programma di riabilitazione in Kenya, un programma che nelle intenzioni di Askwith era volto a svincolare la popolazione kikuyu dall’influenza Mau Mau

attraverso un piano di riforme sociali, economiche, educative e la pratica dell'inclusione razziale. Eileen Fletcher, che condivideva le idee di Askwith, così spiega la sua decisione di recarsi in Kenya:

Sono andata in Kenya nel dicembre del 1954 per lavorare nei campi in cui erano internati i Mau Mau perché ero preoccupata di quanto scrivevano i giornali inglesi sulle atrocità commesse sia dai Mau Mau che da alcuni cittadini britannici impegnati nella repressione del loro movimento.

[...] Volevo aiutare i prigionieri Mau Mau durante la loro detenzione; poiché avevo vissuto per due anni in un campo profughi isolato e per un anno in un campo di riabilitazione per ex prigionieri di guerra, sapevo per esperienza quanto potesse essere avvilente e demoralizzante una simile condizione.

Il programma di Askwith ottenne il formale appoggio del governatore del Kenya, ma nel complesso negli ambienti governativi e tra i coloni prevalse la volontà di eliminare la popolazione kikuyu. Il progetto quindi non ottenne sostegno né finanziamenti adeguati e nelle testimonianze raccolte negli ultimi anni i sopravvissuti nulla ricordano della riabilitazione se non le occasionali partite di pallone, gli slogan di propaganda coloniale gridati all'interno dei campi, la distribuzione di volantini sui successi coloniali britannici e sul buon trattamento riservato ai nativi nei "villaggi di emergenza".

Che il programma di riabilitazione per le autorità coloniali e per il governo britannico non fosse altro che un espediente per giustificare agli occhi dell'opinione pubblica i campi di concentramento e per occultare le crudeltà che vi venivano commesse, fu immediatamente chiaro ad Eileen Fletcher. A proposito di un centro destinato all'insegnamento della lingua kikuyu ai *rehabilitation officers* scrive:

Il locale era pieno di bottiglie di birra vuote e la "conversazione" più frequente consisteva in urla del tipo: "ragazzo, portami un'altra birra" e "ma quand'È che mi daranno una pistola?".

Dopo sedici mesi di attività Eileen Fletcher rompe il suo contratto di quattro anni e decise di tornare in Inghilterra per rendere nota la realtà della repressione in Kenya.

Quando dissi ad un membro della Società missionaria che sarei tornata in patria per dire alla gente cosa stava succedendo in Kenya, mi rispose: "nessuno, a meno che non abbia visto con i suoi stessi occhi, ti crederà Nessuno crederà a una depravazione tanto diffusa.

In Inghilterra gli articoli di Eileen Fletcher, la denuncia più ampia, documentata e puntuale che fosse stata avanzata fino ad allora, pose al centro del dibattito politico la questione del Kenya. Per la prima volta infatti nel giugno 1956 la repressione nella colonia fu discussa ampiamente in Parlamento. A mettere in imbarazzo il governo era la credibilità di Eileen Fletcher: un'apprezzata operatrice sociale che aveva ricoperto un incarico pubblico in Kenya, che godeva della stima di Askwith e della fiducia dell'opinione pubblica.

Tra le rivelazioni apparse su "Pece News" suscitavano particolare sdegno le condizioni di detenzione a Kamiti delle bambine e delle adolescenti; condannate all'ergastolo, erano costrette al lavoro forzato e punite con la cella di rigore.

La detenzione delle bambine fu l'unica violazione che il ministro delle colonie Alan Lennox-Boyd si preoccupò di confutare accampano presunti errori nei documenti giudiziari: in realtà – sostenne - si trattava di quindicenni, un'età in cui il ricorso alla detenzione era perfettamente lecito. Egli non accolse la richiesta dell'opposizione di aprire un'inchiesta ufficiale su quanto stava avvenendo in Kenya e si rifiutò di rendere conto di tutte le atrocità, soprusi, torture riportate da "Peace News"; preferì coprire di discredito Eileen Fletcher. L'apparato del Ministero delle colonie si impegnò in una campagna denigratoria: Eileen Fletcher fu definita un'isterica, una donna dal carattere malevolo; la sua capacità di giudizio e la sua buona fede furono messe in dubbio; il suo lavoro fu considerato superficiale e il suo resoconto pieno di grossolani errori.

La vicenda di Eileen Fletcher per molti versi può essere accostata a quella di Emily Hobhouse. Ritroviamo lo stesso desiderio di andare in aiuto a donne e bambini rinchiusi nei campi di concentramento, la stessa scelta di tornare in patria per rendere note le atrocità commesse nelle colonie da parte della Gran Bretagna. Sia nel 1901 che nel 1956 le rivelazioni di tali atrocità si imposero all'attenzione dell'opinione pubblica e condizionarono il dibattito politico. Tanto Eileen Fletcher che Emily Hobhouse furono accusate di mentire, di essere incompetenti a giudicare, di essere isteriche. Nel caso di Eileen Fletcher che, a differenza di Emily Hobhouse, aveva avuto riconoscimenti pubblici, la campagna denigratoria fu forse ancora più aspra, la volontà di distruggere la sua credibilità ancora più accanita.

I resoconti di Eileen Fletcher ancora oggi sono fonti preziose per ricostruire gli ultimi anni del dominio coloniale britannico in Kenya. Nel 1963, infatti, immediatamente prima dell'inizio della decolonizzazione, gran parte della documentazione ufficiale che testimoniava massacri e torture venne intenzionalmente distrutta; dagli archivi del Ministero delle Prigioni e da quelli per gli Affari Africani corrispondenze e rapporti furono fatti sparire.

Qui di seguito È riprodotto integralmente il testo dei tre articoli pubblicati su "Peace News" il 4, l'11 e il 18 maggio 1956. Il periodico, a quanto mi risulta, in Italia è posseduto solo dalla biblioteca della Casa della nonviolenza di Verona, i cui addetti ingrato per la cortesia e la disponibilità che mi hanno dimostrato.

Nella trascrizione abbiamo rispettato scrupolosamente l'originale ad eccezione delle numerose fotografie che corredano gli articoli e che ritraggono gruppi di sospettati dietro il filo spinato in attesa degli interrogatori, uomini e donne sorpresi di notte dai raids o in marcia verso le riserve, soldati intenti alla requisizione del bestiame. Contiamo di inserirle nella nostra galleria immagini in uno dei prossimi numeri.

