

The White Mau in Action

THE morning paper displayed on the front page a picture of bulldozers razing to the ground native huts in a Kikuyu village, the evening paper carried the story that "most of a gang of 15 Mau Maus" had jumped from a cliff 70 ft high and committed suicide in order to escape from a Kenya regiment which had been pursuing them. Nothing appeared in the papers on the subsequent days to suggest either that the picture had been noticed or the news of the Kikuyus who had embraced death to avoid what they imagined to be a worse fate at the hands of Britishers had created a stir in the public mind. The one man who could have spoken and raise his voice to some purpose was away from the capital and busy elsewhere on an important mission.

For some reason or other. New Delhi has maintained a diplomatic silence about affairs in Kenya and Malaya. What could these reasons be? It is for the constitutional experts to say whether a Dominion can express an opinion about or protest against what happens inside a colony. International law accepts, acknowledges and sanctifies certain usages; it does not permit certain others. Commonwealth relations are based upon conventions which are no less rigid. Perhaps they are even more rigid because these conventions must be agreed to and accepted by all the members, and agreement is difficult to secure where interests clash sharply. There are various ways of resolving international disputes. There is the Court at The Hague, there is the UNO and finally, war as the last resort, if every other means fails. But manners and customs change, new conventions are evolved to meet changing situations. The Government of India have acted in the past and are acting now for Indians in South Africa who have lost their Indian nationality and are yet denied citizenship in the land of their adoption. "True, such action may not be effective. But the point about it is that it does not conform to the existing and accepted codes which determine the relationship between free and sovereign States.

Why go so far? One may argue that there is nothing that the Government of India can do to secure a status for and improve the con-

ditions of the Hindus in Pakistan, for they are subjects of a foreign State, and by definition beyond the jurisdiction of the Government of India. Intervention in its internal affairs will not be brooked by a State which is sovereign and is in a position to maintain its sovereign rights. This is, however, only a formal statement of the position. History is replete with instances of such interventions, which have not always been for a human or worthwhile purpose, but have been effective nevertheless, and have been effected by resort to anything more serious than a diplomatic frown or gesture. True, attempt at intervention has also led to war, but such occasions have been few.

Intervention, however, has been confined so far to aggression by one people. State or Government against another which has been recognised by influential sections of world opinion as an entity entitled to protection from such aggression. Japanese aggression against Manchuria in 1932. Italian aggression against Ethiopia some years later and more recently, the aggression against South Korea are important instances in point.

