

## KENYA AT THE CROSS-ROADS

TOM MBOYA, M.L.C.

*Chairman of the All-African Peoples' Conference, Secretary-General of the Kenya Federation of Labour and Member of the Kenya Legislative Council.*

IN the turmoil of events, one may overlook the importance of the need for a sense of direction; and this, indeed, is the crux of the struggle in Kenya. Ever since the first African elections in March, 1957, the African elected members have demanded that Britain declare its ultimate objective in Kenya. For the absence of any positive policy of transitional development towards a known and accepted goal has resulted in contending forces laying emphasis on such development as will satisfy only those aims beneficial to their respective groups.

Kenya's political development cannot ignore trends in her neighbouring territories; nor the mood, atmosphere and pace set by events in Africa generally. There have been those who have attempted to isolate Kenya and to discover for it a unique solution. One European settler leader stated late in 1957 that Kenya could not develop into another Ghana—by which he meant attainment of independence on the 'one man, one vote' principle—or another Central Africa—by which he meant 'partnership' as defined by Sir Roy Welensky. But having stated that Kenya is different and denied to it this line of development or that, these critics steer sedulously clear of committing themselves to any definite declaration of their own. A handful of European settlers recently proposed that Kenya should develop towards self-government in pockets—that each of the provinces should become a near-autonomous state, so that the 'White Highlands' could remain White. But this idea was so patently ludicrous that the bulk of settlerdom either strongly attacked or ignored it.

What is Kenya to be? To the leaders of African opinion, the answer is clear—an independent democracy founded on universal suffrage, from which discrimination in all its forms is outlawed. Their attention is no longer focussed on what Kenya is to become, but on how and when they can attain this clear objective.

And Kenya must be seen in the context of the African awakening, as manifested in the All-African Peoples' Conference at Accra in December, 1958. How can Kenya hope to escape the consequences of the discussions there? The Conference adopted as

its programme the co-ordination of all efforts in the African struggle for freedom, by creating facilities for co-operative action and mutual help. It passed resolutions on the particular problems or circumstances of individual territories, including one on Kenya. But the constant theme was that Africa had to be freed from colonial rule and White settler domination, and governments responsible to the people established in their place. Without doubt, this has vastly increased the vigour and self-confidence of the Africans in their struggle—the Kenyans need no longer regard themselves as alone. Another development, equally important and much closer to home, was the establishment of the Pan African Freedom Movement for East and Central Africa at a conference of African leaders from East and Central Africa held in Mwanza during September last year. This too aims at co-operative action and mutual help. When, in May, 1958, seven African members were brought to trial on charges of criminal libel and conspiracy, many nationalist organisations in East and Central Africa sent contributions towards their defence, as did a number of individuals and organisations in Europe and America, while Ghana actually sent a defence lawyer—who was refused entry by the Kenya Government.

It is impossible that Kenya should be considered in isolation from events elsewhere in Africa, its development oblivious of the political mood of the Continent. And the inconsistencies of British policy in East Africa aggravate an already urgent grievance. While remaining silent on the future of Kenya, Britain has seen fit to pronounce that Uganda, Tanganyika, Somalia and Aden are to be developed towards democratic self-rule. Kenya cannot afford to remain for long without a sense of direction. For the uncertainty caused by this scrupulous silence is rotting patience and trust.

African fear and suspicion of White supremacy is justified and understandable. The African demands and must have a position of real effectiveness in the government as his only safeguard against a possible South African type of European domination in Kenya and Central Africa. Despite African opposition in 1953, the Central African Federation was imposed on the peoples of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Since then the Africans have continued to plead for a reversal of this decision. They have petitioned, made repeated representations, argued and agitated. In vain. The British Government betrayed them—it rejected the African Affairs Board advice on the Central African

Franchise Bill and the Constitutional Amendment Bill, both of which were patent discriminatory measures—while Sir Roy Welensky has threatened and bullied them. And in 1960, the Federal Constitution is due for review. Welensky has publicly stated that he considers the grant of dominion status as the logical step to be taken next year; and, as if to give his subjects a foretaste of what such independence will mean, he has encouraged a situation in which the Congresses have been outlawed and their leaders detained for the impertinence of opposition to White supremacy. No further warning is necessary. Dominion status now would destroy all African hopes for development towards democratic government and lead to the disease of another South Africa. Small wonder then that the Africans in nearby Kenya fear for their future and demand an early proclamation of Britain's ultimate intentions towards the colony.

