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MAU MAU: THE PEAK OF AFRICAN POLITICAL ORGANIZATION
AND STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION IN COLONIAL KENYA*

By

Maina-Wa-Kinyatti

I

The renewed and growing intellectual and political interest in Mau Mau history, both here in Kenya and abroad, is a very important development. For us, Kenyan Historians, the true distinction of our profession will depend on how far we succeed, or fail, to bring out clearly, 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 analyses, deductions and conclusions will result. But if our reputation is to remain positive, and in order to play an 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 desire 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 part of the worldwide anti-colonial onslaught can not be dismissed merely with a flick of a pen.

The extent of our contribution to this issue is to introduce some important new information to reinforce one of the existing, but unfortunately under-utilized but excellent documents, namely, Karari Njama's *Mau Mau From Within*. Our information

*A different version of this paper appears in *Kenya Historical Review*, Vol. 5 No. 2. Our rendering remains faithful to the author's patriotic passion and ideological stance. All the primary sources as documented in the original manuscript have been retained. Permission to publish is by private arrangement. The original manuscript is also a private collection, © Maina-Wa-Kinyatti, 1977. Ed. K.M.

mation is based on interviews with surviving cadres of the Mau Mau Movement. We are also introducing hitherto little known and little used documents, such as *Kimathi'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 membership condemned by colonialists as illiterate and irredeemably superstitious. Did these songs and other such symbols express nationalistic, anti-colonial, Kenyan feelings? Did the Mau Mau guerrilla leadership articulate the feelings of the great majority of the Kenyan people? These questions form the essential basis of my argument.

II

In essence, the occupation of our country by British imperialism in the 1800's meant the beginning of the enslavement of the Kenyan people, the systematic destruction of our people's culture and history. Imperialism now could decide what to do with whoever or whatever was in the country. Kenyans were declared the subjects of the British King and their country the property of British imperialism. Clearly, the brutal methods used to rob our people of the country, to drive them from their best land, to uproot them from their culture and history, were not any different from what took place in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the rest of our continent.

The invasion and occupation of our country by imperialism were resisted by Kenyan people courageously. If we exclude the random, isolated but fierce incidents of resistance between 1400 and 1700 we can, for the purposes of this analysis, divide the recent Kenya people's resistance against imperialism into four stages.

The first stage began 1800 to 1900 when the imperialist forces were establishing their colonial settlement and political domination over Kenyans and their country. It was in 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 the 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. Francis Hall, who commanded the British imperialist forces against the people in Murang'a in the 1890's gives the following account:

As usual the natives had deserted their villages and bolted with their livestock. However, we scoured the forest and collected a good deal and then proceeded to march quietly through the country, sending columns out to burn the villages and collect goats, etc. We rarely saw any of the people; when we did, they were at very long ranges, so we did not have much fun, but we destroyed a tremendous number of villages and, after fourteen days, emerged on the plains to the eastward, having gone straight from one end to the other of the disaffected districts. We captured altogether some 10,000 goats and a few cattle, and this on top of previous expeditions, must have been a pretty severe blow to their resistance...We killed 796 Kikuyu.¹

Similar patterns of Kenyan people's armed resistances against imperialism took place in other parts of our country. Since these resistances were isolated, uncoordinated and weak the people were defeated. Perhaps a united front against their common enemy would have made defeat less certain. Nevertheless, they learned some lessons from these failures. Besides the failure to form a united front they were also using comparative primitive weapons vis-à-vis the enemy's.

The second stage was a continuation of the struggle which began in the 1800's, but this time at a slightly higher level of political consciousness, 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,"² using the "Kipande" system "for controlling movements of African labourers and for locating and identifying them."³ It was required by the law for all African males to carry this slave-identification with them at all times "and to produce it when demanded by the police."⁴ Anyone without a Kipande was liable for arrest "and none could employ him if he had no Kipande or if he had not been signed off by his previous employer."⁵ This was convenient for the forced labour policies.

