

June 8, 1972. Price 15p (including taxes).

# This Week

Kitson's war  
with the I.R.A.



**The Officials' ceasefire**

## Truce signals political talks

TRUCE DECLARED by the "Officials" — for this relief much thanks. The Provisionals will have none of it. Yet a section of the republican population is anxious now for peace at any price. The rest desire it on the Provisionals' terms.

It might be well to recall those terms:— all internees free; all political prisoners charged and sentenced free; all the "wanted list" discarded; a "declaration of intent" for reunification, based on an all-Ireland plebiscite.

There is a flaw in the logic of Mr. Whitelaw's tactics. He is not submitting the remaining internees' case to any law, but his own. He is still ignoring the principle that a man should not be imprisoned without trial. Thus, while Stormont has been discredited, the British secretary in Northern Ireland is reluctant to abandon Stormont's action. The internees are guilty until Whitelaw proves their innocence.

In this instance the Secretary is providing an excuse for the Provisionals' retaliatory violence.

Casting a hard cold eye on the North of Ireland it must be admitted that Mr. Whitelaw has no more right to govern the place than the IRA have.

A complete truce is devoutly to be wished. Neither of the violent positions, British or Irish, can be justified. The justification of the cessation of armed conflict, the guns and the bombs, the raids and the jailings, is the number of the innocent dead.

The Officials' decision to cease fire arises from their discovery that the war has become sectarian. One wonders how they could not have realised until now that it was impossible for it to be otherwise. They were well aware that the whole political situation was based on sectarianism.

They will now fall back on a completely defensive position, according to their statement. It must be so. They have aroused a monstrous bigotry against which the people of the ghettos have no other defence. Even the most moderate person, north or south, cannot trust in the discipline of the British Army. The opposite has been proven too often.

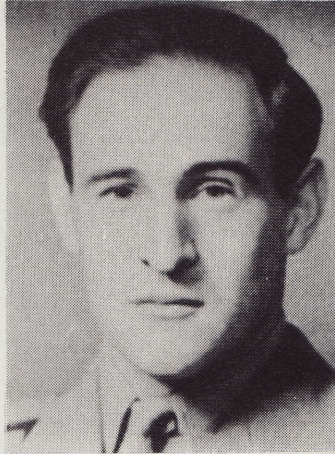
The Provisionals may still believe that the best form of defence is attack. Obviously many of the people in the 'no go' areas still agree with them. Who is going to convince them that there is neither need for defence or attack?

The S.D.L.P. group is still speaking with too many variant voices. Mr. Lynch has manipulated a 'go slow' committee and is resting on Mr. Whitelaw's oars. The internees, because nobody will talk till they are released, are being made the hostages. The time has come, willy-nilly, for a complete amnesty, at Crumlin Road, Armagh, Magilligan, Long Kesh and the jails in Britain. And of Protestant and Catholic.

However, significant or insignificant the Officials' cease-fire may be it is at the very least an attempt at a political move. Let the politicians follow it up. ●

L. MacG.

### COVER STORY



BRIGADIER FRANK KITSON, the British Army expert on guerilla warfare, spent 18 turbulent months in Northern Ireland. Whitelaw's dissatisfaction with Kitson's tactics, it is said, led to the Brigadier's recall to England. But Kitson's radical counter-insurgency theories are now being used to re-shape the British Army.

Sean Boyne examines the strange career of the Brigadier in the trouble spots of the world, the origins of his unorthodox ideas, and the political intrigue that led to his departure from Northern Ireland. (Page eight.)

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Published by *Creation Ltd.*, P.O. Box 320, *Creation House, Botanic Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9*. Telephone 303511. Printed by *Creation Printing Ltd.* Distributed in the Republic of Ireland by *Newsread Ltd.*, The Irish Farm Centre, *Bluebell, Dublin 12*. We take every care in the handling of prints, negatives and colour, but we do not accept responsibility in case of loss or damage.



COVER  
STORY

Brigadier Frank Kitson is the British Army expert on guerrilla warfare. For eighteen turbulent months in Belfast he operated against the IRA. His military theories are radical, and are being supported by army chiefs. He believes, for instance, that the military should be prepared to fight political agitation in England later this decade! Sean Boyne has explored the remarkable personal life of Brigadier Kitson, his strange career as a guerrilla fighter in the trouble spots of the world, the origins of his military thinking, and the intrigue that surrounded his departure from Northern Ireland.