I - Kenya's Concentration Camps, An Eyewitness Account,

by Eileen Fletcher

This is a true account of things I have seen and heard myself and of things told me by responsible officials. It is not exaggerated or written up in any way. These things are known and accepted in Kenya. Because I would not accept them it was made impossible for me to continue my work although the Government could not get anyone else in my place.

One Church Missionary Society worker, when I told her I was coming home to tell people what was happening in Kenya said, "No one will believe you, unless they have seen it. No one would believe that such widespread corruption exists".

I went to Kenya in December 1954 to work in Mau Mau Camps because I was concerned at the accounts in English papers of atrocities committed both by the Mau Mau and by certain British people in suppressing them.

My religion teaches me "there is a way of God in every situation" and I was anxious to prove this in the trouble areas of Kenya. Also I was anxious to help Mau Mau Detainees during their time of imprisonment, for having lived for two years in an isolated Refugee Camp and for one year in a Rehabilitation Camp for Ex-Prisoners of War, I know from experience how frustrating and demoralising such life can be.

I was appointed as a Rehabilitation Officer by the Kenya Government and worked in the Department of Community Development and Rehabilitation under the first and as yet the only African Minister. Shortly afterwards I was made Staff Officer in charge of Rehabilitation of Women and Girls in Mau Mau Detention Camps and Prisons throughout the Colony.

Sweeps

From time to time sweeps of varying sizes were carried out by Police and Troops, especially after the murder of a European or after a gang had stolen food.

I was told by Dr. Gregory, Head of the Save the Children Fund in Nairobi, that during one of the early sweeps, Operation Anvil, troops went into all the African locations in Nairobi, rounded up all the African adults and took them to a Reception Camp.

No one gave a thought to the children and as long as 48 hours after, tiny babies were found in cots who had had no care, attention or food during the whole of that time. I also heard him repeat this at a meeting.

The head of one Government Department told me that during the same operation one of the men detained was an African who had worked for one firm in Nairobi for 12 years. During his detention he was screened "white" (i.e. clear of Mau Mau) and sent back to Nairobi. He could have gone back into his job but the District Commissioner would not give him a permit to stay in Nairobi and he was sent to his Tribal Reserve where he had never lived. The life was quite strange to him, with practically no chance of employment.

The District Commissioners have complete power over such things. I was present when the heads of two Government Departments were discussing two of them. They described them as “a couple of thugs, completely anti-African”.

The attitude of the British in Kenya to these sweeps has become quite callous. I met English women whose African houseboys had been swept up for screening, although they belonged to a tribe not affected by Mau Mau, simply on suspicion because a gang had been seen somewhere in the neighborhood. They were marched off about 6.30 a.m. before breakfast, and kept all day at the Police Station, all night and until 2 p.m. the following day.

They said during the whole of that time they had no food, there was no sleeping accommodation, and although it was a cold night no blankets or covering were provided. These servants had been for several years with the English families, done all the housework and served them faithfully, yet their English employers only said it was a pity they had been taken on a Monday as the laundry was not done!

The Reception Camp

One of my first duties was to visit a camp of about nine thousand men, women and children, mostly gathered up in sweeps but some deported from other territories simply because they belonged to the Kikuyu, Embu or Meru tribes and therefore might be Mau Mau. They were not convicted but detained on suspicion and kept prisoner till they could be sent to Detention Camps where they would be screened to discover if they were Mau Mau and if so to what extent they were implicated.

The officer on duty asked me which “Pens” I wanted to visit first and this word “Pen” set the scene for me. I have seen cattle markets in England, and places where animals are loaded on lorries to take them to slaughter houses, where the treatment was better than that accorded human beings in this camp—humans, moreover, who as yet were innocent, merely being detained on suspicion.

The camp consisted of old tents, and was divided into compounds holding several hundred people each, enclosed with barbed wire. The whole camp was also surrounded by barbed wire and high watch towers like a Prisoner of War Camp. As Mau Mau is called an Emergency these Africans, held in British territory without trial, had not the rights to which they would have been entitled as Prisoners of War.

I saw them arrive jammed into cages on top of high lorries, the cages were removed and they had to jump over the high sides carrying their bundle of possessions. Some tripped, dropping the bundle which was then kicked from one Askari (armed African guards) to another, the owner in trying to rescue it being prodded back into line. I saw several men who were not moving quickly enough to please the Askaris being given great blows on naked shoulder blades with rifle butts, and when I protested the British Officers and even women officials standing by said, “Oh you don’t want to feel sorry for them”.

During a visit I paid at Christmas an Indian officer reported to me that the night before Askaris had entered the Juvenile Compound and carried out a mass beating up of the inmates including two boys under eight years-of-age. I was horrified to find that these boys aged approximately four and seven had no relatives in the camp, the father being detained elsewhere and the mother’s whereabouts unknown.

They had been swept up and put in this compound with 330 juveniles, some aged 17, many of whom were real toughs.

There were several such children and I took the matter up with the District Commissioner concerned and asked that they should be released and taken to the place of safety run by the Red Cross and that in future any unaccompanied child under eight should be sent, there direct and not to a camp. He was most reluctant to agree and it was only after much discussion on my part that he agreed to it for children under seven instead of eight as I had asked.

He took me to the compound behind his office where women and children, arrested that day, were waiting to be sent to a camp and said to me, "Look at them, I am not going to have that stuff wandering about Nairobi".

Over Christmas there was a fear that some of the detainees might attempt escape. All clothing and possessions, except cooking pots and blankets, were taken from all mates in the camp. This applied even to small boys, many of whom had coughs and colds through only having a blanket to wear.

No proper arrangements were made for storing the appropriate clothing, all the things being thrown higgledy piggledy in a fearful conglomeration into a small enclosure open to the weather. One officer told me, he did not know how the things could ever be re-distributed and said, "The first comers will collar all the lot and the rest be unlucky". These were their only possessions and such treatment naturally aroused bitterness and resentment.

All the people were housed in old and tattered tents except for a few women with very small children for whom two "A" frames (aluminium huts) were provided. The officers told me the tents were quite unsuitable for women and children as few precautions could be taken in the way of health and hygiene.

The camp had only been intended for use for a few months at the beginning of the Emergency but it was in use for a long period and became more and more unfit for occupation, entirely non-waterproof. For the last few months there was practically nothing to screen the women's latrines from the male passers-by.

Eventually it was closed because it would cost too much to put it in order. The Commissioner of Prisons refused responsibility for it and said that the estimate for repair was £47,000 which the Government would not sanction.