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

This second stage started about 1900, with the Kenyan working class regrouping in the East African Association (EAA), under the leadership of Harry Thuku, for 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 predictably it led to violent clashes with the colonial security forces. What Thuku did not realize was that imperialism is in essence violent. As Stephen Nkomo of ZANU* has said, "it lives and grows only through force and the use of force increases as the opposition to it grows." ⁶ 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 their thousands to demand the unconditional release of their leaders. 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 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

*Zimbabwe African National Union, the political organisation which finally won independence in Zimbabwe under the leadership of Robert Mugabe, now the President of the country. Ed. K.M.

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 that 56 bodies* were brought in, although the government said only 11 were killed.⁷

Thuku and his two comrades were exiled, without trial, to Kisumu.** The banning of the 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."⁸ 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 nonviolence as a form of struggle was inapplicable to the social reality of the country then. It was a big lesson to the people. It taught them the violent nature of imperialism and its agents, but it also heightened their fighting consciousness and their determination to resist further oppression, as the subsequent stages of the struggle demonstrated.

The third stage began in the late twenties and continued to the early fifties. The Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) replaced EAA as the organized force. It was organized by a then relatively radical group of men, e.g., Joseph Kang'ethe, Jesse Kariuki, James Beauttah 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 leadership was centralized and well-disciplined. Oath pledging, the traditional means of group discipline, albeit weak, was utilised for the purpose.

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 that 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 leader-

*It is known now that at least one hundred and fifty Kenyans lost their lives on that historic day. See the *Manchester Guardian* of March 20, 1929. Also see Makhan Singh, *History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement to 1952*, pp. 16.

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

ship of the KCA with similar political associations in the country. For instance, the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association (KTWA), the Ukamba Members Association (UMA), and the Taita Hills Association (THA) were objective allies as were all other organizations fighting the forces of colonialism.

Significantly the struggle against imperialism had developed into a national struggle and had made a great impact in the world by the early thirties. Beside KCA's activities in Central Kenya, its leadership was in touch not only with the Akamba and Taita patriots, such as Isaac Mwalozi, Samuel Muindi Mbingu, Elijah Kavulu, Jimmy Mwambichi and Woresha Mengo, but also with Luo and Abaluyia patriots, men like Benjamin Owori, Jonathan Okwiri, Paul Agoi, Anderea Jumba and Limaded Kisala, as well as the Ruganda patriotic leaders. By the late thirties these leaders and their associations were now formally affiliated with KCA and together formed not quite a united front but a loose fraternity against British colonialism. At the same time the KCA leadership was working closely with leaders of the Kenya Trade Union Movement and the international Pan-African Movement led by W.E.B. Du Bois. Its international connections were of great propaganda importance. The subsequent international support of the struggle was an advantage to the Movement.

With its relative political radicalism, its national and patriotic outlook, its relations with the then-militant international Pan-Africanism 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 the African working class
- ban on many respected traditions considered "savage" by colonialists.

Again as with EAA, KCA's leadership was detained and the Organization driven underground. Muigwithania, its official organ, was suppressed. Unlike the EAA, KCA continued mobilizing people secretly, particularly in Nairobi, Mombasa and 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 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 Beauttah 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.*⁹

The formation of KAU as a political Union 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 in the future. As far as the political system was outlined its horizon was constitutionalist, reformist and parliamentary at best. 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 armed resistance, it was impossible to wage a victorious struggle against imperialism and colonialism in this 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. For 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 those were merely political slogans of protest, they were not revolutionary in the sense of giving some indication of an alternative, a new point of departure, some preparedness for self-defence and political mass education, in short: a new kind of direction. Besides exciting the masses with such appeals as: "The freedom tree can only grow when you pour your blood on it...I shall firmly hold the lion's jaws so that it will not bite you. Will you bear its claws?"¹⁰ the KAU leadership had not thought of,

*Kenya African Union, founded in October, 1944. Ed. K.M.

and was not ready for, an armed confrontation with the colonialist forces. Consequently when our people decided to confront colonialists with revolutionary violence, the KAU leadership were nowhere to be seen. This point is well expressed by Mohamed Mathu in his book, *The Urban Guerrilla*. 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?*¹¹

It is also a well-known fact that "the KAU leaders gained knowledge of the Emergency Declaration"¹² and their arrest the day "before [the] October 20, 1952, announcement,"¹³ and yet none of them tried to escape and join Dedan Kimathi 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, at Wanza Mansion, the Mau Mau Central Committee was meeting in the offices of Isaac Gathanju when one of our informers sent for me. ...He told me that the colonial government planned to arrest all KAU leaders during the next 36 hours. In the light of the information received we decided this meeting would be the last meeting of the Mau Mau Central Committee...We made provision for our own arrest and laid down a number of directives for after our arrest.*¹⁴

Now the fundamental question is this: if Kaggia and Kubai were members of the Mau Mau Central Committee, why didn't they join the Kenyan patriotic forces in the forests instead of giving themselves in to the enemy?