## The fearless Brigadier

BRIGADIER FRANK KITSON, the British Army expert on guerrilla warfare, supplied much of the brainpower behind the fight against the IRA from September 1970 until his departure from the province on April 22 this year. During that time of turmoil, Kitson, one of Europe's leading military intellectuals, commanded the 39th Brigade covering the Belfast area with a relentless devotion to rooting out the IRA.

There has been much speculation about his transfer from Northern Ireland. Certainly, Kitson's counter insurgency theories are radical, based on personal experience of several guerrilla campaigns, intensive study, and contacts with the U.S. Army. Some of his ideas have proved unpopular with older officers trained for the more traditional world of conventional

warfare. Kitson believes, for instance, that the Army's main role in the 'seventies will be a counter insurgency one.

But some of the British top brass, including the Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Michael Carver, seem to share this view and there is even a school of thought among senior officers which fears racial riots in British cities like Wolverhampton later this decade. So it seems unlikely that Kitson's radical ideas on long-term Army policy was the reason for his transfer from the North, especially in view of the fact that his new appointment is as Commandant of the School of Infantry at Warminster in Wiltshire.

Kitson had been openly critical of Ministry curbs on counter insurgency instruction in the Army training schools and so his

appointment to Warminster seems to mark a radical change in British Army long-term policy, and a shift from a traditional military role towards a policing function and a closer integration with the civil power.

The official British Army line is that Kitson was transferred because his tour of duty in the North had come to an end. This is a plausible explanation because a cursory glance at Kitson's career in trouble spots like Kenya shows that he seldom spent more than two years in any one place. But the key to Kitson's removal from the North may be found in his own personality and in his cold, almost fanatical devotion to crushing whatever enemy force he encounters.

"This Week" contacted a man who had worked with Kitson in Kenya

intelligence during the Mau Mau emergency and he described the Brigadier as "a loner, utterly devoted to his work, who took little part in Kenya social life." Kitson, a cold, intense man who often kept a Bible by his bedside, was an extremely thorough soldier who believed in the supreme importance of intelligence work in fighting guerrillas. It is thought that his relentless attitude towards destroying the IRA was unacceptable to Whitelaw who was trying to conciliate the Catholics with his "softly softly" approach.

#### Whitelaw asked for Kitson's removal

According to one report, Whitelaw asked for Kitson's removal and Lord Carrington, Minister of Defence and a liberal on Ulster, was Kitson's unexpected supporter in the Cabinet. It is possible that Carrington arranged the appointment to Warminster as a compensation to Kitson for his removal from the North.

But other unexpected factors have emerged in the Kitson case. It appears that while in the North he was involved in the re-organisation of the RUC and that he is continuing this work from England. Part of the plan, apparently, was to replace the present structure of the RUC by a county constabulary system based on the English model.

The replacement of the RUC Chief Constable Mr. Shillington by an Englishman and the replacement of Shillington's assistant, Flanagan, by a prominent RUC officer called Harry Bailey, are reportedly also under consideration. Kitson's apparent involvement in this kind of work comes as a surprise.

#### Civil Servant was retired prematurely

It may be significant that William Stout, the civil servant who has worked with Faulkner since the 'fifties, and who was chairman of the Stormont Security Committee, was retired prematurely about the same time that Brigadier Kitson left the North. It seems that Stout's committee has also disappeared and that its work is now being handled by Whitelaw's personal staff. Did Whitelaw decide on a clean sweep of the traditional methods of fighting the IRA?

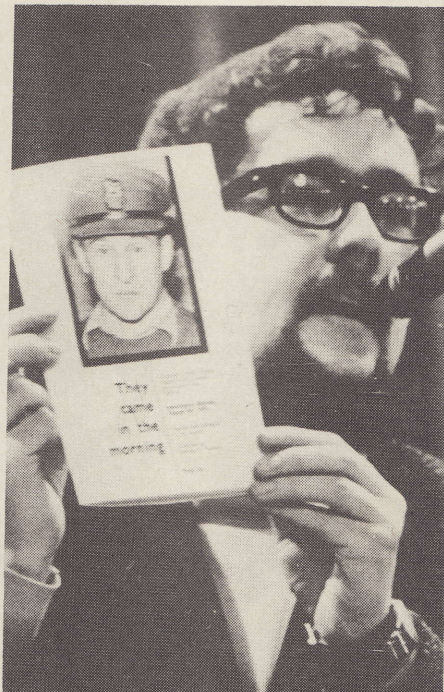
Kitson established his reputation as the Machiavelli of the British Army with a slim volume called "Low Intensity Operations" pub-