To end on a brighter note, two of the officers were keen and humane and reported things to me which otherwise would have taken much longer to rectify. We also had a young woman welfare officer there, assisted by an African girl, who did excellent work finding lost children and linking them up with their families.

Screening

Mau Mau men and women in the Detention Camps and Prisons in Kenya are screened and classified white, grey, or black, according to the depth of involvement in Mau Mau (These colours have now been superseded by letters.)

The first stage in Rehabilitation is when they confess to the Rehabilitation Officer that they have been in the movement, wish to renounce it, and give him information, not only about their own crimes but about other people's. The confessions are always referred to by the Government as voluntary and emphasis is laid on this fact in the Annual Report of the Commissioner for Community

Development and Rehabilitation. This voluntary aspect, however, is not borne out in conversation with the Rehabilitation Officers who do the screening. I was talking to the Commandant of one prison and mentioned that a certain Rehabilitation Officer was being posted to his prison. He replied, "Yes, and he has the reputation of being very rough when screening". Another person referring to the same man said, "He is a member of Moral Re-Armament, but there's no MRA about him when screening."

I once visited Nairobi Gaol with a Rehabilitation Officer. Gaol saw a truck containing about twelve African lunatics, accompanied by armed guards, who were being sent to a mental hospital. They were making an appalling noise, shouting, gesticulating and grimacing. The officer, who was second in command at the gaol said he was glad to get rid of them as they had been a disturbing element in the prison for a whole year.

The Rehabilitation Officer said he was sorry they were going as he had intended putting detainees who would not confess in with them for a few days, "Now I shall have nothing to rely on but light diet and a good thrashing".

We went on to another Detention Camp and we repeated this to the Commandant there who replied, "I had a political prisoner in my charge in 1951 and put him in with the lunatics for ten days. What they did to him in those ten days was nobody's business, and at the end of that time he was not interested in politics or anything else".

I saw a letter from the Commandant of a prison for Mau Mau women saying "I have been informed that at Githunguri there are 52 single corrugated iron cells which would be of tremendous value to us in connection with screening women and for segregation purposes". A Commandant showed me single cells which he was constructing and said, "By the time the women have been in here for a year, even the blackest will give in".

One of the troubles over Rehabilitation is that many of the officers have not done similar work before and there is no policy to guide them. Each officer works according to his own ideas and there have been instances where an officer has screened men grey and moved them up to a better camp and the officer there re-screens them, says they are black and sends them back to a Black Camp!

Sometimes a man's category depends on the Rehabilitation Officer's "flair" for what he calls psychology! One officer told me he showed his detainees a picture of a maimed and dismembered corpse, with guts and brains on the ground, and in one corner a very small butterfly. "I ask them what they see in the picture. If they say a dead body or guts or blood I classify them black, but if they say a butterfly I move them up to grey".

Detained without trial

The women's screening has unfortunately been much slower than that of the men. It is in the charge of a woman screening officer, a settler's wife employed half-time! She is a daughter of settlers and speaks Kikuyu fluently. Incidentally she is the only woman in Rehabilitation work who carries arms, always wearing a revolver strapped in a prominent position, all the other European women (and African) would go alone among the most hardened "Black" women with no

protection at all.

She told me it was a waste of time my trying to teach Kikuyu women anything as “they were fat lazy lumps who can’t learn anything” (Later she denied, when I was not present, having said this!).

One of the strange things from the point of view of British Justice is that under the Emergency Regulations convicts who have served the full term to which they were sentenced by the Court, can, without further trial, and on the order of the Rehabilitation Officer, be transferred to a Detention Camp and kept there indefinitely instead of being released.

This woman officer’s screening figures for September, 1955 of convicts who served their sentences are illuminating:

Convicts

160 classified grey, recommended for Repatriation.

227 classified black, recommended for Detention.

Long-Term Convicts

13 classified grey, recommended for Repatriation.

45 classified black, recommended for Detention.

The Assistant Commissioner told me that one District Commissioner had asked her why this woman was recommending so many for detention.

Mr. Justice Cram, Kenya Supreme Court Judge, was reported in April, 1955 as saying:

The Kikuyu Home Guard is an illegal body. Looking at the evidence there exists a system of Guard Posts manned by Head men and Chiefs, and there are Interrogation Centres and Prisons where the Queen’s subjects, whether innocent or guilty, are led by armed men without warrant, detained, and as it seems tortured until they confess to alleged crimes and then led further to trial on the sole evidence of these confessions. It is time the court declared any such systems illegal and should come to an end, these dens emptied of their victims and those chiefs exercising arbitrary power checked and warned.

(Following this the Home Guard was made legal! But have the above irregularities been dealt with?)

Detention camps and prisons

The Nairobi paper, “Comment”, of June 30, 1955, quotes their Rongai correspondent as saying the Kikuyu are costing two and a half million pounds sterling per year in Detention Camps and Prisons.

A settler told me it was unfortunate that Mau Mau had learnt jungle warfare and the use of weapons from us when we trained them to serve in World War II!

In Kisumu the Rehabilitation Officer introduced me to a contractor who said the best and cheapest way of dealing with Mau Mau would be to shoot a whole age

group. When the Rehabilitation Officer said that could not be done and that the men were being put in camps on islands in Lake Victoria, the contractor said, "Oh well that's just as good, Blackwater Fever and Malaria will do the trick just as well, only take a bit longer".

Nairobi. The Rehabilitation Officer asked me to go there with him to visit 75 male juveniles under 17 Years-of-age. The Commissioner for Community Development and Rehabilitation came with us and said to me, "It will break your heart to see them, shackled, nothing to do, in a very small dormitory and with a very small space for exercise. They have been there a year and are just rotting".

Although I went at the request of the Rehabilitation Officer who accompanied me, and I had an official pass signed by the Commissioner of Prisons, permitting me to visit all prisons, the officer in charge would not allow me to see them!

Later they were moved to Kamiti prison where they were given longer shackles and put to work in the quarry. A visiting American missionary who saw them there told me the duty officer told him one was only eight years old. One wonders how a child of that age can be rehabilitated, shackled among toughs and working in a quarry when our own children would have barely left the Infant School.

Young girls in goal

Kamiti. The woman officer in charge of the Women's Prison told me that a number of the female convicts were under 14 years-of-age and it was illegal for them to be in prison but there was nowhere else to put them. She also said that 17 of the girl Lifers would have been hanged for murder, but for their youth and their sex, as at that time under the Emergency Regulations, Africans could be hanged if they happened to be in a house at a time when someone committed a murder, or even for consorting with Mau Mau.

