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Inspection of Prisons Establishments

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INSPECTION OF PRISONS ESTABLISHMENTS

It was decided a year ago to invite Mr. G. H. Heaton, O.B.E., a member of the Advisory Committee on the Treatment of Offenders in the Colonies, and a former Commissioner of Prisons, in Kenya, to carry out an inspection of the Prisons establishments in the Colony. Mr. Heaton, whose report is published to-day, was given the following terms of reference:

“To visit detention camps and prisons to see if any measures can be taken to—

- (a) achieve greater segregation of inmates with a view to reducing the risk of contamination of the less bad by the worse;
- (b) prevent infection of the warders with *Mau Mau* doctrine;
- (c) achieve better control and discipline over the inmates and the reduction of any *Mau Mau* activity within camps or prisons and better rehabilitation results, the aim being that the security risk of *Mau Mau* convicts on release should be reduced to a minimum before release”.

2. Mr. Heaton arrived in Kenya on 3rd March, 1956, and left on 29th June. Besides this report, which is a general assessment of Prisons administration and conditions in prisons and detention camps, Mr. Heaton made two main recommendations in respect of *Mau Mau* convicts. These were—

- (a) that the *Mau Mau* convicts should be sent to small prison camps in their own districts, where they can come under the influence of their own chiefs and elders as the detainees do in the District Works Camps, and can see for themselves in the Reserves that *Mau Mau* is defeated;
- (b) that rehabilitation in prisons should become the responsibility of the Commissioner of Prisons, in order to end the present duality of control. (At present the Department of Community Development are responsible for rehabilitation.)

3. It is already the policy of Government to reduce the size of the larger detention and prison camps, and to transfer the persons accommodated in them to their own districts of origin for rehabilitation. The large detention camps at Langata and Mackinnon Road were closed down in 1955, and Manyani has been reduced from three units of 6,000 each to two such units, now accommodating a little under 10,000 persons. Similarly there has been some reduction in the number of convicts housed at Embakasi. It is not possible, however, further to reduce both Manyani and Embakasi at the same time, without the engagement and training of a considerable number of additional staff, and the construction of new camps. This would take several months, and by the time the camps were ready they would only be required for a short period. It was, therefore, necessary to decide to which to give priority, to detainees or to *Mau Mau* convicts.

4. The population of Manyani is more than twice that of Embakasi, and it is considered that priority in rehabilitation effort and so in opportunity for release must be given to those who have been detained rather than to those convicted in a court of law of a specific offence. An added consideration has been that there is ample work for the convicts at Embakasi for a long time to come.

5. It has been decided therefore to reduce the population of Manyani Special Detention Camp first. Five hundred of those believed to be responsible for the resistance to rehabilitation have been moved out, and are being transferred to Mageta Island in Lake Victoria. Teams of loyalists have been sent to Manyani from Kiambu, Fort Hall, Nyeri, Embu and Meru, each under a district officer, to develop a new rehabilitation approach to the detainees at Manyani, with the hope of convincing them that the *Mau Mau* campaign has failed, and that the future of the tribe demands their co-operation.

6. There are already three special rehabilitation camps for those detainees who appeared initially to be irreconcilable, but who have begun to show signs of co-operation. These are at Athi River, at South Yatta, and at Thiba on the Mwea-Tebere Scheme; another camp on the Mwea Scheme, Kandongu, is being converted for this purpose, and those detainees at Manyani who respond to the new rehabilitation approach will be transferred to one of these four special rehabilitation camps. In this way, it is hoped to make a substantial reduction in the population of Manyani in the next few months.

7. Detainees in the Mwea camps are transferred to works camps in their own districts as fast as their response to rehabilitation make it possible for this to be done, and in this way the works camps in the Central Province are likely to have a steady flow of detainees on their way to release until about the middle of 1957.

8. As soon as a sufficient number of detainees have been rehabilitated and released, and it is possible to manage with less detention camps in the districts, the intention is that one works camp in each district will be adapted from being a detention camp to be a prison camp. *Mau Mau* convicts now at Embakasi will be transferred to these special district prison camps as recommended by Mr. Heaton, for intensive rehabilitation under local influence. This, it is thought, should be possible soon after the middle of 1957.

9. Valuable work has been done in the last three years in the rehabilitation of thousands of members of *Mau Mau*. At the height of the Emergency, some 72,000 members of *Mau Mau* were in detention and prison camps in the Colony. The number of members of *Mau Mau* still in detention and prison camps now is about 44,000, and they are being released at an average rate of 1,500 per month. One of the biggest problems has been to find suitable rehabilitation staff in sufficient numbers, and with the limited staff available it has not been possible to provide rehabilitation in all the camps at the same time. In order to make the best use of the available resources, the general policy has been to concentrate rehabilitation work primarily on those members of *Mau Mau* considered most likely to respond: these have been transferred to district works camps, and released as soon as they were no longer a risk to the maintenance of public order. Generally speaking, priority in rehabilitation was not given to those detainees who showed no response and they are now mainly accommodated at Manyani, Mageta, Saiyusi and Lodwar.

10. For the same reason, rehabilitation was late in beginning among *Mau Mau* convicts. These are now mainly held in the Nairobi group of prisons, though it has been possible in recent months to move them all out of the old Nairobi Prison itself. In this group of camps, valuable work has been done by the rehabilitation staff in separating out a considerable number of the lesser *Mau Mau* convicts who show a changed attitude. As a result of this work, the sentences of those who appear to be reformed are considered by a Review Committee, which can advise their transfer to detention. Out of an original total of some 18,000 *Mau Mau* convicts, the Review Committee so far has interviewed 1,014 convicts and recommended 661 of these for transfer to detention. The present number of *Mau Mau* convicts as distinct from detainees is 9,252.

11. Mr. Heaton, however, has drawn attention to the fact that rehabilitation should be a normal part of Prison administration, and has expressed the view that there should not be a division of responsibility in a prison and that the Commissioner of Prisons should be responsible for all aspects of prisons work, including rehabilitation.

12. Government appreciates the force of Mr. Heaton's proposal that, for administrative reasons, the control of rehabilitation in prisons should be transferred to the Prisons Department. Rehabilitation moreover should be a normal part of prison administration, on the principle that a convict should be a better citizen on the completion of his sentence than when he was convicted. The Department of Community Development was given the specific task of rehabilitating the members of *Mau Mau*, and in this they have done very good work. As *Mau Mau* convicts are released in increasing numbers, however, the emphasis has changed, and it is becoming more important for the Department's resources to be concentrated on those detainees who appear so far to be irreconcilable, and whose release would, therefore, still be a serious security risk.

13. By the middle of 1957, the bulk of the short- and medium-term *Mau Mau* convicts will have finished their prison sentences, and those remaining will be, for the most part, those convicted of the more serious criminal offences, and therefore best dealt with by ordinary prison methods. The Prisons Department have not, at present, the staff and other provision that will be necessary to enable it to take over responsibility for rehabilitation. It has been decided, therefore, that responsibility for rehabilitation in prisons should be transferred from the Department of Community Development to the Prisons Department, with effect from the middle of 1957.

Ministry of Defence,
Nairobi.
15th October, 1956.