A British Army public relations picture of Kitson.

lished last year. It is a classic account of the way to defeat insurgency and subversion and his ideas could have a far-reaching effect on the British Army. Much of the theory is based on his own campaigns and the list of places where he built up his counter-insurgency reputation reads like a blow-by-blow account of the death pangs of an empire — Kenya, Muscat and Oman, Cyprus, Malaya, and more recently, Northern Ireland.

He was a fearless soldier and has



A Sinn Fein booklet with Kitson on the cover in the hands of Tony Heffernan.

gold medals to prove it. In June 1955 he was awarded the Military Cross for his campaign against the Mau Mau. He received another M.C. in June 1958 and there followed an M.B.E. (1959), and O.B.E. (1968) and this year a C.B.E. for his service in Northern Ireland.

#### Dangerous increase in military influence

Kitson's military philosophy would seem to entail a dangerous increase in military influence over what has traditionally been the domain of the civil authorities. He recommends that as soon as a "subversive threat" is detected that the Army be brought in to advise the civil authorities, and he suggests that this be done in the strictest secrecy.

He also suggests the integration of civil and military authorities in a supreme council for dealing with the threat. This has already been done in Northern Ireland with the formation of the Joint Security Council, and it may be a sound recommendation from the point of view of military efficiency. But it could give the Army a dangerous influence over decisions by the civil authorities.

Bragadier Kitson's expressed objective is the preservation of the democratically-elected Government against the threat of subversion and insurgency. But the methods he would employ could seriously damage democracy. In an extreme situation, where subversion is linked with an invasion threat Kitson would for instance accept the use of the legal system as a propaganda cover for the disposal of subversives. Although there is no invasion threat in Northern Ireland, it would appear that the legal system there is being used in this way. But it is not known if Kitson has had any influence here.

#### Man of action and insight

Kitson was based in Thiepval Barracks in Lisburn and he made quite an impression on his fellow officers as a man of action and insight. They held a party for him before he departed. But he failed to defeat the IRA. He was successful against the Mau Mau in Kenya and against the Communist guerrillas in the Malayan jungle. But he has yet to notch up a success against a force of urban guerrillas. Perhaps his hands are bound by political considerations. It was politically acceptable for Kenya security forces to kill 10,000 Mau Mau.

But British public opinion would never tolerate such slaughter closer to home. Kitson is very much aware of the political repercussions of military operations and even favours the fostering of prosperity as a means of killing subversion.

### Optimistic about the North

He is optimistic about Northern Ireland and believes that the emergency there can be resolved between 1975 and 1980. He belongs to a military school of thought, however, which fears the outbreak of subversion and insurgency in English cities in the late 'seventies. The belief is unusually popular with British Army chiefs. One senior officer was heard to state in Belfast recently that the troubles there were simply a "dry run" for urban unrest in cities like Wolverhampton in the next few years.

In "Low Intensity Operations" Kitson would seem to endorse this startling viewpoint with a rather extraordinary statement: "... there are other potential trouble spots within the United Kingdom which might involve the Army in operations of a sort against political extremists who are prepared to resort to a considerable degree of violence to achieve their ends. It is difficult for the British with their traditions of stability to imagine disorders arising beyond the powers of the police to handle, but already there are indications that such a situation could arise, and at this time of apparently unrivalled affluence."

Kitson is politically conservative, a typical member of the British officer caste, and so by background and training inclined to see reds under the bed. Some of his social attitudes seem curiously old-fashioned. As a Mau Mau fighter in Kenya he was amazed and amused when he found that trade union rules demanded a large number of technicians to do a small number of jobs on the set of the Rank film "Simba."