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 compromising 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, hopeless housing conditions"¹⁵ and inevitable police harassment and brutality, "there grew an enormous number of people who were extremely dissatisfied"¹⁶ 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's 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 Ngatu 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 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.*¹⁷

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 writes:

*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 our 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 & Commercial Workers Union). The three of us were staunch trade unionists and very militant.*¹⁸

Again he writes:

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

*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 offices, without written permission."

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.¹⁹

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 had told an American journalist, Negley Farson: "I am afraid of this left-wing group. I believe that their dark and half-educated minds will lead them to use force."²⁰

Between August 1951 and October 1952 it was evident that the Kenyan masses were getting impatient with old-styled 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"²¹ with the British colonialists in London and the settler interests in Kenya. Mbiyu and Achieng Oneko were sent to London to explain KAU's policy to the Colonial Office. The Colonial Office ignored them and refused to see them. The Colonial Secretary scornfully 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

*The leading militants within KAU were Bildad Kaggia, Secretary of Nairobi Branch, F. Kubai, Chairman of Nairobi Branch, James Beuttah, Chairman of Murang'a Branch and Vice-President of the Central Kenya KAU Council, Harrison Wamuthenya, Chairman of Nyeri Branch, Henry Wambogo, Vice-Chairman of Nyeri Branch, Kiragu Kagotho, secretary of Nyeri Branch, Pratt Njogu, Chairman of Embu Branch, Romano Jamumo Gikunju, secretary of Embu Branch, John Mbiyu Koinange, Chairman of Kiambu Branch, Kungu Karumba, Chairman of Limuru sub-Branch, Charles Munyua Wambaa, Chairman of Kikuyu sub-Branch, J.D. Kali, assistant secretary of Nairobi Branch, P.J. Ngei, KAU assistant secretary.

result from that 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, a waste of our money and time.²²

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. Both attempts failed. Thus opened the way for physical confrontation between the Kenyan people and British imperialism.

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 approach. Kaggia explains: "The collection of guns was accelerated and our intelligence network strengthened. The Mau Mau Central Committee authorized more and more aggressive methods and activities."²³ 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 explains:

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 leaders, whom he did not know, were running the meeting. E. Mutonyi and I. Gathanju were the chairman and secretary.²⁴

Obviously the situation now called for a new leadership and a new kind of Organization to direct the People's Movement. To quote Kaggia further:

*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.

...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 government would never give up Kenya without a struggle...²⁵

What Kaggia is saying is simply that since KAU had failed to bring national independence through constitutional methods, the more politically aware saw no other alternative than to impose their will through armed struggle. And this led to the organization of the Mau Mau Movement. As Philip Bolsover wrote in 1953:

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.²⁶

Again he pointed out:

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.²⁷

The organization of the 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 traveller."²⁸ The Movement pointed out clearly to the 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 Kimathi 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, as 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-bourgeois 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 spelt-out that the objective 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:

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

Or again:

*Rise up, you Kenyan masses!
Seize your freedom
Expel the foreign imperialists
From this country.*

At any rate, as the oathing and political education continued to spread secretly in Nairobi, Central Kenya and among the squatters of the Rift Valley during the latter part of 1951, the political consciousness of our people continued to heighten significantly. The nature of racism ("colour bar") and the land and labour questions were better than ever grasped. By June 1952, many of the "militants had started preparing for resistance in the forests,"²⁹ 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), combatting prostitution and the elimination of the homeguard traitors, informers and other imperialist accomplices. The colonial regime, confused about the turn of events, was 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 launched its fascist offensive against the people.

