

# Sure March Into an Unsure Future

***With Forks and Hope: An African Notebook***, by Elspeth Huxley (Morrow, 398 pp. \$5.95), reports on "the buoyant infancy and uncertain future" of some of the emerging nations. Charles Miller is a free-lance writer specializing in African affairs.

By CHARLES MILLER

IN 1948, Elspeth Huxley wrote a book called *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, the account of a five-month journey through Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar on the eve of history's most momentous sociopolitical upheaval since the Russian Revolution. Essentially, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* addressed itself to the question of the African's capacity for guiding his own destiny with the ideologies and techniques which he was just then beginning to inherit ("demand" may be more accurate) from his European masters. In seeking an answer, Mrs. Huxley talked to innumerable individual Africans—clerks, tenant farmers, government employees, tribal elders, teachers, shopkeepers, artisans, domestic servants—and these conversations revealed an intelligence, sensitivity, and character seldom (at that time) acknowledged or even recognized by whites. But her final verdict was that the native inhabitants were hopelessly unprepared to cope with the vast problems that would inevitably arise when and if they ever assumed full responsibility for the conduct of their own affairs. (Never mind who may have been at fault for this unreadiness: the fact was simply there.)

Mrs. Huxley's latest book, *With Forks and Hope*, might be called the 1964 sequel to *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, for it covers the same ground and deals with the same people—except that yesterday's hewers of wood and drawers of water are today's movers and shakers. The volume is also a reappraisal of many of her earlier conclusions, and while the fundamental judgment of unpreparedness remains largely unchanged, this is obviously no longer the point: ready or not, there they are, and Mrs. Huxley endeavors to find out how the new and ebullient presence in the East African driver's seat is facing up to the challenge of freedom.

Generally speaking, the picture she paints is bright. Although the march



—Camera Press (Pix).

**Elspeth Huxley—"a new climate of black-white goodwill."**

toward national well-being proceeds at an agonizingly slow pace, harassed as it is by the unholy triple alliance of poverty, ignorance, and disease, we see East Africa's new leadership tackling its unfamiliar job with a zeal and resolve that compensate enormously if far from entirely for lack of formal training and experience. If the new Tanganyikan district commissioner approaches his assignment from the position of ward boss rather than civil servant, he also brings to the task a far deeper understanding of his fellow-Africans than could ever have been claimed by his European predecessor. Kenya's new African landowner class—now occupying the once-sacrosanct "White Highlands"—may threaten economic disaster for the country with its ultraconservative tribal practice of land fragmentation, but in the very same highlands region is the Egerton College, also formerly lily-white, where the disciplines of modern scientific farming are being instilled in a steadily growing cadre of skilled African agronomists. While the glistening modern colleges in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam may not be filled to capacity, this is at least partly because so many young men and women are studying on scholarships in the U.S. and Britain—and behind the

Iron Curtain, too. In the less well-equipped grade and high schools, teachers carry on with spit and baling wire and total dedication.

Ability and determination are even more conspicuous at the top. Mrs. Huxley shows us the leadership and ironbound integrity of Tanganyika's President Nyerere that have already made him independent Africa's most respected chief of state. The reader would be myopic indeed who failed to appreciate the finesse and utterly professional grasp of *realpolitik* with which Uganda's prime minister Milton Obote has held together the viciously disparate interests (including and especially the not-so-comic-opera kingdom of Buganda, a potential Katanga if ever there was one) that continually imperil his country's unity. And perhaps the most hopeful sign—certainly the most astonishing—is the way the charismatic personality of Jomo Kenyatta has captured Kenya's European community, to whom, only a short while ago, he embodied everything that was dark and loathsome. "I'd never have believed," Mrs. Huxley heard one white farmer remark, "that we'd all be saying: 'I hope to God nothing happens to Jomo.'"

This doesn't mean that Mrs. Huxley has tried to gloss over the anger of many departing Europeans. But she also notes a new climate of black-white goodwill that seems to be present everywhere: in the Nandi chief begging a South African farmer (that's right) not to leave Kenya; in the complete absence of resentment felt by expatriate technicians ("the mercenaries of peace"), who know that they are soon to be "Africanized"; among the youthful English language students and their European instructors, hilariously acting out the idiom in a Nairobi classroom; in the interracial and slightly intellectual twisting on the dance floor of noisy, sweating Kampala night clubs. And most of all, perhaps, in the author herself. Readers familiar with the pastoral scenes of Mrs. Huxley's childhood in *The Flame Trees of Thika* and *On the Edge of the Rift* might expect a note of bitterness as she describes the end of that wonderful world, but, aside from an occasional passage that voices a sadness of stabbing poignancy, the prevailing tone is one of warm and genuine eagerness for the new cause to succeed.

