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BASIS OF CONFLICT AMONG PEASANT COMMUNITIES

by

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I. Introduction.

Nearly thirty five years ago the broad mass of the Kenyan people, particularly those from Central Kenya* and the Rift Valley took up arms to wage a protracted peoples' war against British Imperialism. The war was fought under the auspices of Kenya Land Freedom Army (KFLA), popularly known as Mau Mau led by Dedan Kimathi. The Mau Mau war was the first one of the kind in Colonial Africa: Others FLN, MPLA, FRELIMO, PAIGC, ZAMA, SWAPO etc. were to come later. It posed a great challenge to the position of British imperialism, not only in Kenya but throughout Africa, and hence it was crushed with massive repression and bestiality. But to-day more than ever the Mau Mau question still remains a subject of great concern, controversy and inspiration among Kenyan scholars and politicians.

The movement has been interpreted differently by many scholars within and without Kenya. The major bone of contention is whether Mau Mau was a national anti-imperialist movement or a 'tribal' one. There are those who contend that Mau Mau was by and large a Kikuyu affair. To be more specific let me quote one of the leading exponent of this view. William R. 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 Muranga, Nyeri, Embu, Meru and Machakos--- It is therefore important to correctly evaluate Mau Mau as a primarily Kikuyu affair."¹ In fact, some of them even go further to allege that the ideology of Mau Mau was rejected by nationalists. Listen to Professor B.A. Ogot: "we are to a large extent merely indulging in the politics of nostalgia. The Mau Mau ideology, as I have argued, was already rejected by 1960 by the nationalist forces. How can we then regard Mau Mau as the pivot of the Kenyan nationalism. This is a painful conclusion."²

The central argument of these two historians is that Mau Mau was "a chauvinist and tribal movement" which did not articulate the interests of other Kenyan nationalities.

The second school of thought, however, contend that Mau Mau was the peak of anti-imperialist struggle in Kenya. Its leading exponent is the patriotic Kenyan historian Maina wa Kinyatti³ whose research and prolific writings had done much to restore popular memory of Mau Mau armed struggle among the broad mass of the Kenyan people.

The third school of thought, sees Mau Mau as being the result of the failure of a primitive culture to withstand the impact of a superior one. "He writes: It (the Mau Mau Emergency) could be said to have begun when the first European settlers came to settle the country and

in good faith tried to impose their own ways and their idea of civilisation on a group of primitive peoples still living in something akin to the Stone age."⁴ This view represents that of the British imperialist and their spiritual policemen.

The fourth school of thought represent that of the Chauvinist members of the Agikuyu and related nationalities. It states: "We Gikuyu, Embu, and Meru fought and died for independence, therefore, we bought it with our blood. All position of privilege, power and wealth must be occupied by us."⁵

The above are, therefore, the well known interpretations of Mau Mau Movement which have been at the centre of the controversial debates in Kenya's scholarship.

At the political level, the debates have focussed on whether the post-colonial KANU government have betrayed or fulfilled the ideals of which the people of Kenya sacrificed so much. The core of this debate, therefore, also centres on the resolution of Agrarian and National Democratic Questions in neo-colonial Kenya.

This paper is a modest attempt to revisit this important phenomenon, and evaluate which of the schools of thought mentioned above represent a correct interpretation of Mau Mau armed struggle, which lasted ten years. To do this, an attempt will be made to relate

the Mau Mau struggle to the important questions of Agrarian changes and national democracy in colonial Kenya. The paper also seeks to highlight some of the salient lessons that can be drawn from this struggle, and try to conceptualise the place of the nationality question in the struggle for national and democratic change in Africa.

II. The Agrarian and National Questions.

Any scientific analysis of Mau Mau Movement which seeks to explain and evaluate its place in Kenya's struggle for national independence must begin with a theoretical postulation of the following issues: What is a nation? what is Agrarian Question? Was Kenya a nation at the time of a State of Emergency? Did the various Kenyan nationalities consider themselves as members of one nation? Is it the Agrarian crises which sparked off the war? Did Mau Mau have a national or tribal programme? What explains the lukewarm participation of many of the broad mass of Kenyan population outside Central Kenya and part of the Rift Valley? Did all the Kikuyu and related nationalities take part in the struggle? If no, why? How relevant is Mau Mau to contemporary Agrarian and national questions in Kenya and Africa as a whole?

Obviously these and other related questions have been responsible for the intense and at times fierce debates amongst scholars and even politicians in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa.

The problems of Africa be they social, economic and political have many a time been attributed to 'tribalism' by Western analyst and their defenders. So all African crises or conflicts are explained in terms of 'tribalism', defined as attachment to one's tribe or ethnic group which remains a more relevant unit of identification than the country as a whole. Put differently, according to this thesis 'primordial' sentiment remains the most relevant factor of social reality.⁶ Perhaps the ablest exponent of this thesis in the recent past is Goran Hyden.⁷

But as Nzungola-Ntalaja aptly puts it:
'By granting a priori determinism to blood, kinship, religion and other "primordial" ties, loyalties and affinities, this thesis obscures the interplay of class, economic and geopolitical factors which weigh heavily on contemporary African politics.'⁸

The central thesis of the advocates of this thesis is that Africa is still backward, 'primitive' and pre-capitalist, and for it to be part of the civilised societies, its pre-capitalist tendencies must be sacrificed, for the sake of modernity. In essence the modern nation is born through the passing away of the traditional society.⁹

Surprisingly this approach to the national question "comes very closely to the point of view of dogmatic

marxists".... whose understanding of the question is primarily, if not exclusively based on the reading of Joseph Stalin's classic Marxism and the National Question in which he defines the nation as "a historically constituted, stable community of people formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."¹⁰ For Stalin, such a nation requires for its viability an integrated home market and, consequently, belongs to the epoch of rising capitalism.