As one report puts it:

*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.*³⁰

The British colonial offensive was a calculated plan to destroy the Movement and the unity of the people in order to stem 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.*³¹

And again:

*We are going to stay here for the good of Africa, and as long as we stay we rule.*³²

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 country-side. The limited freedom of speech, press, association, movement and assembly were thrown overboard. The independent schools, catering for more than 62,000 students, which the people of Kenya had patiently built at the "cost of great self-sacrifice to make up for the Government's neglect of education,"³³ were forced to close down. Murder, imprisonment, detention and torture of thousands of our patriots became the order of the day. In the city and towns much African property was lost in these bloody campaigns of which "Operation Anvil" was but one. In the countryside, the peasant's means of livelihood--his cattle, sheep and goats--were rounded up by the colonial troops and armed settlers; and the peasant himself 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'."³⁴ The Mau Mau patriotic army in the forests accepted this challenge unflinchingly and 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."³⁵

The arrest of Kenyatta and other KAU leaders was undertaken with the misguided notion that these leaders were the main organizers and managers 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 realize the crucial distinction that Mau Mau was a separate, independent force with its directions 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.*³⁶

At one of the Mau Mau guerrillas' conferences in the forest Dedan Kimathi made the following observation:

*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 as we have done to those who stood in our way.*³⁷

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. Again to quote Kaggia:

*Although the Mau Mau Movement looked upon Kenyatta as the national leader, it was not under his direct control....He knew little of what went on in the Mau Mau Central Committee meetings.*³⁸

Enraged by the revolutionary stand taken by our people, the imperialists deployed thousands of troops, police, warplanes, armoured cars, police dogs, armed European settlers, homeguard and "taitai"* traitors, in a vain attempt to crush the resistance. George Padmore writes:

*What started as an emergency has already become a full-scale military operation--the biggest colonial war in African 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.*³⁹

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

*Taitai were educated Africans who were working in the CID. [Crime Investigation Department, the Kenyan edition of the CIA. Ed. K.M.] as pro-colonial intelligence agents during the Mau Mau War of National Liberation. Taitai literally means "those who wear ties"--the Elite.

British contention that only 11,000 Africans died is a gross under-estimate.*

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.*⁴⁰

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 go 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.*⁴¹

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

Anyway, to avoid being killed or arrested many of the youth voluntarily joined the Mau Mau guerrilla army in the forests 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 trial 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 Boslover 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.*⁴²

In fact, the assassination of Senior Chiefs Waruhiu and Nderi and pro-colonial collaborator elements like Ofafa, Tom Mbotela etc., was seen as a great victory 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 own country
Waruhiu sold out his own country (for money)
But he died and left the money.*

In connection with that, Mohamed Mathu tells us how the people celebrated his [Waruhiu's] death with three days of beer drinking. They were happy that one of Kenya's 'Black Europeans had left the earth.'⁴³ Waruhiu, Ofafa, Nderi and Tom Mbotela were the foremost colonial government agents and it seems there were many others. 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 numbered 5,567 and wounded, 622. The casualties suffered by the security forces amounted 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.*⁴⁴

Again in November 1954, the Colonial Secretary, Lennox-Boyd, ga

the following report to the House of Commons:

Mau Mau adherents killed 1,186 civilians (twenty-four Europeans, seventy Asians and 1,145 Africans). The total number of Mau Mau suspects arrested and screened was 138,235...⁴⁵

The fight was becoming fiercer. It is not necessary here to go into details of each heroic victory of the people against the forces of imperialism, since Karari Njama has recorded all these events. Suffice it only to 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 Patriotic 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 Patriotic Army courageously attacked and over-ran the Naivasha Police base. It captured many guns and much ammunition, killing and capturing a considerable number of the enemy personnel. General Mbaria Kaniu was the guerrilla commander in this battle. The other important battle against colonialist occupiers took place on September 17, 1954. The Mau Mau Patriotic Army over-ran Lukenya Prison and successfully freed all the prisoners. They captured a substantial amount of war material; and the enemy personnel 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 towards 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 deed.⁴⁶*

These two battles, as we have mentioned, influenced the course of war between our people and imperialism. They encouraged and reinforced the iron-determination and fighting spirit of the Mau Mau Patriotic Army, earned it much support and loyalty of the worker and peasant masses. The imperialists were forced to bring what they considered their best Generals, namely, 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 new military dictators, Generals Erskine and William Hinde. In addition, 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 criticising General Erskine for his inability to exterminate the Mau Mau patriots. Answering to the white settlers' criticism, the General replied:

*...there is no question of the Mau having strong
defence or being particularly gallant. It is just
the opposite.*

*Mau Mau defence consist of sentries down every trail
leading to hideouts. As soon as a sentry is engaged,
the gang disperses and reassembles at prearranged
places. Sitting in an armchair, it sounds very easy
to get a sentry or two but much more difficult to
get into or surround a gang. The gangs never wait
to fight.⁴⁷*

The Mau Mau Patriotic Army was able to achieve considerable victories over the enemy forces between 1952 and the early part of 1955. However, in the late 1955 the "tide seemed to be turning against the guerrilla forces."⁴⁸ 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 arms, ammunition,

*The war was costing the British Government at least one million pounds in 1954. It was costing the British Government more than 20,000 pounds to capture one "Mau Mau terrorist." See G. Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, p. 255.

medical supplies, clothing, well-trained cadres and money. Now with all these desiderata cut off, the guerrillas faced a serious problem of shortage of supplies. And then, most devastating of all in this relation: the capture and surrender of General China.

According to Karari Njama, "China's confession and ultimate collaboration with Special Branch Officers,"⁴⁹ 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. Second, the "Villagization Program," used by the British in Malaya, was introduced in the countryside after "Operation Anvil." Though not immediately, this cruel programme was relatively able to isolate the guerrillas from the peasant masses who were their major source 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. By the middle of 1956 the Mau Mau Movement was in its decline.

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. As a former Mau Mau guerrilla interviewed for this paper remarked: "Why should they (M.P.'s) 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?" Another line taken by this group is to urge the people to forget Mau Mau. To quote Ngugi Kabiro's book, *The Man in the Middle*: "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."⁵⁰ Similarly Mathu states:

Looking back on Mau Mau today, I still consider it to have been a just and courageous struggle for freedom. Though mistakes were made, and some people entered the revolt for narrow or selfish interests, the...people as a whole fought and suffered bravely and I am proud of them. Our fight against British colonialism, by throwing fear into the hearts of imperialists and settlers, quickened the pace of political development and independence in Kenya. I should like to remind those African leaders who now condemn Mau Mau and tell us to forget our past struggle

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.⁵¹

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 articulated by the University of Nairobi school of thought and the third one stems from a chauvinist clique in Central Kenya.

The Imperialist and Christian School of Thought

According to this school of thought as it is well articulated by L.S.B. Leakey,* F.D. Corfield, Fred Majdalany, Dennis Holman, Ione Leigh, R. Ruark and the 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
- an anti-christianity and anti-western civilization
- a product of the Gikuyu people's failure to adapt to the demands of western civilization.
- a terrorist movement whose aim was the drinking of human blood
- a communist subversive movement**
- etc., etc.

The imperialist and Christian school of thought is easily understood because it is a straight racist position. One sees

*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. Carothers; *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau* by F.D. Corfield; *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu* and *The Defeat of Mau Mau* by L.S.B. Leakey; Ione Leigh, *In the Shadow of Mau Mau*; D. Holman, *Bwana Drum*; Fred Majdalany, *State of Emergency*, and R. Ruark, *Uhuru*.

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 are trying to accomplish is to destroy the real essence of our national movement. Their ulterior motive is 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, fails to undermine 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.

Essentially the Christians, particularly the more confused African Christians, condemned Mau Mau as a "terrorist movement whose aim was to drink human blood." Yes, it is true that Mau Mau killed a lot of Africans relative to the European casualties. 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 involved thousands and thousands of people, the masses would not be able to heighten their political consciousness if it allowed 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 act immediately to 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 always able to distinguish between enemy and friend. In fact it seems to be the case that too many selfish and opportunist elements were left in the movement and subsequently derailed it and betrayed it.

The University of Nairobi School of Thought

In their effort to 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 chauvinist movement
- 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 in or support it,
--it did not spread beyond Central Kenya,
--oathing was typically Gikuyu, Embu and Meru
--etc., etc.

