

WAR AGAINST KENYA.

By Hilda Bernstein.

Militarily and economically, Kenya is one of Whitehall's most valuable colonies.

It is strategically important as a corridor down the east coast of Africa from Britain's Middle East bases to her southern ally, South Africa. It is being built as a rear base for forces centred on the Suez Canal, and is a corridor between the Indian Ocean and the important central African areas round Lake Victoria.

Kenya exports, based on cheap labour, are valuable to Britain, and Kenya in return is a market for British goods.

Who is responsible for the terrorism in Kenya today? The Kenya African Union is the leading organisation fighting for the interests of the people in Kenya. There are believed to be 100,000 paid up members of the K.A.U. In its 15-point programme, the K.A.U. demands human rights, genuine elections, land for the Africans, equal education, democracy, equal pay, free trade unions, the repeal of repressive legislation.

Its six leaders are charged with organising the Mau Mau, a secret society engaged in conspiracy. The Government claims the Mau Mau is an anti-white terror organisation directed by the K.A.U. and its leader, Jomo Kenyatta.

There is doubt about the actual existence of the Mau Mau. It may be that such a terrorist organisation does exist - a sort of Stern gang of the African struggle. Yet even so, its influence must be very small. After months of newspaper headlines of Mau Mau terror, the Kenya Government announced that the Mau Mau had murdered nine Europeans and 193 Africans, while troops and police had killed 121 people, rounded up thousands more into concentration camps, imposed the terrible system of communal "punishment" on the people, depriving thousands of their bread-winners, their crops and land, their stock, their means of livelihood. In a newspaper report headed 'New Violence breaks out in Kenya', it is reported that a police patrol fired on 300 natives, including 100 women, holding an

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illegal meeting.

There is war today on Kenya's people. In 10 days alone, 3,600 Africans were arrested in a mass drive on the Aberdare mountains. Companies of the King's African Rifles and platoons of the Kenya Regiment beat their way through jungle, arresting every African they found. In other areas, thousands are 'detained' for questioning. In one raid on the Rift Valley, 7 Africans were arrested because a dead dog was found strung up in the area. Another time mass arrests were carried out because Africans were seen brandishing sticks at a passing plane. Lancashire Fusiliers patrol at night and shoot on sight Kikuyu who break the curfew regulations. Police and reservists fire and burn out lush land plantations.

Is there anything more cruel than the days of office punishment, of impounding cattle, seizing crops, closing schools, depriving thousands of women and children of any form of livelihood?

How many of the nine Europeans killed during Kenya's emergency were actual victims of a secret society, and how many were ordinary criminal acts, it is not possible to say. What is true is that the fierce repression in Kenya today is NOT AIMED AT ANY SECRET SOCIETY. It is aimed at putting under lock and key anyone who can be regarded as a leader, organiser or spokesman of the people. It is a frame-up, designed with the object of suppressing completely the African Liberation Movement. It is a cover under which to destroy the Kenya Africa Union, whose leaders were arrested without a shred of evidence against them.

THE LAND QUESTION:

Behind the war between British imperialism and the people that is today being waged (at a cost of £250,000 a day!) is the basic issue of land. Kenya is an overwhelmingly agrarian country - more than 95 per cent of the population depend on agriculture for a living.

In Kenya the process of land expropriation or 'alienation' that began in South Africa 300 years ago, has been compressed into fifty years. In 1901 there were only 13 white settlers

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in Kenya. Today there are 30,000 and 2,000 of them hold 50 of Kenya's finest land, while over five million Africans farm 50,000 square miles of second-best land. In the space of nine years - from 1905 to 1914 - 4,400,000 acres of land were alienated.

The 'alienation' was swift and brutal. The land of the Kikuyu, the most fertile and best watered, was raped first. They lost nearly 500,000 acres. 100,000 Kikuyus found themselves as squatters on European-owned land - land that had for generations belonged to their fore-fathers. Many of the rest were forced through land shortage to become labourers to the new settlers.

