

PORTRAIT OF IAIN MACLEOD

JAMES CAMERON

Columnist in the London 'News Chronicle'

It seems no time since we used to say, watching, for example, the Mau Mau confusions dragging endlessly on, sapping away all human decencies in Kenya, that the next Colonial Secretary would at least be an improvement on Mr. Lyttelton. By and by we were back at it again, watching the vicious circle in Cyprus, and saying that in time things would have to get better, since we could scarcely do worse than Lennox Boyd. A little later, in Nyasaland, we kept it up a little more desperately: anything would be an improvement on what we had.

Someone, I expect Mr. Butler, once said of Sir Anthony Eden that he was the best Prime Minister we had, an observation of somewhat measured enthusiasm since we do not as a rule have more than one Prime Minister at a time. Such a definition would not wholly fit Mr. Iain MacLeod, who is the best thing in Colonial Secretaries since the job stopped being a sinecure. No Colonial Secretary can be better than his context allows him, but many can be, and have been, worse.

Perhaps a man may be deduced by his effect on those with whom he has to work and argue. Thus Dr. Hastings Banda, bounding out of Gwelo Jail full of a year's bottled-up enthusiasms, fell on the neck of Mr. MacLeod. "A great Christian gentleman," cried Dr. Banda, "Britain's greatest insurance-broker against trouble in Nyasaland!" When the doubting Thomases suggested that perhaps all of Mr. MacLeod's liberalism were not shared by all of Mr. MacLeod's party, Dr. Banda would still not be denied: "Then it will not be Mr. MacLeod's fault."

Dr. Cheddi Jagan of British Guiana got on well with the Minister too. Sir Milton Margai of Sierra Leone was bowled over. Did not Mr. MacLeod begin their conference by saying: "At least let us not waste time arguing the principle of independence; *of course* we accept it." Sir Grantley Adams of the West Indies got on with him; so did Tom Mboya, with reservations. Dom Mintoff of Malta didn't, but then Dom Mintoff gets on with practically nobody these days. Sir Roy Welensky gets on with him in no way at all, which is perhaps the best recommendation of all.

The Right Hon. Iain Norman MacLeod, P.C., M.P. (Fettes and Caius College, Cambridge) is 46 years old, short and some-

what of a shrewd kewpie in demeanour; he has been defined as the complete political animal, the epitome of the clear-headed, far-sighted, broad-minded, multi-hyphenated Tory career member, who knows where he is going, and derives great satisfaction if he can go there on the right bandwagon. Some time ago the *'Guardian'*, which should know, detected in him "officer-like qualities". One thinks of him, mused the editorialist, as "a district officer with irresistible claims to promotion". He is hard, efficient, intelligent. It is possibly not for nothing that he is one of the half-dozen best bridge-players in the world (he has played for England, and was once Bridge Editor of the *'Sunday Times'*) and, furthermore, is one of the people who like to play chess against themselves. He is a first-class parliamentary debater; it was after a particularly biting joust with Aneurin Bevan over the Health Services that Mr. MacLeod leaped over the back benches in 1952 and reached the Ministry of Health in one bound. The Ministry of Labour came three years later. Before last year's elections it was he who ran the unofficial inner committee on Tory poll-policy, doing the job, they said, that Lord Hailsham should have been doing (just as now they say he is doing the job that Lord Home should be doing). Nowadays, when the Conservative constituency organizations cannot get Mr. Macmillan, they ask for Mr. MacLeod. And rarely in vain.

If Iain MacLeod has got a very long way in a very short time, he has done so without the brandishing of many personal gimmicks. He is a tiresome proposition for the cartoonists. He lives a home-life of suburban rectitude in the heart of his own constituency, at The Ridgeway, Enfield.

In his eight months at Abbey House Mr. MacLeod has impressed himself, there is no doubt about it. His tour of Central and East Africa this year brought a heartening display of bile and hostility from the Rhodesian and Kenyan settlers, which Mr. MacLeod accepted with phlegm, recognizing perhaps that nothing could do him more good with the British electorate in its mood of the time. He brought the seven-year-old Emergency in Kenya to an end—though the method he used was questionable; while he ordained the gradual release of detainees, he simultaneously sanctioned the Public Security Bill which gave the Governor even more control over public meetings and parties and yielded him power to restrict all discussion without reference to the courts. This, it was generally held, was only making noises like a liberal. At the same time, his handling of the Kenya Conference was

a tactical triumph, as was admitted on all sides; the reconciliation of the African and the Blundell groups, however temporary, was an object-lesson in committee technique.

How far does he go now? No one who studies the subtle semi-tones of Government utterances can altogether miss the hint of disagreement in the higher reaches of the Conservative Party. Only in March it seemed that the Prime Minister went quite a step out of his way to temper the progressive mood of Mr. MacLeod. Rightly or wrongly, but at least unequivocally, Mr. MacLeod had made it clear that in Britain's view now the rights of Africans must come before the rights of immigrant Europeans, that H.M.G., however reluctantly, must henceforth recognise the superior claims of the majority.

Forthwith Mr. Macmillan made two important speeches of his own—once on television and once to the Commonwealth and Empire Industries Association—in which he categorically loaded all his emphasis, as a statement of Government policy, on the side of Europeans' rights in Africa.

To everyone in British Africa, either black or white, all this spells confusion, and confusion spells doubt, and doubt spells uneasiness. It can, to be sure, be said of Mr. Iain MacLeod that he is the best Colonial Secretary we have—but how many have we?