The four characteristic features delineated by Stalin are not used mechanically as a checklist against which nationhood is to be gauged.¹¹ They have to be seen as necessary rather sufficient conditions of nationhood, for they can also be found in social formations based on pre-capitalist modes of production. What is sufficient to make a nation, Stalin's followers argue, is the "particular historical practice that produces those features as a unity - the formation of distinct capitalist social formations."¹² Why, it may be asked, is capitalism the only mode of production capable of grafting these features on a socio-historical entity to produce a nation. Is it impossible to achieve the centralization of economic organization and political authority essential to nationhood under other modes of production? Stalin's followers have no satisfactory answers to these questions other than appealing to European history as a point of reference.

Two scholars Poulantzas and Samir Amin have made extremely pertinent critiques of the Stalinist theory of the nation.¹³ According to Samir Amin, the Stalinist theory confuses the existence of nations with one of its historical expressions, namely, the emergency of nation-states in Europe in connection with the development of Capitalism.¹⁴ It is inadequate for a concrete understanding of the phenomenon of nationhood in other parts of the world because it assumes that nations cannot exist in the absence of capitalist development. Nicos Poulantzas makes a useful point when he writes thus: "As a social phenomenon, the nation is not necessarily or exclusively a product of the capitalist mode of production. It may appear at every stage of history as a particular unit of production of social relations in class societies based on modes of production which require a centralization of economic organization and political authority. Such centralization is best achieved through state power. This is why there is a dialectical relationship between the state and nation in the modern world. The nation either emerges to coincide with an existing state, or consolidates itself as a modern nation by creating its own state."¹⁵ Having postulated on the national question, it is not appropriate to discuss the colonial roots of Kenya.

III. Roots of Mau Mau.

Initially, the land which became Kenya was viewed by the British imperialists as nothing more

promising than a dreary stretch of hot, dry bush which had to be crossed to get to Uganda, the source of the head-waters of the Nile and seemingly boundless fertility and potential wealth. Lustling after Uganda, the British, in the closing years of 1800, gained access to it by building a railway across our land which they had declared a British Protectorate.

The immediate preoccupation of the British was how to make the railway profitable. The solution, which they gradually stumbled upon, was to make the territory of Kenya a White "Man's country", where European settlers would take for themselves all the best agricultural land and produce something for the railway to transport. The massive land grab of what became known as the "White Highlands" was forced upon reluctant or indecisive British officials by rogue aristocrats like Lord Delamere, who simply arrived, looked, and took what they wanted, leaving the administration to rationalize their activities in subsequent land policies.¹⁶

There was nothing systematic and well-planned about the process which made Kenya a settler economy. By World War I a fixed policy on land alienation had still not been decided upon by the colonial government, but their dithering made little difference to the thousand or so Europeans and Boers - the Kaburus - who decided to force the ineffectual administration to see matters their way.¹⁷

A few, more far-sighted officials argued that a settler - dominated economy would prove to be more trouble than it is worth. It could be both needlessly expensive and politically dangerous.

But such approach was not adopted. Soon after World War I an over-populated Britain willingly exported its land-hungry citizens and rewarded its soldiers with land grants in Kenya.

The policy of white settlement had been articulated as far back as 1905 by Sir Charles Eliot, the British commissioner from 1901 to 1904. He wrote:

In other words, the interior of the Protectorate is a White Man's country. This being so, I think it is mere hypocrisy not to admit that white interests must be paramount, and that the main objective of our policy and legislation should be to found a white colony?¹⁸

The white settlers grabbed land from the peoples of the Highlands and the Rift Valley. But at first their basic problem was how to procure and guarantee labour supply. Many of the African people were self-reliant and reluctant to leave their homesteads to go and work for the whites. Indeed the labour shortage became so acute, that in 1912, a Native Labour Commission was appointed on the instigation of European Land Holders' Association to inquire into the reasons for the shortage of African labour. The leader of the white settlers, Lord Dalmere noted that:

If the policy was to be continued that every native was to be a landholder of a sufficient area on which to establish himself, then the question of obtaining satisfactory labour supply would never be settled. The soundest policy would be to curtail the Reserves .

In response to the demands of the white settlers, the colonial state passed a Crown Lands Ordinance in 1915 and in 1917, the Chief Native Commissioner, John Ainsworth instructed his District Commissioners that all chiefs and headmen who were not 'helpful' in providing easy labour for the white farmers should be reported to the governor - which meant dismissal from office.

During this period, the colonial state in collusion with the white settlers embarked on deliberate and systematic policy of land alienation in the Highlands. African families were forcefully removed from their plots to give way to white settlement. The greatest victims of such measures were the Gikuyu, Embu, Meru, Maasai, Taita, Kalenjin and the Kamba. Hence while $1\frac{1}{4}$ million of the Gikuyu nationality were allowed to hold land only in their 2000 square miles of Native Reserves, the 3,000 European settlers occupied some 12,000 sq. miles, which was the most productive land in the country.

This inevitably created land hunger, as therefore the origin of the agrarian crisis in colonial and post-colonial Kenya. Land alienation together with the payment created a constant flow of migrant African labour to the settler estates and the emerging towns like Nairobi, Mombasa and Nakuru.

In the words the overall impact of land alienation and other related colonial measures, is that it accelerated and intensified the process of impoverishment and proletarianising of the broad mass of the Kenyan people, some of whom were compelled by chiefs Authority Ordinance to work as agricultural labourers for the white farmers. This enlarged labour force was only partly salaries. The labourer was usually given a small piece of land to farm to compensate for the extremely low wages.