These are some of the heartening aspects of East African independence which Mrs. Huxley describes with the knowledge and perception accumulated during a lifetime in that part of the world. But there is another side of the coin, and she views it with unconcealed apprehension. Although this concern is expressed less as prognosis than as inquiry, the questions she asks by their very nature throw an unsettling pall

over the future. Even if the obstacle of land misuse in East Africa is surmounted, she wants to know whether this will have any meaning in the face of the region's terrifying population explosion. Despite the assurances of so committed a libertarian as Nyerere, will individual freedom survive under the one-party state? Are the age-old terrors engendered by magic and superstition too deeply imbedded to permit fullest and most beneficial use of modern ideas? Will the rising tide of pugnacity toward South Africa and other European-ruled outposts bring on a full-scale war, and, if so, will the conflict dissipate entirely the resources of East Africa's already impoverished independent nations? There is little doubt that the author sees things becoming much worse before they get better.

Meanwhile, despite the brooding clouds, Mrs. Huxley's journey offers readers a fabulous and illuminating adventure. With her unparalleled gifts as a nature writer, she brings to life the immensity and breath-taking color of the land. She introduces us not only to the more celebrated leaders of the three new nations, but to thousands of Africans at less exalted levels who are already carving niches for themselves in a multitude of administrative, professional, and artistic callings. She provides historical perspective by bringing forth many fabled personalities of the past, including, to name only a few, Harry Thuku, the father of Kenya nationalism; Dr. Albert Cook, Uganda's turn-of-the-century Schweitzer; Abdi Ibrahim, the Somali leader who nearly overran all East Africa; Sir Vincent Glenday, the all but legendary Lawrence-like figure whose bluff—and plain guts—eventually halted the Somali drive. There are the living legends, too. We meet Dr. and Mrs. Louis Leakey, the anthropologists who may yet prove beyond question that the birth of mankind took place in Tanganyika's Olduvai Gorge. In the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, a brief call is paid on George and Joy Adamson—and Elsa. And there is a happy visit with the indefatigable matriarch of Kenya's white community, the Hon. Mrs. Nellie Grant, more familiar to readers as Tilly, the author's mother.

Viewed from any angle, *With Forks and Hope* must be this year's most exciting—and most important—book on the buoyant infancy and uncertain future of the new East Africa.

#### LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. Charlotte Armstrong. 2. Mickey Spillane. 3. Andrew Garve. 4. Rex Stout. 5. Arthur Upfield. 6. John Creasey. 7. Brett Halliday. 8. Michael Gilbert. 9. Georges Simenon. 10. Maurice Procter. 11. Doris Miles Disney. 12. Ian Fleming.

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## Nine Lives Lived for Their Country



Marguerite Higgins—"tilting lances."

***Overtime in Heaven: Adventures in the Foreign Service*, by Peter Lisagor and Marguerite Higgins (Doubleday. 275 pp. \$4.95), refutes some popular ideas about diplomats in general and U.S. officers in particular. Delia Kuhn, recently returned from her third tour of Southeast Asia, is working on a book about the Philippines.**

By DELIA KUHN

ONE DAY in the spring of 1962 the senior officers of the State Department received numbered cards summoning them to their auditorium. President Kennedy stood before them and said:

"I know that you frequently feel here in the Department that the White House tends to interfere with our conduct of foreign policy, but I feel that it would not be inappropriate for me to come over here to talk to you for a few minutes to indicate my great dependence on your experience and your counsel—and the great dependence that this country has upon you."

The President talked without notes and off the record about the "difficult and complicated and sensitive" decisions that go into the making of foreign policy. Neither the decisions nor the persons who had to make them, he feared, would ever be fully understood by the American people.

His impromptu visit was a pilgrimage, his words something of a penance. For Mr. Kennedy had come to office

nursing the deepest skepticism about the State Department's ability to meet his standards of quality. Moreover, he made no secret of his impatience with the pace of its performance. To ride herd on the career diplomats, he called for and personally read sheaves of cables, soaking up the content and the flavor of Foreign Service business. As the state visits of foreign notables multiplied, he sought briefings from lowly desk officers as well as from assistant secretaries. What began as a kind of confrontation blossomed into a lively and productive acquaintance. When, after fifteen months, the senior officers heard the President say, "We are partners and allies," they felt they had had a pat on the shoulder as well as a prod on the behind.

The Kennedy talk, never before published, comes to light in sanitized form as an epilogue to this book about Foreign Service heroes of past and present. Peter Lisagor and Marguerite Higgins, experienced writers about foreign affairs, tilt their lances at some of the prejudices and stereotypes to which even a brilliant young President was not immune. In the files of the State Department they found "countless tales of courage, bravery, gallantry, bold and quick-witted acts and gestures" among men who served the United States abroad.

The authors chose nine such tales. Although they contend that their main interest is in telling good stories which happen to be true stories, they are only a little less interested in exploding popular

Peter Lisagor—"exploding myths."

