

ASSIGNMENT MAU MAU

Pathe News cameraman Bill McConville has been assigned to cover the news in the Kikuyu country, and this is his first report: I boarded a B.O.A.C. Hermes aircraft at London Airport only a few days ago to fly to Nairobi. I don't mind admitting I had pretty mixed feelings.

The journey out was uneventful. A little girl played in the gangway. From the pilot came the report "All well- dead on course."

A mining engineer, Rodney Baker, his wife and their month old baby were going out to make their home in Kenya. Then suddenly we get our first glimpse of the wild, mountainous land of the Kikuyu.

Major Pallager and his family took it all calmly, so did young George Good, who'd been on leave in England. Then Nairobi was below - B.O.A.C. had brought us to the heart of the Mau Mau territory in only sixteen hours. The armed police soon showed us that the newspapers weren't exaggerating - you could feel the tension as soon as you set foot in the place.

So this was Nairobi. The "City of Suspense" someone called it. It wasn't long before I saw why. Mau Mau suspects were being checked prior to interrogation. All were members of the Kikuyu - the tribe which has suffered most from the Mau Mau.

Despite the fear that is in the hearts of all in Nairobi, they still go about their work as usual - but a loaded revolver in a man or woman's belt told me just how great was that peril, and brought home to me for the first time the truth of those terrible stories of violence and sudden death.

On the outskirts of Nairobi, I came across the Severn family: Brian, his sister Susan, and Mrs. Joan Severn. A gun was by her side as she read them a bedtime story. The next day at Karibangi I filmed a large scale round up of men suspected of being involved in murdering 150 people in what they now call the Lari Massacre.

I asked some of the officers about their job. They told me their chief problem was that so many Africans were reluctant to talk for fear of the Mau Mau's revenge - for even one of their own tribe may well be a member of the gang. A black cloud of suspicion hangs over all in Kenya, and until the Mau Mau are destroyed, the innocent too must suffer.