The last two years have seen an intensified constitutional struggle in Kenya. In March, 1957, the newly elected African members of the Legislative Council declared the Lyttelton Constitution void and rejected the two £3,500 a year ministerial posts offered to the African people. In July the African Elected Members' Organisation sent a two-man delegation to London, to explain to the British Government and public its case in rejecting the Lyttelton Constitution, with its White-dominated Council and Cabinet. In October of the same year, Mr. Lennox-Boyd visited Kenya; and without consulting, or even discussing his proposals with all the racial groups, decided to impose a new constitution.

The Lennox-Boyd Constitution conceded an increase of six more seats to the Africans, bringing their representation to parity with the European settlers. But despite this apparent advance, the Constitution still preserved European dominance in the Council of Ministers, and introduced twelve new Legislative Council seats—4 European, 4 Asian, and 4 African—elected by the legislature itself sitting as an electoral college. Since the legislature has an overwhelming European membership, a candidate for these seats must receive the majority support of the European members in order to be elected. No wonder then that the Africans chosen to fill the four special seats tend to reflect European political demands.

Unhesitatingly, the African elected members continued in their boycott of the Council of Ministers, and during 1958 pressed in the Legislative Council for the appointment of a

constitutional expert and the convening of a round-table conference. All their efforts, however, were defeated by a combination of European settler representatives and Government votes in the legislature. Since 1957, the Asians have publicly declared their support for the African demands, and their representatives have consistently voted with the African members on all these issues. Even one European member, Mr. S. V. Cooke, has boldly broken ranks and supported the Africans in their efforts, being censured as a result by some of his European constituents. Yet the coalition of settler and Government representatives has won the day. Mr. E. A. Vasey, Kenya's Finance Minister, failed to win one of the twelve special seats because Europeans disapproved of his public declaration that Kenya would one day have a predominantly African government.

In January, 1959, the Africans decided to carry their resistance to the Lennox-Boyd Constitution even further, by boycotting the sessions of the Legislative Council until their demands were properly considered; and the Indian members—in accordance with a resolution passed at their Congress meeting in April, 1958—decided to boycott the legislature indefinitely as well. In February, the non-European elected members of the Legislative Council, joined by Mr. Cooke, decided to send the first-ever joint delegation to the United Kingdom to press for a declaration of policy towards Kenya, the appointment of a constitutional expert and the convening of a round table conference. This delegation, which visited London in April, was historic and in itself fulfilled two important functions. It established once and for all that the Africans are not alone in their dissatisfaction with the present constitution, and illustrated that it is the European settlers who constitute the stumbling-block in any efforts to arrive at a settlement. All previous talk by the settlers that they alone are capable of leading the country has been made ludicrous by their obvious disunity and lack of any leadership or policy.

Recent activities by Europeans have consisted mainly in fruitless cries for leadership and a positive policy. A Convention of European Associations was held in Nairobi on 10th March, but all it was able to accomplish was a call for continued Colonial Office control of Kenya for the foreseeable future. This is a complete reversal of their 1956 policy, which sought immediate self-government under European control. It is obvious that European settlers are today caught between fear and

realism. They are afraid that democracy will mean an African government which will 'get its own back' by discriminating against them, and will tear down the fence protecting the "White Highlands". They are realistic enough to know—although they are afraid to say so publicly—that whatever they do, African rule in Kenya is on its way. They do not know how to adapt themselves to this new situation and especially how to become part of it. In this, Tanganyika will perhaps provide them with an urgently needed answer. Meanwhile they look to Britain for help, and find little comfort in Britain's refusal to speak out and give them a lead. After the recent events in Central Africa, the Kenya European cannot hope to look to Roy Welensky for ultimate rescue.

In all this confusion, it is necessary to restate the African stand. The Africans demand that it be recognized that Kenya is an African country. It has 6,000,000 Africans to 200,000 immigrants, and any democracy must inevitably and rightly lead to a predominantly African government. As against a racialist Black State, the African has accepted the only rational compromise—a democracy recognizing the rights of all citizens regardless of race or colour, guaranteeing individual property rights and equality before the law, and upholding the civil rights of all citizens through the functioning of an impartial judiciary. The Africans do not and cannot agree that the "White Highlands" should remain the prerogative of any one race, nor can they accept segregation in schools and hospitals. The African leaders guarantee just compensation to any persons affected in the process of reorganizing the country's economic structure when independence is attained. As against this, the settlers offer nothing but undefined partnership and a great deal of vague talk about government by people of integrity and civilized standards. This is the same language that was used in South Africa in 1910 and in Central Africa in 1953; and the evident results are painful reminders to the Africans of the consequences to be expected from any simple faith in words, however sweet they may sound.

The Kenya Government is currently in panic; and arbitrary arrests and detentions continue to hound the Africans in their struggle. But the fight for self-government cannot be stopped by bars or by bullets. History has shown itself a faithful and victorious ally.