

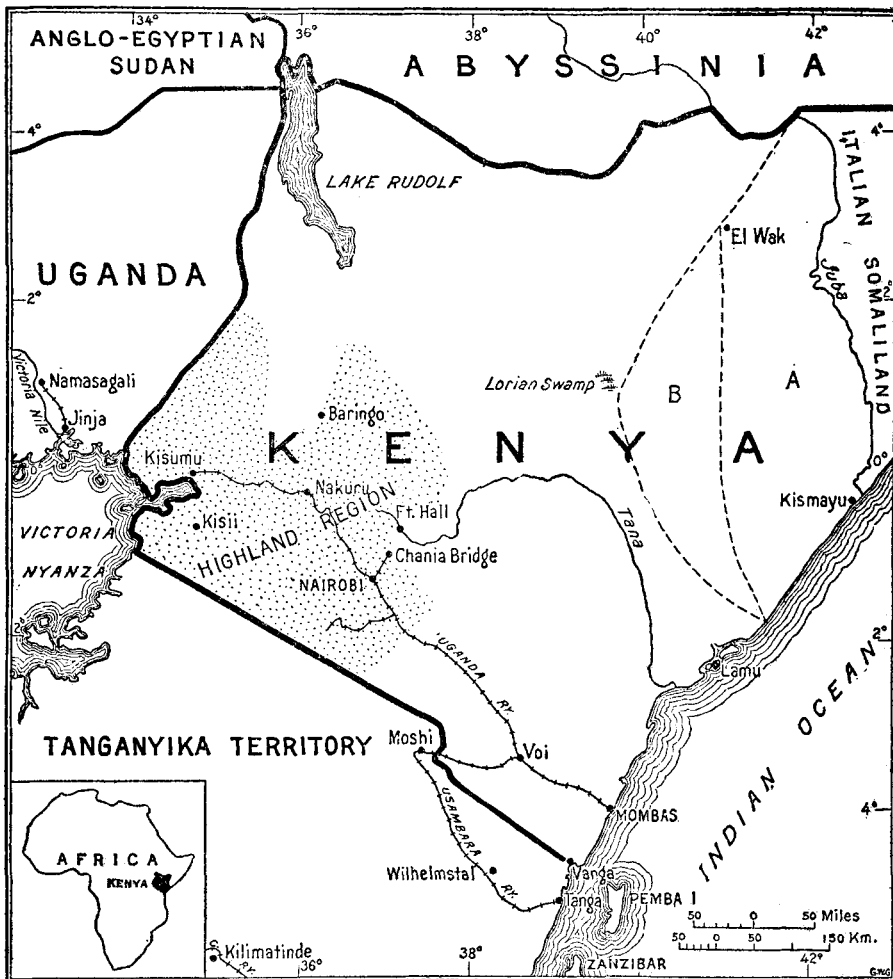
# THE INDIAN QUESTION IN KENYA

*By Stanley Rice*

**K**ENYA COLONY, or, as it used to be called, British East Africa, is a tropical possession of the British Empire situated right on the Equator. Topographically it may be divided into three main sections. The northernmost of these, consisting largely of desert and unproductive soil, may be ignored for the purposes of this discussion; the value of the Colony both actual and prospective lies in the south between the island of Mombassa on the Indian Ocean and the shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza. The second main section consists of the actual sea coast (including Mombassa) and its immediate hinterland. As we go westward from the coast we pass through this low lying belt into the third section, which gradually rises until it becomes a high tableland at an average elevation of some 5,000 feet. It falls again to the shores of the great lake, though by no means to sea level. Nairobi, the capital, is between 5,000 and 6,000 feet above the sea.

