

1923

KENYA

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REF
R 25 MAY 23

MUSCOTT, R. F.

DATE

25th MAY 1923.

CIRCULATION:—

SUBJECT

POSITION OF INDIANS.
BRITISH POLICY IN EAST AFRICA.

Five copies of a series of five articles
written by MR L. W. Leach, late Editor, "East
African Standard".

Previous Paper

MINUTES

See
25944

See within

No present action

to Professor Green

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29/5/23

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G.C.S.

26.5.23

Put by

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M.A.

Subsequent Paper

ISSUES IN EAST AFRICA.The need of a definite Policy.A Tragedy of Expediency from an East African
Point of View.

by

L. W. LEMON (late Editor
"East African Standard")GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

There are on their way to London at the moment deputations from Kenya comprising the Governor, Sir Robert E. Coryndon, K.C.M.G., and leading European and Indian residents there, who at the invitation of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, are to discuss the deadlock that has arisen over the claims of Indians in Kenya to equality of status with the White colonists.

In the articles that follow an endeavour has been made to demonstrate not only that the crisis that has now been reached, and which may be of far graver import than is commonly believed, has its origin partly, if not chiefly, in the absence of a clear and declared policy on the part of the Imperial Government in relation to our East African possessions, but also that the continued absence of such a policy as a working plan of government and settlement generally, may lead, in other directions than that at present apparent, to very costly and regrettable confusion in that part of the Empire.

ARTICLE I.THE DARK CONTINENT.The reservoir of half the world's problems.Britain's share.

The lecturer on "Wildest Africa" at the Philharmonic Hall has startled many among his audiences by imposing upon a screen a map of Africa, as a demonstration of the immensity of that Continent, maps, on an equal scale, of India, Europe, China and the larger part of Australia.

Africa, in terms of area is as difficult of comprehension for most of us as in terms of age, and just as imagination is stimulated nearer to perception in regard to immensities of time by the discovery of fowls trussed 3,000 years ago, so some such graphic illustration of great space as that given by Mr. Hatcliffe Holmes is helpful, if not necessary, towards facilitating appreciation of the facts of vastnesses such as those that Africa presents.

But some of us who watched, saw a perhaps unintended, symbolism in the simultaneous occupation of Africa by these large, varied and vital areas. The thought suggested itself that in so imposing them there was little need to divest any of them of any of their possibilities or their problems. For this still immature continent is revealing rapidly to those who pursue its acquaintance a wealth of economic and human resources that in far from distant days may be the germ and prize of world history. And with the appreciation of these resources there is being exposed as fascinating and complex a series of problems as is presented probably by the whole of those better known but difficult countries that together approximate to its size. The Dark Continent is now becoming the Continent of the Dawn, and all

Europe, perhaps America too, is concerned in the coming of that Dawn.

It is true that many of the problems may be solved on lines that have proved their validity elsewhere, but others, and those chiefly with which Great Britain, as guardian of some of the most rapidly awakening portions of Africa is concerned, will require patient and careful research along routes where no exact precedents exist. For most of them have characteristics of sheer novelty, and even where older questions, already settled elsewhere, are making themselves felt in Africa, they acquire a new force and gravity from the rapidity of modern mass movements, and from the dangerous inflammability of men's passions when their destinies are under external experiment.

Our present Ignorance.

We do not know Africa - yet - as we know India; its resources and potentialities; the measure of our strength - & weakness - there. Until we have that knowledge, and this will take many years of acquisition, we should move slowly. But we should prefer deliberate movement to drift.

Only, we have to visualise British Black and White Africa as an immeasurably valuable partner in the Empire, the retention and development of which will give the Imperial Power as high prestige and satisfaction as have accrued from the possession of India, and, in deciding, even at this early stage, on what lines it can develop in the immediate future to strive for consistency, and to avoid by every possible means any act that might be calculated to prejudice its future. Its course must be protected as far as possible from the dictates of political expediency, financial opportunity and blindness to and unawareness of the rapid

and not easily calculable consequences of the birth of black nations.

An Experiment.

In Africa, and particularly in Equatorial Africa, a larger experiment than that in India is being worked out, and that the experiment in Asia may be the nearer evident decision is but a reason the more for the most careful regard of every step in the early stages of the far more patient and vital processes in Africa. Is this patient, deliberate but purposeful, attitude a feature of British African - particularly East African - Administration? We should see more clearly now than we did 25 years ago when we took over British East Africa, whither we are wending, and what we are going to do with that great area. We should have clear in our minds there, even in these early days, (since they are big decisions that have been made and are being made) some indication of ultimate purpose to which we shall continue to direct Government and settlement. Do we know what we want and do we exhibit such a purpose?

