

Nyasaland ~ A Bit of Background History

(Part 11)

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The Emergency

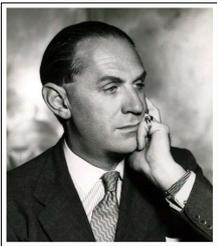
Operation Sunrise began at first light on the 3rd of March 1959 and proceeded calmly. Small teams consisting of an administrative officer, a European police officer, two or three African constables and sometimes a member of Special Branch were dispatched to the home addresses of those to be arrested and usually met with little or no resistance. By



sunset one hundred and twenty people of interest had been taken in. Seventy-two detainees were flown to Southern Rhodesia immediately - these included Banda, Chipembere and Chisiza. In the few days that followed the number of arrests rose to

over two hundred and fifty, but some were released quickly once it was established they had not been at the Bush-meeting. Eighty-seven names remained on a 'wanted' list.

In London the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd, delivered the news that a State of Emergency had been declared in Nyasaland in the House of Commons. The Labour Party demanded an immediate debate about the matter, insisting that



Armitage had only declared the Emergency as a result of pressure from the Federation who wished to turn the situation to their advantage and take control. Compromised, Lennox-Boyd felt he must disclose a little of what he knew regarding the suspected murder plot and broke with the protocol of secrecy that was usual in his own department, making it clear that the decision had been made solely by the Governor. At the end of the discussion it was decided that the British Government would support

Armitage in his decision and Lennox-Boyd began making arrangements for supplies and extra manpower.

In the immediate aftermath of the operation the detainees were interrogated; some in the Rhodesian prisons they had been sent to and others in Nyasaland. However, the officers conducting these sessions were not fully conversant with the facts as the intelligence regarding the alleged murder plot had not been widely circulated; in fact hardly any of the arresting officers were aware of it and few of them had been given much training with regard to the type of information gathering they were supposed to be conducting. It was felt that the officers on loan from the neighbouring countries were tougher and more conversant with techniques that would persuade reluctant prisoners to talk.

At first, violence erupted all over the country. Crowd control was imperative as masses of citizens gathered in both rural and urban locations, some at the behest of members of the NAC who had not been considered important enough to arrest in an attempt to continue the party's campaign of civil disobedience. On a nationwide scale the co-ordination of the troops to quell these throngs was less well executed than the arrests had been. In Nkata Bay the worst disturbance had devastating results; twenty Africans were killed and twenty-eight injured even though the policy regarding the use of firearms was that they were a last resort, to be employed only in the most extreme of circumstances. In short; nobody wanted unarmed civilians to be killed or injured but if a contingent of settlers or a small garrison of soldiers were in danger of being massacred by a mob, then they would have to be protected by whatever means were necessary and available. In Blantyre, protesters