Out of Kenya's total area of some 246,000 square miles this elevated tableland covers roughly about 50,000, though it has never been accurately surveyed. Its existence is of the highest importance to the present question, for it is only the "White Highlands," as it has come to be called, that makes European colonization at all possible. From this point of view the position is not unlike that in India where what may be called the agricultural settlers, the tea and coffee and rubber planters who alone own lands of any extent, are confined to the more elevated slopes.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, chiefly owing to the enterprise of explorers, British trade began to be attracted to East Africa, but no attempt was made at first either to administer the country or to establish a colony. But when Germany put in an appearance in the eighties it became necessary to define the respective spheres of influence. Kenya Colony was allotted to the British. The island of Mombassa together with a strip of the coast extending inland for ten miles remained under the Sultan of Zanzibar, but in 1890 a British Protectorate was declared there and the administration is now carried on in conformity with British ideas. As happened in India, a trading company whose original object was only profits was driven by the force of



KENYA COLONY

In article 13 of the Pact of London, Great Britain and France promised to cede territory to Italy in compensation for colonial gains they might make by the treaty of peace. In fulfilment of this, Great Britain has expressed a willingness to cede to Italy the portion of Kenya marked A on the above map. The Italians, however, have asked for more. They have reduced an earlier more extensive claim and now demand in addition only the territory marked B.

circumstances to undertake the administration of the country. The commercial enterprise however did not prosper. The company found itself in difficulties and in 1895 reluctantly surrendered its charter to the British Foreign Office. The colony remained under Foreign Office control until 1908 when it was handed over to the Colonial Office as being more naturally within

that department's province. By the Colonial Office it has been administered ever since, and Whitehall retains the ultimate control. The Governor is the agent of the Colonial Office and in all major matters must take his orders thence. He is assisted by executive and legislative councils, but to all intents and purposes they are advisory bodies, the former being the machinery for carrying out the Colonial Office policy and the decisions of the latter being subject to the veto of the ultimate authority.

The coming of Indians and other Asiatics to Mombassa and the coast dates back several centuries. They came purely as traders, very rarely penetrated into the interior and made no attempt either to interfere with the indigenous systems of government or to undertake the moral or the economic education of the African inhabitants. Indirectly, however, they served a useful purpose, not only by bringing to the people the simple commodities of which they stood in need but also by introducing to them the methods of a higher civilization, though naturally enough they themselves were not slow to take advantage of their superior intelligence to become rich at the expense of the natives.

In 1896 the British Government began to build the Uganda railway with a view to opening up the interior, and for this purpose they imported large numbers of Indians, at first mainly unskilled laborers, then, as the railway progressed, clerks, since the enormous cost put European labor out of court and the African was thought to be too primitive to undertake the work. The foreigner, both white and brown, began to penetrate into the remoter parts, the white man to farm on the large scale, the brown to carry on his traditional employment of money lending and petty trade, or, if he were an artisan, to supply general needs when the railway was finished. The lower ranks of the railway itself were, and still are, staffed by Indians. The result of this expansion is that at the last census the European population numbered 9,561; the Asiatic about 30,000, of whom 22,822 were Indians; while the native Africans were estimated at from two and a half to three millions.

The Indians have shown a tendency to date what they call their troubles from the assumption of responsibility by the Colonial Office. This, however, was a mere coincidence. It happened to synchronize with the extraordinary outburst of nationalist activity in India which took place in 1907. It was also about this time that the Indian question in South Africa

came prominently into notice. A new spirit had arisen in India. The Indian had begun to question the hitherto unquestioned superiority of the white man and his claim to domination. The slogan of the extreme party was self-government and as a corollary the political equality of the races, not only in India but in overseas dominions where Indians were to be found.

The war gave a great impetus to this movement and Indians could point with pride to their great contribution to the Allied armies and to their great sacrifices for the Allied cause. There was, however, another reason for this intensification of nationalist feeling. British leaders were never weary of proclaiming the doctrines of self-determination and the rights of the weaker nations. Indians, always quick to seize upon western catch-words but slow to appreciate their practical application, utilized these doctrines to the full. These considerations are amply sufficient to account for the new-born grievances of the Indians in Kenya without charging the Colonial Office with sins of partiality.

Thus the essence of the present question is the Indian demand for political equality. The points in dispute are in the main four:

1. The reservation of the Highlands for Europeans.
2. Commercial and residential segregation in towns.
3. The franchise.
4. The restriction of immigration.