No single policy.

There can be, in the nature of things, no single African policy. There can be no claim of conflict of principle for instance, merely on the ground that both countries are in Africa, in the delegation of authority to Africans themselves under supervision, as in Egypt, or to British Settlers in Africa as in Rhodesia and the Southern Union, nor in the form or rapidity that delegation takes. Nor need the progress towards self-government of Colonies on the East and West Coasts respectively march invariably in perfect step. But that Kenya now sees self-government as a practicable goal while the Gambia or Uganda does not, and that the

Colonial Office appears to be more anxious for Federation than any of the affected territories, and that Rhodesia may or may not look to Central rather than South Africa, intensifies rather than reduces the duty of the Imperial Government to make up its mind on the basic principle on which these other nebulous and remote designs must stand (or fall).

Consequences, not Causes.

The writer is concerned with the consequences rather than the causes of the evident absence of a policy for Eastern Africa. But it may be observed that the reluctant use that appears to be made of Imperial experience elsewhere in similar problems to some of those which from time to time arise in East Africa suggests a defect in central administration that urgently requires rectification.

The Colonial Office would appear to have little co-ordinating principle by means of which lessons learned on one side of Africa are made easily available for the other side if and when required. It would not be difficult perhaps to point to cases to support the theory that Africa is governed sectionally - by Coasts - and that problems common to various parts of Africa are faced and settled anew and independently wherever they arise, and the lessons of the one virtually ignored for the other. There is thus a present and grave danger that matters of great pith and moment to larger issues than the mere welfare of individual sections of Africa, may be settled on questions of sectional prestige or parochial compromise.

The vice would not be peculiar to the Colonial Office if it were found, as it is submitted it would be found on investigation to exist. To anticipate a subject to which later reference will be made, the position of Indians in Kenya has, it is understood, never yet been made a Cabinet

question - at least 'decisions' are announced as those only of a Secretary of State - and its continued debate between the Colonial Office and the India Office rather than by the Imperial Cabinet as a whole, with all available data before them or formed by a vision of which Africa and India are only factors, threatens a tragic demonstration of the eventuality suggested above - with the Empire itself as the issue.

The basis of Policy.

Data, in considerable volume, for the formulation of an African policy exists, not only in the accumulated despatches from Colonial Governors, but in the important books in which from time to time experienced administrators in retirement and others embody their perceptions of problems, and of the way to meet them, but after all allowances are made for the period of time necessary for the incubation of ideas in the official mind, or that required to disinfect of the charge of precipitateness any inspired thought of a Colonial Governor, it remains a fact that the movement of African history goes on in the absence of any clearly defined and detailed purpose of Great Britain in East Africa.

Instead, tentative measures, introduced hastily to meet sudden emergencies, to avert imminent disaster, or to secure benefits that would otherwise be fleeting, are forming, for good, or ill, the stern facts and precedents with which, when it comes, that policy will have to deal, or, more probably, to which it will have to conform itself to the permanent advantage or loss of the final status and form of British rule in East Africa.

It may be conceded that the hesitating and tentative conduct of the Imperial Government in East Africa is due largely to the geographical situation of the territory, to its racial elements and to the extreme newness and rapidity of its settlement; but the Imperial Government may be presumed to have been aware of the two former of these factors, and it was their profession and duty all along to have controlled the others. At all events by the fiat of the Imperial Government, the Protectorate of British East Africa has gone, and the Colony of Kenya is a fact in all school books and official documents. Were there no reason for knowing that annexation was designed as a step to the raising of a loan, it might be taken as a symptom of a policy and a step towards maturity. The facts speak otherwise.

The Curse of Peace.

It is the case also that consequential characteristics from these factors have accounted for the absence in East Africa of the placidity that generally has marked British history and government in the West African Colonies. In the first place, White settlement has not been practicable on the West to the extent it has been pursued on the East, and Asia which for East Africa has been an anxious supplier of coolie labour has been, for the West Coast, blissfully remote from that point of view. All Africa, however, appears to have been assumed by British opinion to be a land of slow and placid development, the only interruptions of which were occasional wars with the natives. That Kenya has had few of these interludes has been wrongly taken to imply peaceful progress under the wing of that kind fate that, except in America, has blessed so eminently British incursions into other folks' territories. The absence of wars in East

Africa may prove to have been a misfortune in disguise, since, as elsewhere, they might have arrested the policy of drift, and compelled Britain to put forward a policy. Worse and more costly things than occasional quarrels with natives appear to confront us unless we remedy that great omission in Colonising enterprise.