### Family had a Royal Navy tradition

He comes from a family with a distinguished Royal Navy tradition going back over 200 years. Born in London in 1926, he received a public school education at Stowe, in Gloucestershire. In 1944 he joined the Army and after training at Sandhurst was commissioned into the Royal Green Jackets. An asthmatic condition had prevented him from joining the Navy but his only brother kept up the family



Kitson with his Arab manservant and Kikuyu household staff at Kaniti, Kenya.

sea-going tradition. Kitson went to Germany as a lieutenant in 1946.

A keen horse rider, he took part in Rhine Army races. But despite an active sporting life that included shooting and trout fishing, he soon settled into a life of boredom. He had however impressed an officer called Major Harington and this man arranged for the 26-year-old Captain to go to Kenya in 1953.

As Kitson relates in his book, "Gangs and Counter Gangs," he had not even completed a Battalion Intelligence Officer's course at this stage. But he was to become Kenya's most dynamic intelligence

man during the Mau Mau trouble. He arrived in Africa with an old-fashioned Kiplingesque faith in the settlers' cause. While in Europe he had read with disgust newspaper accounts of Mau Mau terror tactics. His convictions were shaken, but only for a time, after reading a pamphlet by Fenner Brockway, now a Labour Peer.

The pamphlet questioned the morality of the tactics used against the Mau Mau. Kitson later wrote: "Fortunately my morale was in good order so I suffered very little from the experience. All the same it is not pleasant from a soldier's



Kitson took a keen interest in the use of hooded informers to pick out Mau Mau at identity parades.



One of the 'pseudo gangs' which Kitson helped to form in Kenya.

point of view to have the cause for which he may have to fight called in question by a Member of Parliament."

Kitson's morale was very high indeed when he reached Kenya. He had a public school preoccupation with feats of valour and romantic ideas about jungle warfare. "I wanted to go at once to look for a gang," he wrote. But he had to spend many frustrating days before he was finally posted to Kiambu where he rented a house for £15 a month. At British Army GHQ he was briefed by the senior staff intelligence officer, Major

John Holmes and he afterwards conferred with a Mr. Gribble, who was Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Special Branch of Kenya.

Kitson was young, energetic, and impatient at being posted to an area where there had been few confrontations with the Mau Mau. He found afterwards that Kiambu was one of the nerve centres of Mau Mau activity. He had the title of "District Military Intelligence Officer" but his brief was vague. One of his tasks was to organise a force of Field Intelligence Officers. Many of these were NCOs seconded



The body of Waruingi Kurier, a Mau Mau leader whom Kitson stalked for many months.

from the British Army to help the Kenya Special Branch.

Kitson soon perfected some of the techniques which nowadays form part of his counter-insurgency scenario. Before he had any real confrontation with the Mau Mau, he travelled incessantly throughout his territory speaking to civilians, policemen, soldiers and civil authorities. His aim was to build up a general picture of the enemy by co-ordinating all the available scraps of intelligence.

#### He was also eager for action

A piece of information, which might have seemed irrelevant to an individual policeman or soldier, acquired new importance when examined by an intelligence officer with an over-all view of the situation. But Kitson was also eager for action against the Mau Mau and whenever he heard of contact between the security forces and a gang he would jump into his jeep and drive to the scene. But all too often, to his disappointment, the foe had melted away into the forest.

He became an expert, relentless interrogator. He would question a captive for hours at a time through an interpreter until everyone involved was exhausted. Prisoners were usually handed over to the civil authorities for trial and there were many executions. Apparently a mobile gallows toured the country dispatching convicted Mau Mau. But Kitson and other intelligence officers found that some Mau Mau could be persuaded to turn against their former comrades. Kitson formed "pseudo gangs" with great success. He became a Lawrence of Arabia figure. He blackened his skin, dressed as an African guerrilla and lived with his gang of former Mau Mau in the forest during operations.

#### An unusual achievement

It was an unusual achievement for a man who had arrived in Kenya with the usual racial assumptions of his class. To pass the time on his first Sunday in Nairobi he attended service in the local Anglican cathedral. He found himself seated beside an African woman and afterwards recorded his "surprise" that the church was not segregated. But within months he was almost thinking as an African. He formed a strange partnership with a fierce former Mau Mau called Matenjagua and

he began to have a contempt for the stereotyped British Army convention that an officer must keep aloof from his men. Such ideas, he found, did not work in the forests of Kenya.

