

Mau Mau Use Bamboo Bazookas

By DUDLEY HAWKINS
NEA Special Correspondent
Nairobi, Kenya (NEA) — Kenya's Mau Mau fighting is more and more difficult to steal guns to arm their ragged army of savages, are making their own.

I have just been shown a collection captured in the battle area of Nakuru, 100 miles west of the capital. I saw rifles made out of lengths of electric wiring conduit, piping and "bamboo bazookas."

As British troops deploy to new jungle stations for the final assault on the Mau Mau, combat patrols of African troops, special police and loyal spear-toting natives are recovering many of the weapons.

They include the homemade variety and latest type automatic carbines, stolen from Army depots and police stations where security measures were allowed to lapse.

Long before Mau Mau launched their attacks on European farm houses from their forest hideouts, they had been accumulating a miscellaneous armory.

It ranged from ladies' handbag

automatics and parlor guns to coils and elephant rifles. They augmented that armory in carefully planned and bloody raids.

Today the picture is changing slowly.

The possession of a gun to the Mau Mau is a sign of rank. Some of the swaggering leaders styling themselves brigadiers, generals and sporting stolen uniforms go about armed with as many guns as they can carry.

So in forest hideouts, in the mud and thick huts in mountain villages and even on European farms, in slums in Nairobi and perhaps even surreptitiously in government workshops, Mau Mau men are turning out guns by the score.

They are far more dangerous to the fiercer than the target. But they have morale value.

A young police officer who brought in two homemade guns while I was at Nakuru told me: "The Mau Mau know that it's almost certain suicide or at the best a blown-off hand if they fire these things."

"But when they go on food hunting forays into the reserves or try to press-gang new members a gun is a powerful weapon. The average Kikuyu cannot tell the genuine from the fake. To him anything that looks like a 'bundooki' (native word for gun) is a 'bundooki!'"

These guns had barrels made from three-foot lengths of three-eighths-inch electric conduit. The butt was roughly carved from a branch, and the bolt was just a door bolt.

The firing mechanism was a piece of elastic, tied around the handle of the bolt and secured to a nail on the butt. To fire, the elastic is released and the bolt shoots forward to strike the primer of the cartridge.

That's the intention.

"These guns will kill more Mau than they will kill us," a policeman explained. "That's why they rarely inflict casualties on the security forces. But the 'bamboo bazookas,' that's a different kettle of fish altogether."

And so I saw the Mau Mau's secret weapon.

It's dangerous and has already put one police officer out of action. And its simple. It can be made in three minutes.

It consists of three main ingredients — four-inch length of hollow bamboo, a stone, and stolen 12-bore cartridges.

The cartridge is inserted and the brass lip rests on the edge of the bamboo. Then the stone is just bashed against the primer. There's a lot of recoil, but at point-blank range these weapons are dangerous.

"They can use 'em at night," I was told. "A Mau Mau is challenged at close quarters. He is told to shove his hands up. If he has a loaded 'Bazooka' in one hand and a stone in the other, all he does as he lifts his hands is to bang one against the other."

"One of our chaps bought that one the other day. He's in hospital now. The doctors have dug half a dozen pellets out of his face and one of his lungs has been collapsed. The Mau Mau are making these by the hundred. They are not much of a weapon, but they make a bang and they can do damage."

And so the Mau Mau battle goes on, the primitive against the modern. It is estimated that the real Mau Mau army numbers something like 500.

That's the hard core of desperate murderers who call at a minute's notice 10,000 tribesmen who have sworn on the secret oath of the society to kill when they are called upon to do so.



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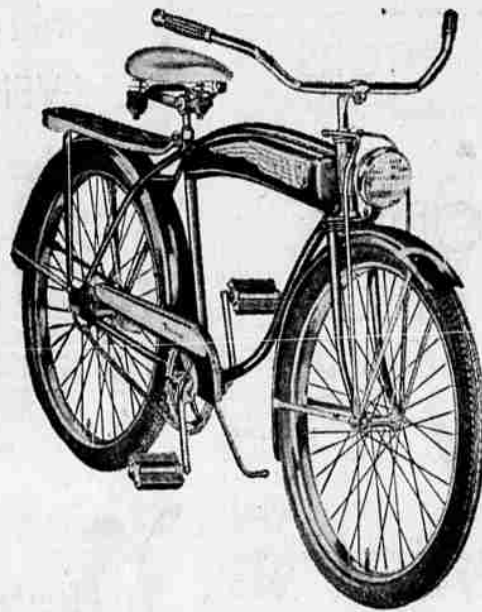
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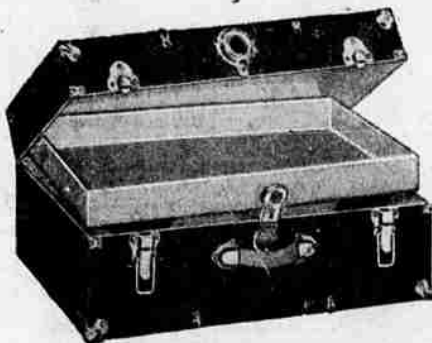


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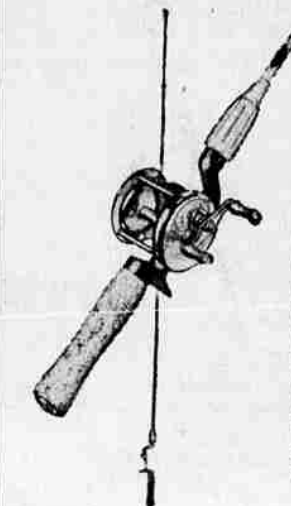
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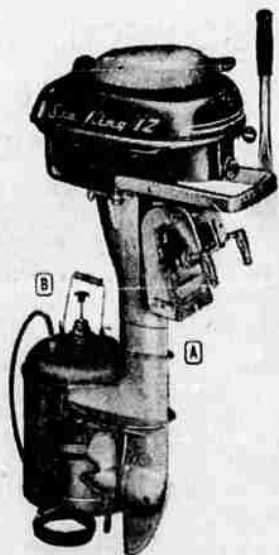
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