

# MAU MAU: A REVOLUTION BETRAYED

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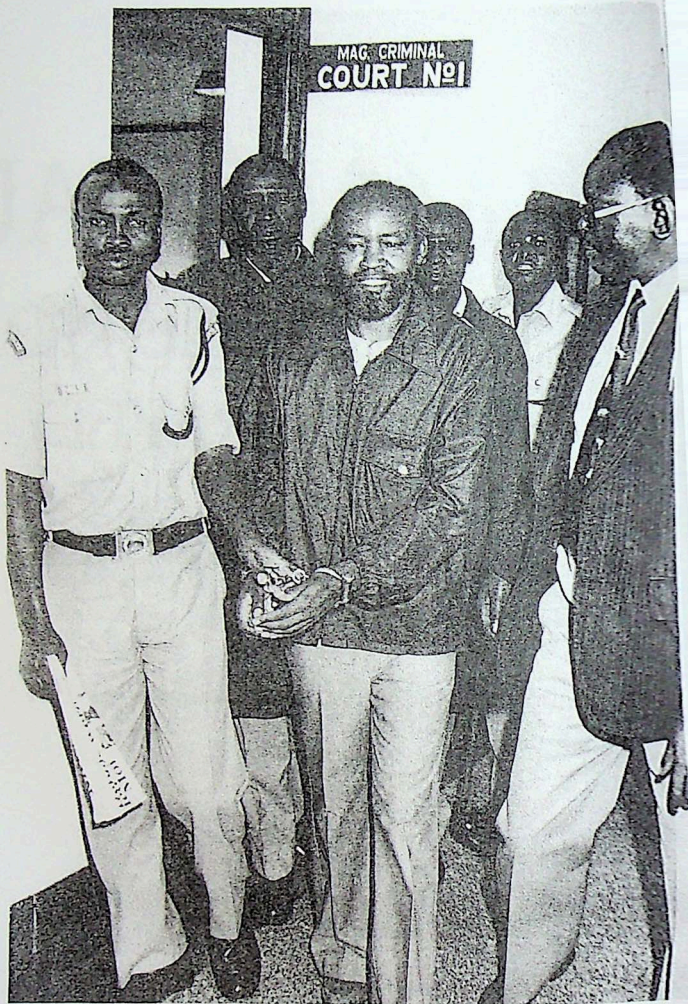
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The author was arrested by the Moi-KANU regime in June 1982 and imprisoned for six and a half years for his writing of the history of the Mau Mau Movement. He was released in October 1988.

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*The day will come when history will speak. But it will not be the history which will be taught in Brussels, Paris, Washington or the United Nations. It will be the history that will be taught in the countries which have won freedom from colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its own history and in both north and south it will be a history of glory and dignity.*

Patrice Lumumba

SHOULD I EVER BE ASKED, AT ANY TIME, TO GO OUT  
AND KILL AN ENEMY OF THIS MOVEMENT, I WILL  
ARM MYSELF AND PROCEED FEARLESSLY TO FULFILL  
THE ORDER THUS GIVEN TO ME BY THIS MOVEMENT  
I WILL NEVER ABANDON THE LEADERSHIP OF MY  
PEOPLE BUT I WILL GO WHEREVER THEY SEND ME,  
TO DO WHATEVER MY COMPATRIOTS ASK ME TO  
DO, EVEN IF IT MEANS MY DEATH. I WILL NEVER RUN  
AWAY FROM THE BATTLEFIELD AND LEAVE MY COM  
RADES FIGHTING. I SHALL CONTINUE FIGHTING  
UNTIL THE ENEMY IS DEFEATED.

Mau Mau Oath

## FOREWORD

On May 12, 1950, thirty-nine Kenyan farm workers were arrested in Naivasha after *nyapara* (overseer) Njihia wa Kinuthia reported to his white colonial employer, S.V. Aitchison, that he had been forcefully recruited by them to join a secret organization whose political goal was to drive *Wazungu* (Europeans) out of Kenya by violent means. Specifically, he informed Aitchison that the secret movement was using a traditional oath as a tool of recruitment, unity, and commitment.

The arrested workers were brutally tortured by the colonial police, but they stubbornly refused to reveal the aims and the name of the Movement. Nineteen of them, 15 men and four women, were brought to court and charged with membership in an unlawful society. They were jailed for seven years each. Njihia was the colonial state's key witness. The Magistrate and prosecutor were white. The interpreter was an African.

During the trial, Magrougi ole Kodogoya, under cross-examination on the dock, absolutely refused to cooperate with the colonial prosecutor. Repeatedly, he was asked by the prosecutor to explain to the colonial Magistrate, H.A. Carr, how he was recruited into the underground Movement, as well as the aims and the name of the Movement and methods used to make him a member, but he refused to answer the questions put to him directly. Instead, he told the Magistrate that because of his commitment and dedication to the Movement, he would never reveal *maundu mau* (those things) the leadership of the Movement told him not to reveal to the government. He would die first, he stressed, before he betrayed the sacred Movement. The Magistrate angrily insisted that Kodogoya must explain to the court what he meant by "those things" he was told never to reveal. With firmness and fearless courage, Kodogoya told the Kangaroo Magistrate:

*Ndingikwira maundũ mau mau nderirwo ndikoige ni kiama.  
Ni hito iitũ. Niingĩ wee ũrĩ thũ iitũ. Ni inyuũ mvaatũtũnyire  
bũrũri na hinya; mũgĩtũtua ngoombo cĩanyu.... Bũrũri ũyũ nĩ  
witũ, twatigĩrwo nĩ Aagu na Aagu. Tũtikaũrekia.*

(I cannot tell you those, those things I was told not to tell by the Movement. It is our secret. Besides, you are our enemy. You (white people) took our country by force and made us your slaves.... This is our country, we inherited it from our ancestors. We shall never abandon it.)

The English colonial press, confused by the statement, but seeking the way to characterize the secret organization, seized upon the words "mau mau" (those, those) as the name of the Movement. Further, the press explained that the aim of the Movement was to overthrow the British rule in the colony by armed struggle and establish an African government. To be a member of the movement, the press added, one must take a Mau Mau oath.

That is how the name "Mau Mau" entered the political dictionary of Kenya's anti-imperialist resistance.

Significantly, the name "Mau Mau" has been immortalized by the Kenyan people because it symbolizes their collective heroism against foreign domination and their undying love for freedom and liberty. In other words, it has become synonymous with Kenyan national patriotism, anti-imperialism, military acumen, and most importantly, popular democratic revolution.

For academic historians in our country, all of these truths are suspect. The first article in the volume you are holding was previously published in a special number of *Kenya Historical Review* to defend Mau Mau against a rain of academic untruths. In it, this author called for further research, reminding readers that, "there are people still alive with useful documentary evidence which is in stark opposition to some current hypotheses." It was for continuing that line of research that this author was jailed. The second article explains why the dictatorship cannot tolerate the truth about Mau Mau, and shows some parallels between that struggle and the struggle today. Finally, as an appendix, is the secret British file on Makhan Singh. It is a reminder about a great patriot of our country and the colonialists' attitude toward him.

## Mau Mau: The Peak of African Political Organization in Colonial Kenya

There is renewed and growing intellectual and political interest in Mau Mau history both here in Kenya and abroad. This is a most important development for us Kenyan historians because I sincerely believe that the true distinction of our profession will depend on how far we succeed, or fail, to bring out clearly and without fear or favour the historical significance of Mau Mau to Kenya's political development up to today and subsequently.

Indeed the timing could not be more opportune. Indications are that interest groups and individuals, including, as we shall see later, some University historians have started *revising* important aspects of Kenya's political history, especially of Mau Mau development. If crucial documentable occurrences of the Mau Mau Movement are ignored, purposely or otherwise, if dubious new information is smuggled into the discussion, then certainly unjustifiable analysis, deductions and conclusions will result. I insist that if our reputation is to remain worth anything or if we wish to play a positive and enlightening role in the future development of Kenya's society we must discard the speculative and encourage the objective. Clearly, a national movement that attracted hundreds of thousands of our people, a movement whose goals and aims were so appropriate to the common desires of so many, a movement which so profoundly influenced Kenya's political evolution and inspired so many fraternal peoples, in short, a movement which was a part of the world-wide anti-colonial onslaught can not be dismissed merely with a flick of a pen.

My aim here is to introduce some important new information to reinforce such already existing, unfortunately underutilized, but excellent, documentations as Karari Njama's *Mau Mau From Within*. I have undertaken some interviewing of surviving cadres of the Mau Mau Movement and introduced hitherto little-known and little-used documents such as *Kimaathi's Papers*, *Mau Mau Document*, guerrilla revolutionary songs as well as the works of the former Mau Mau cadres: *The Urban Guerrilla* by Mohamed Mathu, *The Hardcore* by Karigo Muchai, and *The Man in the Middle* by Ngugi Kabiro.

The Mau Mau Movement used the folk-poetry method of mass-communication and in the process produced a most formidable political literature in song-form, thus politicizing in a short time a largely peasant

This paper was first published by *Kenya Historical Review* in 1977 and reprinted in 1983 by *Ufahamu*, Journal of the African Activist Association in Los Angeles. This is an improved version



membership condemned by colonialists as illiterate and irredeemably superstitious. Did these songs and other symbols express nationalistic, anti-colonial, Kenyan feelings? Did the Mau Mau guerrilla leadership articulate the feelings of the great majority of the Kenyan people? Essentially these questions form the basis of my argument.

## II

The invasion and occupation of our country by imperialism was resisted by Kenyan people violently. We can, for convenience, divide the recent Kenyan people's resistance against imperialism into four historical stages.

The first stage began in 1800 to 1900 when the imperialist forces were establishing their colonial settlement and political domination over Kenyans and their country. It was during this period that the Kenyan people across the land began their protracted struggle against the forces of oppression and exploitation. Between 1895 and 1905, for instance, the Kalenjin people put up a strong and bloody resistance against foreign intruders. This resistance, which was heroically led by Koitalel, lasted for ten years before it was contained by the invading forces. In the Southwestern highlands of Kenya the foreign enemy forces had to fight the Gusii people to occupy their land. The people of Central Kenya\* also had to wage a bloody resistance against the British imperialist forces whose aim was to occupy their country. Richard Meinertzhagen, who led the imperialist forces against the people of Central Kenya wrote in 1902:

Last night the enemy made two unsuccessful attacks on my camp... The first of these took place about 11 P.M. It was pitch dark and pouring with rain at the time.... We lost two killed and several wounded.

The second attack took place about 1:30 A.M. It came without warning and from two sides. A shower of arrows and spears accompanied the rush, which put 7 of my men out of action.

Our casualties during the night were 4 soldiers and 5 Masai (mercenaries) killed, and 11 soldiers and 14 Masai wounded. Our carriers had one killed and 7 wounded. We found the bodies of 38 enemy outside our defences in the morning. I must own I never expected the Wakikuyu [sic!] to fight like this.

\* The old colonial Central Kenya included the Gikuyu, Embu, Meru, Mberere, and Akamba peoples.

1. Richard Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary: 1902-1906* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1957) p. 66-7.

Similar patterns of Kenyan people's violent resistance against imperialism took place in other parts of our country. Since these resistances were isolated, uncoordinated and weak, the people were defeated. However, they learned some lessons from these failures. Besides the failure to form a united front, they were also using comparatively primitive weapons while the enemy had the best weapons. Consequently they became a subject people.

The second stage was a continuation of the struggle which began in the 1800's, but this time at a slightly higher level and with more awareness of the manipulations of imperialism and its brutal presence in the country. But in order to break the people's growing resistance the imperialist rulers resorted to fascist acts against Kenyans. They "systematically passed and enforced all sorts of oppressive measures, such as direct statutory compulsion, imposition of hut and poll tax, curtailment of African lands," using the *Kipande* system "for controlling movements of African labourers and for locating and identifying them." It was required by the British for all African males to carry this slave-identification with them at all times "and to produce it when demanded by the police." Anyone without a *Kipande* was liable to arrest "and none could employ him if he had no *Kipande* or if he had not been signed off by his previous employer." This was convenient for the forced labour policies.

Historically, the second stage started about 1900 when the Kenyan working class, regrouped in the East African Association (EAA) under the leadership of Harry Thuku, began the intensification of the struggle against colonialism. Thuku's political strategy was to rally the Kenyan masses in a bid to overthrow the dictatorship of the colonialists by means of mass protests, demonstrations, petitions and other non-violent actions. It worked to a certain extent but, not surprisingly, led to violent clashes with the colonial security forces. What Thuku did not realize was that imperialism is in essence violent, and "it lives and grows only through force and the use of force increases as the opposition to it grows."<sup>3</sup> The British imperialists considered Thuku's EAA as a great threat to their interests in the country and East Africa as a whole. They banned the EAA and arrested its leaders. Immediately after the EAA leaders were locked in, the Kenyan masses came out in thousands to demand the release of their leaders unconditionally. For twenty-four hours they surrounded the police station (the former Kingsway Police Station) where their leaders were held. The fascist forces, excited and frightened by the show of the people's strength, unity and determination, responded by savagely firing on the unarmed protestors. When the shooting

2. Makhan Singh, *History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement to 1952* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1969) p. 4-6.