The sentences passed by the court on women, some of them mere children are worth noting (extracts from official records):

Age 11. Taking two illegal oaths. Seven years Hard Labour.

Age 12. Consorting with Mau Mau. Indeterminate Sentence.

Age under 18. Only with gang two days. Sentenced to seven years Hard Labour "for willingly consorting with gang and with a woman sentenced for murder, but not with intent to murder".

Age 30. Taking illegal oath. Seven years Hard Labour.

Age 12. Consorting with armed persons. Indeterminate Sentence.

Age 18-19. In company with armed persons. Denies adherence to Mau Mau. Little Swahili, few capabilities. It is noted that in opinion of trial Judge she may have been press ganged. Not a dangerous character. Should be detained for a period not exceeding five years if that be the Governors Pleasure.

Age 15. Unlawful possession ammunition. Indeterminate Sentence.

Age 19. Consorting with suspected persons, Seven years Hard Labour.

Age 25. Taking illegal oath (two counts). Five years and seven years Hard Labour concurrent.

Age 16. (1) Member of unlawful society; (2) Attempting to commit offence punishable by death; (3) Assault causing Bodily Harm; (4) Assault causing Bodily

Harrn. Sentence 15 years Imprisonment.

Age 42. Has seven children aged from 15 months to 22 years. Charged with being in unlawful possession of ammunition. Sentenced to Death, commuted to Life Imprisonment.

Age 16. Consorting with persons in unlawful possession of firearms and ammunition. Indeterminate Sentence.

Age 16-17. Consorting with persons in unlawful possession of firearms (gang). Indeterminate Sentence.

Age 17. Unlawful possession ammunition. Indeterminate Sentence.

Age 16. Consorting with armed persons. Indeterminate Sentence.

Age 16. Unlawful possession of firearms. Unlawful possession ammunition. Indeterminate Sentence.

Those indeterminate sentences only come up for review every four years. No rehabilitation work had been done with any of them as it was against the policy of the department to work with the "Black" category. I was allowed to work with them as an experiment and had a very marked response from them. After I had to leave I heard the work with them had stopped and the original policy of only working with "Greys" reverted to.

One wonders what these young girls and adolescents will be like after four years segregation with the Hard Core Mau Mau women, some of whom, according to one prison officer have boasted of their murders and of having eaten human flesh. Many of the young ones were terrorised into joining Mau Mau and some of the sentences should surely be reviewed or special provision made for their rehabilitation before it is too late. There is a real risk of them being contaminated by some of the women as oathing ceremonies have taken place in male and female camps and prisons.

In Kamiti nine females were found to have conducted such a ceremony. They were prosecuted and eight of them sentenced to death and a juvenile to life imprisonment. All appealed and their appeal was upheld, the Judge saying:

Judge surprised at prosecution

"It was obvious that the women who informed on the appellants all had strong motives for doing so, they would be moved into better compounds, with lighter duties and less onerous discipline. Their evidence was a mass of contradiction, discrepancies and serious divergences".

"Was it safe", he asked, "to allow conviction on a capital offence to stand on evidence which to say the least was of very poor quality". He ended by saying, "we feel constrained to add that we are somewhat surprised that the prosecution was even launched".

In spite of these comments the Police Authorities paid two of the women £20 and £15 respectively for having given

One cannot help wondering how many of the men already hanged were sentenced on such flimsy evidence but did not appeal.

Kisumu. One girl aged 15 had been sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for taking oaths. She said she did it under pressure and that at the screening centre the Chief threatened her with reprisals if she would not have sexual intercourse with

him.

A number of the women in this prison had on their prison records, “good behaviour: no evidence of Mau Mau tendencies!”

One hundred and thirty-seven of them were transferred from Kisumu to Kamiti prison. One was dead on arrival. The Commandant said there was no need for an enquiry as these things happen. One wonders what state she was in when she was started on the two day journey.

Athi River. I visited here in August, 1955. Some women had been temporarily transferred from Kamiti which was overcrowded.

The woman officer in charge of the women’s section told me that some of the Lifers were very young, only 11 or 12 years old. The camp was unsuitable and the main purpose was to accommodate hard core males and it was not possible to segregate the women entirely.

Also it was not possible to find the women suitable occupation. I found them (even the young ones) stone breaking. The officer said she hoped eventually to use this only as a punitive measure as they were always damaging themselves either through cutting themselves or hammering their thumbs. There was also, I thought, quite a serious eye risk!

Mageta Island Camp (male convicts). East African Standard Report: “On August, 1955 the Commandant was taking prisoners by launch to work on the mainland, accompanied by guards and also by some warders going on leave. The launch sank and 21 were drowned. At the inquest it was shown that the launch was grossly overcrowded. It was licensed to carry 30 passengers, and there were 48, and in addition more than 150 stones, one of which weighed 45 lbs., five bicycles, tables, chairs and boxes belonging to African warders going on leave. At the enquiry it was stated that gross over-crowding was the direct cause of the accident. The Coxswain said he had protested twice to the Commandant (who was one of the passengers) but was ordered to go”.

It was stated that compensation for the relatives would be considered. Has it been?

Prisoners too weak to work

Manyani. A large camp for about 18.000 men. East African Hansard (Parliamentary report) 1954 reported that 97 men died during typhoid outbreak. Questioned about this in Legislative Council the Government replied, “Some were in the incubation period when detained, they could not be ascertained and movement was so quick that the sanitary accommodation in the camp was not completed” (See same excuse in section on villages).

One Rehabilitation Officer had some men from this camp sent to his. He told me they were in very poor shape physically, very thin and appeared under-nourished. Later in his own camp the men told him they were always hungry. He spoke to the Prison Commandant and found they were only getting half the ration of flour to which they were entitled. The excuse was that it was issued in two kinds and one kind was not available. Nothing had been given in lieu.

The Rehabilitation Officer said they could not work on the food they were getting and the Prison Commandant replied, “Send them to me; I’ll make them

work all right”.

The Rehabilitation Officer had the Commandant transferred but not all would have bothered and anyhow some had not the authority to carry it through. The relative (herself an official) of one Rehabilitation Officer told me that he reported it was impossible to do rehabilitation work with the convicts in his camp while the prison officers were like they were. He was told he was not a missionary and he was moved!

Embakasi. In official reports it is always emphasised that the compulsory work done is for the benefit of the tribe and their own community. Some is, but not that at Embakasi where they are making an airport, whilst surrounded by armed guards. The East African Standard of June 17, 1955 printed a talk given to Rotary by a Mr. Johnson.