In 1908 Lord Elgin, then Colonial Secretary, decided that the Highlands must be reserved for European settlement and entirely closed to Asiatics, who could find an outlet for their activities in the lower regions which were unsuitable to Europeans. This decision was affirmed by Lord Milner in a despatch dated May, 1920, and again by Winston Churchill in a speech at an East African dinner in London in 1922. Unfortunately the wording of Lord Elgin's despatch left room for argument. In the course of it he said: "It is not consonant with the views of His Majesty's Government to impose legal restrictions on any particular section of the community, but as a matter of administrative convenience, grants should not be made to Indians in the upland areas." The Indians, backed by the Government of India, argue that the decision was confined to the original grant and not to subsequent transfers. The point is perhaps arguable as a question of verbal interpretation but there is little doubt that the intention was to bar Asiatics absolutely. Lord Elgin

can scarcely have meant to nullify his own orders by admitting Asiatics to gradual, and perhaps ultimately to preponderant, possession in the Highlands. At any rate, the European has given the widest interpretation to the order and on the strength of it he has established himself in the Highlands in full confidence that his children will grow up in European traditions, uncontaminated by any Asiatic influence.

The underlying motive in the matter of commercial and residential segregation was the same as in the reservation of the Highlands for Europeans. The Indians in East Africa are not drawn from a very high class. They are largely Mohammedan traders from Bombay, but there are also a good many who come from lower strata as well as a certain number who conform to European ideas of comfort and sanitation. It was long ago pointed out that commercial segregation—the confinement of Indian houses of business to their own quarter—was both impracticable and illogical, since European houses also employ Indian clerks and deal with the native races. The stigma of segregation thus fell only on the Indian heads of firms and in their case it was uncalled for. Happily these arguments have prevailed and commercial segregation is no longer pressed. As for residential segregation the Indian argued that he does not ordinarily want to live cheek by jowl with the European but that where he has adopted European customs he ought not to be compulsorily relegated to the Indian quarter. He contended that for all practical purposes drastic municipal laws and a stringent control of sanitation could achieve all that was desired. This was of course no answer to the European settlers' fear of Asiatic influence upon the growing generation, but the fear was after all based upon a theory which is never likely to have much effect in practice. It assumed that the Indian of the lower middle class is really anxious to intrude, whereas it is more than probable that he would be extremely uncomfortable if he tried to enter the European preserves.

The basic motive for the Indian agitation on these two points is that they entail a stigma of inferiority. It is impossible to overrate the extreme sensitiveness of the Indian in all matters of dignity. He will contest a point of honor to a degree which the more practical European mind considers irrational. Much of the misunderstanding is indeed due to the western inability to appreciate this attitude of mind. It is of no use to tell an Indian

that such an ordinance will be a dead letter or that it has only been enacted to guard against improbable contingencies. He is conscious that its very existence brands him as an inferior. He may say that his exclusion from the Highlands is a hindrance to his legitimate prosperity. He has himself proclaimed that he is not anxious to invade the European quarter. Actually, in both cases what he really resents is the racial disqualification.

Although Indians profess to regard the question of the Highlands as crucial, it seemed for some time as though these two points of dispute might be adjusted by compromise. The Indian, it was hoped, might be persuaded to accept without loss of dignity the accomplished fact of reservation. The European might waive the point of residential segregation, trusting to the safeguards already mentioned. This, it will be seen, was the solution adopted. But the problem lies much deeper and finds its practical expression in the remaining two points of dispute.