3. Stephen Nkomo, "The Rhodesia Crisis: Its Source and nature," in *Africa: National and Social Revolution* (Prague: 1967) p. 134. 8

stopped many patriots lay dead on the streets and many others were seriously injured. It was cold-blooded murder. Job Muchuchu, who was involved in the struggle, gives the following account:

I went to the police lines with Harun Mikono. We had been there the previous evening, the fifteenth of March, thousands of us, and we were determined to get Harry Thuku out... Mary Nyanjiru, a great patriot from Murang'a, leapt to her feet, pulled her dress right up over her shoulders and shouted to the men: 'You take my dress and give me your trousers. You [damn] coward men. What are you waiting for? Our leader is in there. Let us get him!' The hundreds of women trilled their '*Ngemi*' (Gikuyu ululation) in approbation and from that moment on, trouble was probably inevitable. Mary and the other patriots pushed on until the colonialist bayonets of the rifles were pricking at their throats, and then the firing started. Mary was one of the first to die. My companion, Harun Mikono, was badly wounded in the right leg.

On the other side of the lines the European settlers sitting drinking on the verandah of the Norfolk Hotel joined in the shooting and it is said that they were responsible for most of the deaths over there. One of our people employed at the mortuary told us the 56 bodies\* were brought in, although the government said only 21 were killed,

Thuku and his two comrades were exiled, without trial, to Kismayu.† The banning of EAA and the arrest of its leadership were acts of violence against Kenyans "in reply to their demand that their country be restored to them.", This clearly demonstrated that Kenya was plagued by a merciless foreign regime whose ideological creed was to maintain repression and exploitation by force of arms. Second, it also demonstrated to many that

\* It is known now that at least one hundred and fifty Kenyans lost their lives on that historic day. See *Manchester Guardian* of March 20, 1929. Also see Philip Bolsover, *Kenya: What are the Facts*, London 1953. p. 6.

† Whilst in detention, Harry Thuku was bought out by imperialism and he became its running dog after his release. He was one of the imperialist collaborators during the Mau Mau war of independence.

4. Quoted in C.G. Rosberg, *The Myth of Mau Mau: Nationalism in Kenya* (New York: Praeger, 1966) p. 51.

5. Nkomo, p. 135.

nonviolence as a form of struggle was inapplicable to the social reality of the country then. It taught them the violent nature of imperialism and its agents, and at the same time it heightened their fighting consciousness and their determination to resist further, a fact demonstrated by the subsequent stages of struggle.

The third stage began in the late twenties and continued to the early fifties. The Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) replaced EAA as the organized political force. It was organized by a then-relatively radical group of men: Joseph Kang'ethe, Jesse Kariuki, James Beuttah and a few others who possessed some skills of mass organization, men who took their political work seriously. Unlike Thuku's loose leadership, the KCA was centralized and well-disciplined. Such traditional, albeit weak, forms of group discipline as oath pledges were employed.

However, learning from past experience the KCA leadership worked hard during the interwar period to build its organization and to strengthen the bond between its regular membership and the masses in the countryside including the working class in Nairobi, Mombasa and Nakuru. It is important to point out the Kenyan nationalism as expressed through KCA was not insular, that there was general widening of political consciousness among all Kenyan masses. This linked, at least in purpose, the leadership of the KCA with similar political associations across the land. The Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association, the Ukamba Members Association, and the Taita Hills Association, were objectively allies as they were all fighting the force of colonialism. Therefore there emerged a loose fraternity, not quite a united front, against British colonialism. At the same time the KCA leadership was working closely with the leadership of the Kenya Trade Union Movement and the international Pan-African Movement of which W.E.B. DuBois was the leader. Its international connections were of great propaganda value. The subsequent international support of the struggle was an advantage to the movement. Significantly the struggle against imperialism in our country had developed into a national struggle and had made a great impact in the world by the early thirties.

With its relative political radicalism, its national and patriotic outlook, its relations with the then-militant international Pan-African Movement and other Third World national movements, KCA helped to broaden the national base of the movement in Kenya and abroad. Most significantly for us today it heightened the national consciousness of Kenyans during the interwar period. It aroused great hatred among the colonialists for mobilizing popular opposition. The Association was suppressed in 1940 as "communist subversive" following its militant agitation against:

the alienation of land in Kenya  
the *Kipande* system  
the Hut and Poll tax  
exploitation of African working class  
banning of many respected traditions considered "savage" by  
colonialists

Again as with EAA, KCA's leadership was detained and the organization driven underground. *Muigwithania*, KCA's official organ, was suppressed. Unlike the EAA, KCA continued secret mobilization, particularly in Nairobi Mombasa, among squatters of the Rift Valley and Central Kenya, but under serious difficulties. Although KCA was able to achieve numerous isolated successes underground, it never regained its former position in the national political arena. It was finally incorporated into the Kenya African Union (KAU) under Jomo Kenyatta's leadership. Interestingly the KCA members refused incorporation into KAU under Harry Thuku's, and J. Gichuru's, leadership until Jomo Kenyatta took over in 1946. James Beuttah tells us:

"The leaders of the new party tried hard to get the well-known KCA people to join them, but they would have none of it. Our suspicions were that KAU was a colonial government front and those in leadership were colonial stooges. It was Jomo Kenyatta who convinced most of the KCA members that KAU was a genuine African political party whose aim was to unite all Kenyans and to fight for national independence."

The formation of KAU as a national front against colonialism was characterized by increasing mass resistance and expression against British imperialism. To a large extent, the leadership of KAU was petty-bourgeois nationalist in its conceptions of the politics and socio-economics of a Kenyan society to come. As far as the political system was outlined, its horizon was constitutional, reformist at best and parliamentary. It was against revolutionary violence and in favour of negotiations. We therefore see for the first time the dominance of the educated strata in Kenya's political leadership and their conservative stance.

Because of their narrow nationalism, the KAU leaders failed, from the beginning, to understand that without politically directed violence it was impossible to wage a victorious struggle against imperialism and its colonial agents in our country. Again while the leadership was superficially anti-

imperialist, it did not, at any time in its existence, have a clear-cut and consistent conception of what was to replace the colonial society. Indeed, a revolutionary organization involved in a national liberation struggle must be ideologically clear, have a seriously worked-out programme and a coherent sense of direction. This KAU clearly did not have. As a result the KAU political programme was phrased in a vague, abstract and populist way. The main political slogans were "We want our land back," "We want to rule ourselves," "Remove the colour bar," etc., but these were merely political slogans of protest; they were not revolutionary in the sense that they gave some indication of an alternative, a new point of departure, some preparedness for self-defence and political mass education, a new kind of direction. Besides exciting the masses with such appeals as:

The freedom tree can only grow when you pour blood on it... I shall firmly hold the lion's jaws so that it will not bite you. Will you bear its claws?,

the KAU leadership had not thought of, and was not ready for, a violent confrontation with the colonialist forces. Consequently, when the Kenyan people decided to confront colonialists with revolutionary violence, this KAU leadership was nowhere to be seen. This point is well expressed by Mohamed Mathu. He writes:

... the minds of the [Kenyan] people were turned toward violence and revolt by the preachings and political agitation of men such as Kenyatta, Koinange and other KAU leaders. The question we now ask is: Why did these men abandon us in our hour of greatest need?,

It is also a well-known fact that "the KAU leaders gained knowledge of the Emergency Declaration" and their impending arrest a day "before October 20, 1952, announcement", and yet none of them tried to escape and join Dedan Kimaathi and other patriots in the forests. All of them allowed themselves to be arrested without any struggle at all. Kaggia explains:

on the 19th October, 1952,... our informer sent for me... He told me that the colonial government planned to arrest all KAU leaders during the next 36 hours...<sup>10</sup>

8. Mathu, p. 17.

9. *Ibid.* p. 7.

10. Bildad Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom 1921-1963* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1976) p. 116.

6. Interview with James Beuttah, November, 1976.

In essence, KAU's aim was to achieve some national independence through constitutional and peaceful means. From 1947 to 1952 the leadership made several attempts to reach a compromise or understanding with the British, but each of these attempts was met with increasing resistance and hostility from the imperialist circles. All attempts failed miserably. These failures were to affect KAU in the future. The more militant within the Union would insist that the KAU leadership take a hard line against British imperialism.

These disillusioned militants were soon to find allies. In Nairobi where the life of the workers was "characterized by chronic unemployment [and] hopeless housing conditions," and inevitable police harassment and brutality, "there grew an enormous number of people who were extremely dissatisfied" with the oppressive conditions. They gradually decided to do something about these unbearable conditions; they began to organize themselves into an anti-colonial group called the "Forty Group (Anake a 40). The membership of the group included the more militant patriots such as Fred Kubai, Charles Wambaa, Mwangi Macharia, Eliud Mutonyi, Isaac Gathanju, Stanley Mathenge, Domenico Gatu and many others. Since most of them were dissatisfied with the conservative stand KAU continued to advocate, the majority decided to join the Kenya Trade Union Movement which by this period of the country's history was the most progressive, anti-imperialist force under Makhan Singh's leadership.\* Kaggia says:

In the Trade Union Movement I found the right place for my ambitions. The people I worked with were as militant and revolutionary as myself. They were not suffering from any inferiority complex. We had little respect for KAU, which we regarded as an instrument of the Governor through Mathu, his nominated member of Legislative Council.,,

In June 1951 this group of militants took over the KAU leadership in the Nairobi Branch. As Nairobi was KAU's most important base because of its large working class, this change was significant. Kaggia tells us:

11. D.P. Singh, "Mau Mau: A Case Study of Kenyan Nationalism," in *Africa Quarterly* Vol. 8, No. 1 (April-June 1968) p. 14.

\* Makhan Singh was arrested and detained in Lokitaung by the colonial Government in 1950. "Makhan Singh," the dictatorship of the colonialists declared, "will be detained there for an indefinite period, unable to leave the area without written consent of the Police Commissioner, and even unable to visit shops, stations or telegraph office without written permission." See the appendix to this volume.

12. Kaggia, p. 15.

The KAU Nairobi branch election was approaching and the trade union leaders met long in advance and planned to capture all posts. We would put strong men in all the important posts and leave room for only one or two non-trade unionists... The final results were: F. Kubai, Chairman (Transport and Allied Workers Union,) J. Mungai, Vice-Chairman (Transport and Allied Workers Union,) B.M. Kaggia, general secretary (Clerks and Commercial Workers Union.) The three of us were staunch trade unionists and very militant.

and:

Before the trade unionists took over the leadership of the Nairobi branch, KAU was very unpopular. All of the Nairobi people looked to the trade unions to represent them. Even Kenyatta did not seem to have any faith in KAU. He didn't come often to KAU headquarters. Everything was left in the hands of vice-president Mbotela. Kenyatta concentrated on the Kenya Teachers College at Githunguri.,,

By August 1951 it was clear that the moderate and conservative forces in the Union were very weak. The militants were gaining strength in other branches also.† Under these circumstances Kenyatta was left with one choice: to break the Union by expelling the militants or to side with them against his own political stand and that of the British. He took an apparently neutral line, a middle-of-the-road policy between the KAU conservatives and the militants. He was afraid to oppose the militants as he clearly understood the danger involved. For instance, way back in 1948, he told an American journalist, Negley Farson: "I am afraid of this left-wing group. I believe that

† The leading militants within KAU were Bildad Kaggia, secretary of Nairobi Branch, F. Kubai, chairman of Nairobi Branch, James Beautah, chairman of Murang'a Branch and vice-president of the central Kenya KAU Council, H. Wamuthenya, chairman of Nyeri Branch, H. Wambogo, vice-chairman of Nyeri Branch, Kiragu Kagotho, secretary of Nyeri Branch, Pratt Njogu, chairman of Embu Branch, R. J. Gikunju, secretary of Embu Branch, John Mbiyu Koinange, chairman of Kiambu Branch, Kungu Karumba, chairman of Limuru Branch, Charles Wambaa, chairman of Kikuyu Branch, J.D. Kali, assistant secretary of Nairobi Branch, P.J. Ngei, KAU assistant secretary.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

their dark and half-educated minds will lead them to use force.”<sup>14</sup>

Between August 1951 and October 1952 it was evident that the Kenyan masses were getting impatient with old-style KAU politics. Meanwhile Kenyatta and Mbiyu Koinange made an unsuccessful attempt “to ensure a peaceful transition to African self-government by opening a fresh dialogue”<sup>15</sup> with the British colonialists in London and the settler interests in Kenya. Mbiyu and Oneko were sent to London to explain KAU’s policy to the Colonial Office. The Colonial Office ignored them and refused to see them. In fact, the Colonial Secretary abusively dismissed them as “irresponsible black monkeys.” Kaggia writes:

The KAU militants who were at the centre of the Mau Mau introduced a resolution which was passed at the KAU Kaloleni meeting on the day when Mbiyu Koinange and Achieng Oneko were leaving for Britain.... The resolution declared this deputation would be the last one sent to Britain. We had no faith in deputations, but we were willing to give Britain a last chance.... Some of us believed that there would be no favourable result from the deputation...

“Our expectations were fulfilled when Achieng Oneko returned from Britain and said that the British Colonial Secretary did not meet them... Achieng also proved a very good representative for our cause when he described the treatment the deputation received from the Colonial Secretary. All his emphasis on the insulting attitude of the British towards Africans helped our committee convince the people that deputations to London were useless....<sup>16</sup>

On the home front, through the Kenya Citizens’ Association,\* Kenyatta tried to sell KAU’s policy to the Kenya settlers but they too rejected it.

After these failures to convince British imperialism that a peaceful transition to African self-government would head off the mounting confrontation, the KAU militants and other patriots openly began to advocate a violent uprising against the British independent of the regular KAU ap-

\* The Kenya Citizens’ Association was inaugurated on October 23, 1950, to deal with race relations. It was controlled by the settlers and the Christian church leaders.

Kenyatta and Mbiyu were members.  
14. D.P. Singh, p. 14. Also see Negley Farson’s *The Last Chance in Africa* (New York: Harcourt, 1950.)