“More than a million tons of material have been excavated and 500.000 tons of stone laid at the new Embakasi Airport. He traced the history of Embakasi, the difficulties of financing it and the decision that was taken to go ahead when the increasing flow of Mau Mau prisoners became available after the Declaration of the Emergency.

“He spoke also of difficulties of moving tons of black cotton soil, filling craters and putting down three layers of stone and bitumen to four runways. The total area will be about seven square miles: great precautions have to be taken to prevent water seeping through. “It is a joint effort of prisoners and the Public Works Department”.

I visited this camp in July 1955 with a Rehabilitation officer who was very unsympathetic to detainees and convicts. Yet even he told me the convicts at Embakasi were terribly hard worked. He also told me that 600 of the convicts were attending hospital with skin disease.

The Prison Commandant told me he considered the place unhealthy and much too over-crowded: 5.300 people in 19 acres! He also spoke of unauthorised people coming to the camp and said, “Trying to keep any check or order over the camp properly has become quite fantastic. It is no good putting up notices saying. “Prison” or “Protected Place”, as the African takes no notice, can’t read anyhow, and at the moment has no respect for the Government”.

Manda Island Camp. East African Standard of January 19, 1956 reported that some of the detainees are taking correspondence courses and added: “No man is permitted to study anything of a political nature such as *Social Science*”. (Italics mine.)

Asked about the wisdom of these courses being allowed the Commissioner for Community Development and Rehabilitation is quoted as saying, “It must be remembered that these men are not being punished for anything they have done. They are merely being kept from other people because they might be a danger to security”.

The bitterness being engendered by long periods of detention without trial and the transferring to detention of convicts who have completed the sentence given by the Court, will take a long time to overcome. Moreover the tribal customs and economy are completely disrupted.

When I visited the Friends Africa Mission at Kaimosi even boys still at school

and belonging to a tribe entirely unconnected with Mau Mau asked me:

1. What will happen to the girls who cannot get married because they or the men are detained?
2. Is it British Justice to detain a convict who has finished his sentence?
3. Are the youths in Camps and Prisons able to get circumcised? [An important tribal ceremony].

Compulsory labour

The New Villages. Some villages have been put up as part of a resettlement scheme for released detainees who have no land. In some an experiment in rice growing is being carried out. This scheme is said to be having some success, but even so there is some doubt expressed as to whether the Africans will wish to remain in it after the Emergency.

The villages I visited were those set up by the Government for security purposes, either to prevent the people feeding the Mau Mau or to punish those who were thought to be doing so. They were put up very quickly and occupied before really ready; the people being moved into them compulsorily. One Red Cross worker told me of a village of 800 people with no sanitary accommodation whatever.

A Community Development Officer supervised 36 new villages with no latrines. In their own little hamlets they can go out into surrounding bush country, but herded together in small villages the health risk is acute. She complained to the British District Officer who replied, "They can make a hole when they need to with their pangas (chopping knife which every villager carries as an essential tool) and cover it up". They were too primitive to bother to do this and anyhow the children don't carry pangas!

In some villages many children were said to have bums from fires used for cooking as all women had been taken off for compulsory labour by the District Officer and no one was left to look after the children. One Welfare Officer told me that in some of her villages children were left alone without food from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. as the whole village was on compulsory labour (This has now partly been overcome through the Red Cross setting up Soup Kitchens).

One Red Cross worker took me to a village into which the people had been put for punishment for feeding Mau Mau. Here they could not do it and indeed had very little for themselves.

When she first visited the village she asked to see the children and two hundred had to be carried out of their huts as they were too weak to walk; 40 of them could not even sit up. Thirty per month died for nearly a year as whooping cough and other illnesses swept through the village and they were too weak to resist.

She showed me several of these children whom she thought had TB as a result of this malnutrition and who were too far gone for treatment.

In one village the men were given a money allowance for their wives as they were not allowed to grow maize which might serve as a hiding place for Mau Mau. The allowance had recently been cut down as it was thought they were feeding Mau Mau. The Welfare Officer said it was not now sufficient to feed themselves. She had already told the Divisional Officer they could not live on what they were

getting and he replied, "It will do them good".

In one village the officer-in-charge admitted having kept money himself that had been forcibly collected from Mau Mau funds. His excuse was that he would use it to buy milk for the villagers!

Children starve

One Welfare Officer told me that in her village the women were so short of food they went to a nearby town and worked for a farmer from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. each day, including Saturdays and Sundays, and this European farmer paid them 7s, per month! She reported him to the Labour Office who promised "to give him a rocket".

One Red Cross worker reported to the East African Standard on August 12, 1955 that children were wandering into Nairobi looking for food because of the lack of it in their villages. Throughout her area 48.000 hot drinks of powdered milk were issued each month. She said many children existed solely on this as they had no other food. There were poor rains, a very small harvest and no one was allowed to go into Nairobi to work.

On November 17, 1955, the East African Standard reported that since August, 45 children had died from malnutrition in one village.

In Legislative Council the Minister for Health and Local Government was questioned about this. "He denied allegations of widespread starvation and said one of the main factors was the ignorance of the mothers who did not realise the value of proteins".

Dr. Gregory, of the Save the Children Fund, in Nairobi, told me he had battled for two years with the Kenya Government to get them to ask for powdered milk as they said there was no necessity for it!

A Church Missionary Society worker travelling through the Native Reserve by train said she was impressed by the fact that at the small stations children crowded to the train windows pleading not for cents as formerly but for bread. There had been no rain and the Shambas (on which they grow their food) were exhausted.

Girl gaoled for playing

We often hear the word "Curfew" now familiar in BBC news from Kenya, Malaya and Cyprus, but do we realise what it means. One Community Development Officer told me of one of her villages where the people had been passing food over to the Mau Mau. A 24 hour a day curfew was imposed for a fortnight and they were not allowed out even to the latrines (Remember there are no arrangements at all in the huts and not even any utensils which could be used). Small parties under armed guard were allowed out once a day to fetch water. Seventy people in this one village died of typhus during this time, she said.

The Headmistress of an African Girls' School had a letter from the woman Screening Officer at Kamiti (the settler's wife already referred to under Prisons) saying that a girl from her school had been arrested and sent to prison for being in Nairobi without a pass. She said, "it is not doing her any good being in prison with Mau Mau women", and urged the Headmistress to get the family to pay the fine of

£ 20. The father had been out of work for years so payment was impossible.

On enquiring what the girl's offence was the Head mistress was told she had gone into Nairobi without a pass to ask her Aunt to lend her money to pay her school fees for the coming term!