Some of these African labourers worked for a small but growing 'Kulak' of wealthy African peasants in the Reserves.

Meanwhile the labour shortage continued in the settlers' estates as in the 1920s and 1930s the African labourers were able to establish themselves as squatters receiving a patch of land in return for a labour rent. In effect, these African were tenant farmers and had a firm commitment to their own five-or-six-acre farms,

Increasingly the white settlers, however, tried to transform them into wage labourers, squeezing them off the land. In time the labour rent for five or six acres was nearly trebled. This happened in 1940s when it was increased from 90 days to over 250 days. This met with considerable resentment, and the squatters nursed a ferious hatred of the whites.¹⁹

Such developments proved unbearable to the mass of the Gikuyu and related nationalities, the Masaai, Taita etc. working in the plantations and living in towns. Matters were even made worse the colonial government plan which compelled African people to terrace their land in the reserves and the white farms to prevent soil erosion. This scheme caused great hardship and considerable social and family upheaval. It was harshly administered by certain chiefs who were anxious to please their District Commissioners with monthly reports of a record number of yards dug up. Let Oginga Odinga inform us of what transpired in Nyanza: "the people were restive under heavy taxes, and compulsory labour of women and children as well as men."²⁰

IV. Politics-Social Organization in Colonial Kenya.

As the social, economic and political conditions deteriorated in the reserves and the towns, the broad mass of Kenyan people sought for modes of resolving

the Agrarian crises as well as improve their wages and working conditions. Different associations or organizations were formed by the people of Kenya to articulate their demands; and the nature and structure of such organizations were determined by the nature of the problem.

The precursor of such organizations was the East African Association (EAA) of Harry Thuku, which sought to rally the Kenya masses in a bid to overthrow the dictatorship of the colonialists by means of mass protests, demonstrations, petitions and other non-violent actions.²¹ The association managed mobilize and sensitize the peoples consciousness. This posed a threat to the interests of the British imperialism in the country and East Africa as a whole. They decide to bann the association and intern 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 peoples' unity, strength 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.²²

Thuku and his comrades were exiled to Kisinaya. The banning of EAA and the arrest of its leadership demonstrated the British imperialists determination to maintain control of the Kenyan people by force of arms. As Maina-wa-Kinyatti correctly puts it: "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."²³

The banning of EAA saw the emergence of Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). It was led by relatively militant people who took their political work much more seriously. The leadership of KCA exploited the interwar period to build its organization and create a large following among the broad mass of the people in Central Kenya and the Rift Valley, and the working class population in Nairobi, Mombasa and Nakuru. During this same period, there emerged similar associations like Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association, the Ukamba Members Association, and the Taita Hills Association. All these political associations were restricted by the Colonial authority to operate within the confines of their nationality boundaries. But although based in different nationalities, they were united by the anti-imperialist content of their demands and assertions, they were, therefore, allies in the crusade against the British imperialist forces in Kenya.

And through the contacts of their leadership, and their political activities, they helped to broaden the national base of anti-imperialist movement in Kenya. At the same time, the Nandi people led by Arap Manyei, son of the legendary Samoei Arap Koitalel continued his father's tradition of uncompromising resistance to foreign domination and oppression. He tirelessly worked to forge political unity among the Nandi and the related Kalenjin peoples. He also sent feelers for a possible patriotic alliance with the Luo and Gusii nationals.²⁴ He was arrested at Kapsabet in 1922 and he was charged with administering oath binding the Nandi people to join hands with other nationalities to wage a new war to drive out the British from Kenya. He was detained in Meru for ten years.²⁵

V. World War II and Its Impact on Kenya.

During the second world war the blood of African people was spilled in service of Imperialism. During the 1940s. nearly 100,000 of Kenya's five million inhabitants, were pressed into the war. For many Africans who went abroad with the British army - men like Bildad Kaggia and Dedan Kimathi the situation in which they found themselves was a profoundly radicalising one.... Behind the European claims to be agents of a superior civilisation they discovered a brutality

and racist - inspired genocide beyond all imagining. They recognised the hypocrisy of the British who claimed to be fighting German racism while treating their own subject peoples in a similar way - as sub-human species.²⁶

These men fought and died for the British. But the message that greeted them on their return was a simple one: nothing has changed, you are still merely servants in your own country. There were signs of worse to come. For the settlers had reached the peak of their domination during the war years, when they had a free hand to do as they liked as long as they supplied the armies with food. Their numbers were growing. 8,000 new white migrants entered the Colony after the war, hoping to settle in the "White Highlands". As far as European farmers were concerned, things had never looked more promising in 'White Man's Country'. They confidently expected it to last forever.²⁷

As resistance to colonialism gathered momentum the colonial state resorted to repressive measures. The KCA was banned 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
- ban of many respected traditions like

female circumcision among the Gikuyu, which the colonialists considered savage.

As with EAA, KCA'S leadership was detained and its activities driven underground. KCA continued secretly, mobilising people particularly in Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, the squatters of the Rift Valley and Central Kenya, but under serious difficulties. Why? Because the colonial state "systematically passed and enforced all sorts of oppressive measure, such as direct statutory compulsion, 'imposition of hut and poll tax, curtailment of African lands",²⁸ using the Kipande system for controlling movements of African labourers and for locating and identifying them".²⁹ It was required by law for all African males to carry this slave identification with them at all times "and to produce it when demanded by the police".³⁰ Any 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."³¹

These new measures greatly agrieved the peoples of Central Kenya and the Rift Valley. In response, the Kikuyu and related nationalities under the auspices of the banned Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) launched an oathing campaign to enroll the peasantry in a secret conspiracy against the British colonial rule. Secret underground committees were established throughout the Reserves and among the Gikuyu, Embu, Meru and Kamba in

the Highlands. In fact a new type of loan - the administration of a mass oath to a whole community emerged in 1947-48 when the agrarian crisis of the Olengurone squatters came to ahead. Eleven thousand Kikuyu were faced with forcible eviction from their lands. The affected peasants resorted to oathing en masse. It was a community pledge - a commitment to resist eviction and agricultural restrictions.