15. D.P. Singh, p. 15.

16. Kaggia, p. 114.

proach. Kaggia explains: “The collecting of guns was accelerated and our intelligence network strengthened. The Mau Mau Central Committee authorized more and more aggressive methods and activities.”<sup>17</sup> The militants consolidated their hold among the working class in Nairobi and the squatters of the Rift Valley. To a great extent they had the support of the great majority of peasant masses in Central Kenya. It was clear by now that Kenyatta had little control of the situation and he knew very little of what was going on in secrecy. Again, Kaggia writes:

The Mau Mau Central Committee asked Kenyatta to see them. For the first time Kenyatta met the Mau Mau Central Committee. He was surprised to see Kubai and myself there. And he noticed to his further surprise that other other leaders, whom he did not know, were running the meeting. E. Mutonyi and I. Gathanju were the chairman and secretary....

Mau Mau was an organization formed by KAU militants who had lost faith in constitutional methods of fighting for independence.... It was clear [to us] that the colonial government would never give in Kenya without a struggle....<sup>18</sup>

Since KAU had failed to bring national independence through constitutional methods, the more politically aware saw no other alternatives but to impose their will through armed struggle. Obviously the situation now called for a new leadership and a new kind of organization to direct the people’s movement. This, therefore, led to the organization of the Mau Mau Movement. As Philip Bolsover writes:

If Mau Mau and other secret societies exist, they are the direct result of land robbery by white settlers, suppression of trade unions and democratic rights, and the use of violence by the British Government against the African people.<sup>19</sup>

The organization of the Mau Mau Movement marked the fourth and still higher stage of our people’s struggle. In fact, for most Kenyan people, particularly those in Central Kenya, Mau Mau was “food and drink for a hungry and thirsty traveler.”<sup>20</sup> The Movement pointed out clearly to the

17. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 114-5.

19. Philip Bolsover, *Kenya: What Are the Facts?* (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1953) p. 4.

20. Le Duan, *The Vietnamese Revolution*, (New York: International Publishers, 1971) p. 2.

Kenyan patriots the road of the armed struggle, stirring up a vigorous nationalist political upsurge throughout the country in which the workers and peasants became an independent leading political force. In essence, this historic event marked a fundamental turning point in the history of the Kenyan anti-imperialist resistance. It saw the death of KAU as a petty-bourgeois political force, combined with the birth of a new leadership of workers and peasants based in the countryside under the direction of Dedan Kimaathi and Stanley Mathenge.

The first task of Mau Mau's overall strategy, say between 1950 to 1952 was to educate, mobilize and unite as many people as possible against British occupation. Oathing, a traditional pledge of commitment, was designed as an instrument to unite those who could be united around the Movement. The basic aim of the organizers of Mau Mau was not to create a movement of a particular class or nationality, but a nationalist movement which united the ranks of the workers, peasants, members of the petty-bourgeoisie and other patriotic elements who were determined to fight colonialism and imperialism for national independence. To use oathing as a weapon to unite the Kenyan people was only a part of the Movement's strategy. Much political education was carried out using whatever media was available. It was clearly spelled-out that the aim of the Mau Mau Movement was: to defeat imperialism and colonialism, win national independence, and regain stolen land. This point is clearly expressed in one of the Mau Mau songs entitled "*Aanake Ukirai Ni Mugwitwo Ni Muingi*"\* (Rise Up Young People, The Masses Are Calling You):

We are fighting for our land  
Some of our people  
Don't seem to understand  
The root-causes of our struggle  
Can't they see that we are tormented  
Because of asking for our independence  
And full rights to our land?

Again:

Rise up, you Kenya Masses!  
Seize your freedom  
Expel the foreign imperialists  
From this country.

As the oathing and political education continued to spread secretly in Nairobi, Central Kenya and among the squatters of the Rift Valley during

\* Mau Mau songs have been translated from their original Gikuyu version by the author.

the latter part of 1951, the political consciousness of our people continued to heighten significantly. The nature of racism and the land and labour questions were grasped better than ever before. By June 1952, many of the "militants had started preparing for resistance in the forests",<sup>21</sup> as the dictatorship of the colonialists began to resort to fascist measures, and to consolidate and strengthen its hold on our country. In addition to oathing, other anti-imperialist activities were being conducted, like boycotting European goods, e.g., beer, cigarettes, hats and public buses (Kenya Bus, Ltd.), combating prostitution and the elimination of the homeguard traitors, informers and other imperialist accomplices. The colonial regime, besides being confused with what was going on, was also seriously shaken by our people's collective revolutionary daring. This early period continued till October 20, 1952, when the dictatorship of the colonialists declared a state of emergency in the country and at the same time launched its massive fascist offensive against the people. "On 20th October 1952 the Kenya Government declared a state of emergency and on the instructions of the Churchill Government, and with the vociferous support of the white settlers in Kenya, launched an attack against the Kenya people's democratic organizations."<sup>22</sup>

The British colonial offensive was a calculated plan to destroy the Movement and unity and to dam the revolutionary spirit of the people. As Colonel Ewart Grogan declared:

We Europeans have to go on ruling this country and rule it with iron discipline tempered by our own hearts.<sup>23</sup>

Again:

We are going to stay here for the good of Africa, and as long as we stay we rule.<sup>24</sup>

Using repressive action, the British began with the banning of KAU, arresting its leaders, suppressing its political activities and destroying its bases both in urban centres as well as in the countryside. The limited bourgeois freedoms of speech, press, association, movement and assembly were thrown overboard. The independent schools, catering to more than 62,000 students, which the people of Kenya had patiently built up at the "cost of great self-sacrifice to make up for the Government's neglect of education,"<sup>25</sup> were

21. D.P. Singh, p. 15.

22. *Terror in Kenya*, (London: W.F.T.U. Publications, 1952) p. 55.

23. George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, (London: Dobson, 1953) p. 255.

24. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa* (New York: Viking, 1947) p. 284.

25. *Terror in Kenya*, p. 3.

forced to close down. Murder, imprisonment, detention and torture of thousands of our compatriots became the order of the day. In the city and the towns much African property was lost in these bloody campaigns of which "Operation Anvil" was but one. In the countryside, the peasant's cattle, sheep and goats — his livelihood — were rounded up by the troops and armed settlers, and the peasant was hunted down like a dog, in a vain attempt to intimidate him. "The only answer to Mau Mau," declared Colonel Grogan, "is to teach the whole Kikuyu tribe a lesson by providing a 'psychic shock.'" <sup>26</sup> The Mau Mau patriotic army in the forest accepted this challenge unflinchingly and would have courageously replied: "We have to be violent in a violent situation, we must fight when a war is imposed on us, defend our rights in the face of aggression. There can be no peace when the foundations of peace have been unilaterally undermined." <sup>27</sup>

The arrest of Kenyatta and other KAU leaders was undertaken with the misguided notion that they were the main organizers of the Mau Mau Movement. Their removal, the imperialists believed, would smash Mau Mau at the embryonic stage. To their great disappointment and surprise most Kenyans held on firmly and continued with the resistance. Blinded by racism and with typical colonial arrogance, the British did not recognize the crucial distinction that Mau Mau was a *separate, independent force* with its own direction and aims under the guerrilla army in the forests. Kaggia writes:

Although many Mau Mau members were KAU members, others were not. And many KAU members were not members of Mau Mau. More important, some of our leaders knew nothing about this militant movement within KAU. KAU took orders from its Central Committee; Mau Mau had a separate Central Committee. There was no organized link between the two. <sup>28</sup>

At one of the Mau Mau guerrillas' conferences in the forests the following observation was made by Dedan Kimaathi:

Let us make this very clear: If one of the KAU leaders or anybody else gets in our way, we will cut him down just the same we have done to those who stood in our way. <sup>29</sup>

It seems clear that the arrest and imprisonment of Jomo Kenyatta as

a Mau Mau organizer and manager was a great injustice that was done to him since in fact he was not its organizer.

Enraged by the revolutionary stand taken by our people, the imperialists deployed thousands of troops, police, war-planes, armoured cars, police dogs, armed European settlers, homeguard and "*taitai*"\* traitors, in a vain attempt to crush the resistance. "What started as an emergency," writes George Padmore,

has already become a full-scale military operation — the biggest colonial war in Africa since the Boer war. Over thirty thousand British troops have been assembled to assist the local police force, the Kenya Regiment recruited exclusively from among the European male population, the Kikuyu Home Guards, and the King's African Rifles are in open warfare against what the Africans call the Kenya Land Liberation Army. <sup>30</sup>

All rural areas of Central Kenya, a large part of the Rift Valley and the urban centres of our country were occupied by the fascist forces. Untold miseries were the order of the day — including wholesale massacres and wanton destruction of property. The contention by the British that 11,000 Africans died is grossly erroneous.\*\* On March 24, 1953, the *Irish Revolutionary Press* stated:

We only get one side of the story and that, as we in Ireland know so well, is told in a way that destroys the African's case.... The papers are constantly reporting the killing of Africans while 'resisting arrest,' 'failing to halt,' or 'attempting to escape.' These are terms which Irish people remember as synonymous with sheer murder by British forces and police of unarmed Irishmen and women. The recurrence of such expressions in reports from Kenya has a sinister ring in Irish ears.... Whatever the happenings it has become evident that the mass of people are against the present regime. <sup>31</sup>

\* *Taitai* were the educated Africans who were working in the C.I.D. as pro-colonial intelligence agents during the Mau Mau war of national liberation. *Taitai* literally means those who wear ties — the elite.

\*\* A conservative estimate is that at least 150,000 Kenyans lost their lives, 250,000 were maimed for life and 400,00 were left homeless.

30. Padmore, p. 254.

31. Bolsover, p. 9.

26. Padmore, p. 256.

27. Nkomo, p. 135.

28. Kaggia, p. 113.

29. An extract from Dedan Kimaathi's Papers.

Writing to his friends in London about the war, Tony Cross, a former Officer of the Kenya Police, stated:

We have three home guard sections, each about fifty strong and they go out and bring in information. Some are pretty good and we go out and raid and knock a few off. Don't ask me why... just because the home guard say they are bad men.

Anyway, after persuasion they usually confess something. I inspect all the prisoners and if they are a bit dubious I refuse to have them. The next morning I am usually called to a dead body and proceed normally.

If you are on patrol and find some men hiding in the bush you call on them to stop and if they don't they are shot, or rather shot at. These boys are often rotten shots, so I grab the first bloke's rifle and have a go.

Compared with coppering in London, this really shakes you. There seem to be no judge's rules, cautions, etc., but I am gradually getting some proper policing. I am sure all this gestapo stuff never got anyone anywhere...

To avoid being killed or arrested, many of the youth voluntarily joined the Mau Mau guerrilla army in the forest or performed ancillary chores. By the end of 1954 about 150,000 workers, peasants and the patriotic elements of the petty-bourgeoisie had been hauled without trials into prisons and detention camps where they were to undergo unspeakable tortures. Many died, others lost their limbs, others went insane while some were even castrated. The Mau Mau leadership understood this as a necessary price for national dignity.

Whilst the colonial fascist regime was pouring thousands of its mercenary troops across the country, Mau Mau forces continued to win victories both in the battlefields as well as in recruiting more men. It also had the support of the great majority of our people and the progressive forces of the world. Philip Bolsover writes:

For years now the national struggle of the Kenya Africans has been gaining strength.... And for years the Kenya Government has been trying to suppress that struggle... but never with final triumph...

In fact, the assassinations of Senior Chiefs Waruhiu and Nderi and pro-

32. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

colonial, collaborator elements like Ofafa, Tom Mbotela, etc., were seen as great victories for this movement. This was immortalized in a song entitled "Ndiri Hindi Ngendia Bururi" ("I Will Never Sell Out the Country") after the victorious assassination of Waruhiu:

I will never sell out the country  
Or love money more than my country  
Waruhiu sold out his own country (for money)  
But he died and left the money.

In his book, Mohamed Mathu tells us how the people "celebrated his (Waruhiu's) death with three days of beer drinking [because] they were happy that one of Kenya's 'Black Europeans' had left the earth."<sup>34</sup> Reporting the state of war in Kenya to the House of Commons on July 3, 1954, Henry Hopkinson, Under-Secretary of State for the colonies, gave the following information:

Mau Mau insurgents killed number 5,567 and wounded, 622. The casualties suffered by the security forces amount to 422 killed (including twenty-five Europeans, two Asians and 395 Africans), and 367 wounded, among them forty-four Europeans, ten Asians and 313 Africans...

Again in November 1954, the Colonial Secretary, Lennox-Boyd, gave the following report to the House of Commons:

Mau Mau adherents killed 1,186 civilians (twenty-four Europeans, seventeen Asians and 1,145 Africans)...