To be more specific, let us quote the two leading anti-Mau Mau academicians: William 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.*⁵²

He continues:

*The Mau Mau administrators never took into account the interests of the Pokot, Giriama, Luo, Turkana or Somali.*⁵³

In the same vein 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 would have been truly 'national.'*⁵⁴

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

*It is not therefore surprising that hardly anyone, outside Central Kenya, voiced sympathy or support for Mau Mau.*⁵⁵

During the August 1976 conference of the Historical Association of Kenya, Professor Ogot strongly argued that Mau Mau songs expressed Gikuyu nationalism as opposed to Kenyan nationalism. We quote:

*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.*⁵⁶

To label and condemn Mau Mau as a "chauvinist and tribalist movement" is not enough to convince anyone because the reasons advanced do not explain the historical and social contradiction:

which brought about its birth and development. Moreover, this school of thought fails to understand that although the Mau Mau Movement was perhaps different in form from 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 understand that the Kenyan people did not choose the road of armed struggle because they loved to shed human blood. They came to the conclusion that it was the only effective way to dethrone British colonialism, win independence and regain their stolen land. 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.*⁵⁷

We will come to this point later.

The Chauvinist Interpretation

The third interpretation of the Mau Mau Movement is a purely chauvinist one. Simply stated, 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.

In addition to denying the Mau Mau Movement its national character, this chauvinist group has another dangerous ulterior motive, viz., to use Mau Mau revolutionary prestige as a tool to monopolize national leadership and to use it as an instrument to enrich themselves.* Ironically, those who proudly praise Mau Mau now are largely the same elements--the homeguards,

*"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 programmes 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 *The Urban Guerilla*, p. 87.

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

Politicians: 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...⁵⁸

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?

III

While we would admit that some organizational methods and techniques which were utilized by the Movement produced negative consequences in terms of its development, recruitment and expansion nationally, the notion that the symbols, songs and oaths were anti-Kenyan nationalism is totally baseless. Also it does not mean that because the overwhelming bastion of the Movement was in Central Kenya, Mau Mau was therefore less nationalist. Essentially one can ask: Where in the world has a self-sustaining revolutionary movement been started spontaneously by the masses? [Emphasis added, Ed. K.M.] Isn't it true that the revolutionary upsurge always starts with the most politically conscious elements, groups or sections in any country? In Czarist Russia it was the Great Russian nationality which provided the Bolshevik Party with the base to begin the Revolution. The early leading supporters of the Chinese Revolution were the Han nationality. Why then should our national struggle, because of its national uniqueness and development, be condemned and damned as a tribal

insurrection? Basically it is not true as B.E. Kipkorir wants us to believe that the Movement did not spread beyond Central Kenya. Mau Mau had a considerable number of supporters in Narok District. Ole Kisio, a Mau Mau General, was a Maasai, from Narok. All the squatters of the Rift Valley fully supported the movement. The Akamba were also involved in the Mau Mau Movement.

In essence, those who strongly argue that Mau Mau was not a national movement, and those others who want to convert it into a regional movement, should seriously examine the documents and speeches, now available, of Dedan Kimathi, who was the chief architect of the Movement. In one of the pamphlets which was distributed mostly in Nairobi, Kimathi condemned the injustices of British imperialism against the people. He stated:

*If colour prejudice is to remain in Kenya who will stop subversive action, for the African has eyes, ears, and brains. It is better to die than to live in distress, why confine distress to the soul?**

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 Kimathi 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 aims of the Movement. He also called the Mau Mau "Kenya Parliament" meetings regularly to review and analyze the war situation and more importantly to discuss the future of Kenya. At one of those meetings Kimathi 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.

*Even though most of Kimathi's writings and speeches were burned by the Colonial Government, there are individuals who have some of Kimathi's Papers in their private collections. We were lucky to be allowed to examine some of these Papers. In their recent publication *A Bibliography on Mau Mau*, pp. 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 Kimathi Papers*." According to them some individual writers have been able to examine a few of these Papers.

*I lead them because god never created any nation
to be ruled by another for ever.*

Further, in a letter he wrote to Fenner Brockway,* Kimathi 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 Kimathi published in October 1953 and it was followed by letters he sent abroad to different individuals such as Fenner Brockway 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 Koinange in London, Fenner Brockway, the Chairman of the Pan African Congress in London, President Eisenhower of the United States, 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 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 learned that the Government had started using propaganda to defeat us. We agreed to start campaigns against Government propaganda and at the same time preach our 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 to Africans. See Njama's *Mau Mau From Within* pp. 357.