Earlier on in 1944, Kenya African Study Union (KASU) was formed on the advice of the Governor as a colony-wide African body with which the lone African member of Legislative Council, Eliud Mathu could consult. Later its name was changed to Kenya African Union (KAU). Initially KAU was led by moderate leaders who favoured the settler formula of representation, like Harry Thuku and J. Gichuru. This explains why the KCA members refused to be incorporated into KAU before Kenyatta assumed its leadership in 1946.

Under Kenyatta's leadership, KAU embarked on a nation-wide campaign, to recruit more members and mobilize the Kenyan people for the struggle against colonial oppressive and exploitative rule. Consequently, mass resistance and expression against British imperialism was on the increase at the petit-bourgeoisie leadership of KAU confronted the government with unprecedented propaganda. However, these middle class the asoni conceptualised the political struggle in terms of constitutional change and parliamentary. They favoured negotiations

as opposed to revolutionary method of struggle advocated by sections of its leadership. These were mainly the ex-servicemen like Bildad Kaggia, J.D. Kali, Dedan Kimathi, P.J. Ngei and others who had returned from serving the British in India, Burma, Ceylon, and the Middle East and Europe. These militant African politicians were also aware of subtle and discreet preparation on the pipeline by the Gikuyu and related nationalities to confront the colonial authority. But some of the militant nationalists were afraid of revolutionary change, and they are the type Frantz Fanon described as violent in their words and reformist in their attitudes, those who, when they see the masses up in arms, rush to the colonialists to acclaim: "this is very serious.... we don't/^{know} how it will end; we must find a solution, some sort of compromise, those who use the anger of the masses as a bargaining argument for concessions and private deals with colonialism."

The KAU leadership had not thought of, and was not ready for, a violent confrontation with the colonialist forces. Thus when the broad mass of the Kenyan people from the Reserves and the Highlands decided to confront the colonialists with revolutionary, the KAU leadership vacillated.

VI. Contribution of Trade Unionism During This Period.

Trade Unionism was an integral part of this struggle against British Colonialism. The emergence of trade union movement must be traced back to the eviction of Agikuyu and related nationalities from their land and the introduction of taxation and forced labour, which forced many Kenya people to seek work in towns in particular in Nairobi, Nakuru and Mombasa and in agricultural plantations. Wages were low, work was irregular housing was appalling and many of them lived in slums of Pangani, Majengo and Mathare Valley. Here they were equally subjected to gross abuses of racial discrimination and the Kipande system. These conditions together with spiralling cost of living sparked off restiveness on the black working class. As this small embryonic class tried to organize to change this state of affairs, they met with fascist measures. The most highlighting example is the strike at Uplands Bacon Factory in which workers were shot dead, and their leader Cege Kibachia sent to prison. His Workers Federation Movement was banned.

On May 1, 1949, six trade unions came together in Nairobi to form the East African Trade Union Congress (EATUC) Fred Kubai, a leader of the transport workers became the president, and the militant Asian leader, ~~M~~ Khan Singh became general secretary. EATUC was a radical

organization, committed not only to fighting for improved wages and working conditions but also to confronting the settlers and the British administration.

In fact, in a Labour Day the following year, the leadership of EATUC raised the demand for independence under majority rule, the first African organization to make such a demand. The colonial authorities were quick to respond.

Kubai, Singh and a number of other union leaders and activists were arrested. Those still at large called a general strike, and for nine days Nairobi came to a complete standstill. Large crowds of strikers clashed with the police until they were driven off the streets by a massive show of military might.

The strike spread like a bushfire throughout the country, eventually involving some 100,000 workers. The part of Mombasa was closed for two days. The colonial authorities stood firm, however, and the strike was crushed. The EATUC was broken.³²

The EATUC secretary, Makhan Singh was the one charged of "stirring up the natives." He was detained without trial for the next eleven years. The other union leaders were released after serving prison terms. Kubai was released after eight months in prison.

With the banning of EATUC, the union activists changed tactic and threw their weight into the organization of a Secret revolutionary organization that linked up with similar developments initiated by the KCA in the countryside. Whereas the KCA was primarily concerned with the land issue, the Nairobi militants looked to the overthrow of British Colonial rule and the seizure of political independence.

What is evident from the above analysis, is that "despite British attempts to encourage purely "tribal" divisions in order to fragment the people, during the 1930s and 1940s there was a ground swell of anti-colonialist sentiment which transcended ethnic divisions and enabled Africans and Asians from various parts of Kenya to organize themselves to fight together for their common interests as workers and victims of colonial oppression".³³

Asians like Isher Dassis, M.A. Desai, and later Makhan Singh and Pio da Gama Pinto, were especially prominent in publicising grievances through newspapers, and the trade union movement. The unions, using with considerable effectiveness the weapon of the general strike, organized labour on a class - not ethnic, racial or occupational-basis. Their leaders fought to retain their independence of action, and refused to be co-opted by the colonial administration.³⁴

More significantly by the late 1930s and 1940s there were organizational links between the unions in the towns and the majority of the people in the countryside. Resistance to various aspects of colonial policy was often nation-wide. For instance, the trade unions, and such organizations as the KCA, the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association, the Ukamba Members Association, the Taita Hills Association and the North Kavirondo Central Association, all took up the issue of land alienation and demanded a better deal for the African people.³⁵ Nationalist sentiment nurtured by such bodies as the Forty Group, the Action Group within KAU, and the unions under Cege Kibachia, Makhan Singh and Fred Kubai, must be seen as part of a general world-wide Afro-Asian movement against colonial domination. As the militants mobilized people in towns, and among the squatters in the Rift Valley, and the poor peasants in Central Kenya to struggle for their liberation, the moderates within KAU began to vascillate. They wanted a constitutional change of government.