The fight was becoming fierce. It would not be useful here to go into the details of each heroic victory of the people against the forces of imperialism since Karari Njama has recorded all these events in his book. However, we can mention in passing the two major ones which greatly affected the course of the war by heightening and boosting the revolutionary spirit and morale of the Mau Mau guerrilla army on the one hand, while shaking and frightening the imperialist forces on the other. The first was the successful battle of Naivasha which took place on March 2, 1953. The Mau Mau guerrilla army courageously attacked and over-ran Naivasha Police base. It captured many guns and much ammunition, killing and capturing considerable numbers of the enemy personnel. Another important battle against colonialist occupiers took place on September 17, 1954. The Mau

34. Mathu, p. 15.

35. Padmore, p. 257.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 257.



Mau guerrilla army over-ran Lukenya Prison and successfully freed all the prisoners. It captured considerable war material; and the enemies were either killed or ran away. The following song was composed to eulogize the Lukenya battle:

While fighting in the forests,  
Encamped in the coffee field,  
We young Fighters planned  
Our raid on Lukenya prison.  
When the discussion was over  
And we all agreed,  
Our scouts were sent to investigate.  
They went and returned,  
Giving us a report,  
We should prepare  
Ourselves for the attack.  
We began our journey,  
We young fighters toward Lukenya,  
Keeping well-hidden all the way.  
When we arrived our fighters lay down,  
We opened fire and killed two guards  
The Black people imprisoned  
Were crying for help saying,  
'Oh, our people, open the doors for us.'  
After fighting and releasing the prisoners,  
We prayed to God in us  
So that he might assist us to [return] safely.  
All Black people of Nairobi were happy  
Congratulating us for brave deeds.,,

These two battles, as we have mentioned, influenced the course of war between the Kenyan people and imperialism. They encouraged and reinforced the iron determination and fighting spirit of the Mau Mau guerrilla army, earned it much support and loyalty of the worker and peasant masses; whilst the imperialists were forced to bring their "best" Generals — George Erskine and William Hinde. The head of the British Intelligence Service, Sir Percy Sillitoe, was also sent to Kenya to organize the intelligence service. A war cabinet was formed under the military dictators, Generals Erskine and William Hinde. In addition to that, more troops, aircraft, armoured cars, and bombs were brought in. The whole country was turned into a fortress in their desperation to crush the will of the people.\* At the same time the white settlers

were bitterly criticizing General Erskine for his inability to exterminate the Mau Mau patriots. Referring to the white settlers' criticism, the General replied:

...there is no question of the Mau Mau having strong defences or being particularly gallant. It is just the opposite. Mau Mau defences consist of sentries down every trail leading to hideouts. As soon as a sentry is engaged, the gang disperses and reassembles at pre-arranged places. Sitting in an armchair, it sounds very easy to catch these chaps. It is comparatively easy to get a sentry or two but much more difficult to get into or surround a gang. The gangs never wait to fight.,,

The Mau Mau guerrilla army was able to achieve considerable victories over the enemy forces between 1952 and the early part of 1955. However, in late 1955, the "tide seemed to be turning against the guerrilla forces.", First, through "Operation Anvil," the colonial government was gradually able to disrupt the guerrillas' major base in Nairobi by arresting and detaining more than 70,000 people who were its great supporters. The Nairobi base provided guerrillas with such things as arms, ammunition, medical supplies, clothing, well-trained cadres and money. With all these cut off, the guerrillas were to face a serious problem of shortage of supplies. Related to this, and very important, was the capture and surrender of General China. According to Karari Njama, "China confession and ultimate collaboration with Special Branch Officers,"<sup>40</sup> affected the entire Mau Mau activities and communications. His confession and betrayal revealed to the colonial security forces most of the guerrillas' military secrets and plans. Through China's "sellout deal," the enemy forces were able to arrest a considerable number of guerrilla leaders and they successfully destroyed some guerrilla units. Thirdly, the "Villagization Programme," used by the British in Malaya, was introduced in the countryside after "Operation Anvil." Though not immediately, this cruel programme was relatively successful in isolating the guerrillas from the peasant masses who were their major sources of supplies, communications, and food. Lack of significant victories after 1955, poor discipline among the guerrilla units and the ideological division among the leading Mau Mau Generals weakened further the fighting spirit of guerrilla forces. But despite these contradictions within the KLFA leadership, the national armed struggle continued until the British imperialist occupiers were forced to negotiate for

38. Padmore, p. 257.

39. Karari Njama, *Mau Mau from Within* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966) p. 375.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

37. Mathu, p. 54

\* A conservative estimate is that at least 150,000 Kenyans lost their lives, 250,000 were maimed for life and 400,00 were left homeless..

a constitutional transfer of power to the Kenyan leadership. It is particularly significant to note that it was Kimaathi who the British first approached for negotiations, not the imprisoned Kenyatta, the *humungati*\* leadership, or the pro-West, rightist, petty-bourgeois leadership of Tom Mboya.

The Mau Mau Movement has been attacked and interpreted from different angles and by different groups and individuals. Occasionally, attacks and criticisms of the Movement are heard from certain members of the Kenya National Assembly. Some even proudly and loudly boast how courageously they fought Mau Mau in the pay of British imperialism. During my interview with a former Mau Mau guerrilla, he asked: "Why should they (members of Parliament) continue to condemn Mau Mau — a Movement which fought for their rights to be in that 'House' they call Parliament? Was it a crime to fight for our land and our country's independence?"<sup>41</sup> Another line which has been taken by Kenyatta and KANU is to urge the people to forget Mau Mau. To quote Ngugi Kabiro: "We are told to forget the past. But I, for one, fail to understand why we should so easily forget the great suffering endured by our people in their struggle for land and freedom."<sup>42</sup> Similarly Mathu states:

...I should like to remind those African leaders who now condemn Mau Mau and tell us to forget our past struggles and suffering, that their present positions of power in the Legislative Council and elsewhere would not have been realized except for our sacrifices. I would also warn them that we did not make these sacrifices just to have Africans step into the shoes of our former European masters.<sup>43</sup>

Basically, there are three interpretations of the Mau Mau Movement. The first interpretation is based on the imperialist and Christian school of thought. The second one is represented by the University of Nairobi school of thought; and the third one stems from a chauvinist clique in Central Kenya. I shall comment on each of these.

\* *Humungati* were those Kenyans who fought on the side of the British during the Mau Mau war of national independence. Literally the word means "home guards." But to the people of Kenya it means traitors.

41. Interview with author.

42. Ngugi Kabiro, *The Man in the Middle* (Richmond, British Columbia: LSM Information Center, 1973) p. 75.

43. Mathu, p. 75.

## 1. THE IMPERIALIST AND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OF THOUGHT:

According to this school of thought, which is well articulated by L.S.B. Leakey,\* F.D. Corfield, Fred Majdalany, Dennis Holman, Ione Leigh, Robert Ruark and many leaders of the Christian Church, Mau Mau was:

- a barbarous and atavistic organization
- an anti-white tribal cult whose leaders planned to turn Kenya into a land of darkness and death
- a product of primitive Gikuyu forest mentality
- primitive and a lunatic barbarism
- an advanced form of Gikuyu insanity
- anti-Christianity and anti-western civilization
- a product of the Gikuyu people's failures to adapt to the demands of western civilization
- a terrorist movement whose aim was the drinking of human blood
- a communist subversive movement†

etc.

The imperialist and Christian school of thought is easily understood because it is a straightforward racist position. One sees their point since they were the enemy forces Mau Mau was determined to overthrow. To expect them to eulogize the victory of their slaves is like expecting Henry Kissinger to eulogize the victory of the Vietnamese people over American imperialism in 1975. What these enemies of Kenyans were trying to accomplish was to destroy the real essence of our national movement. Their ulterior motive was one: to try to justify their mission as "agents of world civilization" in our country in order to cover their exploitation and brutal oppression of the Kenyan people. This reasoning, which is racist in nature, failed to explain the fundamental contradictions which brought the Mau Mau to its birth. And it can not erase in our history the monumental task the Kenyan people took up for their national liberation. It is obvious that the colonialists and their agents, the Christian Church, were not in our country for humanitarian purposes. They came for one underlined aim: to enslave and exploit Kenyans for their own stomachs.

Essentially the Christians, particularly the more backward African Christians, condemned Mau Mau as a "terrorist movement whose aim was

\* L.S.B. Leakey was working as an Intelligence Officer in the C.I.D. during the Mau Mau war of national liberation. His brother, who was killed by Mau Mau in October 1954, was a leading Kenya settler spokesman.

† For detailed information see *The Psychology of Mau Mau* by J.C. Corothers; *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau* by F. D. Corfield; *Mau Mau and Kikuyu* by L.S.B. Leakey; *In the Shadow of Mau Mau* by Ione Leigh; *Bwana Drum* by D. Holman; *State of Emergence* by Fred Majdalany; *Uhuru* by Robert Ruark, etc.

to drink human blood.” Yes, it is true that Mau Mau killed a lot of Africans in comparison to the number of Europeans it killed. But the fundamental question is: What sort of people were killed? They were outright traitors and colonial collaborators who owed Kenyans many blood debts and were bitterly hated and opposed by them. In a movement which involves thousands and thousands of people, the masses would not be able to heighten their political consciousness if it allows traitors and reactionary intellectuals or religious agents to spread their pro-imperialist propaganda freely among the people. If these elements are not wiped out quickly they would sabotage the people’s movement and eventually destroy it. Truly, if Mau Mau did not immediately wipe out most of the traitors the Kenyan masses could not have supported it nor could they have allowed its presence in their midst. In its methods of struggle Mau Mau was able, by stages, to distinguish between the enemy and the friend. In fact, it seems to be the case that too many selfish and opportunist elements were left in the Movement only to subsequently derail and betray it.

## 2. THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI SCHOOL OF THOUGHT:

In their efforts to misrepresent and distort the fundamental aim of Mau Mau and to deny the Movement its national character, some University of Nairobi historians and other academics use arguments essentially similar to the imperialist and Christian school of thought. That Mau Mau was:

- a primitive Gikuyu movement
- a Gikuyu chauvinistic and tribalist organization
- Gikuyu nationalism as opposed to Kenyan nationalism

and that it was not a national movement because:

- all the Mau Mau symbols and songs were Gikuyu
- other nationalities did not take part or support the movement
- it did not spread beyond central Kenya
- oathing was typically Gikuyu, Embu and Meru
- etc.

Perhaps to be more specific we should quote the two leading anti-Mau Mau academics — William R. Ochieng’ and B.E. Kipkorir. William Ochieng’ argues that:

Mau Mau was definitely not a nationalist movement... [it] had no nationalist programme... [further] the Central Committee that managed the Mau Mau Movement contained representatives from Murang’a, Nyeri, Embu,

Meru and Machakos.... It is therefore important to correctly evaluate Mau Mau as a primarily Kikuyu affair.<sup>44</sup>

In the same vein B.E. Kipkorir argues that since Mau Mau did not distribute its political programme nationwide it was therefore not a nationalist movement. He writes sarcastically:

Kaggia has put forward the view that to steal from a European a cow, in the cause was ‘nationalist’.... But he fails to show that Mau Mau had a programme for national leadership which could have been truly ‘national.’<sup>45</sup>

Again according to Kipkorir, Mau Mau did not have *any support* outside Central Kenya because it was a tribal movement. We quote:

It is not therefore surprising that hardly anyone, outside Central Kenya, voiced sympathy or support for Mau Mau...<sup>46</sup>

In a somewhat similar vein, Professor Ogot has strongly argued that Mau Mau songs express Gikuyu nationalism as opposed to Kenyan nationalism. In a paper read to the 1976 Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya, he wrote:

In conclusion, I would like to state that what emerges from a study of these hymns is a strong sense of Kikuyu nationalism as opposed to Kenya African nationalism.<sup>47</sup>

For this University of Nairobi school of thought to label and condemn Mau Mau as a “chauvinist and tribalist movement” is not enough to convince anyone because the reasons it gives do not explain the historical and social contradictions which brought about its birth and development. Moreover, it fails to understand that although the Mau Mau Movement was perhaps different in form in comparison with other Third World national movements, it was not different in political content. Mau Mau was a struggle similar to those then being waged by the colonized peoples all over the Third World. Further it is important to really understand that the Kenyan people

44. William Ochieng’, “Review of Kaggia’s *Roots of Freedom 1921-1963*” in *Kenya Historical Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1976) p. 140-3.

45. B.E. Kipkorir, “Mau Mau and the Politics of the Transfer of Power in Kenya 1957-1960.” Unpublished paper.

46. *Ibid*

47. B.A. Ogot, “Politics, Culture and Music in Central Kenya: A Study of Mau Mau Hymns: 1951-1956.” Chairman’s address to the Annual Conference of the Historical Association of Kenya, 1976, p. 10.

did not choose the road of armed struggle because they loved to shed human blood, but because they came to the conclusion, as we have explained earlier that it was the only effective way to dethrone British colonialism, win independence and retain their stolen land. Philip Bolsover pointed out in May 1953:

What is going on in Kenya today is a great liberation movement of the African people, and the struggle is being waged by the only methods left open to them as a result of the violence and suppression exercised by the British imperialists.<sup>48</sup>

There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the organizers of Mau Mau and those who went to the forests to wage war viewed Mau Mau as a countrywide movement whose aim was to fight for national independence. Mathu writes:

Our principal aim was to forge an ironclad unity among the people of Central Kenya — and all other Africans whose support could be won — so that we might take action as a single body to achieve our national objectives.<sup>49</sup>

We will come to this point later.

### 3. THE CHAUVINIST INTERPRETATION:

The third interpretation of the Mau Mau Movement is a purely chauvinist one. Simply, it goes like this: "We Gikuyu, Embu and Meru fought and died for this independence; therefore, we bought it with our blood. All positions of privilege, power and wealth must be occupied by us! This is the other side of the argument that the University of Nairobi school of thought is pushing.