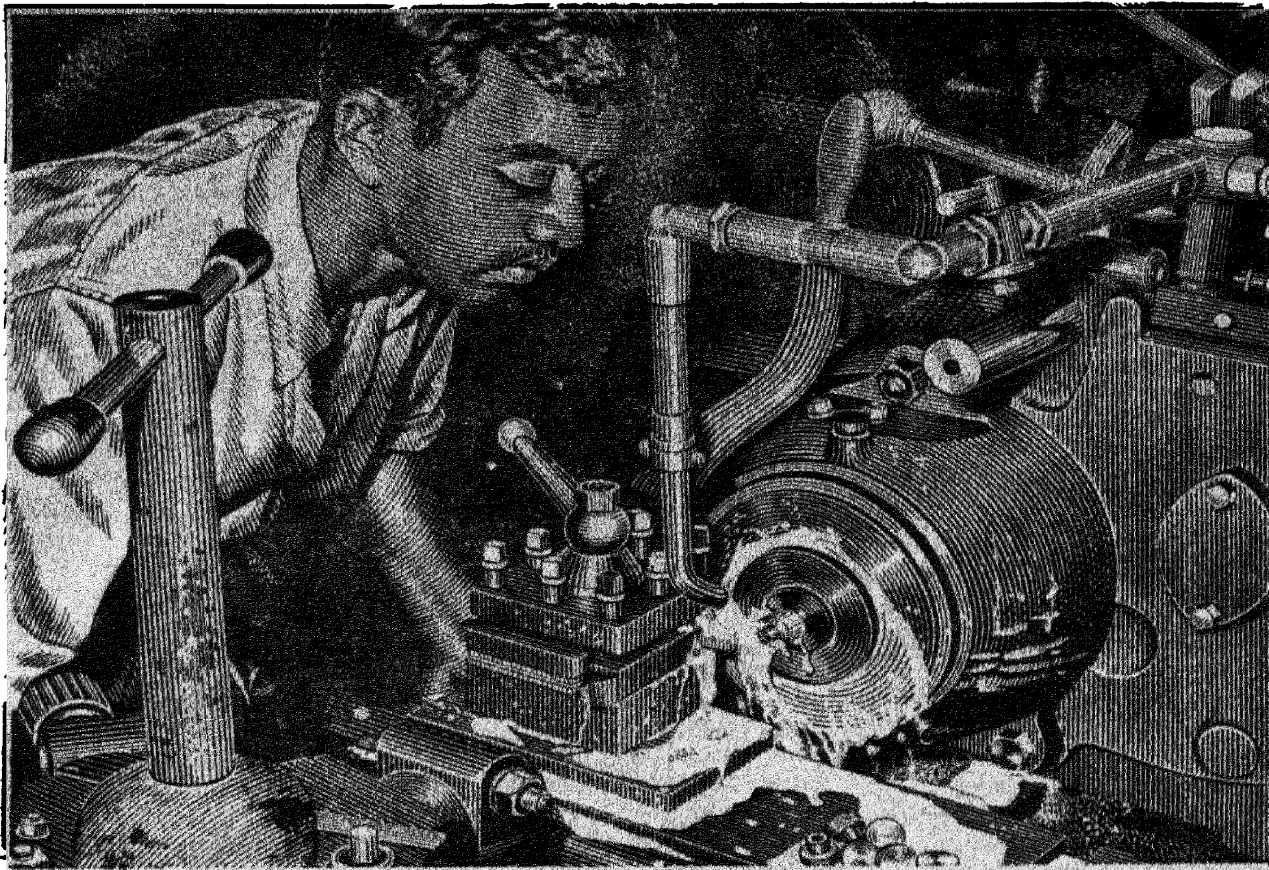
To repeat, in order to qualify for recognition as aggression, the act in question must be perpetrated against a people who are recognised by important groups of States as entitling them to protection by outside intervention. The United Nations offer a forum where subject peoples have the right to present their case. It is an important advance in that recognition has been given to it in principle that subject people may have a case which they can present before other nations. Even in theory, however, the recognition is extremely limited, and is hedged in by all sorts of conditions. It will suffice to say that though Manchuria and Ethiopia came up before the bar of the League of Nations, India, Burma, Ceylon and Indonesia never qualified for that privilege. The Kikuyus have far to go before they can aspire to what India never could over long years of servitude. For no subject nation has yet been freed through the intervention of the United Nations.

The tragedy of Kenya is therefore something for which one can see no solution in the foreseeable future. There are peoples all over

the world who have been dispossessed of their lands and robbed of their rights, though neither the fact of dispossession nor that of deprivation is yet formally recognised in the comity of nations to which we now belong. Until the codes that regulate the political relations in the world are changed from those that sanctified brigandage, loot and murder and are brought into conformity with the concept of rights altogether different, from those that are now recognised, black Mau Mau will be suppressed by White Mau Mau. And since thatch huts cannot resist bulldozers, they will continue to be razed to the ground.

British arms protected the Kikuyus from the raids of the neighbouring war-like tribes, British administrators freed the country of malaria, black water fever and other pestilences, which along with the periodic raids kept the population down to the available means of subsistence. As a result of British rule, natural balance between population and resources have been so disturbed as to create an acute land hunger which is driving the Kikuyus to desperation. All these may be true. Equally undeniable is the fact that in the present, state of their knowledge and development, the Kikuyus cannot utilise the land as effectively as can the white settlers and to leave Kenya to those people would be to invite greater economic distress. Granted all these, we who know what it is, what it means to be deprived of our rights, cannot accept that for these reasons, the Kikuyus have¹ no right to their lands because others can till it better and that their superiors have the prescriptive right which they acquired by forceful occupation.

Leave us to God or to chaos", this is what Gandhiji said at the last moment of despair. Mere passage of time cannot make¹ a wrong right. For India not to protest or to lift even her little finger in support of a people who demand what is theirs would be to turn away from all those principles for which we have struggled; to be a party to the perpetuation of these wrongs, by silence which means acquiescence, would be a betrayal; to condone violence because it is organised and infinitely greater while condemning it when its outburst is sporadic- and feeble though it may not be less cruel, would be mean and cowardly.



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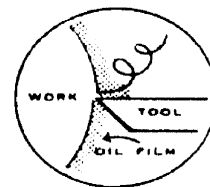
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