Another woman official told me of a girl of 13, arrested for playing in the street after curfew and taken to this Mau Mau prison. Although the father had paid £4 10s. fine this was not enough and she was still in prison.

A Prison Officer told me that a woman was sent to his prison for being in Nairobi without a pass. She had only gone in to take a sick child to hospital. He refused to admit her sending her back to Court with a note saying she had money and could pay a fine. She was fined £ 10.

The Red Cross, sent out from England, is doing a grand job of welfare in the new villages and has a very friendly approach.

Rehabilitation Staff

The task of running these enormous camps and prisons, the population varying from 3.000 to 18.000, and of winning them away from Mau Mau is immense. It needs people with special qualifications and understanding. The work is divided between Prison Officers and Rehabilitation Officers.

The Sunday Post (Nairobi) reported on November 13, 1955 that many of the Prison Officers were men out on a two year contract from England. The District Commissioner, Embu, said that in that area in 13 camps there was not one prison officer with any previous experience in prison administration.

One camp of 1.000 detainees "supposed to be undergoing the highly complex business of social rehabilitation before release was run by an ex-paratrooper, who eight months ago was a storeman in England."

With regard to rehabilitation, unfortunately, in my opinion, this was placed in the hands of the Department of Community Development. A Department which before the Emergency was a very small one, centred around a school for training African Community Development Officers.

To do Rehabilitation it had to expand very quickly at a time when it was practically impossible to get staff. Other Departments were asked what staff they could spare and sent those they wanted to get rid of!

There was no policy to help them; things were done by individual trial and error. I felt that an African Proverb, "We don't know where we are going but we're on the way", described the Department!

Many of the officers for Prisons, Police, Administration and Rehabilitation were sent from England on a two year contract. I stayed for a few days in the centre where they went for a five weeks language course. The Common Room floor was littered with empty beer bottles and the chief "conversation", were shouts of "Boy, bring me another beer" and "When am I going to be issued with my gun?"

Months later I met one of the lecturers who told me the Rehabilitation Officers in his courses needed rehabilitating themselves. Another official said they were. "Subhuman" and wondered who selected them, while a Prison Commandant told me his new officers "were absolutely the bottom of the barrel". A high-ranking official told me it was a "Department of Misfits".

For the rehabilitation of the women I did not have a single European woman with any training at all. One had only done shorthand typing.

In the Kenya Sunday Post of February 12, 1956 the Auditor General is reported as saying: "The Ministry of Community Development and Rehabilitation appears unable to control its financial operations, and its account is overdrawn. A Government vehicle was used for private running without payment being collected and an expensive car used for local running about".

One officer told me that his wife was being paid two-thirds of a full-time salary for working three afternoons per week. I must add that five of the male rehabilitation officers were excellent.

What are we to do?

The Settlers are trying to throw off the rule exercised by the Colonial Office and "run their own show". From the above account one can imagine the fate of the luckless Kikuyu if this happens.

The defeat of Mau Mau is largely financed with money from this country. It is our money that is being spent on these brutal and repressive measures. What are we going to do about it?

II - Truth about Kenya Where Justice Lies Buried,

by Eileen Fletcher

Two things struck me forcibly during my sixteen months in Kenya: (1) the large number of offences which, under the Emergency Regulations, carried the death penalty, and the large number of Africans executed under these regulations; and (2) that in every case against a European the charge was either reduced or the case appeared to be conducted in a way favourable to the European.

Most readers will be familiar with the case of Kamau, Mrs. Barbara Castle, MP, having written about it. I include it later purposely to show the attitude and comments which seem to me to suggest that "Justice" is perhaps the wrong word to use!

"Goodwill" to whites only

Searle, a geologist in Government service, during the Emergency, was a District Commandant in the Kenya Police Reserve.

Convicted of perjury in a case where an African was on trial on a capital charge, Searle was sentenced to four years imprisonment.

Europeans immediately started an Appeal Fund and raised £ 3.000. On appeal his sentence was reduced to eighteen months.

A prison officer said to me, "I'm on the wrong side". Asked what he meant he replied, "I wish I had the treatment Searle's getting."

A Petition for clemency was presented to the Governor. On August 31, 1955,

the East African Standard reported that the Governor had exercised his prerogative of mercy and cut Searle's sentence by half.

The Sunday Post reported that Mrs. Searle had then asked the Governor for a complete pardon for her husband. "The Governor listened sympathetically and said he would consider the matter further".

The Sunday Post also published a large family photo on his release and said, "Mr. Searle will almost certainly be asked by the Colonial Office to resign. It remains to be seen whether good will can overcome Colonial Service Regulations. Good will there is certainly here in Kenya in plenty".

A Kenya firm paid his fare to fly home from the prisons "a goodwill gesture"!

The Sunday Post reported Mr. Searle understands that the Department has been instructed by the Colonial Office that they must not assist him to obtain another job and bars him from holding any Government post in Kenya. Where is the obstruction coming from? From the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Lennox Boyd, was the opinion".

The Governor in exercising his prerogative of mercy is reported to have said that there were mitigating factors not put before the Court when Searle was sentenced, for instance, heroism, going single handed into the Bush to try to capture armed gangsters!

The East African Standard, on August 16, 1955, reported that a British soldier had been charged with the murder of a Kikuyu woman on July 2.

He was found guilty. A member of the jury said to me, "We couldn't bring him as insane because he explained why he had done it. He'll have to get off on appeal as he's a British soldier!"

The East African Standard reported on December 1, 1955, that a verdict of guilty had been set aside by the Court of Appeal of East Africa which had directed that though guilty he was insane at the time.

The jury had said, reported the newspaper, that, "They agreed he suffered from mental instability but added that insufficient evidence had been produced to convince them that at the time of the offence he was legally insane!"

The appeal was brought on the grounds that the finding of the jury was "perverse, wholly unreasonable and against the weight of the evidence".

Crown Counsel said, "He knew what he was doing and knew it was wrong, and that was abundantly proved by his actions... it is significant that within a few minutes of committing the crime he went and confessed it".

The Sunday Post, December 4, 1955, quoted Crown Counsel in asking for Appeal to be dismissed: "that on the medical evidence (for Defence) one expert had been discredited and the other one contradicted".

In spite of this, the Appeal succeeded and the jury verdict of "Guilty" was set aside.