Besides denying the Mau Mau Movement its national character, the chauvinist group has another dangerous ulterior motive, and that is: to use the revolutionary prestige of Mau Mau as a tool to monopolize national leadership, and foremost, to use this prestige as an instrument to enrich themselves.\* Ironically, those who chauvinistically praise Mau Mau now are

\* "I have closely watched the activities of our political leaders and am not happy with much of what I see. Much of the money collected overseas or from our poor peasants and workers at political rallies and Harambee projects goes into the pockets of politicians for their personal use instead of for the development of the country and the welfare of our people. Some leaders are becoming rich Africans, driving around in fancy cars, building new houses in the city and using our money for women, drink and foreign travel." See Mathu's book, p. 83

48. Bolsover p. 4.

49. Mathu, p. 17.

largely the same elements — the homeguards, loyalists and *taitai* elements — branded time and time again as traitors by Dedan Kimaathi. Their chauvinist outlook is well portrayed by Ngugi wa Thiongo's and Micere Mugo's recent play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. It is a struggle between Kimaathi and these chauvinists who use Mau Mau heroism as a tool to divide Kenyans for their selfish ends. We quote:

Politician: We have been given two alternatives. We can get independence, province by province. Majimboism. As a token of their goodwill, they have now allowed District and Provincial Political Parties. Independence for Central Province. After all, it is we Gikuyu, Embu and Meru who really fought for Uhuru.

Kimathi: Would you too call the war for national liberation a regional Movement? What has colonialism done to your thinking? Hear me. Kenya is one indivisible whole. The cause we fight for is larger than provinces; it shatters ethnic barriers. It is a whole people's cause...<sup>50</sup>

Similarly Mathu observes:

Remembering how many of these leaders abandoned us during the revolution, I am suspicious of those who now claim to speak in our name. Are they not abandoning us again in their quest for personal power and wealth? The vast majority of Africans remain very poor. Are the masses of people simply to become the slaves of a handful of wealthy Black men?<sup>51</sup>

### III

There are really two distinct, although related, charges here. The first is that the Movement was based largely in Central Kenya. The second is that the Movement was ethnically exclusive, that it was "tribalist." We must immediately concede the first point. It was in Central Kenya that British colonialism created the conditions for a modern nationalist movement. Wholesale land seizures, large single-crop plantations, railroad towns like Nairobi, and the railroad itself meant the formation of a class of workers whose traditional links with land and kin had been disrupted. These workers, both urban and rural, were in a position to see the struggle against colonialism from a new, non-tribal perspective. This was especially true for those who had fought in World War 2, met soldiers from other colonies — as well

51. Mathu, p. 17.

52. Ibid., p. 87

as the English working class — and gotten an idea of the scope and intent of Britain's empire. All these preconditions, both economic and human, were concentrated in Central Kenya. One can ask: Where in the world has a self-sustaining revolutionary movement sprung up spontaneously and simultaneously throughout a country? Why should our national struggle be condemned and damned as a tribal insurrection because of its unique development?

The mere fact of the Movement being located mainly in Central Kenya does not answer the question of its character. But it certainly raises that question, and for participants as well as historians. The kinship ties of urban Kenyans had not been wholly severed and they were a useful means of spreading the movement, especially back in the villages. Allegiance was secured by a traditional-style oath before Gikuyu na Mumbi. This created a definite ambiguity in people's understanding of the Movement's aims and explains why some felt they were participating in a tribal rising. Mathu remembers: "The oath was disliked by non-Kikuyu. Many of us felt that a more general, flexible oath was necessary." Mathu also recalls an incident in which a Luo volunteer was refused because of his ethnic background. But it is important to see that Mathu and others were constantly fighting this narrow conception with a larger one. Karari Njama worried about the same counter-tendencies which he, like Mathu, saw in Mau Mau. But he elected to join because he concluded that they were not the principal aspect: "I believed it was an all-Kenya African national movement and not a tribal one."<sup>22</sup>

All revolutionary movements do internal education to explain their views to the membership. The Mau Mau leadership understood the need to clarify the Movement's ends, to the larger world as well as to its own members. And it means that these clarifications offer us the best explanation of what the Movement was about. That is why those who want to interpret Mau Mau as a regional or tribal insurrection should seriously examine the documents and speeches, now available, of Dedan Kimaathi, who was the chief architect of the Movement.

If colour discrimination continues in Kenya, who will stop  
subversive action, for the Africans has eyes, ears and brains. It is  
better to die than to live in distress. Why confine distress to the  
soul?\*

\* Even though most of Kimaathi's writings and speeches were burned by the colonial regime, there are individuals who have some of Kimaathi's papers in their private collections. We were lucky enough to be allowed to examine some of these papers. In their recent publication, *A Bibliography on Mau Mau*, p. 75, M.S. Clough and K. A. Jackson, Jr. inform us that, "There appear to be a few copies in private possession of the *Dedan Kimaathi Papers*." See *Kenya's Freedom Struggle: The Dedan Kimaathi Papers*, ed. Maina wa Kinyatti, Zed Books, London, 1987.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 87

Giving the reason why the Kenyan people have taken the road of armed struggle, he declared:

We resort to armed struggle simply because there is no other alternative left to us, because our people are exploited, oppressed, plundered, tortured...

From 1952 to the middle of 1956 Kimaathi made genuine efforts to provide the ideological leadership of the resistance in the forests. He toured and visited various guerrilla units explaining the direction and aim of the Movement. He also called the Mau Mau "Kenya Parliament" meeting regularly to review and analyze the war situation and more importantly to discuss the future of a Kenya to come. At one of those meetings Kimaathi is reported to have replied to the imperialist propaganda:

I do not lead rebels, but I lead Africans who want their self-government. My people want to live in a better world than they met when they were born. I lead them because God never created any nation to be ruled by another forever.

Further, in a letter he wrote to Fenner Brockway†, Kimaathi argued:

We are not fighting for an everlasting hatred but are creating a true and real brotherhood between white and Black so that we may be regarded as people and as human beings who can do each and everything.

The ideological position of the Movement is articulated clearly in a *Document* Kimaathi published in October 1953 followed by letters he sent abroad to different individuals in defence of the Mau Mau Movement. The Document consists of 79 articles. Copies of the Document were sent to the Colonial Office in London, the Indian Government, the Government of Egypt, the United Nations, Mbiyu wa Koinange in London, Fenner Brockway, the Chairman of the Pan-African Congress in London, President Eisenhower of the United States, George Malenkov of the Soviet Union, the French Government, George Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah. The following extracts from the Document clearly show that Mau Mau was a national Movement and part of a worldwide movement against imperialism and

† "We learned that the Government had started using propaganda to defeat us. We agreed to start campaigns against Government propaganda.... The first one was a copy of a letter written to Fenner Brockway... The letter accused the British Government of giving their forces and the Kenya settlers authority and arms to shoot the Africans." See Njama's *Mau Mau from Within*, p. 357.

against exploitation by capital. The Document states:

We want an African self-government in Kenya now.  
We reject the foreign laws in Kenya for they were not made  
for Kenya and are not righteous.  
We reject to be called terrorists when demanding our  
people's rights.  
Our real fight is not against the white colour but is against  
the systems carried on by the white rulers.  
Fighting for our stolen land and our independence is not a  
crime but a revolutionary duty.  
Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom.  
Only when we achieve our independence can our people  
have genuine peace.  
We reject a foreign Attorney-General in Kenya for he deals  
with appearances more than righteousness.  
We reject to be called Mau Mau. We are Kenya Land  
Freedom Army (KLFA).  
We reject colonization in Kenya for being in that state we  
are turned into slaves and beggars.  
Our people will chase away the foreign exploiters, wipe out  
the traitors and establish an independent government of the  
Kenyan people...

After going through Kimaathi's Document one cannot hold the view that Mau Mau was "a tribal and atavist insurrection" or a "Gikuyu chauvinist movement" unless one has *certain motives* other than a genuine search for truth.

As a matter of fact, D.P. Singh writes, "throughout Kimaathi's writings and speeches, and in the reports of the meetings held by guerrillas, there is a consistent emphasis on the need for justice, on the possibility of reconciliation, and on the right to self-government."<sup>53</sup> In connection with that, Mau Mau songs and poetry express succinctly the political aims of the Movement. A quick perusal of extracts from some of these songs will, like Kimaathi's writings, show the Mau Mau was a national Movement. We will start with the most well-known one entitled, *Rwimbo Rwa Africa* ("Africa Song"):

53. In his article, "Mau Mau A Case Study of Kenyan Nationalism," *Africa Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (April-June 1968), pp. 10-25, D.P. Singh has extracts from this Document. He refers to the Document as "Mau Mau Charter." The Document was particularly sent to Mbiyu Koinange and Fenner Brockway to present it to the United Nations.

God gave to the Black people  
This land of Africa  
Praise *Mwene Nyaga*  
For his blessing.

We will continue in our praises  
of the land of Africa  
From North to South

After much suffering  
The country of Egypt  
Was delivered from bondage  
And received its freedom.

Abyssinia (Ethiopia) saw the light  
Shining down from the North  
Her people struggled mightily  
And rescued themselves from the mire.

If you look around the whole of Kenya  
It is only a river of blood  
For we have one single purpose:  
To lay hold of Kenya's freedom.

Listen to the painful sobbing  
Of our brothers in South Africa  
Where they are being oppressed  
By the Boer oppressors.

We shall greatly rejoice  
In the unity of all the Black People  
Let us create in our unity  
A united states of all Africa.

The song expresses Mau Mau's international solidarity with the people of Africa against imperialism and colonialism. It also calls for a creation of a Pan African states of Africa.

Since Mau Mau was fighting foreign exploiters and their friends in our country, the song below, *Inyui Nyakeru Muri Ageni Bururi Uyu Witu* ("You White People are Foreigners in Our Country"), brings out this point clearly:

You white people are foreigners in our country  
You brought slavery and exploitation in our country

Now leave our country.

I will fight our enemy  
I will fight our enemy  
Until our country is free.

And you traitors who sell us  
To the white oppressors  
You must realize that  
We will expel the white oppressors  
From this land  
Then you will pay  
For your treacherous act  
With your lives.

All along the struggle, as we have mentioned elsewhere, Kimaathi consistently continued to stress the justice of the struggle. This is reflected in the following song entitled, *Ndiri Na Kieba No Nguthi* ("I Am Not Afraid I Must Go"):

When the enemy comes  
I will not be afraid  
I will wipe him out  
Because I am fighting for justice.

Understanding of the violent nature of imperialism and its racist policy is clearly expressed in a song entitled, *Rwimbo Rwa Kimaathi* ("The Song of Kimaathi"):

We are tormented  
Because we are Black  
And we are not their kind  
But with God in us  
We will defeat them [the colonialists].

In conclusion, it is evident that the true "political kernel" of the Mau Mau Movement has up to now, not been cracked largely because of a failure by Kenyan historians to examine crucial internal ideological struggles within KAU alliances just before 1952, the historic regrouping of the disenfranchised young militants into the Mau Mau, the organization and growth of the ensuing armed struggle, their eventual dispersal, and most significantly, their silencing and, in many cases, the betrayal of their political goals after 1960. It is evident, further, that instead of attempting to crack this "kernel" with

objective investigation, there are efforts to hide even that part of Mau Mau history which is already amply documented. The various schools of thought responsible for this are, in my view, not only doing great intellectual disservice to Kenyans, but are also playing a treacherous political role in complete defiance of facts.

It is evident that resistance movements since the 19th century progressed from lower to higher levels of organization and political awareness culminating in the Mau Mau armed confrontation. Mau Mau, therefore, was the peak of African anti-colonial politics in Kenya. However, weaknesses in organization all along, especially the failure to weed out counter-tendencies and greedy opportunists who later liquidated the struggle at tremendous cost, are also quite evident.

Plentiful information already exists for the collecting. (It is true that perhaps-critical documents lie hidden in the Kenya national archives in an effort by the KANU regime to prevent the completion of this glorious chapter of our national history.) But there are people still alive with useful documentary evidence which is in stark opposition to some current hypotheses. I have endeavoured to bring out some of this new information, through interviews and documents. I am hopeful that this will help realign the Mau Mau debate more correctly and at least lay to rest the more blatant anti-Mau Mau myths and the "revised" positions. This treatment in no way exhausts the sources of information. It is but the beginning of what necessarily must be a long discussion of this important chapter of Kenya's history.

My investigations show doubtlessly that Mau Mau Movement answered an urgent desire of the Kenyan peasantry and workers for land redistribution and that on strategic differences its leadership split from moderate and conservative KAU, that Kimaathi and the Mau Mau Defence Council were clear about the need for armed struggle, the essentially anti-imperialist political content of such a struggle and its Kenya-wide nature. That Mau Mau had serious organizational weaknesses is also made clear by the ease with which it was cut off from the urban and rural population around 1955 after three years of spectacular success and more so by their utter failure to regroup after 1960 as a political force that could not be betrayed or sold out.

This latter weakness gave Kenyatta and KANU an opportunity to betray national independence. Political weaknesses always have a very high cost.

## Kenyatta, Moi and KANU

In 1952 the British colonial settlers found it hard to believe that the people of Kenya had resolved to use revolutionary violence against white supremacy. Their common political belief at the outset was that the Mau Mau Movement had, and could have, no wide support amongst the oppressed Kenyan masses. They dismissed it as the sinister work of "communist agitators," "atavists," and "anti-white terrorists," believing that British imperialism could not be defeated by "a bunch of disorganized agitators." They held this belief, blind to the determination and courage of the anti-imperialist resistance, until the British Empire collapsed in 1960 in our country.

Bildad Kaggia, the former member of the Mau Mau Central Committee states:

When we picked up arms in 1952 it was a clear indication that we rejected foreign domination; we reaffirmed our steadfast fortitude and determination, and no matter the great sacrifice, we were determined to win national independence for our people and country. Consciously, we were aware that no people ever won their independence without bloodshed.