Thus in the 1950s when the tide of nationalists resistance to British imperialism had heightened, the alliance of the militants and moderates cracked, as the latter preferred to negotiate, while the former - aware of the violent nature of imperialism - chose to fight for their uhuru. But the militants had a formi-

dable task of fighting for the allegiance and support of the broad mass of the Kenyan people against moderate nationalist leaders, of whom the leading force was Jumo Kenyatta, the leader of KAU. This organization did not as yet even consider raising the demands for moderate reform and protestations of loyalty to Britain.

Kenyatta still looked to the election of the Labour government in Britain in 1945 as the way to achieve reform in Kenya and to start the country along the gradual road to independence. Labour, he believed, would stand up to the settlers and curb their racism. He gave too much credence to the promises of the Labour left and was accordingly unprepared for Labour's craven capitulation to the settlers. He was not alone in this: even the settlers were surprised at Labour's consideration for their interests.³⁶

However, some of the measures taken by the Labour Government in 1951 considerably undermined the credibility of Kenyatta and his moderate allies in KAU. In May 1951, James Griffiths, the Colonial Secretary visited Kenya and announced his programme of constitutional reform. The country's 5 million blacks were to be given 5 nominated seats on the Legislative Council, when the by-now 50,000 whites were to get 14 elected members. These pronouncements created disenchantment among the black population, and in the process KAU lost popularity, as many of its adherents enrolled in Mau Mau

in growing numbers.

VII The Militants Organize for Armed Struggle.

The preparation for violent confrontation with the colonialists started in the main during this period, and the African ex-servicemen were very instrumental in such activities. These people found the Land Committees and the KCA already at work in secret in a field fertile with grievances.

These militant got completely disillusioned by the stand of Kenyatta and his allies in KAU. Odinga inform us that: "It was leaders from Nyeri like Dekan Kimathi, Stanley Mathenge, Paulo Njeru,..... who even before the declaration of the Emergency, had advocated fighting from the forests, and who had begun tentatively to survey the forest areas, to store arms, and to make plan for supply lines."³⁷

These militants found more allies in Nairobi where the life of the workers was "characterised by chronic unemployment and hopeless housing conditions, and inevitable police harrassment and brutality, there grew a number of people who were extremely dissatisfied with the oppressive conditions."³⁸ These are the people who finally decided to do something about these unbearable conditions.

These Kenyans then constituted themselves into anti-colonial group called the Forty Group (Anake a 40) outside the formal KAU structure.³⁹ This group was led by a secret Central Committee that had been established with strong trade union participation in Nairobi. The body had almost virtual control of the black estates in the city and soon set up its own special organ to acquire arms by illegal purchase or by stealing.

Stolen guns and home-made guns of iron piping were stored away; returned ex-servicemen gave shooting instructions under cover of dynamiting at Stone quarries. They also organized a counter-intelligence organization which followed the movement of government security.

In Nairobi the taxi drivers, the black marketeers, the unemployed lumpens were enlisted, and a network of local committees were set up, which were to prove vital links and supply lines with the fighters in the countryside and the forests. These plans and preparatory activities were not revealed to the moderate leaders of KAU, even some of the people involved were themselves KAU branch leaders.

The recruitment of cadres transcended the nationality boundary, as some Nyanza men working as labourers in nearby farms in Central Kenya and the Rift Valley were recruited. Attempts were also made to contact the Maasai at Narok.

The salient issues to note is that at this period Kenyatta and his close associates had lost control of KAU, as the militants took charge of other branches, including the all important one of Nairobi. Kenyatta was certainly aware of these developments, but he chose to a middle-of-the road approach. He was, however, opposed to violence. Listen to Kenyatta:

I am afraid of this left-wing group, I believe that their dark and half-educated minds will lead them to use force. 40

Meanwhile the Wananchi of Kenya were becoming more disillusioned with the KAU constitutional approach to resolving Agrarian and national independence questions. In a meeting held at Kaloleni in Nairobi to decide on these issues, it was decided that the land delegation of Mbiyu Koinange and Achieng Oneko to Britain would be the last deputation, and if the British Government took no notice of it, the people would be led to new forms of struggle. The Colonial Office refused to oblige. Let Bildad Kaggia one of the leading participants explain: "The KAU militants who were at the centre of 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 deputation, 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 to the deputation received from the Colonial Secretary. All his emphasis on the insulting attitude of the British towards Africans helped our committee to convince the people that deputations to London were useless."⁴¹

Back at home, Kenyatta made ill-fated moves to convince the white settlers about the viability of KAU moderate policies. But the settlers rejected it.

The stage was thus set for a violent confrontation between British imperialism and the broad mass of the Kenyan peoples in Central Kenya and the Rift Valley. The militant nationalists intensified their campaign for the violent struggle against the colonial state and white settlers independent of KAU's blessings. The collection of arms, ammunitions, the recruitment of cadres and oath administration were now on the increase among the working people in Nairobi, Nakuru and in the countryside.

These activities of Mau Mau militants soon attracted the attention of the colonial state and its apparatuses, which responded with repression, which in turn served only to increase and strengthen the support of the movement among the Wananchi of Kenya in the Reserves, Settler Estates and in towns. The white settlers equally became hysterical about what they saw as an impending violent uprisings.