And although Kitson could be cold and ruthless, he was also a man of sentiment, with a romantic feeling for Africa. One night, around a forest camp fire, his men sang Mau Mau songs. By conventional standards they were traitors. But by some curious process of double-think they sang in praise of Jomo Kenyatta, and vowed vengeance on the strangers who had stolen their land. And as they chanted, Matenjagua grasped Kitson's hand. Kitson wrote afterwards: "As we sang, I too began to feel that we should rise and kill the whites . . ."

But Kitson did not allow sentiment to detract from the job of tracking down the enemy. One of his tactics was to line up thousands of "loyal" Africans to beat through the forest and this often resulted in horribly gruesome deaths for Mau Mau. Although Kitson apparently wanted as many live prisoners as possible, if only for interrogation, any Mau Mau flushed out by the beaters were usually chopped into tiny pieces unless members of the security forces arrived in time. Kitson records his annoyance at finding one Mau Mau body cut into many fragments by the flailing pangas of the over-enthusiastic beaters. As a good intelligence officer, he would have liked to identify the remains.

### Ruthlessness—the key to success

Kitson took a keen interest in other rather unpleasant methods of quelling rebellion. One tactic was to use hooded informers to pick out Mau Mau at identity parades. These and other counter-insurgency methods are described in Kitson's textbook "Low Intensity Operations" and also in "Gangs and Counter Gangs" his account of the Mau Mau war. But the underlying principle seemed to be that ruthlessness was the key to success. Kitson once wrote: "No operation can succeed until the men are really keen to get to grips with the enemy and destroy him utterly."

This kind of single-minded, almost fanatical dedication won for Kitson the favour of the British top brass in Kenya. General Erskine, dressed in civilian clothes, drove to Kiambu to visit Kitson and heard the dynamic young

officer read a paper about his intelligence work. General Carver, now Chief of the General Staff, also had first-hand experience of Kitson's work in Kenya. Kitson's rise to power was swift. He became Military Intelligence Officer for the Nairobi area and at the request of his senior officers, founded a Special Methods Training Centre where courses were organised for Field Intelligence Officers. It was the beginning of Kitson's career as a military educationalist.

Kitson left Kenya in 1956 and then attended a course at the British Army Staff College in Camberley. By 1957 he was again fighting guerrillas, this time as a company commander in the Malayan emergency. His experiences in the



Portrait of Kitson as a 26-year-old Captain.

jungle reinforced his belief in the need for closely-integrated civil-military command and the necessity of keeping at least a few troops in an area at all times so as to organise the population and build up background information.

British Army public relations men, when giving a resume of Kitson's curriculum vitae, often fail to refer to his tour of duty in Muscat and Oman. It seems likely that Kitson was there at some time during the years 1958 to 1960 when officially he was a staff officer with the War Department. In 1958 British forces helping the Sultan's offensive against the rebels on the Jebel Akhdar began the tedious job of building up an intelligence organisation. Kitson's expertise would have been valuable. In that

## It's a long way from .

BRIGADIER KITSON'S ideas about the dangers of subversion at home and the need to prepare the army to counter-act it, are shared by many senior officers at the newly-built headquarters of the UK land forces at Wilton in Wiltshire. There is concern not only about the activities of the IRA in Northern Ireland but about what the top brass see as "a drift towards anarchy" in England, Scotland and Wales. The Times recently quoted Major-General Administration at Wilton, Ronald Buckland as saying: "The more discerning of us are extremely depressed about the way things are going. We seem nearer and nearer to anarchy all the time. Now, with the schoolchildren on the streets of London, we have reached an all-time low."

### Possibility soldiers might be called in

The miners' strike received considerable attention at Wilton because of the possibility that soldiers might be called in to man essential services. Preparation for such eventualities forms part of Kitson's plan for beating subversion as outlined in his counter insurgency textbook, "Low Intensity Operations". At least one high-ranking officer at Wilton, Brigadier Brian Watkins, thought, after the experience of the miners' strike, that the police force was too small to deal with all those who are not prepared to respect the law.

Kitson has some very sophisticated technological ideas for beating subver-

same year trackers from Kenya were used against the rebels and this also points to Kitson's influence. Nowadays the Special Air Service is reported to be operating with the Sultan.