In the absence of hostilities that have been fashionable elsewhere in Africa. East Africa has developed problems peculiar to herself, that relate themselves to few precedents, that make their own phraseology, ('forced labour', 'equality of status' and the like) and that are not always readily understood by the Englishman in the street.

Later articles in this series will identify certain of these problems, and will seek to emphasize the necessity for the Imperial Government to do now what it would have done long ago had its authority in East Africa been more dramatically challenged, and to say how what is its purpose in East Africa, how it proposes to effect it and to explain in the light of that purpose and conduct certain present and proposed features of its administration there.

ARTICLE II.The Story of the Past.The Conflict of various possibilities.

The general characteristics of British Administration in East Africa - the absence of a declared and pursued goal - may be illustrated by a brief historical summary of the British occupancies. There may then follow an allusion to some of the considerations that render vital an early and as definite as may be, administration of East African policy; a method of ascertaining and formulating on the clearest possible lines will be indicated, and a plea put forward for the suspension, pending the declaration of such a policy and the de-ordination with it of all existing factors in the situation, of all constitutional and racial experiments. Where such a policy when formed involves interference with existing conditions, these conditions must be changed, but, above all, that policy must be loyally adhered to as decisive of all future administration.

A five-act drama.

Eastern equatorial Africa has been regarded by the Imperial Government from successive points of view, at present some five in number. Each has determined administration temporarily and till modification by a later accident or idea; little or no attempt has been made to correlate each with its successor, or to remove any one conception entirely before the introduction of a new antagonistic one.

Viewed first as a corridor to Uganda, where the turbulent Christians lived, what is now Kenya, and was then British East Africa, assumed, when it developed, problems of its own, an Indian type of panacea, chiefly because Indian currency

and Indian law had been introduced as a consequence of the employment of Indian coolie labour on the construction of a railway designed primarily to reach Uganda, rather than to develop East Africa. The Imperial Government were not ready then with an African policy, and, no less blind to imagined consequences than the rest of the world, they followed Indian models and introduced Indian institutions because Indians had come over to Africa to build a railway for wages and to trade. The character of the administration of the new Protectorate was set, in the absence of an African policy - Indian.

White Settlement.

There came a new movement when white settlement promised to be a practicable policy over a large area of the East African highlands, and this was laid down as 'policy'. Native tribes were moved, large areas cut up into farms and many European settlers attracted to what was to be in perpetuity a white Colony. It did not, however, occur then to the Imperial Government that this was a radical change, sufficient at least to justify in those highlands the substitution of British for Indian institutions, nor likely to invite a challenge later from some of the African natives themselves. Adaptations of existing procedure to meet some of the new conditions were made, but they were adaptations only. The Indian system stayed, and stays. Only a basic change: East African currency from Indian to Imperial terms, the law of the East African highlands is still the Indian penal code, and the East African Administration is still Indian in its hierarchic forms and conventions. Natives were put into elastic reserves with a sense of a British trust to them fulfilled. Not all the Reserves were gasetted.

That this new order of things 'white settlement' has been recognized as considerable in Downing Street, is indicated among other things, by Lord Elgin's 'pledge' of the reservation of the highlands for white settlement and by Mr. Churchill's after-dinner enthusiasm for a 'characteristically British Colony' - with no indication, however, that Indian institutions were, or are, to be replaced by British. These two strange precedents at least were to broaden slowly down into freedom.

And that the Colonial Office were, and are, equally loyal to the most ancient view of Kenya, - the 'corridor' theory - is evidenced by the exclusion of the Kenya link of the Imperial Wireless Chain as soon as it was found that South Africa had made independent arrangements for direct communication with London.

The Indians.

The fourth stage opened with a reversion to the second on the sudden discovery and occupation by India of a chief place in the Councils of the Empire; and Kenya was selected, because India wished it, as the test of the value of British adhesion to the principle of 'equality within the Empire for all British subjects'.

The phraseology of the principle was attractive, and has won adherents from among those who believe that the British Empire has a mission to unite all colours in brotherhood and to harmonise all creeds and cultures. None can quarrel with that vision of Imperial vocation. Its holders err in this instance only through unawareness of the conditions of Kenya. The Imperial Government, however, should have guided its zeal, it would have been supposed, with discretion, and should have carried out, through the Colonial Office, the

responsibility (that lay with it rather than with unofficial adherents of the doctrine of equality) of pointing out that the issue in Kenya was complicated by the presence of some millions of awakening Africans, and that therefore, without a preliminary harmony, either in India or Africa, of any two of these cultures, a somewhat risky attempt was involved of co-ordinating three. No demur, however, was made, and 'negotiations' have proceeded for years.