The British Government also got alarmed with these developments, and in October 6, 1952, a new Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring was dispatched to Kenya ostensibly to deal with the looming crisis, through suppressing African discontent. It had dawned on the British imperialists that these new developments required a different 'Captain' in charge of the Statecraft.

Increasingly the secret preparations of KCA, the Landi Committees, and the work of Mau Mau Central Committee began to leak out. The people's patience could not be contained any longer, and there were sporadic acts of violence in several parts of Kenya. In October 1952 the killing of Senior Chief Waruhiu of Kiambu in broad daylight, near Nairobi shocked the colonial government into realization of the struggle of the freedom struggle and its support among the people.⁴²

VIII Declaration of the State of Emergency and the Start of Armed Struggle in Kenya,

In October 20, 1952, a State of Emergency was declared in Kenya, and troops and police went on rampage rounding up KAU and Mau Mau leaders and activists. The first police swoop was called Operation Jock Scott, and 183 leaders were arrested. By the middle of November some 8,000 blacks had been arrested, detained and imprisoned in different parts of the country.

The British colonial offensive was not only a calculated plan to destroy Mau Mau and unity and dam the revolutionary spirit of the people, but the Governor also hoped that Mau Mau could be suppressed without much effort within a few months. But the events were to prove later that he had a narrow perception of how widespread and deep-rooted the movement was, and how determined these militant nationalists were to get rid of British imperialism. Baring even seemed to believe that Kenyatta was the leader of Mau Mau, which was not true as plans were in the pipeline to eliminate Kenyatta as a collaborator when he was arrested.⁴³

The first arrests were followed by waves of others. Almost overnight Kenya's African political leadership was gaoled. Those imprisoned included the leadership of the secret organization within KAU. Such measures

caught Mau Mau movement preparation for the war against the British imperialist in its embryonic stage. The movement was just in the process of training and aiming its combatants, and forging solidarity links with nationalities outside Central Kenya.

Seemingly the Central Committee of Mau Mau had wanted a longer period of preparation before declaring the war against the British colonialists, but the Governor hamfistedly and unwillingly had seized the initiative. Furthermore it seems open confrontation might not have followed, the movement might have ridden out the repression and regrouped for a later day, but for one the white settlers and the police took Baring's state of Emergency as an opportunity to declare open season on the Gikuyu and related nationalities, and to beat, torture and shoot them back into submission. Resistance in such circumstances was inevitable.

In January 15, 1953 the few leaders of KAU and Mau Mau who survived the swoop convened a secret meeting at KAU headquarters at Kiburi House. This meeting decided to have a fresh oath and a fresh undertaking: to wage armed struggle against the British colonial state and white settlers, and their African allies. They also set up a Secret War Council, and moved its base to Mathare Valley in the mud and thatch huts among the trees. Mathare was then a major base of the Kenyan

black working class and the unemployed, as it is to-day.

Under its new organization, the major duties of the War Council were to coordinate the movements' war efforts, mainly to: provide the guerilla army with men, weapons, medical supplies, clothing and strategic information; and organize more Mau Mau cells in the urban centres and in the rural areas.⁴⁴

The War Council was also charged with reinforcing discipline in the Movement, and with the elimination of all its enemies, spies and informers, the recruitment of more members, and the organization of an elaborate system of agents, whose task was to infiltrate the colonial machinery in order to obtain weapons and strategic information.⁴⁵

IX The Armed Struggle Starts.

The military wing of Mau Mau, later named Kenya Land Freedom Army (KLFA) under the command of General Stanley Mathenge wa Mirugi entered the Nyandarua (Aberdares) forest in June 1952 to begin the war against the British imperialism. It was a small force of about 300 fighters based in Nairobi. In December 1952 Dedan Kimathi joined KLFA at the age of 32. As Odinga explains:

Two kinds of people went to the forests; Leaders like Dedan Kimathi and Mathenge wa Mingi escaped the police net and retired to the forests with prices on their heads, there to make a military stand. Round them they rallied the men who had taken not only the unity oath of the KCA but also the later fighting oath. Like their leaders these men had become targets of the police; they retreated to the forests for their safety from the arrest and turned into full-time guerilla unity. 46

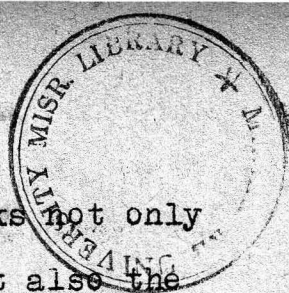
Many of the recruits of Mau Mau were the agricultural labourers in Central Kenya, the squatters in the Rift Valley, and the black working class in Nairobi and Nakuru, together with the unemployed who had survived the arrests. This is not unique to Mau Mau, other liberation movements elsewhere in the Third World have often recruited from these class of people. For example in Nicaragua, when Sandino led his people in the war against American Imperialism it was from these two groups - the semi proletariat and the lumpen - that he drew most of his troops. 47

In time the armed struggle escalated, as the arrests mounted by the colonial state failed to destroy the movement. The arrests opened the way for a full-scale guerilla war, and to the dismay of the British colonialists, they discovered that large areas of the country (Central Kenya and Rift Valley) had effectively passed out of his control and into that of Mau Mau.