**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. In *the Shadow of Mau Mau*, pp. 190-191, Ione Leigh has quoted this document. He refers to this document as "Mau Mau charter". The document was particularly sent to Mbiyu Koinange and Fenner Brockway to present it to the United Nations.

*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 system 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 turned into slaves and beggars.*

*Our people will chase the foreign exploiters,
wipe out the traitors and establish an independent
Government of the Kenyan people.*

After going through Kimathi'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 search for the truth.

As a matter of fact, "throughout Kimathi'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."⁶⁰ In this connection, 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 Kimathi's writings, show that Mau Mau was a national movement. The most well-known one is entitled "Rwimbo Rwa Afrika" ("Africa Song"):

*God gave to the Black People
This land of Africa
Praise the God who dwells in the high places
For his blessings.*

Chorus:

*We will continue in our praises
Of the land of Africa
From East to West*

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"), makes these points very clear.

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

Chorus:

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 life.*

All along the struggle, Kimathi consistently continued to stress the justice of the struggle. This is reflected in the following song entitled, "Ndiri Na Kieha No Nguthi" ("I am Not worried I must Go").

*When 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 Kimathi" ("The Song of Kimathi")

*We are tormented
Because we are Black
We are not white people
And we are not their kind
But with god in us
We will defeat them.*

It is evident that the true "political Kernel" of the Mau Mau Movement has, up to now, not been cracked. This is due largely to the failure by Kenyan historians to examine crucial internal ideological struggles within that organization. Pertinent to this are the splits and subsequent shifts in internal KAU alliances prior to 1952, the historic regrouping of the disenchanted 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 subvert even that part of Mau Mau history which is already amply documented. The various schools responsible for this are, in our view, not only doing a great intellectual disservice to Kenyans, but also playing a treacherous political role in complete defiance of facts.

It is evident that resistance movements since the 1800's progressed from lower to higher levels of organization and political awareness culminating in the Mau Mau armed confrontation. This 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 under the 30-year British Government "secrecy" clause): But there are people still alive with useful documentary evidence which is in stark opposition to some current hypotheses. We have endeavoured to bring out some of this new information, through interviews and documents. It is hoped 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 in no way exhausts the sources of information. It is but the beginning of what necessarily must be a long discussion of this chapter of Kenya's history.

This investigation shows doubtlessly that the Mau Mau Movement answered an urgent desire of the Kenyan peasantry and workers for land redistribution and that on strategic difference its leadership split between the moderates and the conservative KAU, that Kimathi 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 by about 1956 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 still affects Kenya's politics today.*

*Mau Mau Defence Council was the Supreme Governing Council of the Movement.

**As Karigo Muchai, a former Mau Mau cadre puts it: "I don't know what the future has in store for me. I can only hope that with Kenya's independence my suffering of the past ten years will somehow be rewarded. I want only a decent job or a piece of land to cultivate so that I can provide for my family and see to it that my children go to school and have an opportunity for a better, richer life than my own. These are the things we (Kenyans) fought and died for. I only pray that after independence our children will not be forced to fight again." See *The Hardcore*, p. 85.

NOTES

¹Carl G. Rosberg, Jr., *The Myth of Mau Mau: Nationalism in Kenya*, New York, 1966, p. 15.

²Makhan Singh, *History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement to 1952*, Nairobi, 1969, p. 4.