The Native.

There will emerge very shortly the fifth - perhaps the final, and certainly the decisive - aspect, to be correlated with the others, and to supersede those with which it is not compatible, namely, Kenya as a profitable home and school of civilisation for the native African. The Imperial Government and its local officers are beginning to realise this, and its implications. They are only beginning. The British public are not yet alive to it. An endeavour to give this point of view something of the quality of which it has so far been deprived will be the purpose of the next article.

Meanwhile it is enlightening to tabulate the five schemes or precedents that have so far gone to the erection of the East African Dominions, all of which co-exist and operate to-day:-

1. A Corridor.
2. Indian law and Institutions.
3. White Settlement (Characteristically British Colony)
4. Indian Claims to 'Equality'
5. The Unknown Native factor

ARTICLE III.

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THE NATIVE.

The Contact of Black and White.

Questions and Demands.

The Native, in Eastern Central Africa, himself presents a complicated problem. Drawn, as is the case in scarcely any other area of equal extent in the Continent from many varied sources, Nilotic, Bantu, Hamitic races, he has so far, during the British occupation of his country been left largely to himself. He has not been replaced, regimented and controlled as in the South, nor economically released and enfranchised as in the great Colonies of the West and in Uganda. He has lived chiefly in Reserves that have divided, with the White areas and the uninhabitable tracts, his country into three sections. He has gone out from those Reserves - or some few of his number has gone out - to earn on the White man's farms and in the towns, money with which to pay his taxes. In doing this he has evolved grievances; he has a bitter grievance in regard to the land, and others, less comprehensible perhaps, but equally vital in view of that trait in his psychology that arrests them in-to first class burdens, in regard to Registration and incidents of his taxes. He has become aware of the controversy that has proceeded in England on "forced labour", and while he has his own criticism to make in regard to this institution, it is safe to say that he would find difficulty in understanding or accepting with gratitude the efforts of his White friends in England who deem prior reference and approval by the Colonial Office of everyone of the few occasions that arise for "forcing" natives out to repair a road or bridge as against the present authority of the Local Government to order them out, an effective security against

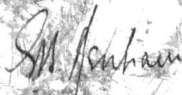
main line, and every effort will be made to afford him siding facilities when the plans now under preparation in England are received.

4. I attach copies of local correspondence with Mr. Store for your information.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,



G O V E R N O R .

COPY.

S.No.18965/6/23.

1864 28-1-34 J.

THE SECRETARIAT,

Nairobi,

14th January, 1934.

Sir,

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With reference to the subjects raised in your letter dated July 26th, 1923, to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies and discussed with you by His Excellency the Governor on December 12th at Nairobi, I have the honour to inform you that Government is unable to reconsider its decision that unless you are able to proceed with your timber concession on the existing royalty basis your licence not be cancelled and fresh tenders invited. The fullest consideration will be given to any tender you may submit.

2. No proposal to stabilise royalties is under consideration by Government.

3. As regards farms Nos. 1860, 1866, and 1869 Government agrees - subject to the sanction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies - to accepting the surrender of Farms 1866 and 1869 and to waiving its claims to all outstandings on those farms.

4. A separate communication will be addressed to you on the subject of the alignment of the Thika-Nyeri Extension Railway in its relation to your signal estate.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

Sd. E. B. Denham.

COLONIAL SECRETARY.

J. C. Store, Esq.,

The Cedars
Abbey Park Road,

GRISBY, ENGLAND.

J.

THE SECRETARIAT,

1911,

Dear Sir,

I am to inform you that His Majesty's Railway has finally considered the request made by you during your interview that your factory may be allowed to remain connected with the main line. It is expected that the Railway Administration will be glad to grant the necessary facilities for a siding on the main line.

It may be desirable to arrange to provide the area required by the extension of the line to one of the following:

Yours faithfully,

Your most obedient servant,

EDWARD SECRETARY.

J. C. STONE, ESQ.,
 * The Cedars *
 Abbey Park Road,
 GRIMSBY, ENGLAND.

Sar. 11131/24 Kenya

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DRAFT.

14 March 1924.

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for Coigndon
MINUTE.

I have to ask the next
of your desq, N^o 136, of the
28th of Jan, & to inform
you that I approve generally

Mr. Brew March 3
Calden 12.2

of the action taken in
connection with the timber
concession of Mr J. C. Stone

- Mr. C. Davis.
- Mr. G. Grindle.
- Mr. H. Read.
- Mr. J. Masterton Smith.
- Mr. Ormsby Hope.
- Duke of Devonshire.

(SIGNED) J. H. THOMAS.