As Odinga writes:

At the height of the struggle there were several relatively autonomous zones of resistance and fighting: Nairobi which was the vital supply centre, the Kikuyu reserves, Mount Kenya, and the Aberdares (Nyandarua) Forests, and the settler farms of the Rift Valley. In the forests the fighters set up permanent headquarters, which not only resisted government attack, but also launched offensives, like the famous raid on Naivasha police station of March 1953 when 173 prisoners were released and much ammunition seized. 48

The forests proved impregnable to the British army for about eighteen months. The British had underestimated the strength and extent of the rebel organization, and were soon to realize that the means of repression that they employed were completely inadequate to cope up with guerilla operations. They failed to break the Mau Mau operations in Nairobi, which enabled the leadership of the movement to recruit from other nationalities particularly the Kamba. The Mau Mau guerilla fighters also made contacts with Arap Manyei of the Nandi who started administering oaths and training parallel guerilla units. He was arrested and detained in Mfangano Island on Lake Victoria where he remained until 1962, just a year before independence.



In fact, Mau Mau had within its ranks not only non-Kikuyu and related nationalities, but also the Asians. Kefa Wanyonyi of North Nyanza was a member of Mount Kenya Chief Committee, and he played a crucial role in recruiting the Luhya people into the movement, and supplying arms and ammunitions. In November 1953 he sent a thousand bullets through a messenger. Unfortunately the British military intelligence finally arrested Wanyonyi. He was brought to trial, and with the written evidence bolstered by the testimony of his foreman, a Muganda, who chose to become a State witness, was found guilty. Kefa was then hanged.

Perhaps, more revealing about the participation of other races is Odinga's articulation that: between January and February, 1953 Stanley Mathenge, Kiego Mboko and Gitau Matenju received as many as 500 recruits from Nairobi into the forests; they were equipped with 36 rifles, 45 pistols (almost all the pistols were acquired through Pio Pinto.....)⁴⁹

To some settlers these developments seemed the beginning of the end, and they feared that the struggle would soon engulf the whole country.

At the same time the British Government in London saw the Mau Mau war as a great challenge to her position not just in Kenya but throughout Africa. Consequently

troop reinforcements were drafted in, and a new military commander, General Erskine, was appointed. The propaganda machinery was streamlined and sharpened, as the colonial administrators, missionaries and British educationists assumed the task of isolating the Movement from the people by portraying it as atavistic and blood-thirsty band of gangs. There were abetted in these activities by scores of African homeguards and reactionary petit-bourgeoisie politicians and businessmen, and civil servants.

But still the British army and police were unable to come to grips with the nationalist forces. Instead they concentrated on destroying their support in the reserves and the towns, establishing prohibited areas along the fringes of the forests, breaking down the traditional dispersed village settlements, and ordering the concentration of villages under the army, police and homeguard control. The ultimate goal of these measures, was to act the forests off the supply lines and starve the nationalist forces into the open.

The British colonialists seemingly did not make the mistake about the movement. Unlike the some Kenyan historians and politicians who depict it as a 'tribal' or a peasant rebellion, the British saw it as a nationalist movement which if not checked was bound to engulf many parts of the country.

The British came to terms with the fact that Nairobi was the effective center of the armed struggle. It was here where funds were raised, weapons and ammunition collected, and fighters recruited. Without this source of sustenance the Land Freedom Army based in the forests would have been crippled. There were also conscious of the involvement of the black working class and the trade unionists.

Besides, sustaining the guerilla struggle, it was in Nairobi that Mau Mau conducted its political offensive against the British colonialism. The Mau Mau urban task force managed to organize boycotts of European owned shops and of European goods, organized boycott of public transport, and early 1954 was preparing to call a general strike in the city.

The British suspicion and recognition of the black trade unions as the backbone of the movement in Nairobi were proved by General China, the leader of the Mount Kenya Unit, captured in January, 1954. His ultimate confession gave the British intelligence officers the leads it needed to cut vital supply lines and to formulate new tactics against Mau Mau forces.

Acting on these information, the colonial government mounted Operation Anvil, in which 25,000 soldiers and police rounded up the entire African population of Nairobi just over 100,000, and screened and dispatched to specially prepared detention camps all men

between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five - the warrior age from the so-called affected nationalities. Over 15,000 men and women were interned without trial.

Any African carrying a union card was automatically arrested and interned. The entire leadership of the transport and Allied workers, Union and Domestic and Hotel Workers Union, both Mau Mau strongholds were detained, and the bulk of the membership driven out of Nairobi to the Reserves.

With the Operation Anvil, the British colonialists managed to disrupt the resistance groups in Nairobi and severing of the supply of arms, ammunitions, money, clothing, and medical supplies to the freedom fighters in the forest:

Subsequently, the British proceeded to restore their control over the settler districts and in the 'Reserves' forcing the fighters to retreat deep in the forests. In the 'Reserves' villagisation was intensified, and by October 1955 over 1 million Gikuyu and related groups had been forcibly resettled behind barbed wire in some 854 heavily policed villages.

This programme was obviously modelled on the forcible settlement of Chinese squatters in Malaya, but it was carried out with greater brutality and bestiality in Kenya. Mau Mau suspects were arrested in doves and

the number interned eventually reached 77,000.⁵¹

The British thus instituted a reign of terror on the people of Kenya, and in the course of the Emergency over 1000 guerilla fighters were hanged. Over 500 were hanged for the offenses less than murder, some 290 for possessing arms and ammunitions and an incredible 45 for administering oaths.

X. Tides Turn Against Mau Mau.

In the wake of such massive repressive and fascist measures against the Wananchi of Kenya, the backbone of the movement in Nairobi and countryside was broken, as the remaining combatants penetrated deep into the forests of Nyandania and Mount Kenya. The strength of Mau Mau cadreship was considerably reduced from a maximum of 15,000 at the end of 1953 to only some 2,000 by the end of 1955 and even less at the end of 1956.