Before proceeding to the details of the franchise and immigration questions it will be convenient to set out clearly the conflict of principle which has governed the whole controversy. In 1921 the Imperial Conference passed a Resolution which is so important that it must be quoted in full:

The Conference, while reaffirming the resolution of the Imperial Conference of 1918 that each community of the British Commonwealth should enjoy complete control of the composition of its own population by means of restriction of immigration from any of the other communities, recognizes that there is an incongruity between the position of India as an equal member of the British Empire and the existence of disabilities upon Indians lawfully domiciled in some other parts of the Empire. The Conference accordingly is of the opinion that in the interests of the solidarity of the British Commonwealth it is desirable that the rights of such Indians to citizenship should be recognized.<sup>1</sup>

The Indians not unnaturally regarded this Resolution as a triumph for their fight for equality, for if the "rights of Indians to citizenship" do not connote equality what is the meaning of the phrase? That the mother country cannot interfere in the concerns of the self-governing Dominions they are willing to admit, but they point out that the question of Kenya is for the mother country herself and that she is bound to honor her own signature. To the contention of the white settlers that each community is entitled to "enjoy complete control of immigra-

<sup>1</sup>South Africa refused to accept this.



tion from any of the other communities" they reply that the handful of white settlers in Kenya is not and cannot claim to be the arbiters of the destinies of the whole colony. To the Indian therefore the question is of vital importance. For if the principle of British citizenship, promised by the Resolution, is not to be conceded to him there, what is to prevent all the other Crown Colonies from following the example? And if they should do so, of what practical value are those high sounding phrases such as "an equal member of the British Empire" and "the rights to citizenship?"

Against this contention of the Indians has to be set an opposing principle regarding the kind of government that is best for the natives. It is quite probable that the implications of the Resolution were not fully realized at the time of its adoption and that the case of a colony inhabited by three distinct races, where the black population outnumbered the brown and the white together by about fifteen to two, was not appreciated. At any rate it became the main plank in the platform of the Europeans in Kenya that the country must be governed primarily in the interests of the African native, that it cannot be governed jointly by two differing civilizations, and that therefore the Europeans to whom the Africans entrusted their future and who by experience and tradition are obviously better fitted for the task must continue to act alone. The Indian replies that he is a necessary factor in the uplift of the Africans. He is brought into closer touch with them, he has admittedly done useful work in this direction and will continue to do it, and his simpler habits and the conditions of his own native climate permit him to go where no European can venture.

The argument regarding the welfare of the African native has been stressed by both sides, but to tell the truth it savors of the *ad captandum* species. It is very doubtful whether either side is quite sincere in its championship of the African cause, with the exception of the missionaries who naturally favor their own creed and their own civilization. It is impossible to resist the impression that the white settler is using the African largely in order to fortify his claim to racial superiority or that the Indian is really concerned only with political equality and with profits. The real question at issue came to be this: Is a British colony to be governed by white men who represent the mother country or is the responsibility to be shared with the Indian who is recognized

as an equal partner in the Empire? The difference is sharply accentuated by the fact that India's own position is anomalous. She is the only large Dominion within the British Empire which possesses a high civilization and yet is not white. One feels instinctively that if the Indian community in Kenya were Australian or Canadian, no such difficulty as the present would ever have arisen.

Bearing these general considerations in mind, we may now turn to the thorny question of the franchise. The Legislative Council of Kenya originally consisted of eighteen officials, eleven elected Europeans and two nominated Indians. The nomination of the last named was changed to election after Lord Milner's despatch of 1920; but in 1921 there was a reversion to nomination, the number simultaneously being increased to four. This proceeding was, however, considered inadequate, and in 1923 the program called from its authors the Wood-Winterton Scheme was put forward. Though its text was never published,<sup>2</sup> it included the following proposals:

1. A common electoral roll so arranged as to enfranchise about 10 per cent of the Indian population.
2. An arrangement of constituencies which would give elected Europeans a majority of 7 to 4.
3. Some kind of municipal franchise not defined.
4. No embargo on immigration.
5. The Highlands to be left to the Europeans and the principle of segregation to be abandoned.