Kenya's long anti-imperialist struggle, culminating in self-government in 1962, independence in 1963, and republic in 1964, represented a largely united cry for national self-determination, and the inalienable human and natural rights of a people to harness their resources for their own welfare according to their own collective and democratic wishes. Historically, it was a political trendsetter in Africa. It forced British imperialism to change its colonial policy in Africa. In their book, *Nationalism and New States in Africa*, Mazrui and Tidy write:

With a major colonial war on her hands in East Africa, and growing political militancy in West Africa, Britain undertook an agonizing reappraisal of her presence in Africa. By 1957 the first black colony in Africa emerged from British colonial control. The independence of Ghana was a triumph not only for the oratory of Nkrumah but also for the courage of Kimathi (sic), a victory not only for the organized efforts of the Convention People's Party in Ghana but also for the armed endeavor by the Mau Mau in Kenya, a fulfillment not only for Africans in the streets of Accra but also for Africans in the forests of [Nyandarwa] mountains. If World War II had helped to break the British imperial will in Asia, the Mau Mau insurrection had helped to break it in Africa. Military factors once again played a part in African liberation, but in the case of the collapse of the British imperial will, it was not a military coup in London but a couple of wars which were decisive.

Though the history of Kenya's anti-imperialist struggle has often been distorted and betrayed, it symbolizes the indomitable determination of the majority of

Kenyans to reconstruct an entirely new social order in Kenya and to take the country in an entirely new, anti-imperialist direction. In summary, it was the general popular desire and wish that the previous colonial and racist regime be dismantled and replaced with a militant anti-imperialist national one which would not only eradicate vestiges of the past, but would also protect the people from further oppression or exploitation. Kenyans expected the new governing order to initiate immediate measures towards reconstruction, redistribution and overall equitable social development. They wanted the entire economic infrastructure (finance, commerce, industry, mines, etc.) to be collectively owned and run by the people in order to ensure full national benefit and control, and the land issue to be resolved justly and democratically through an agrarian revolution.

Specifically, the popular understanding was that the independent Kenyan government would nationalize all the land occupied by the foreign capitalists and divide it amongst the Kenyan poor and landless: that it would ensure full democratic rights of assembly, association and expression, as the Kenyan struggle remains inseparable from, and in solidarity with, those of all other subjected peoples and nations of Africa and the rest of the Third World. Furthermore, it was a clear understanding that the rich indigenous cultural heritage rooted in our own history, tradition and national experience would be protected from harmful foreign influences and that the majority of the African population, having borne the brunt of oppression and been dispossessed by colonialism, would receive preferential, remedial, or compensatory considerations in all spheres of Kenya's political and social life.

Broadly speaking, this was the main position of Mau Mau, the Kenya Land Freedom Army, and Kiama kia Muingi (KKM) as embodied in the Kenya African National Union Manifesto of 1960 for national independence, social democracy and stability. By supporting the popular demands of the people and by its anti-imperialist stance, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) under Kenyatta's leadership won the 1963 general elections overwhelmingly and defeated all the other pro-British and reactionary Kenyan parties. Thus, KANU's stand emerged as the choice of the people to lead the country to national independence and progress. It is absolutely wrong to assert or imply that KANU won in 1963 because of this or that individual leader or group of leaders. KANU won because of the massive popularity of its principled, anti-imperialist manifesto. Imperialist forces and their Kenyan friends and allies, such as the members of the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) as well as most white settler elements, were understandably distressed by these developments and set out to undermine Kenyan unity in order to defeat the national anti-imperialist struggle and to demolish national patriotism.

Having overwhelmingly won the elections, it only remained for the KANU leadership to use its majority in Parliament to form a strong patriotic government of national reconstruction and redress in order to speedily imple-



ment the principles of the Manifesto. Yet is this what happened?

Of course not!

It is now common knowledge in our country that this was never to be

The aspirations of millions of dispossessed and expectant Kenyans were thrown overboard by the same government which they put into power. Beginning around 1965, Kenyatta, whom the people erroneously expected would take a militant, anti-imperialist stance, began to display openly his true colors. He began to see eye to eye with the Anglo-American imperialists, the former *humungati* leaders, the KADU reactionaries, and he simultaneously worked closely with the KANU right-wing elements led by Tom Mboya and James Gichuru to oust the anti-imperialist force from the party and government. Further, instead of dismantling the coercive colonial machinery, he decided to keep it intact for use against patriotic Kenyans.

At the same time, Kenyatta's leadership vigorously campaigned against the former Mau Mau freedom fighters who were not prepared to accept without a struggle what they saw as Kenyatta's and KANU's progressive surrender of the interests of the Kenyan people to neocolonialist interests. The majority of the freedom fighters consistently insisted that besides implementing the KANU Manifesto, the KANU government should immediately and without delay:

- 1) return all the land that was confiscated by the British colonial occupiers during the Mau Mau war to the original owners with compensation;
- 2) recognize the Kenya Land Freedom Army as a national army and unconditionally dismantle the colonial military machinery and close down the British military bases in the country;
- 3) arrest all those Kenyans who took arms against KLFA and charge them for the atrocities they had committed against the people;
- 4) provide free education to all Kenyan children; and
- 5) build a national monument for the Mau Mau-KLFA martyrs and assist families of the freedom fighters who died during the war of national independence.

To counteract the demands of the KLFA guerrillas, Kenyatta told the nation:

Some people, particularly the so-called freedom fighters, have been going around saying that all European farms will be distributed freely to the landless. But I want to make it very clear that no one will be allowed to occupy land which is not his and I will crush anyone who goes against the policy of my Government.

and again:

*Hakuna cha bure*\* Those who want free things should either go to China or Tanzania.

In addition, Kenyatta made it very clear that the KANU government did not recognize the heroic role played by the KLFA guerrillas during the national struggle for independence:

"I hear that some people claimed that they fought and died for *Uhuru*," he said. "I don't want to hear this rubbish because we all fought for *Uhuru* in our own ways..."

"We are determined to have independence in peace and we shall not allow hooligans to rule Kenya. We must have no hatred towards one another. Mau Mau was a disease which had been eradicated, and must never be remembered again."

While intensifying the campaign against the former KLFA guerrillas and the KANU militants, Kenyatta and his cabinet ministers, members of Parliament and senior civil servants were busy looting, amassing great wealth and consolidating their power in the government and Party. Under the new land policy of "willing seller, willing buyer," the comprador rulers grabbed large estates in the former "Whites-Only" highland area. Parasitic, corrupt and unproductive, the KANU comprador rulers became willing collaborators with the economy of neocolonialism, and even more vicious and greedy than the former British colonial occupiers.

For their refusal to mortgage the country, to betray Mau Mau and the KANU Manifesto of 1960, Bildad Kaggia, Oginga Odinga and other anti-imperialist militants were expelled from KANU and Parliament in 1966. Later, some of them, particularly those who refused to recant, were arrested and jailed. Pio Gama Pinto, General Bamuinge, and J.M. Kariuki were outright murdered. As for the former KLFA guerrillas, the KANU government branded them a security risk and excluded them from national politics altogether. Their efforts to regroup and organize themselves as a political force were vigorously and violently suppressed. Intimidation and other brutal methods were used to silence them. Further, to stifle national patriotism, Kenyatta's regime became extremely intolerant and sensitive to criticism. It prohibited public debate on national and foreign issues, and treated genuine constructive criticism as sedition or treasonable crime. The trade union movement was strangled, and no opposition political party was allowed. The former colonial army under the British commander was sent to fight the KLFA guerrillas who had returned to the Nyandarwa and Kirinyaga mountains to oppose with guns the sellout policy of the KANU regime.

By the time of his death, Kenyatta had transformed Kenya from a colonial state into a neocolonial state, consolidated the comprador dictatorship and chained the working class to the tails of the IMF and the World Bank. In

\* There is nothing for free.

essence, this was an outright betrayal of Kenya's independence, the betrayal of the Mau Mau struggle.

The lines below express the political indignation of the former KLU guerrillas:

Today  
We walk in the streets  
In rage  
In rags  
In famine  
Shoeless  
Jobless  
While those who watched  
The struggle from the sidelines  
Those who betrayed the patriotic struggle  
Now have taken control of the new state

They eat the best food our country produces  
Sleep in warm golden beds  
Name streets and buildings after them  
Erect monuments to them

Wanja wa Mugo, a peasant woman and a Mau Mau veteran, told the author on July 7, 1978:

Today the majority of the former freedom fighters wander about in the country in quest of jobs and something to eat and they complain very bitterly that they were betrayed by the Government which they put into power. You see, despite our great sacrifice during the Mau Mau war of national independence, the Kenyatta government sided with the British and the Kenyan traitors against us. Kenyatta and KANU betrayed the precious blood we shed for land and freedom. Consequently, we have been left without freedom or food: to hold a public meeting is a crime, to make use of any civil rights is met with a rain of brutality, and the road to independence and progress is paved with the bricks of betrayal, half-truths and false promises.

In essence, Kenyatta's neocolonial rule left a retarded economic program, divided the people of Kenya, and contributed significantly to the present political instability.

When Kenyatta died in 1978 he was succeeded by his Vice-President, Daniel arap Moi. Unlike Kenyatta, Moi was more than anxious to paint Kenya as a "democratic," economically stable country in order to attract more financial aid and loans from the West. For three and a half years, Moi pointed with pride to the fact that under his government no Kenyan was imprisoned for his political beliefs and there was no censorship of thoughts. However, in May 1982, he swiftly reversed his position and ordered the police to arrest those Kenyans who opposed the neocolonial policy of his government and others who

were teaching "foreign ideologies" at the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University. In this connection, lawyers, politicians, academics, journalists, workers and peasants were arrested and imprisoned indefinitely without trial. Other critics of the regime were dismissed from their government jobs and expelled from the Party as enemies of the state.

The "crimes" that dumped so many of our compatriots into the prison darkness or political limbo were their sturdy refusals to support the mortgage of our country to world imperialisms. And the price for such stubbornness runs very high in a country increasingly given to political fanaticism, terror and repression. The frightening midnight call, cell filled with water, the interrogator with instruments of torture, have become the order of the day under Moi's increasingly authoritarian regime.

In June 1982 the Moi-KANU government rushed through Parliament an amendment to the Constitution, making Kenya a *de jure* one-party state. The change of the constitution was illegal but was very important to the repressive regime. It consolidated the power of the President, giving him control of the state, the Party and Parliament. In other words, it consolidated a one-party dictatorship and closed all the doors to democracy, leaving our people defenseless before state terror and repression. On April 15, 1991 the U.S.-based human rights organization, the Committee to Protect Journalists, reported:

The regime's political monopoly has been achieved through a number of measures, including a 1982 constitutional amendment which established the Kenya African Nation Union (KANU) as the nation's sole legal party; the replacement in 1986 of secret balloting in primary elections with queue voting, which requires citizens to line up behind a photograph of the candidate they favor, and a 1988 amendment abrogating senior judges' tenure.

Why had Moi brought back the hated practice of imprisonment without trial, reinforced state repression, and imposed harsh censorship throughout the country? Firstly, by 1982, his government, shaken by public scandals and corruption in high places was powerless to cope with the worsening economic situation and the erosion of its political power without using terror and political intimidation.

Secondly, opposition to his government was gaining strength amongst the workers and peasants, the university progressive intellectuals and students. In May 1982 the first underground revolutionary newspaper, *Pambana*, the organ of the December Twelve Movement (DTM) was widely distributed across the country.\* It called the people of Kenya to organize to overthrow the

\* *Independent Kenya* was published in 1982 by Zed Press, London; it was the underground work of the December Twelve Movement. In 1985 the Movement changed its name to *Muungano wa Wazalendo wa Kukomboia Kenya* (MWAKENYA.)

repressive regime:

Kenyans have been massively betrayed. The revolution we launched with blood has been arrested and derailed. KANU and its government have disorganized all spheres of economic production, have scattered all communal efforts at organization, have sowed unprincipled discord and enmity among our peoples, and have looted unspeakable sums of money and national wealth. They have finally given our entire country over to U.S. imperialism to use as a political and military base. All these crimes have been wrought in the name of "Progress and Prosperity."

True independence is a SACRED thing. It is revolutionary. It means a clean break, a new start with no fetters from the past oppressive machinery. It means a fiercely vigilant nation led by a strong people's organization which works with the people's initiative in building a new society, with new forms and new modes of thought. True independence releases vast new energy and creativity. Kenya has no independence.

Thirdly, the KANU government's secret deal with the United States in 1981 which provided America with military bases in Kenya in return for continuing food aid became public knowledge in 1982. This mortgage of our country to U.S. imperialism sparked off vigorous national criticism, and led to the call for the formation of a second political party to debate such national issues.

Between 1982 and 1989 the mortgage of our country to the IMF and the World Bank was completed in exchange for a strong guarantee that international imperialist capital and the U.S. ruling circles would support the existence of the Kenyan comprador state. With that assurance, Moi and his men tightened their ruthless grip on the political life of the country. The censorship of expression was brutally reinforced — public lectures and people's theater were banned, progressive and Marxist books censored, elections rigged, patriotic academics gagged and university campuses occupied by the KANU secret police. On September 13, 1984, Moi demanded that all Kenyans must sing like parrots:

Ladies and Gentlemen, we Kenyans are happy apart from the fact that there is widespread drought. I would like to say while here with you, that for progress to be realized there should be no debates in newspapers on this and that. What is required is for people to work in a proper manner...

...I call on all ministers and every other person to sing like parrots. During Mzee Kenyatta's period I persistently sang the Kenyatta (tune) until people said: This fellow has nothing (to say) except to sing for Kenyatta. I say: I didn't have ideas of my own. Why was I to have my own ideas? I was in

Kenyatta's shoes and therefore, I had to sing whatever Kenyatta wanted. If I had sung another song, do you think Kenyatta would have left me alone? Therefore you ought to sing the song I sing. If I put a full stop, you should also put a full stop. This is how this country will move forward. The day you become a big person [like me], you will have the liberty to sing you own song and everybody will sing it...