The Kamba lost 300,000 acres of their most fertile land. The Masai lost most of all. They were deprived of their normal grazing lands by a series of tricks and broken promises that have few parallels in history. After a series of incidents during which the Masai protested vigorously at concessions of their land given to white settlers, the Government made a treaty with them in 1904, by which the settlers were allowed to cultivate specific parts of land in the Rift valley. The settlers soon began to demand more, and the Government turned the Masai out, transferring them to the border of Tanganyika. So the treaty was broken, and the Masai were robbed of the best of their land.

Agricultural labourers enter on contracts which entail their absence from the reserves for many months of the year. The law allows for children of all ages to be employed in agriculture, with only one safeguard - that children under 10 years must be accompanied by a relative. The tea estates, the Nyanza gold mines, the sisal and coffee plantations employ much juvenile labour.

Africans are driven off the land left to them by a system of hut and poll taxes, similar to those in South Africa. Their former method of shifting cultivation is no longer possible in the reserves because of land shortage; so the land is continually under crops, becomes exhausted, and this leads to erosion. The fact that so many adult males must leave the reserves to work elsewhere for a wage means that many of the heavy farming

tasks essential to good farming - the draining and fencing, for instance - are neglected, and poor farming methods add to the erosion.

The old cry - so familiar in this country - is levelled at the Africans: that their land is overstocked. Forcible selling increases the peoples' bitter resentment.

WAGE WORKERS AND 'KIPANDE'

No African in Kenya can work without a kipande - a registration certificate, the hated 'pass'. The kipande serves the same purpose as the pass in South Africa. It must be carried always, produced on demand.

There has been some growth of industry in Kenya in recent years. Wages are usually kept below subsistence level, based on the myth that the African worker obtains partial support from his family left in the reserves. In 1944, skilled workers earned an average of 45 shillings a month, unskilled 10 to 25 shillings.

Domestic labour is an important part of Kenya's economy. The economist Varga observed that one feature of imperialism in decay is a tendency for workers to 'pass over from the sphere of production into the sphere of circulation and into the personal service of the ruling class'. This is strikingly confirmed in Kenya. In 1945, 12% of all Africans employed outside the reserves were in domestic service. In that year there was an average of one servant for almost every white man, woman and child in Kenya.

Labour was conscripted in Kenya during the war, and this war conscription fixed the maximum number of male servants in Nairobi as three for a household of one adult, four for a household of two adults.

HOW KENYA IS GOVERNED.

In Kenya today there are 30,000 Europeans, 24,000 Arabs, 100,000 Indians, and 5,250,000 Africans.

The Governor, appointed in London, has effective power.

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He is advised, but not controlled, by an Executive Council of four Europeans.

The 'Parliament' is a Legislative Council, in which Europeans have 39 representatives, Indians 6, Arabs 2, and the Africans 6 - all the African members are nominated, not elected.

All local Government is run by Europeans, except in certain areas where local Native Councils run by chiefs friendly to the Government, are allowed to operate. But they have inadequate funds, and depend entirely upon the District Commissioners.

The Governor is usually appointed for five years, and depends largely on civil servants, drawn from upper-class British families.

Even the European section of the Legislative Council can hardly be called democratic. They are elected, it is true, but only a small percentage of the settlers are registered voters. In the General Election of 1944, for instance, the total number of votes cast was 1,465.

Typical of the members of the Legislative Council is Colonel E.S. Croghan, oldest member - 78 years old. He declared last November: "If this is rebellion, and obviously it is, then anyone taking part in it is guilty of treason and the proper punishment for that is to be hanged by the neck until dead."

The Colonel added: "About 100 of these rascals" should be charged with treason, and 25% of them hanged in front of the remainder, who should be sent back to the reserves "to tell the joyful news to the others."

AFRICANS AND THE LAND.

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LABOUR STRUGGLES.

1922 saw the first general strike in Kenya. Since then there has been a continuous history of labour

struggles and attempted organisation. The 1922 strikers, who sat outside police headquarters in Nairobi holding prayer meetings and demanding the release of their leader, were 'fired' on by the police, and the dead and wounded lay in the streets of Nairobi. The Chairman of the organisation - the East African Association - was deported without a trial.

