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JAMHURI — DECEMBER 1964 COVERAGE OF KENYA'S REPUBLIC CELEBRATIONS

In December 1963 Kenya celebrated its independence (Uhuru). Sound and television coverage of the celebrations, which lasted more than a week, was successfully achieved by dint of much enterprise and ingenuity, including borrowed television cameras. Seldom has a broadcasting organization as young as that in Kenya been called on to present both in words and pictures the birth of a new country. The following December saw the official celebrations for the creation of Kenya as a republic. This article describes the sound and television coverage given to these, and some of the difficulties and problems that had to be overcome.

THERE WAS TO BE NO resting on our laurels— for almost as soon as the last report had been signed and the last of many meal-claims paid, we were meeting again; this time to discuss coverage of the first anniversary of Uhuru and the official celebration of the new Kenya, a republic, within the Commonwealth.

Our experience in covering outside events on television a year previously was invaluable as we intended similar coverage—though this time with our own equipment, for protracted negotiations finally resulted in a rush order to the Marconi Company for delivery of a 2-camera Outside Recording Unit equipped with Mark IV 4½-in. image orthicon cameras and an Ampex VR1100 Recorder. A second recorder was to be installed in the main studio centre.

On our Sound Services a pattern similar to that which had proved so successful during Uhuru a year earlier was adopted and detailed planning commenced. Early in November, a provisional coverage chart was produced, but this was subject to so many variations,

as celebrations were altered or shifted from one day to another, that at its conclusion it bore little semblance to the original! However, engineering work continued and on 4th December installation had already started and was progressing well.

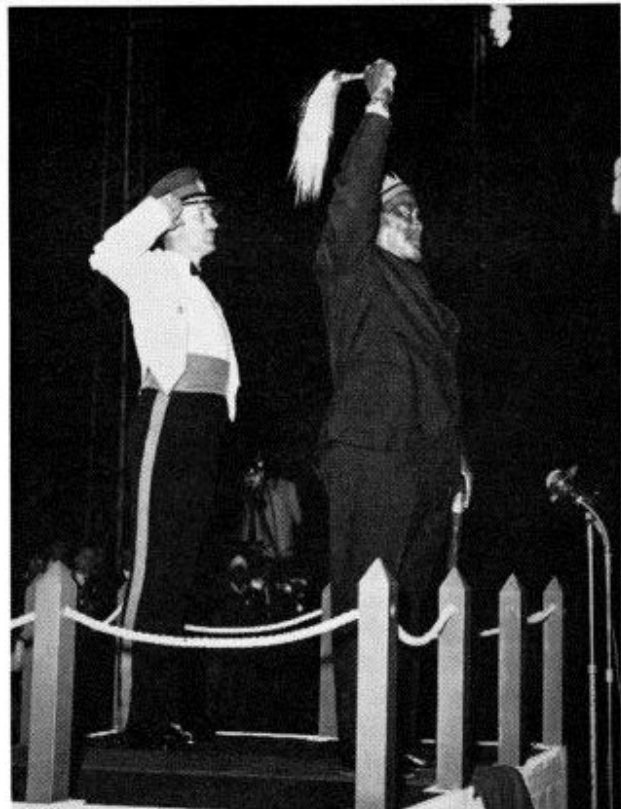


Fig. 1. The President of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, takes the salute at Jamhuri Park, Nairobi, at Republic Day celebrations.



Fig. 2. The Parade of National Unity at Nairobi on Republic Day. Two television cameras can be seen on the left.

On the television front, however, matters had been rather chaotic! Most of the camera equipment for the truck had been shipped on a freighter and this was delayed. The vehicle itself was not ready and arrangements had been made to "borrow" a new 26-seater bus from the local agents and adapt it to take the equipment. Marconi's in England then flew out a further set of camera equipment, sound mixing equipment was diverted from studios, and by 1st December some sort of installation seemed possible. The Ampex Videotape Recorders were due on 6th December but these too were delayed, finally arriving on the 8th. An Ampex engineer had by then appeared to help in the installation, and for operational training.