In the process of fighting the censorship over thought, the Kenyan press has been under constant attack by the repressive comprador regime, which accuses sections of the press of being on the payroll of some foreign masters whose intent is to create division and turmoil in Kenya by publishing "divisive," "seditious" news, editorials and articles. This stifling of the Kenyan press, which from colonial times has never really been free, leaves only the yellow-press products to flood the streets and newspaper stalls. Thus, in Kenya we cannot talk of the freedom of press to write objectively on particular controversial issues and thereby display its journalistic integrity. Already a number of patriotic and progressive journalists have been jailed allegedly for holding and expressing "subversive" views. In recent years, journals and magazines have been banned for refusing to "sing like parrots." To be found in possession of a copy of any of this banned literature is a chargeable offense, punishable by seven years in prison.\* On December 6, 1987, Africa Watch, a human rights organization, commented:

Systematic harassment of the press and consistent efforts to suppress freedom of expression have made it extremely difficult for any other democratic institutions, such as the judiciary and parliament, to operate effectively, especially as Kenya is a one-party state. The government's intolerance of dissent has also had a chilling impact on academic freedom and on the ability of church leaders to voice concern about issues of national importance. This antagonism towards press freedom has led to frequent clashes between the government and the country's only political party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) on the one side, and the churches, the Law Society of Kenya and the press on the other.

The Christian church leadership in Kenya has been seen by Moi and KANU as an unregistered opposition political party simply because the clergy-men have expressed their strong opposition to the *de jure* one-party dictatorship, to the "queueing" method of election, to corrupt practices in the upper echelons of power, and to such antisocial vices and corruption practised by the top comprador bureaucrats who themselves preach against these vices. Consistently,

\* Since 1981, four publications have been banned by the repressive regime: *Voice of Kenya* in 1981; *Beyond* in 1988; *Financial Review and Development Agenda* in 1989.

the clergy have protested against the detention without trial, against arbitrary and illegal imprisonment, against the shoot-to-kill decree and mass killings of Kenyans in Northeastern Province and West Pokot under unconstitutional emergency laws.

Sometimes the confrontation between the individual church leaders and the dictator has been so pitched that it has led to the banning of certain churches and detention or killing of their leaders. The unscrupulous regime has become so intolerant that the openly expressed views of the church leaders are seen as a political threat to the dictatorship. The recent assassination of Bishop Muge was a clear warning to the Christian church and the people of Kenya that the KANU dictatorship will use blood and iron to silence any dissent. After the brutal murder of Bishop Muge, Umoja-Kenya (USA center) issued the following statement:

Kenya best remembers Bishop Muge as a fearless critic of the Kenya government, of its human rights abuses, of its violence against the people it ought to serve, and of its pathological state of corruption. But after his wrangles with the regime following his exposure of the Pokot famine, Bishop Muge was persuaded into a change of strategy. Henceforth he allowed himself to be drawn into its innermost circle, believing that in this new capacity he can have significant positive influence on the direction of Kenya's politics. But his short spell as an advisor and a confidant of the regime was enough to convince him otherwise: It was enough to convince him that the regime's political rot and moral decay are too deep, too pervasive to be salvaged from within, that it must be completely dumped lock, stock and barrel. True to his conscience, Muge took the courageous step of rejecting the patronage of the regime and taking the murderous bull by the horn. And that cost him his life!

While this violence is definitely a reaction to the unyielding resistance of the Kenyan people, it is calculated to intimidate the nation into silence and inaction. And as the resistance progresses we are bound to witness more incarcerations, more brutalities, more murders.

Between 1982 and 1990 the Kenyan Security Forces have killed more than 10,000 Kenyans, and to justify this naked atrocity the President explains that those who have been killed are common criminals, "*shifias*" (bandits), and MWAKENYA dissidents, not law abiding citizens.

The University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University have for a long time been considered hotbeds of "subversive" Marxist academics and students, and have borne the brunt of the dictatorship's savage terror. Atrocities such as indiscriminate beating up of students during peaceful demonstrations by the KANU police have been a regular occurrence. In August 1982, countless

numbers of students were beaten and sexually assaulted. Others were mowed down with machine guns in the regime's efforts to crush the Kenya Air Force coup attempt.

In Kenya, to take up the pen and criticize the state president is to put one's life in danger at the hands of a comprador regime which confuses constructive criticisms with treason. I went to jail in June 1982 for six and a half years for trying to write the history of the Mau Mau Movement, and when I was released in October 1988, I could not be employed in my own country because my name is on the list of political criminals and I had been in prison. Furthermore, I had refused to apologize to President Moi for my "crime" while I was in prison. The extinction of academic freedom is a cause of serious concern because in Kenya, as everywhere in the Third World, the University is one of the few social institutions where serious research is done and where national issues should be vigorously debated. It is also the training ground for the country's intellectual leadership.

Apart from the extinction of academic freedom, the mass democratic organizations and associations such as the trade union movement, students' unions and women's organizations are no longer autonomous democratic bodies but KANU-affiliates, and leadership is attained through the same coercive methods as those used to select the Party leadership and members of Parliament. Other mass democratic organizations such as the University Staff Union and the Civil Servants Union were outright banned. The dictator also banned all social welfare organizations like New Akamba Union, Gema, Luo Union, etc.

Let us see how this all-pervasive repression manifests itself in Kenyan penal institutions. The Kenyan prison system is itself a colonial hangover inherited intact by the KANU government under Kenyatta's leadership.

Once you have been earmarked for arrest, it can take place anywhere, anytime, any day. Usually in the early hours of the morning:

First comes the savage knock on the door. It is 2 o'clock in the morning. Wife goes to the door and asks: "Who is there?" A man's voice answers: "Friends of the family." She refuses to open, then the callers begin to pound on the door with a hammer. The wall around the door frame begins to give in, to crack. And just before the door caves in, the head of the secret police gives an order:

*Fungua! Open!*

*Fungua! Open!*

*Sisi ni sheria. We are the law.*

Arrests are usually accompanied with a thorough search for so-called "seditious literature" or "communist literature" which can be anything, includ-

ing books, magazines, manuscripts, research notes, letters, personal photographs, academic certificates, birth certificates, typewriters, etc. Then the long arduous journey starts, a journey of torture and imprisonment. The captive is taken to Nyayo House (Kenya's John Vorster's Square) where he is hidden in a dark cell for weeks or months undergoing brutal interrogation and torture.

The torture system culminates in the victim being locked up in a "swimming pool" cell naked, in chains, without food or water for more than seven days. In this appalling condition, a prisoner sleeps in the water, sits in it, urinates and defecates in it. This method of torture started in 1982 after the coup attempt, when it was used against Kenya Air Force personnel. Today, it is practised with utmost perfection and callousness.

Other forms of torture also take place simultaneously. The captive is beaten with a barbed wire rod, he is kept in solitary confinement, he is hanged from the ceiling, he is psychologically brutalized and humiliated. In short, he is subjected to any brutal repression that can coerce him to "confess" — to give names of his political friends and relatives, to admit that he is a member of MWAKENYA and to sign a false "confession." Whatever form of torture one is subjected to, the road finally leads either to prison or death.

A political prisoner has an aura of being "dangerous," of being a "threat," of being worthy of a "special watch." This aura entails both close and remote surveillance, even if the victim is in solitary confinement. In the minds of the prison authorities, whoever can be bold enough to oppose the dictator must surely be a "dangerous" person, an enemy of the state. This pathological fear is not only confined to the prison authorities. It reflects the fear of the comprador state. The comprador state is afraid of those who have the courage and fortitude to point out its crimes, expose its underhanded dictatorial dealings, its repressive manipulations and dirty maneuvers. Thus, a political prisoner in Kenya remains a political prisoner always whether he is in prison or free, whether he is active or inactive. The aura will always remain around him.

Upon entering the prison reception handcuffed and in his civilian clothes, the captive is ordered to squat. While still in that position, he is subjected to a flurry of affronts and kicks. But what strikes one during that moment of infinity is the difference in language and unwarranted hostility — expressed with contempt, sarcasm and hatred. An abusive language that makes one's heart bleed in anger and indignation. The captive is asked, for instance:

Are you a Marxist? If you believe in communism, how come you don't go to the Soviet Union or China? If it was my responsibility, I'd send all you fucking communists to the cemetery. Do you believe in Nyayoism?\* Why have you refused to support Moi's govern-

\*The word "nyayo" simply means footprints. In 1979 it was transformed into a state ideology, popularly known as "nyayoism." According to dictator Moi, *nyayoism* consists of "Three Principles:" Peace, Love, and Unity. Those Kenyans who don't believe in this nonsense are branded enemies of Moi and arrested.

ment?

Do you know that your face looks like a rotten cunt or an elephant's arsehole?

Do you know where your wife is right now? She is selling her cunt in the streets.

Let me guess: You are either a motherfucker or a son of a whore. Which one of these two is correct?

Professor, here is not the University; we are going to fuck your arse if you don't obey our orders. Do you understand that?

These questions and comments sound simple, annoying and brutal, but their psychic effects are profound indeed.

Next the handcuffs are removed and then the captive is ordered to strip naked for a body search. They search each and every crevice in the body, and let the captive stand there while the guards taunt him. It's only after this that he is thrown a stinking tattered prison uniform, known as "*kunguru*." It is a white short-trouser and a short sleeved shirt. No underwear or shoes. After putting them on, the captive is then given a cloth bag in which to dump his civilian clothes, shoes and non-valuable personal items he may possess. His valuable items are put in a separate bag. Politely, he is called in the office, given a pen and a piece of paper to write his last Will. He is given his prison number and then ordered out of the office — in fact, violently pushed out and order to squat as he waits to be shaven clean of hair and beard. While still in that position, he is given a pair of threadbare blankets loaded with lice, a plastic cup and a chamberpot painted with human feces. After the reception officer has finished with him he is skin searched again for concealed weapons or money. Finally, he is given a guard to escort him into the prison compound where he finds multitudes of languishing, pathetic-looking and very emaciated captives, with very long stares beyond the mountain-high walls. If he is considered a "dangerous prisoner," he is locked in a solitary cell.\* The cell is about six feet wide, eight feet long and about ten feet high, with a naked electric bulb that burns twenty-four hours a day. There is a small barred window high in the wall. Like other cells, his cell has no bed, no mattress, no wash bowl, no toilet. His bed is composed of two old tattered blankets; yet even this is an ideal bed, for there are many political and criminal prisoners who have no blankets at all, they sleep on cold cement floors. Before the guard locks the steel door, he gives the captive a brief "pep talk:"

You are here because you are a political dissident, you have been working against *nyayo* government... Let me give you a

\* Since the prison authorities considered me "a dangerous prisoner," I was kept in solitary confinement most of my prison days.

good advice: if you want to finish your prison term in one piece, you must respect the prison authorities — obey all prison rules and regulations without question, and don't attempt to write a book in prison, that would cost your life... We shall release you when Moi decides that you are completely rehabilitated and have recanted your political beliefs..."

The prison living conditions are very hostile and nauseating. The food is not unpalatable; it is a swill. Always, it is a pint of cold, nasty, sugarless porridge which goes for breakfast, a pellet of *ugali* (mealy maize) and a serving, spoonful of watery green vegetable soup. Usually, the greens are yellow and full of worms. This passes for lunch, while supper is the rotten boiled beans, full of stones, and half-cooked *ugali* full of sand. Every day, every week, every month, every year, the food remains the same. One cannot easily conceive of how a captive can possibly live on that kind of diet throughout his jail term. But this is the truth of Kenyan prison life.

As for those sick prisoners who are recommended by the prison medic for the so-called "special diet" (which is really nothing different, being basically rotten cabbages and beans and a pint of milk) they have to undergo a protracted fight to get this recommendation approved by the prison authorities to be effective. For politicals, these so-called "special diets" are almost out of the question — even if one is very sick! The prison authorities argue that the objective of jailing the opponents of the state is to break them, to make them submit. And one of the ways of breaking politicals is to deny them their rights, by treating them punitively without mercy. By recommending and approving "special diets," the prison authorities strongly insist they will be nurturing their own enemies instead of starving them to surrender or death. If, however, one is broken and seeks favors from the prison authorities, then such favors will be given, but in very calculated forms, because a political prisoner is a potential danger — an enemy of the state.

Besides physical torture, prisoners are deliberately starved by late meals, half-cooked nasty food, small quantities of food and sometimes no meal at all. For every form of starvation, the prison authorities have an excuse: water shortage, electric power failure, technical defects in the boiler, no firewood, the contractors did not bring food and all sorts of other sickening excuses. It is important to point out that starvation is the most powerful weapon of torture in the hand of the dictator, for it demolishes the psychological resistance of the captive and forces him to succumb.

Disease is also used as a tool of torture in prison. The prison medics are not bound by the Hippocratic Oath. They closely work with the brutal prison authorities in their efforts to deny prisoners proper medical care. In 1986 I smuggled out the following message to my wife:

While the comprador rulers

Are playing golf  
Whoring  
Fornicating each other's wives  
Enjoying the freedom  
Which our people paid for in blood  
My hair is falling  
My face is full of deep wrinkles  
And I am going blind  
I cannot see beyond the front door  
Hunger and starvation terrorize me

They feed me rotten food  
And it is not enough  
I share my cell with lice and fleas  
With ticks and bedbugs

I am very sick  
But they have denied me medicine  
They are preparing for my funeral

Broadly speaking, prison cells are overcrowded and unhealthy for human beings. It is difficult for those persons who have never been in prison to imagine six or seven men living in a room eight feet by six feet, spending everyday locked up in a cold cell. Those long unbearable hours inside the cell cause havoc to the health and psychology of the prisoners and are often the prelude to mental and moral breakdown of prisoners. Apart from that there are revolting conditions of filth in the whole prison. The sanitation facilities are poor and inadequate, hence the toilets and bathrooms look like an open sewer. One very dehumanizing scene is the queuing up for the toilet. Usually, one toilet is used by over two hundred prisoners, and half of the prisoners have diarrhea. Once can imagine the pain of waiting and the psychological torment that goes with it.