There were two general strikes in Mombasa, in 1939 and 1944, which focussed attention on the deplorable living conditions, the terrible housing, starvation wages, long hours worked, and the infringement by employers of their legal obligations. The findings of a Commission of enquiry were kept secret, but African chiefs were hurried down to pacify the workers.

Another general strike in Mombasa in 1947 lasted for twelve days.

The East African Association was declared illegal, its leaders penalised. But the idea of union had taken hold among the people, and where they could not organise openly, they organised underground.

In 1948, 2,000 transport workers struck for 16 days. In 1950 there was a general strike in Nairobi in protest against the arrest of the secretary and president of the East African Trades Union Congress, formed the previous year. This organisation too, is now illegal.

EDUCATION.

Education in Kenya has always been largely in the hands of the missionaries. When the land was opened up, the missionaries poured in to set about converting the heathen, and established schools to teach the catechism and the bible. Missionaries remained entrenched as the chief agents of African education, ensuring that the vast majority of Africans would never be educated, and those who were would be protected against 'dangerous ideas'.

Education for Europeans is compulsory from 7 to 15.

Indian/.....

High education is now compulsory for all Indian boys in the towns. Not more than 18% of African children receive any education at all, while no more than .03% (in 1943) reached or junior secondary standard.

For every shilling the Government spends on an African child at school, 150 are spent on the European child (1945 figures). The expenditure on children of school age is even more revealing - £75.6 per head each year on Europeans, and on Africans 500 times less - 3.07 shillings.

A large proportion of African schools are sub-elementary. Many are bush schools, where the teachers have little education and no training and the schools are rarely visited. Even in elementary schools, such education is devoted to cultivating small garden plots and simple handicrafts, and the children emerge barely literate.

In 1950, an important movement started among the Africans to establish their own schools, independent of the missions. The Africans demanded secular schools, run either by the Africans themselves or by the Government. These Native Councils actually voted £20,000 to establish such schools, and the Africans offered to meet maintenance and capital costs. The reply of the Government was to throw all the weight behind the missions.

The Africans retaliated by setting up schools independent of Government and mission. The wrath of the authorities was great. Local Native Councils were prevented from making direct grants to these schools. Inspectors were hurried around to declare them unsatisfactory.

With restricted funds, and the target of much abuse, yet these independent schools progressed. In five years, 43 were established. By 1946, more than 100 were being maintained by the community, and in 1952, 300.

Everywhere else, except among the Kikuyu, opposition to the mission schools was overcome. But because imperialism chooses the mission as its instrument against independent

... by subject ... the Kikuyu independent school ... represented far more than a revolt against the ... of a particular mission. It was a landmark of ...

... the independent schools have been closed - on the ... that they are "Mau Mau" institutions.

KEY CONCEPT:

Africa is important in the world today. Too much of the world has been lost to the speculators, lost to capitalism. First a sixth of the world went out of their hands for all time - and they have never ceased trying to get it back. Then large areas of highly-industrialised Europe went over to the side of socialism and peace. And after that the vast lands of China, with its huge population and the oldest civilisation in the world.

All Asia is in ferment. India is no longer the happy hunting ground for British imperialism, the treasure house that it once was. Malaya cannot be wrested from its own peoples, in spite of all the might of modern military weapons and power. Viet-nam continues to resist the imperial invader. Korea has not succumbed to them, in spite of the most terrible war ever to be fought.

What is left?

Africa is left, with its vast, still largely unexploited areas of wealth, its minerals and man-power. Africa is essential for those planning a third world war. Britain can no longer make the appearance of concessions to colonial peoples. The liberation movement of Kenya must be suppressed at all costs - as in South Africa. Under these conditions, the exercise of a Mau Mau, or of poisoned water or a school of fire-arms - anything goes. And those who believe in progress and the development of all humanity cannot hesitate in taking sides.