

FREE WORLD

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KENYATTA RESTRIBUTES COMMUNIST AID

On 13 March Oginge Odinga was stripped of his post as Deputy President of the Kenya African National Union (KANU), and stalked out of the annual Party Congress at Limuru muttering darkly about an "invisible government". When he subsequently resigned both his government position and his Party membership, it was evident that President Kenyatta had at last declared war on Kenya's dissident left, and had taken action to forestall any incipient bid to take over the government by his arch rival.

Odinga's first action after his withdrawal was to announce that he was starting an opposition party and, initially, it seemed as though he might in fact be able to end the exclusive domination of KANU, since twenty-eight similarly inclined MP's followed his lead and resigned their party membership. But, twelve days after the incident President Kenyatta revealed that the dissidents would have to contest their seats in a by-election, as they had originally won them running on the KANU platform and, true to his word, the President promptly prorogued the Assembly after rushing through legislation to this effect. Faced with the almost certain loss of their seats, many of those who had bolted the Party applied for readmission, leaving the erstwhile Vice President virtually alone in opposition.

The dubious constitutionality of Kenyatta's move is in itself a measure of the slaps with which he views the symbiotic relationship developing between the Vice President and the communist world. A longtime leftist, the extent of whose ideological commitment to communism is uncertain, but whose dedication to personal advancement has never, even by his friends, been thought to be less than total, Odinga has acquired a reputation as an enthusiastic lobbyist for the interests of Peking and Moscow in Kenya.

This reputation may be partly responsible for the vigor of Kenyatta's antagonism, since the inclusion of an advocate of Moscow's line in the very highest ruling circles tended to

vitalize the credibility of the President's adherence to "African" socialism, the program which he, together with Economic Minister M'boya has evolved as the guideline for Kenyan development. African socialism has been repeatedly denounced by Kremlin ideologists as deviating from the approved course of "scientific" socialism. But no taint of Marxism, however strong, would have provoked the politically sagacious Jomo Kenyatta into attempting so decisively to discredit a deputy who, as head of the Luo tribe, commands the loyalty of the third largest voting bloc in the country. On the contrary, what doubtlessly actuated Kenyatta was the evidence that Odinga was using his office to promote subversion, even to the extent of building up a military force loyal to him personally.

Odinga and the Communists

Odinga's friendship with the Communists antedates Kenyan independence by some years. In 1961 his passport was seized by British authorities upon his return from an illegal trip to Moscow and Peking. At that time, he blantly admitted that he had sent more than thirty Kenyan students to study in Communist countries, stating that the money for their studies had come from Peking. In addition, he boasted of having at his disposal 3000 scholarships proffered by the Soviet Union. When Kenya became independent in 1964, the USSR and Czechoslovakia graciously offered to finance a government news agency for the fledgling country. The agency was to be staffed exclusively by African technicians who would undergo rudimentary journalistic training in Czechoslovakia before going on to Moscow where they were to receive more advanced tuition from the veterans at TASS. Apparently Bulgaria has also been anxious to further the ambitions of Mr. Odinga, as it has been repeatedly reported that the Sofia regime is providing paramilitary training for one hundred Kenyans selected by the Vice President despite an agreement between Nairobi and London that the training of Kenyan officers would be handled by Great Britain.

Mr. Odinga apparently lacks funds to carry out his plans. A London Times dispatch from Nairobi on 1 May reported that a group of former Mau Mau leaders claimed that he had offered them 150,000 pounds sterling to reactivate the cult and

- 1) Although reports conflict, it appears that the CITEHA and TASS services would be provided gratis on the understanding that the sole Western service subscribed to would be Reuters. Also, it is interesting to note that Odinga, at that time Minister of Home Affairs, and Achiong Omedo, Information Minister until the Limuru affair, were the primary figures in the original deal.

fight against the Kenyatta government. Similarly, according to the Nairobi-based East African Standard, on 25 March Kintler for Home Affairs Not charged that between June 1964 and December 1965, more than 400,000 pounds had been expended in trying to subvert the government of Kenya. In an obvious reference to the Soviet Russian, Hungarian, Czech and Chinese diplomats, businessmen and journalists expelled from Kenya for acting as subversive linen men, Not blasted warned against abuse of diplomatic privileges. Commenting on the charges, the paper went on to ask:

Who are the guilty men? They can scarcely hail from the West, or else Communist propaganda is seriously off the mark, because the Chinese and Russian line has been to suggest that the Kenya Government, like some others in new Africa, is not sufficiently "progressive" preferring African socialism to scientific socialism.²

Kenya and East Europe

This somewhat hostile attitude towards the communist world has not always been characteristic of Kenyan policy. Shortly before independence, in September 1964, Kenyatta stressed that Kenya would maintain trade with traditional markets while increasing its volume of trade considerably through contacts with the socialist countries. State agencies were to be set up to trade with Soviet bloc countries. Upon independence, Kenya was quick to implement this policy, and concluded trade agreements not only with the Soviet Union, but with most of the regimes of Eastern Europe. Unlike many such accords, so far as is known, those between Kenya and her communist partners did not involve the granting of credits on the part of the currency poor countries of East Europe. For the most part, a direct exchange of goods was provided for: East European industrial goods in return for Kenyan tea, coffee and hemp. Thus was initiated what ought to have developed into a mutually advantageous trading relationship which could have expanded with the economic development of the countries involved. Unfortunately, however, this felicitous marriage of economic interests was not to be permitted to flourish tranquilly due to the coincidence of communist expectations of ideological hegemony in Kenya with the personal aspirations of Mr. Odinga.

² East African Standard, 25 March 1966.

Outlook for the Future

Putting economic considerations ahead of personal pique, President Kenyatta has so far conspicuously avoided attacks on any of the communist countries which have apparently abetted Odinga, being content to discredit the former Vice President as completely as possible by removing his political base. He has not achieved this without a price, however, for Odinga was the leader of the Luo, and his eclipse will doubtless arouse fears among his tribesmen, especially as the press in the Luo stronghold of Central Kenya is under the deposed leader's control. Moreover, in tribal minded Kenya, any move by the central government against a representative of a given tribe jeopardizes the delicate balance of national unity and traditional fractionalism.

As for Odinga himself, it would be imprudent to predict that he is through for good. As a gifted speaker and astute politician, it is always possible that he might make a strong re-appearance after Kenyatta's demise. While the Khas remains healthy and as firmly in control as he now seems to be, however, Mr. Odinga will very likely have to content himself with plotting from the boardrooms.

Kenyatta has thus made it clear that he regards economic relations as a mutually advantageous means of development, not as an invitation to subversion; that while his toleration of leftist opposition is elastic, the President's patience is not inexhaustible. One wonders if Kenya's trading partners in the East will, in future, resist the impulse to spread communist ideology to the detriment of their friendly image as well as their economic interest.

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