Another very traumatic form of human abuse enforced in prison is that of eating while squatting. Upon being awakened at 5:00 A.M., prisoners are counted while squatting; after the count the cells are opened or unlocked for prisoners to go out for the cold sugarless porridge breakfast. They take their breakfast while squatting and surrounded by bludgeon-carrying prison guards. During lunch time and in the evening, the prisoners eat while squatting as they are also simultaneously counted. The counting alone takes more than an hour. Of course, they say there is no hurry in prison because prisoners have reached the end of the world and the guards are on duty twenty-four hours a day. The beating of the prisoners continue as the count continues.

The most painful and humiliating prison experience is the body search

popularly known as “Tero” (terror). It is usually announced as an “emergency,” or a “curfew” and everybody is ordered to stay at a standstill. Sometimes it is more ruthless, more degrading. It may be done at dawn or dusk. Normally, the guards come before 5 o’clock in the morning, order the captives out of their cells naked and make them squat facing the silent walls while holding their ears with their fingers. They surround them and order them to jump up and down, their fingers on their ears, still facing the walls. This method of torture is known as a “frog-dance.” As it is being performed, the cruel guards hit the captives with their brutal nightsticks, kick their bare buttocks with their combat boots. Apart from frog-dance, there is walking on knees on the rough cement floor, while the victim’s arms are spread sideways. After these traumatic performances, the prisoners are ordered to stand up and bend over with their legs apart for their rectal examinations. The bestial skin search, abusive language, and sexual molestations are reminiscent of the former British colonial state in Kenya.

Clearly, it is important to point out the parallels between the bestial repression to which our people are subjected by the KANU regime and the repression which was used by the British imperialist occupiers against the Mau Mau prisoners of war. In December 1956 my brother who was held at Embakasi Detention Camp for being a member of Mau Mau, sent the following message to my mother:

...I was beaten, whipped, and kicked almost every day for three weeks before my white interrogators relented, my middle finger was dislocated. I was then made to stand in a feces-filled cell for seven days without clothes, food, or water. But I remained firm; I refused to betray the fatherland. Seven comrades were tortured to death. It was a painful death...

A month after, he wrote again:

...The combination of hunger and physical torture is unbearable... A week ago I was tied to a ceiling by the wrists and whipped while naked until I lost my consciousness. My body is all torn up. I am very sick but they have denied me medicine; three more comrades died after the torture. Their deaths give us strength to protect the secrets of the Movement with our lives. It is our country or death...

A similar message was smuggled out of Kamiti Prison in 1986 by one of the political prisoners who wrote:

After the arrest they blindfolded me and took me to Nyayo House, forced me to strip naked and immediately started beating me. After the savage beating, they handcuffed me, left me lying on the concrete floor for two days without food or water. I lost a lot of blood, I thought I was going to die.

After two days they came for me, took me for interrogation. They wanted me to sign a false confession, but I refused. This

action of defiance made them very angry; consequently, they started beating me again, then they burned the tip of my penis with a butt of a cigarette. The pain was unbearable and when I started screaming, they jammed a piece of stinking cloth into my mouth. During this torture I lost almost my physical resistance, but I refused to recant. Next they put me in a “swimming pool” cell. After four days in the water naked, I could not take it any more, I signed the false confession. The following morning they took me to a kangaroo court and jailed me for a crime I had not committed. I feel bitter about this.

In summary, Kenya represents a classic example of a civilian dictatorship, with concrete overtones of fascism. The “Queuing System” was invented in order to give the dictator an open field to rig the election, to pick and choose his political minions for parliamentary seats. In fact, in order to be elected, nay, to be appointed to Parliament through the much opposed, abhorred queuing system, one must sincerely be a *nyayo* sychophant. One must literally worship the “Emperor” by kneeling down before him, as an expression of total subservience, and even allow one’s wife or daughter to become a “mistress” of the insatiably lecherous dictator. In the cabinet and other higher circles of power, rumors are rife about how the dictator selects his “mistresses” from the promiscuous wives of his cabinet ministers, members of Parliament, government officials, even schoolgirls. It is unbelievable how low men can sell their consciences for cheap political and material rewards — men who brag in bars and at political rallies about their leadership qualities, their political convictions and personal integrity and wealth. These subservient forms of behavior are the reflection of a society which is based on brutal terror and violence, a society which is heavily censored, whose thoughts and ideas are tightly controlled. This brutal attempt to reduce Kenyans to mindless buffoons, to strip them all of their basic liberties and freedoms, justifies MWAKENYA’s call: Moi and KANU must go!

## Appendix

SECRET

SECRET

CM(61) 637

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

THE DEPORTATION (IMMIGRANT BRITISH SUBJECTS)  
ORDINANCE, 1949.

MAKHAN SINGH

Memorandum by the Minister for Defense

1. Makhan Singh, a Sikh trade unionist, who has been restricted under the Deportation (Immigrant British Subjects) Ordinance since 1950 following a judicial enquiry into his subversive activities, presents a special problem in relation to Government's policy of releasing all "long service" restricted persons by progressive stages. A detailed history of his career in Kenya is attached.

2. Makhan Singh has rightly been described as an able, shrewd and inveterate Communist agitator and, though his behaviour in restriction has been exemplary apart from periodic hunger strikes, he has made it clear that he will never change his Communist views.

3. The case against Makhan Singh is that he is a life-long fanatical Communist and a trained agitator who intends, immediately on release, to start again where he left off. He will seek to

exploit every weakness and difference within the trade union movement and to disrupt every effort at moderation. In particular he will doubtless direct his efforts :

(a) to rallying and encouraging those Asian members of the Kenya Freedom Party who have Communist leanings and contacts;

(b) to seeking out and encouraging prominent Africans with Communist affiliations and to providing additional stiffening and expertise for their campaigns;

(c) to lending additional weight and knowledge to the increase of Communist penetration of the trade union movement in Kenya;

(d) to encouraging the more radical elements of the community, such as the Ginger Action Group, Youth Leagues, etc.

4. It can, however, be argued that, in the circumstances of Kenya today, it is unlikely that a non-African, however fanatical, would emerge as a leader capable of stirring up the masses. There is also the point that if Makhan Singh is to revert to type it is better that this should happen at an early date. On balance, and in view of the length of time during which Makhan Singh has been under restriction, I consider that he should be released now.

5. The Council of Ministers is accordingly invited to consider the case of Makhan Singh and, taking into his history, his period of restriction in Kenya and his assessment as a security risk, advise whether the restriction order under the Deportation (Immigrant British Subjects) Ordinance, 1949, which is in force against him, should be revoked forthwith or whether he should continue in restriction.



A.C.C.S.

Ministry of Defence.  
10th October, 1961.  
(I&S 41/13/01 (S))

SECRET  
APPENDIX TO  
CM(61) 637  
SECRET

#### CASE HISTORY OF MAKHAN SINGH

1. Makhan Singh was born in the Punjab in 1913. He arrived in Kenya in 1927 and came to notice in 1934 as the holder of advanced Communist views and through his correspondence with a prominent agitator in India. He visited India in 1935 but returned to Kenya in 1936 when he became involved in various Communist activities including, it is thought, acting as a forwarding and receiving agent for Sikh students undergoing revolutionary training in Moscow.

2. He returned to India in 1939 and remained there until 1947. During this period he was detained for subversive activities under the Defence of India Rules from 1940 to 1942, and subsequently restricted to his village until 1945. On release he worked for the Communist party in Lahore. He came back to Kenya in 1947 and was arrested and restricted under the Deportation (Immigrant British Subjects) Ordinance in 1950, following his attempt to engineer a general strike in protest against the refusal to

register a trade union of which he and Fred Kibai were the leaders.

3. Many months prior to this attempted general strike, it became apparent that Makhan Singh was trying to gain control of organised labour in Kenya through the medium of his own Labour Trade Union of East Africa, and through the East African Trade Union Congress which he also directed. His object appeared to be to control labour to an extent which would enable him to call a general strike, and to paralyse communications and essential services at what he considered an opportune moment. In accordance with the now familiar Communist technique, he lost no opportunity either of suggesting or manufacturing grievances, or of exploiting any that existed.

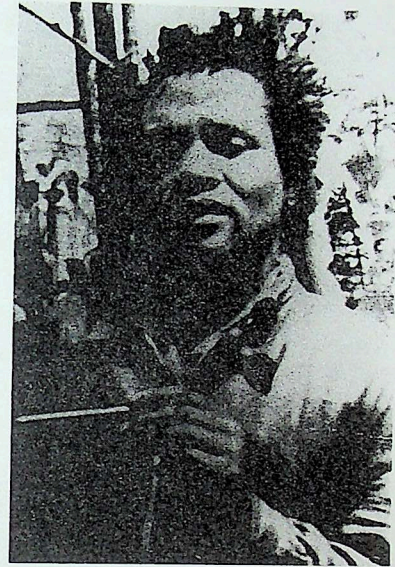
4. In order to produce an atmosphere favourable to a general strike and to consequent rioting and violence, it was necessary on the one hand that he should be hailed as the champion of the poor against the rich, of the workers against the employers in general and the European in particular; and on the other that the maximum possible hostility and ill-will should be engendered in the minds of African workers against the Government, the City Council of Nairobi, employers, and Europeans generally. To this end, Makhan Singh published articles in the press, disseminated pamphlets and repeatedly addressed African audiences. He told them, inter alia, that H.M.G. was a "foreign power who had no right to rule in Kenya", that the Kenya Government had introduced slavery, and that secret plans were being hatched to take more African land for the City of Nairobi. He told Asians that vast bases were being prepared for the re-conquest of India. In every speech he exalted Russia as the land of freedom and ex-

horted his hearers to strike if he himself were arrested.

5. In particular, in the months prior to May, 1950, he organised and whipped up the opposition of Nairobi taxi-drivers against certain proposed Municipal Council regulations to control the operation of taxi-cabs, and endeavoured to organise a boycott of the Civic celebrations which took place in March, 1950, during the visit to Kenya of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester on the occasion of the conferring of a Charter raising Nairobi to the status of a city. In October, 1949, the Transport and Allied Workers Union, led by Fred Kubai, brought the taxi-drivers out on strike. A disturbing feature of the attempted, and largely unsuccessful, boycott of the Civic celebrations, was that shots were fired at two prominent Africans during Civic week - at Municipal Councillor Gikonyo, who made loyal speeches and took a prominent part in welcoming Their Royal Highnesses on behalf of the African community; and at Tom Mbotela, who was a moderating influence within the Kenya African Union, and who was subsequently murdered by Mau Mau during the early days of the Emergency. There was reason to believe that Kubai at least was a party to the shootings and he was subsequently prosecuted (unsuccessfully) on charges of attempted murder and procuring attempted murder.

6. In May, 1950, Makhan Singh and Fred Kubai were arrested, Makhan Singh on a warrant under the Deportation (Immigrant British Subjects) Ordinance, and Fred Kubai under the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Ordinance. As had been foreseen, these arrests precipitated a strike in Nairobi which lasted for a little over a week. Although no serious incidents or injuries occurred, the strike, which was also re-

markable for its intimidation, showed that Makhan Singh's influence and organising ability were considerable. In the proceedings against Makhan Singh under the Deportation (Immigrant British Subjects) Ordinance, a judge duly reported to the Governor in Council that Makhan Singh was an "undesirable person" within the meaning of every part of that expression as defined in the Deportation (Immigrant British Subjects) Ordinance, 1949. The Judge made a recommendation for a restriction order, a recommendation which was subsequently accepted by the Governor in Council. Makhan Singh has been restricted ever since at Lokitaung, Lodwar, Maralal and Ndol Dol.



Dedan Kimathi, pictured here addressing the KLFA historic conference which was held near the banks of Mwathe stream in Nyandarwa forest in August 1953. The conference was attended by more than 5,000 delegates -- guerrillas and peasants. The main task of the Mwathe Conference was to draft the tactics and strategy of the armed struggle and to choose the KLFA leadership. Kimathi was appointed the KLFA overall commander and given a military title of Field Marshall. He was also elected the leader and spokesman of the entire Mau Mau Movement.



General Kago was the best war strategist the KLFA produced. He was also known for his superhuman courage, his steely patriotism and fortitude. He was shot and captured in the battle by the British Forces in 1954. After he refused to betray the Motherland, the British burned him alive. Kago was the embodiment of our courage and patriotism during the war of national independence. He represented the best in our people. He lives on our lips.



General Kariba was twenty four years old when he was appointed the KLFA Field Commander. He led the fearless KLFA Eight Column which was operating in Nyiri district. His major task was to liberate Nyiri, to make the whole district a KLFA rear base. In 1954 he was betrayed by a KLFA turncoat and captured by the British enemy. He endured untold suffering with iron-willed dignity and boundless courage in the hand of the British imperialist occupiers. Because of his unshakable courage, the British murdered him in cold blood. He died a martyr.

CONFESSIOIN ?

WE SHALL TAKE AND RAPE YOUR WIVES, YOU  
KIKUYUS, LIKE WE DID DURING EMERGENCY, IF YOU  
FOLLOW MULTI-PARTY SUPPORTERS.

Wilson Leitich  
KANU Chairman, Nakuru district.  
August 1991.

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