The Europeans instantly took fire. They held indignation meetings and passed a violent resolution which though couched in carefully chosen language did not conceal their resolve to resort if need be to armed force to resist the proposals—a move which showed how far they were actuated by zeal for the African native, since it can hardly be supposed that altruism would call forth the extreme of armed rebellion in its support. The impelling motive was fear for the future. A proposal which maintained the official majority and which guaranteed a further majority of European representatives might be satisfactory enough, but it was coupled with unrestricted immigration and with a common electoral register. Rightly or wrongly the white man foresaw a large influx of Indians, a fair proportion of whom would come upon the electoral register. Rightly or wrongly

<sup>2</sup>Not in extenso. A summary is given in the British White Paper of July 23, 1923.



they feared that the Asiatics would through the preponderance of numbers alone tend to dominate state policy, if not through their representatives at least through the electorate to whom white candidates as well as brown must appeal. And there was another fear lurking behind. They had seen concessions made to agitation in Ireland and in India. What guarantee was there that further concessions would not be made to Indian demands in East Africa and that some day the white majority would not be put on terms of equality with the brown or even turned into a minority?

The Indians were at first inclined to accept the proposals which, indeed, went a considerable way towards meeting their demands except in the matter of the Highlands, but the violence of the settlers stiffened their attitude and induced them to take their stand upon the original claim of equality in all respects. Feeling ran very high. The white settlers produced charges of cowardice in the war and worse; the Indians indulged in wild language of meeting force with force; and the only result of these irrelevancies was to engender further heat. It was at this crisis that the Government resolved to invite both parties to a conference in the calmer atmosphere of Downing Street.

Now although the welfare of the African may have been put into the discussion by both parties from motives not entirely altruistic, it evidently must be consideration of paramount importance to the Colonial Office. To them the interests of brown and white are and have to be subordinate to the interests of the native inhabitants. The idea was comparatively new but, new or not, it had been fully recognized that the primitive peoples were not to be simply regarded either as potential labor or as potential prey for the foreigner. But behind the details of the dispute, behind the arguments of the disputants, behind even the welfare of the African, there loomed up the ever insistent question as to whether the British can consent to share the control of a Crown Colony with any other race, and especially with an Asiatic race which, far from governing other peoples, has not yet given proof of ability to govern itself.

These questions have now been answered by the Colonial Office in the manner that was to be expected. The Government, they say, "regard themselves as exercising a trust on behalf of the African population and they are unable to delegate or share this trust. . . . It is the mission of Great Britain to work con-

tinuously for the training and education of the Africans towards a higher intellectual, moral and economic level." It is therefore in their opinion essential that this duty of trusteeship shall be carried out by the Secretary of State and the agents of the Imperial Government "and by them alone." These words are very significant. They establish an important principle in the government of Crown Colonies, wherever Indians or other non-indigenous peoples are to be found. They indicate clearly the intention of the British Government to retain control in all such Colonies. And they go further than this. For they distinctly imply that now and for a long time to come there shall be no advance towards the ideal of democratic self-government by a handful of Europeans, which the white settlers of Kenya had so ardently desired. The government of a Crown Colony must henceforth be carried on in the paramount interests of the native inhabitants, and it is assumed that no one is so well fitted to judge of these interests as the Imperial Government and its local agents.

The decision of the Colonial Office represents an honest attempt to reconcile the two opposing principles aforesaid. The details of the settlement may be summarized thus:

1. A communal franchise; five elected Indians and eleven Europeans. The official majority in the Councils to be maintained.

2. Immigration to remain under present regulations but the question to be reëxamined from the standpoint of the economic interests of the African native.

3. Reservation of the Highlands for Europeans.

4. Abandonment of segregation of any kind.

Thus an attempt was made to meet the claims of Indians by enlarging the number of representatives and by reintroducing the principle of election, at the same time retaining the ultimate control of all general questions in the hands of Europeans. Franchise by community instead of a common register was meant further to safeguard a European policy in native interests, but the result of the settlement was to concede to Indians much less than they had demanded.

Looking back, we can now see that two cardinal mistakes were made in the past. It probably could not have been foreseen that the importation of Indians to build and eventually to work the Uganda railway would have the effect of bringing

about a crisis. But the grant of a franchise of any kind to a fraction of the population in a young Colony argued an unimaginative statesmanship. It indicated an inability to see that democracy is conditioned by circumstances and that to introduce democratic institutions into such a Colony as Kenya is to make a mockery of the principle. It aroused in the minds of the settlers quite exaggerated hopes for the future. On the other hand it never occurred to any one that the time was coming when India would insist on taking her stand along side of the other Dominions, though as the franchise was only introduced in 1920 the repercussions from India might have been anticipated.