- ³Singh, *History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement*, p. 4.
- ⁴Singh, *History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement*, p. 5.
- ⁵Singh, *History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement*, p. 6.
- ⁶Stephen Nkomo, "The Rhodesia Crisis: Its Source and Nature" in *Africa: National and Social Revolution*, Prague, 1967, p. 134.
- ⁷Rosberg, *The Myth of Mau Mau*, p. 51.
- ⁸Stephen Nkomo, "The Rhodesia Crisis", p. 135.
- ⁹Interview with James Beuttah, November 1976.
- ¹⁰A speech made in 1947 by KAU leadership at a meeting in Nyeri. See also Mohamed Mathu's *The Urban Guerrilla*, p. 7.
- ¹¹Mohamed Mathu, *The Urban Guerrilla: History of Mohamed Mathu*, Richmond, British Columbia, Canada, *Life Histories from the Revolution: Kenya Mau-Mau*, No. 3, p. 17, c. 1974.
- ¹²Mathu, *The Urban Guerrilla*, p. 7.
- ¹³Mathu, *The Urban Guerrilla*, p. 7.
- ¹⁴Bildad Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom 1921-1963*, Nairobi, p. 116.
- ¹⁵D.P. Singh, "Mau Mau: A Case Study of Kenyan Nationalism" in *Africa Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (April-June 1968), p. 14.
- ¹⁶Singh, D.P., "Mau Mau: A Case Study", p. 14.
- ¹⁷Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, p. 79.
- ¹⁸Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, p. 79.
- ¹⁹Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, p. 80.
- ²⁰Singh, D.P., "Mau Mau: A Case Study", p. 14. Also see Negley Farson's *The Last Chance in Africa*, New York.
- ²¹Singh, D.P., "Mau Mau: A Case Study", p. 15.
- ²²Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, p. 114.
- ²³Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, p. 115.
- ²⁴Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, p. 114.

- ²⁵Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, p. 113.
- ²⁶Philip Bolsover, *Kenya: What are the Facts*, London, Communist Party, 1953, p. 4.
- ²⁷Bolsover, *Kenya: What are the Facts*, p. 4.
- ²⁸Le Duan, *The Vietnamese Revolution*, New York, 1971, p.
- ²⁹Singh, D.P., "Mau Mau: A Case Study", p. 15.
- ³⁰World Trade Union Movement, *Terror in Kenya: The Facts Behind the Present Crisis*, London, W.F.T.U. Publications Ltd., 1952, p. 3.
- ³¹George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, London, 1953, p. 255.
- ³²W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, New York, 1955, p. 284.
- ³³World Trade Union Movement, *Terror in Kenya*, p. 3
- ³⁴Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, p. 256.
- ³⁵Nkomo, "The Rhodesia Crisis", p. 135.
- ³⁶Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, p. 113.
- ³⁷An extract from Dedan Kimathi's Paper. See also D.P. Singh, "Mau Mau: A Case Study", p. 18.
- ³⁸Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, p. 113.
- ³⁹Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, p. 254.
- ⁴⁰Bolsover, *Kenya: What are the Facts*, p. 9.
- ⁴¹Bolsover, *Kenya: What are the Facts*, p. 11.
- ⁴²Bolsover, *Kenya: What are the Facts*, p. 3.
- ⁴³Mathu, *The Urban Guerrilla*, p. 15.
- ⁴⁴Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, p. 257.
- ⁴⁵Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, p. 257.
- ⁴⁶Mathu, *The Urban Guerrilla*, p. 54.
- ⁴⁷Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, p. 257.

- ⁴⁸Karari Njama, *Mau Mau From Within*, New York, 1966, p. 375.
- ⁴⁹Njama, *Mau Mau From Within*, p. 330.
- ⁵⁰Ngugi Kabiro, *Man in the Middle*, Richmond, British Columbia, Canada, 1973, p. 75.
- ⁵¹Mathu, *The Urban Guerrilla*, p. 75.
- ⁵²William R. Ochieng', Review of Kaggia's *Roots of Freedom 1921-1963* in *Kenya Historical Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1976, Nairobi, 138-140.
- ⁵³Ochieng', Review of Kaggia, pp. 138-140.
- ⁵⁴B.E. Kipkorir, Review of Kaggia's *Roots of Freedom 1921-1963* in *Kenya Historical Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Nairobi, pp. 140-143.
- ⁵⁵B.E. Kipkorir, "Politics and the Transfer of Power: Kenya 1957-1960". An unpublished paper, 1977.
- ⁵⁶B.A. Ogot, "Politics, Culture and Music in Central Kenya: A Study of Mau Mau Hymns: 1951-1956", p. 10.
- ⁵⁷Mathu, *The Urban Guerrilla*, p. 17.
- ⁵⁸Ngugi wa Thiongo and Micere Mugo, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, Nairobi, 1977, p. 46.
- ⁵⁹Mathu, *The Urban Guerrilla*, p. 87.
- ⁶⁰Singh, D.P., "Mau Mau: A Case Study", p. 19.