On 4th December, our Stores Supervisor was despatched 300 miles to Mombasa to meet the freighter due the following morning, but his report caused consternation when it was learnt that it would not berth until 11th December. The situation in Nairobi was now reaching its peak—air-freighted equipment under test, cable harness being prepared, no inter-communication units, pulse generator giving trouble, one picture monitor with a faulty scan coil, and the

bus delayed by fitting of seat and bench. From Mombasa, constant situation reports were not encouraging in our efforts to obtain the shipped equipment.

By Sunday, 6th December, the situation began to clear; some of the cargo had been sighted in the hold, installation of video equipment was progressing, faults were rectified, and we were well ahead with installation in the bus. On the sound side most installations were in their final stages, and there had been no major problems.

An additional commitment had been undertaken. The East African Institution of Engineers (Electronics Branch) had organized an ambitious Exhibition and, as one of the founder members, the Voice of Kenya was to take part, and by the 6th our exhibit was almost ready for the official opening on the following day.

Monday, 7th December, was bright and sunny, and at last it looked as if we were going to be ready. The Electronics Exhibition was opened by a Cabinet Minister and the first of the events of the official celebration timetable had been successfully completed.

From the coast, 300 miles away at Mombasa, came regular reports of our efforts to obtain the shipped equipment from the TV Mobile Unit. On Sunday work had commenced at 7.00 a.m and by 10.30 we had located some of the packing cases in No. 4 hold underneath nine motor-cars—at 6.00 p.m six of the cars had been shifted and three remained to move before unloading could commence.

However, Monday was to be the successful climax to these days of hot and unpleasant working amid the tropical heat of the African coast. By 8.00 a.m railway vans had been organized, and by 8.30 a.m they were on their way to the freighter by motor-boat—it was still anchored in stream. The day wore on, three other cars had been moved from the hold, a second shift of stevedores had come on duty, nine more cars had been found over the remaining cases and these too had been moved. By 2.00 p.m twenty-five cases had been located and loaded into the lighter alongside. By 9.00 p.m only four cases remained to be found and loaded and we had reached the stage of offering 5 shillings to the finder of each case! But our efforts were to be crowned with success—at 10.30 p.m all had been found and loaded, the lighter had left for the berthing sheds, and a tired but jubilant call to Nairobi got the Chief Engineer out of bed at midnight!

In Nairobi, the day had not been without its incidents; among them was the arrangement made for one of the Senior Engineers to fly his own light

plane from Mombasa to Nairobi on the Tuesday with the more urgently needed items of pulse generator, communications unit and camera cables.

Tuesday, 8th December: all goods were loaded in Mombasa, for consignment on the 3 UP, arriving in Nairobi on Wednesday, 9th December. Our private plane left at 10.15 a.m and arrived in Nairobi at 12.30 p.m, the cases being rushed back to Broadcasting House for installation in the bus.

And so to Wednesday, the last day available for "working up" the new O.B Unit in its temporary bus. Work proceeded all day—the cases ex-Mombasa were collected and delivered and those items actually needed were unpacked. Both cameras had been tested and set up; vision control and switching were finished. Audio installation could now be completed with the arrival of the mixers, and intercommunications were now available. The mobile Ampex Recorder had been installed and was working, and its studio-installed companion recorder was installed but not yet tested out. By 6.00 p.m the bus was ready, and a dummy-run to Jamhuri Park, scene of some of the forthcoming pageantry was timed for 8.00 p.m.

The Sound units had in the meantime wired up City Hall, Jamhuri Park, University College, Parliament Buildings, Nairobi Airport and State House. Doonholm Road Stadium had been completed. In all, several miles of microphone and control cabling had been installed and tested, not only for sound



Fig. 3. A Voice of Kenya television camera at the garden party held in connection with the celebration.