£1 per African body

In August, 1955 two British soldiers appeared on a charge of murdering a Kipsigis herdsman. The evidence, as reported in the East African Standard: Two herdsman were arrested, one of whom was found to have an out of date pass. To check identity he was taken into custody by a Corporal Davies. They met the two

accused who took over the prisoner, sending the corporal away. Soon after, the two British soldiers, with their prisoner, left the road and proceeded about 300 yards into the Bush, where the prisoner was shot. They explained later he had tried to attack them.

The prosecution “pointed out several significant points:

1. When the corporal said he was taking the prisoner to camp the sergeant (one of the accused) said, “we will shoot him then”. When the corporal refused the sergeant said, “all right I’ll do it myself.
2. Prisoner was taken a considerable distance off the road instead of straight to camp.
3. There was evidence that the sergeant was extremely keen to kill a Mau Mau terrorist, his Platoon had not made any kills and the Court would hear that he had been offering £ 1 per body.

It is the case for the Crown that the prisoner was deliberately taken from the road into the Bush and there deliberately murdered by the accused.

The whole investigation was only begun as a result of a complaint from the employer of the herdsmen.

The Inspector in charge of the Police Station admitted that he had not taken the statements from the accused until May 13 but had dated them May 8 because after the complaint from the employer he “thought he had neglected his duty”.

The Defence appeared to rest on three points

1. A possibility that the chief Prosecution witness disliked the accused (who was his sergeant!).
2. That one of the accused had been heard to speak kindly to the prisoner.
3. That after the man’s death they were described as “exultant and jubilant,” and this was not consistent with murder.

The jury retired for 75 minutes and brought in a verdict of “Not Guilty”. Mr. Justice de Lestang said of the accused: “They left the court without a stain on their character”.

Tortured to death

The following is the case of Kamau, in which Mrs. Barbara Castle has been interested. The details are taken from reports of Court Proceedings in the East African Standard.

Kamau s/o Gichina was taken into custody suspected of having stolen £ 350 from a Home Guard post (Evidence showed he was tortured for six days to make him confess and died on the sixth day).

At the Inquest a European District Officer who was also a Third-class Magistrate admitted having seen him beaten by an African Home Guard. A European Police Inspector admitted that sticks were tied to the back and front of his legs and squeezed tightly and he himself had put sticks in the ground behind the prisoner “as he kept falling over” (An African witness said two sticks were sharpened at both ends, one in the ground and one in the prisoner’s back) .

These European officials admitted pushing the prisoner into a stream and shooting at a piece of floating wood “merely for practice not to frighten him”. The prisoner was kept all night in a garage, hand-cuffed to upright poles. This consisted only of a roof and supports, open on all sides. An African constable gave evidence that the prisoner had on only a blanket; it was cold and rained throughout the night. When he had gone to take the prisoner food the European would not allow him to give it him.

The prisoner died on May 10. When his body was picked up “a piece of skin came off one arm. When taken out of the truck at the Hospital a large piece of skin stuck to the floor of the vehicle”.

The Inspector told the doctor he suspected poison. A District Officer who was also a Magistrate said the deceased was looking quite well just prior to his death.”

On examining the body at Hospital the doctor reported: Extensive multiple weals all over body. Superficial skin on outer side of left arm had been removed from the knuckles to two inches above elbow, and 12 square inches removed from inner side. Blisters on fingers and legs. A wound 14 inches long and 1/4 inch deep over left shin bone. On the back 30 square inches of superficial skin had been removed.

An African witness reported having seen the prisoner beaten by an European officer for about half an hour. It was also reported that his toes were smashed and bleeding and his arms so swollen that the handcuffs could not be seen.

The Chief Inspector agreed that Kaman’s arms were swollen and said, “He could have had treatment if he complained about it!”

Dr. Brown said, “My feeling, in view of what was said by the Senior District Officer and others at the time, was that I could not say definitely that these injuries were the cause of death. I have seen people with as severe injuries who did not die. What I can say is that there was no evidence of any disease in the body. In view of the negative poison finding, I should think it is possible that these various wounds were the cause of death”.

Asked if accompanied by two or three nights of exposure and often neglect “would that influence your opinion?” the doctor replied, “With enough exposure all the injuries together could have caused death”.

The Magistrate, Mr. A. C. Harrison, announced that the evidence of Dr. Brown had materially altered the position of two of the accused. “Dr. Brown had expressed the view that death from natural causes could not be ruled out entirely [He would appear to have been tricked into disposing of some of the organs of the body as a result of the accuser’s suggestion of poisoning.-E.F.], accordingly a committal to the Supreme Court on charges of murder or manslaughter would not be justified; therefore the murder charge would be dismissed and they would be charged with causing grievous bodily harm”.

At the subsequent trial the two European Police Inspectors were sentenced to eighteen months hard labour, and the European Chief Inspector and European District Officer fined £ 25 and £ 10 respectively.

Later the East African Standard reported that the East African Supreme Court had set aside the fine of £ 10 and sentenced the District Officer to six months hard labour, and increased the two sentences of eighteen months to 31 years hard labour.

Contempt for law

The remarks of the Magistrate, during the Trial, as reported in the Press are illuminating.

There has been contempt for the law of this Colony, for British tradition of justice and for the right of the individual.

The case was undoubtedly serious for several reasons. Dr. Brown had considered the most likely cause of death to be the injuries sustained by Kaman combined with exposure. Therefore the four accused men might well be fortunate in having their charges reduced as a result of what appeared to have J been an incomplete post mortem examination.

A disturbing factor in the case was the possibility that Kamau may have been innocent in fact as well as in law. In spite of his treatment he died without admitting his guilt. [He was never charged during the six days, being merely a suspect-E.F.]

Another serious aspect was that a District Officer and Magistrate had admitted at the Inquest that he gave false information to the CID, and another District Officer and Magistrate informed Dr. Brown that the deceased was looking quite well just prior to his death. Concerning this Dr. Brown has said: "This statement influenced me to the extent that it led me to discount the importance of the injuries more than I would otherwise have done".

Indeed all evidence points to the fact that the deceased was in a very bad condition and his death was rapidly approaching. As a result the Doctor was apparently induced to suspect poisoning as the cause of death, after the police officers concerned had put the idea into his mind. Probably as a further result the post mortem examination was not thorough and the cause of death cannot now be stated with certainty.

There is evidence that they [the accused officials], or some of them, attempted to mislead, tried to hinder police investigation, and generally disregarded their responsibility.

The East African Standard in a leading article said, "It was necessary to impose penalties which would have a deterrent effect on others and induce a respect for the law" and added it was right these men had been punished "with the full rigour of the law".

Considering that under Emergency Regulations Africans have been hanged for possessing a single round of ammunition "rigour" is perhaps an odd word to choose!