### Visited American military bases

In 1961 Kitson was an instructor at the Royal Naval College in Yarmouth and the following year he became a student at the US Armed Forces Staff College. He visited a number of American military bases and in 1962 he attended a Washington symposium on counter insurgency run by the Rand Corporation, the American computerised "think tank." There he came into contact with other world-renowned guerrilla warfare experts, people like Roger Trinquier, a Frenchman who has written widely on the subject, and Colonel Fertig of the US Army.

Kitson was pleased to find that these experts agreed with many of the theories which he had formu-

sion, and they could have far-reaching political repercussions. He has, for instance, suggested the use of computers to store information about subversives for use during interrogation. In "Low Intensity Operations" he suggests "a central computer to store all the information held in all the branches of the intelligence organisation throughout the country. Each member of the intelligence organisation would be equipped" with some form of wireless which would enable him to contact the computer from anywhere in his area. By this means the interrogator in the forward area could in theory get the information which he needs in order to break down the prisoner without delay."

#### Acquired computer ideas in U.S.

Kitson may have acquired his computer ideas during his sojourn in the US, for the Americans are the experts in computer-intelligence work. The FBI computers for instance, have a store of information on criminals and "subversives" that is unrivalled in the world. Kitson's idea that the Army should be involved in countering subversion in Britain is radical enough. But one could imagine the outcry if Army computers began to store information on British citizens! Kitson's ideas on counter-insurgency have come a long way since the time they used to burn the forest to flush out Mau Mau . . . ●

lated from years of experience. He was impressed by the expertise of the Americans and seems to have returned to Europe convinced that Britain was far behind the US in preparing for counter insurgency operations by the military. In "Low Intensity Operations" he wrote: "The United States is well ahead of Britain in its thinking on the overall direction of counter insurgency and counter-subversive operations." Kitson was particularly impressed by the sophisticated American emphasis on the need to gain and retain the allegiance of the population as opposed to purely offensive operations aimed at breaking up insurgent groups.

#### Served in Cyprus on two occasions

Kitson was second in command of a Battalion with the British peace-keeping force in Cyprus from '63 to '64. He was then posted to the Ministry of Defence as a staff officer in '65 but in '67 he was back in Cyprus this time for a two-year

stint as Commander of a British Battalion with the UN. Kitson makes the comment: "It would seem that the British have a great deal to learn judging by the difficulty which they apparently found in adjusting themselves to peace-keeping in Cyprus compared to the Canadians, Irish and Swedes, according to the United Nations Chief of Staff there." In 1969 Kitson was in Northern Ireland but was then sent by his superiors to University College, Oxford, where he spent a year living among the Fellows as a member of their Senior Common Room.

Kitson has studied the writings of insurgency experts like Mao Tse Tung, Vo Nguyen Giap, Guevara and Grivas. He is also of course very familiar with the works of his



Kitson with 'pseudo gang' member.

fellow specialists in the counter insurgency field — Julian Paget, Roger Trinquier and others. The counter insurgency men lack the colour and charisma of revolutionaries like Guevara. But in Britain at least, Kitson is beginning to acquire a certain mystique, especially with junior officers. During his year at Oxford Kitson read widely on both sides of the insurgency spectrum and he combined this book learning with his own experience to complete "Low Intensity Operations," the treatise that made his reputation as a military intellectual. (Because he wrote the book while on paid leave, he has apparently had to pay 50% of his royalties to the Treasury.)

He studied under Professor N. H. Gibbs, Chichele Professor of the History of War at Oxford. Professor Gibbs, when asked for information about Kitson, replied: "Let me make one thing clear. I am not going to tell you anything about Brigadier Kitson as my pupil without his expressed permission." The Professor gave the "difficult situation" as the reason for his caution but he added: "I like him. I admire him and he was a very good pupil." Kitson too, seems sensitive about publicity. He sought and received a printed apology some months ago from a British popular newspaper which printed allegations against him concerning interrogation techniques in Northern Ireland.

Despite all Kitson's expertise, the British Army in Northern Ireland has not yet succeeded in crushing the IRA. One can only guess at Kitson's role in the campaign against the rebels. He would have had a major say in operational policy and to judge by his past record he would have taken a keen interest in intelligence work and in the results of interrogation. But the bombings still go on and the IRA is still active despite the best efforts of this strange, latter day Lawrence of Arabia with the taste for showjumping. ●

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