The settlement has had the usual fate of compromises. It has not satisfied either party. The Europeans have accepted it as a working hypothesis but with a note of sullen resignation. They are disappointed because it puts off to an indefinite date, if not altogether, their cherished ideal of self-government and they regard with some suspicion the abandonment of segregation. They recognize, however, that the decision of the Cabinet is final and accept it in the Anglo-Saxon spirit of respect for authority. The Indians in the Colony have as yet given no sign; much will depend on the establishment of good relations between the races on the spot.

But in India a storm arose on the heels of the settlement. Its terms were denounced in unmeasured terms by all shades of native opinion. The Legislative Assembly talked of retaliation; the National Congress threatened a boycott of British goods. Protest meetings were held in Bombay and elsewhere. The decision was considered "utterly subversive of the principles of equality within the British Commonwealth." It established "the dangerous and intolerable principle of white domination." Last, and most important of all, India was called upon to withdraw from the British Empire Exhibition now being organized and the Indian delegates to the Imperial Conference were urged to raise the question there and to withdraw if they should fail to obtain redress. Except on the point of segregation India thinks herself flouted, for any change in the regulations which govern immigration must, she considers, react unfavorably upon Indians alone since it is they and not white men who fill the walks of life to which the African can aspire, and they contrast any restriction upon their freedom of action with the unfettered immi-

gration into the neighboring mandated territory of Tanganyika.<sup>3</sup> There is no longer any talk of the African. Indignation is reserved for what is called the betrayal of legitimate Indian aspirations.

As this article is being finished the Imperial Conference (South Africa again dissenting) has resolved to accept the proposal of the Indian delegation to set up commissions in each Dominion to inquire how far the Resolution of 1921 has been carried out and how its application can be extended. The question of Kenya is not to be reopened immediately, but as the Colonial Office is a party to the new decision Kenya will not be excluded from the scope of the Conference on Crown Colonies. Thus the immediate danger of any dramatic action by India seems for the moment to have passed, but the substantive question of Indian status overseas remains unsolved and the Kenya question may again become acute.

<sup>3</sup>The League's mandates secure equal rights of immigration to the nationals of all member states, and India is of course a member.

# DISMEMBERED HUNGARY AND PEACE IN CENTRAL EUROPE

*By Oscar Jászi*

**I**N SPITE of her small territory and present economic bankruptcy, the new Hungarian state plays a dominant part in any consideration of the problems of Central Europe. The Hungarian question is so intimately connected with the general condition of the neighboring states that no serious diagnosis can be made of the disastrous moral and economic ills of that part of the world without understanding the main issues of recent Hungarian history. Economically, geographically, historically, Hungary always has been an important part of Central Europe. Should she continue in her present state, alternately despairing and in the throes of a feverish dream of revenge, there is small possibility for serious work of reconstruction and the establishment of a sane equilibrium in the Danubian countries.

## I

There is a wide-spread belief in Europe—supported by the Marxist interpretation of history—that the chief cause of the recent conflagration lay in the capitalistic and imperialistic rivalry between Germany and the other great commercial countries. Without denying the partial truth of this hypothesis, I nevertheless see that a still more important factor was at work in all those regions which for many decades were called the danger zone of Europe.

This danger zone was made up of the Dual Monarchy, the Balkan States, and the Russian Empire, all of which countries had one characteristic in common, namely, that they were not finished units. They were not really national states in which geography, race and government contributed to form a harmonious organism; instead they formed a world apart, a mediaeval world. In these countries the rôle of national consciousness was usurped by armies and dynasties, all eager to protect the economical privileges of their class and to develop their national language and culture to the detriment of the subject races. A perfect example of this mediaeval type of civilization was the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, whose constitution gave the power in Austria into the hands of the Hapsburg army and