On December 9, 1955 an announcement was made of an official investigation into alleged corruption in the affairs of the Nairobi City Council. As the enquiry went on for months, thousands of pounds and more and more people and firms became involved. Included was a trial resulting from an "alleged plan to "rig" a jury.

The Sunday Post had a photo of a European official and two Asians and underneath (the) Nairobi magistrate said "a more unscrupulous collection of rogues it would be hard to find in Kenya" when he acquitted them!

III - White Supremacy in Kenya

by Eileen Fletcher

The East African Standard of October 22, 1955, reported that during the Debate in Legislative Council, Mr. Mathu, the African Representative Member, stressed the need to take quick action to compensate people whose land had been commandeered for construction of villages and Guard Posts:

“Many people had lost their entire holdings and had nowhere on which to plant the crops on which they depended. This grievance, unless dealt with promptly, would be a means of storing up hatred and bitterness against the authorities in the future. Already there was considerable tension in the villages”.

The Minister for African Affairs said “he believed there would be some return by loyal smallholders to their farms, but this might take some years”.

The following quotations are also from the East African Standard:

June 17, 1955. “Mau Mau to feel ‘lash’ of New Bill” (Forfeiture of land by terrorists).

July 20, 1955. “Land Rights forfeited by 3097 Terrorists described as Rank and File members of Mau Mau Gangs, and of 324 Terrorist Leaders and Organisers”.

More bitterness and hunger

“All the men lose their rights to clan land in the reserves”.

“Remembering how extremely sensitive members of the tribes are on the question of their land the legal consideration...”

“Relatives of a terrorist presumed at large today may later prove he died before July 10 and may take justifiable claims for restoration of land. Insufficient public examination has been given to this complex matter which bristles with difficulties. It is essential that the Government should not unwittingly build up another source of bitterness and misunderstanding among the Kikuyu and other affected tribes”.

This land confiscation is a serious matter. There is no provision for old age for the Africans and they are unable to save out of their earnings. They depend on having a piece of land in the Reserve to assure them a place among the Tribi in their old age.

The East African Standard reported on September 9, 1955. Apparently abandoned farms in Kenya: the Census reveals 210.000 acres of unused agricultural land including 118 farms of over 200 acres. This is disclosed in the first comprehensive post-war census of Kenya’s Non-African Farming Industry, just completed and published by East African Statistical Department”.

Sunday Post, October 9, 1955 “European Settlement Board buys the farm for the newcomer and charges the tenant farmer rent. Since the Board’s creation £900.000 has been spent settling new farmers, out of a million pound development vote”.

Sunday Post, November 6, 1955: “Kenya plans for 200 new farmers in five years.” East African Standard, October 13, 1955: “Competition keen for Highland Farms.”

Multi-racialism

There will be a general election in Kenya within the next few months. There is a movement to try and do away with the multi-racial Government. Some Settlers would also like to do away with the control exercised by the Colonial Office.

The East African Standard, September 7, 1955, reported:

Kenya's Chance to Halt Multi-Racialism: Major Roberts, president of the Federal Independent Party, said: "Kenya had only one chance of halting the rush into multi-racialism and that was at the General Election in nine months" time. It was essential to put back into Legislative Council only those people who would oppose the multiracial set-up and stand on a policy they could bargain with in England. "Major Roberts referred to certain "misconceptions" among British politicians. These include the belief that most of the Europeans in Kenya wanted multi-racialism... When Mr. Oliver Lyttleton announce his plan he made it quite clear it was an experiment; we have got to hang on to that word".

The East African Standard, October 17, 1955 "Multiracial Principle a Safeguard".

Apartheid or Partnership was the only choice before Kenya today, Mr. Havelock, Minister for Local Government, told his constituents on Saturday. He said he agreed that the details of the Lyttleton Plan had been forced on the country but it was the principle and not the details of multi-racial Government that would be the greatest safeguard to the European Community. Multi-racial co-operation for the future of Kenya was the greatest possible protection against cranks in Britain and elsewhere.

East African Standard, November 23, 1955: "Racial Co-operation Kenya's Only Hope".

Mrs. Shaw, member for Nyanza, said: "The re-education of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru would be a long process and it would take years before they could be freely admitted to the normal life of the Colony. Many Kikuyu would never see the light of day again. They had lost not only their liberty but their land and families, such was the price of rebellion".

This statement by Mrs. Shaw gives some meaning to a newspaper headline accusing the Government of Kenya of Genocide. If the sexes are kept apart long enough the Tribe can be very much reduced numerically. Remember also that a recent letter in a paper in England concerning the number of Africans hanged under Emergency Regulations, referred to it as "a massacre".

I have recently been sent a review of a book written by a Kenya settler in which he is reported as saying, "We made a country out of virgin bush". I suppose by now most readers of Peace News know how the land for the White Highlands was alienated, but do they know the large incomes the settlers are making, or what African farm labourers are paid?

The African women working on the farms get paid one shilling per day. The African men on one farm get two shillings per day, if they are very steady and have worked a long time for the farmer! In addition they get a little hut generally built of mud, often only a tumbledown hovel, and a certain amount of food.

In Southern Rhodesia I was told there is a Government Regulation that the food

given must be properly balanced, and quantities and kind are definitely laid down. The labourers have taken readily to the new food and their health is said to have improved. When I discussed this with Kenya settlers they said their labourers wouldn't eat proper food and didn't like vegetables! There are no standards laid down. The food given can be judged from the fact that 25 shillings per month can be deducted from wages! A frequent reply to every question is "They're only Wogs. What does it matter?"

False standard

The price paid for coffee has risen from £ 40 per ton just before the war to £ 840 one would think a larger wage could be "squeezed out"!

One of the troubles about Kenya is that the Europeans will not give up their false standard of living, and the amount spent on entertaining, drink and cigarettes is far above the English standard, while their housework is done by Africans, most of whom have to live apart from their wives either because there is no house for them or they cannot afford to keep them in towns.

With a few outstanding exceptions I found a lack of interest in the welfare of the Africans amounting to callousness. When on the few occasions atrocities by Europeans were brought to light there was no criticism or rousing of public opinion.

When I commented on this a woman whose husband was in a responsible, non-governmental position said, "We wouldn't risk saying anything. If we wanted to, our husbands might lose their jobs".

When the Commission of Enquiry into alleged corruption in Nairobi City Council was proceeding, the two remarks I heard most were, "The enquiry should never have been held, it will get into the English papers!" and "It shouldn't have been held. It will give us a bad name with the Asians!".