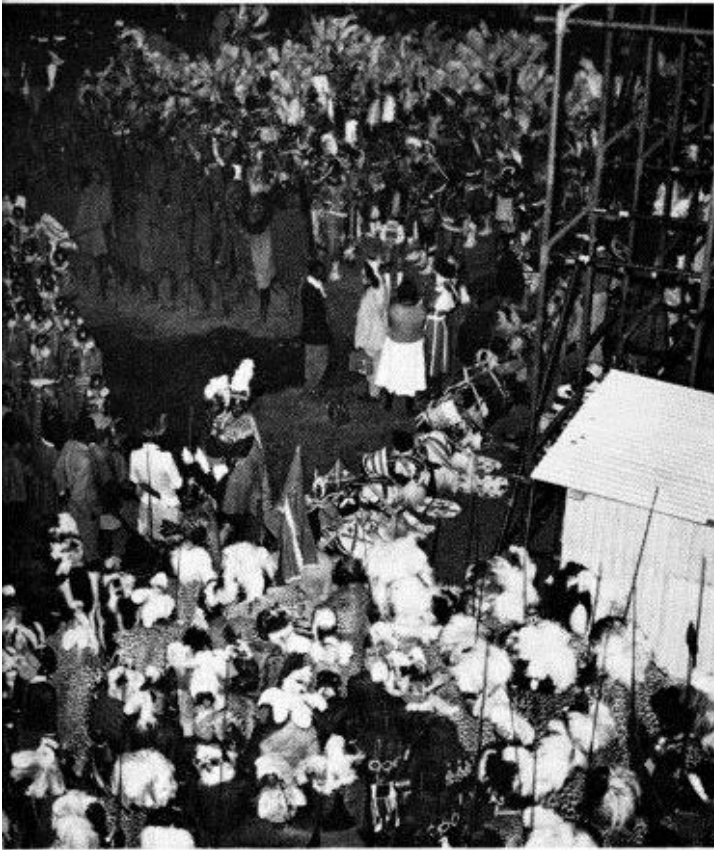


Fig. 4. Traditional dances during the celebration.

broadcasts, but also for effects feeds to sound-on-film camera teams and the television recording unit. Clean speech was also made available to these units from all principal speakers at each event, and this was both recorded on site and back in Broadcasting House for the tape-dubs needed by visiting press and radio representatives.

Of the dummy-run at Jamhuri Park, one impression remains: the scratch crew collected from all over the Engineering organization sitting in the cramped interior of the bus, a bit damp as it had been raining heavily, consuming fish and chips brought by Mrs Davey, the Chief Engineer's wife, as at 11 p.m we went over the problems and how we would overcome them the following morning.

Quite suddenly it was Thursday, 10th December, and at 6.00 a.m the crew started to assemble at Broadcasting House. The first event was to be the ceremonial departure of the British troops from Kenya, at Nairobi Airport, and the attendance of the President and all the leading personalities was good material for the first Videotape to be made in Kenya.

From then onwards event followed event; Jamhuri

Park, swearing in of the new President and his Ministers, Freedom of the City, garden parties and football matches, boxing and parades. At Jamhuri Park, a police despatch-rider carried the first hour's programme on Videotape outside the park and one mile from the gates, handed over to a Voice of Kenya vehicle, which rushed it to Broadcasting House for immediate transmission some forty minutes after the last scene recorded. From then on a stream of tapes followed, bringing these momentous events to television viewers away on farms, and on the shores of Lake Victoria many miles from Nairobi, the same evening.

Tuesday morning, 15th December, and one impression which will remain long after the pomp and pageantry of the events have dimmed in the memory of those who saw them: In the parking area of Broadcasting House, two dusty, finger-marked by hundreds of excited Kenyans, and rather dirty vehicles; one the Sound O.B Unit's Vehicle, full of cables, plugs and sockets, microphone stands and alongside it, the Bedford 26-seater bus, its roof-rack full of camera tripods, boxes and cables, its windows temporarily blacked out, but a worthy forerunner to the new vehicle to follow.

The Staff were all missing — enjoying a thoroughly well-earned day off!

For without their willingness and ability to work long hours and overcome shortage of equipment and staff by sheer ingenuity, the whole operation could not have been successful. It is summed up most satisfactorily by a letter from the President, and there is no better way to conclude than to quote Mzee Kenyatta's remarks in full:

"I am writing to congratulate you on the excellent coverage which you gave both on the radio and television to the Independence celebrations recently concluded.

"As a result, millions of people in Kenya and in neighbouring territories who were unable to attend in person were, nevertheless, able to enjoy the ceremonies and rejoice together on this momentous occasion.

"In addition, I should like to thank you for providing the commentators who performed so competently at the Arena, and also for your co-operation in the installation of the public address system, which worked admirably.

"I should be glad if you would pass my Government's thanks to all those who were in any way concerned."