The British army led by the then Captain Frank Kitson devised new tactics which were devastating to the movement. He formed pseudo-gangs of captured and surrendered Mau Mau cadres under the control of the police which penetrated the forests to track down combatants and kill them. Perhaps the greatest success of this tactic was the capture of Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi. He was executed in 1957.

In the course of the war the British military and police forces reportedly suffered some 600 fatalities, of whom only 63 were whites. Mau Mau combatants (excluding those hanged) were officially put at 11,503, but this figure could have been more.

Although Mau Mau was depicted as an almost cannibalistic orgy of rape and murder against defenceless people (whites and blacks), the truth is that only 32 of the white settlers were killed. Of course many black lost their lives in the war. These included Senior chiefs, wanihiu and Nderi, and collaborators like Ambroze Ofafa and Tom Mbotela, and scores of African homeguards. Later an attempt to recapitulate on this question of elimination and its impact and implications to the anti-imperialist struggle in colonial Kenya.

At this stage it is important to note that even though the British forces had scored decisive military feats against Mau Mau, they realized that it was not adequate to guarantee its position in Kenya in the long run. The British government realized that the solution lie with the creation of a stratum of black Kenyans who were loyal and ready to serve the interests of British capital.

The creation of this stratum required the institutionalisation of some reform measures. But the white

settlers were not willing to buy any concessions to the African demands for uhuru. However, the Macmillan government had no option except making concessions.

The Colonial State started by encouraging the wealthier peasants to transform themselves into landed gentry, and the development of moderate trade union movement from the ashes of the militant and progressive movements of Makhan Singh, Fred Kubai and Cege Kibachia. These loyalists were exempt from certain fees and taxes. They could move around freely, without a pass, while their suffering kinsmen were imprisoned in camps and 'protected villages'. They had access to land consolidation committees where they could put forward their own interests. They alone, among the African population of Central Kenya, could plant export-crops and own trading plots.⁵²

It was this same class of people who were the chief beneficiaries of the Swynnerton Plan, which implemented Mitchell's scheme for expanded production in the colony. The Swynnerton Plan aimed at the consolidation and registration of land in the 'reserves' on a freehold tenure basis, in order to enable the 'reserves' to absorb thousands of Kenyans repatriated from Tanganyika and other parts of the colony, where it was feared they would spread Mau Mau sentiments.

During consolidation in Central Kenya, begun in 1955, half of the land was awarded to less than 2% of the population. Those in a position to buy land from the poor became richer once the restriction of African coffee-growing were removed. The poor became landless. Land alienation which was one of the burning issues leading to the Mau Mau armed struggle, continued.

In other words, the Colonial government had succeeded in creating a puffed-up African middle class, a group of nascent grabbers and looters whose prosperity grew out of treachery of the broad of Kenyan people. Such people shared the aspirations of the British. Their goal was to possess business or settler-style mixed farms, frequented by settler golf and business partners. They shared with the foreigners similar interest of damping the revolutionary potential and energy of the wananchi.

But these measures were not enough. The colonial government painfully recognised that the only solution to secure the allegiance of African petit-bourgeoisie was to grant independence. At least these people "could be trusted to make "Independence" safe for the continued operations of international capital".⁵³

The white settlers were highly opposed to these proposals. But the British Government stood firm. By 1960, some form of independence had become inevitable. International Capital had deserted the settlers, who had

simply become too expensive to support. America, looking to expand her trade and investments with Africa and Asia, pressured Britain to disentangle herself from the empire. Granting 'independence' made good political and economic sense to the imperialists, once they had created a tame collaborating class with an interest in 'smooth transition'.⁵⁴

More significantly the deal was imperative as a measure to guarantee the security of these interests and preempt the possibility of future rebellion by the wananchi of Kenya.

Thus when Kenya was granted 'independence' in 1963, the British handed over power to a coalition of moderate and reactionary Kenyan leaders led by Jomo Kenyatta, a man whose popularity among the blacks had been assured by his arrest on October 20, 1952 and subsequent imprisonment in the land of the Turkana people. In these arrangements, the losers were those who had fought for liberation.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Kenyatta's government turned its back on the land question, which formed the core of agrarian crisis. The nationalist demanded land transfer without compensation. Instead wananchi of Kenya were made to purchase land at inflated prices, with money lent by the British government

and the World Bank. Loan repayments then forced the wananchi into perennial indebtedness and poverty. Many of the poor wananchi could not afford to buy land. Excluded from land consolidation schemes of the Emergency period due to their active support to the Mau Mau freedom fighters, they were to remain landless in new-colonial Kenya of Kenyatta and Moi respectively.

XI. Some Reflections on the defeat of Mau Mau.

At this stage it is important to reflect on the concrete issues which contributed to the military and political defeat of Mau Mau, before we attempt to answer some of the salient questions raised at the introductory section of this paper concerning the interpretations of the movement.

On the basis of the discussion above, it is evident that by the end of 1956, Mau Mau forces were not only worn out by the four years war, but with limited supplies and lack of any credible international support, such as a rear base and sources of supplies, their dynamism as a fighting force was on the decline. Having been cut off from the broad mass of the working people of Kenya who were their main backbone and the source of all their supplies and communications, the guerilla fighters became desperate and had to resort to the struggle for survival. Overtime some of them became indisciplined, and started

looting peoples' property, and indiscriminate killing of wananchi and fellow combatants.

Rifts within the leadership of the movement were also on the increase. Earlier on in August 1953 a conflict had emerged between Mathenge and Dedan Kimathi. Maina-wa-Kinyatti writes: "in August 16 1953, Stanley Mathenge once a prominent leader of the movement boycotted a conference convened by Dedan Kimathi, and tried to use his position to sabotage it, but without success."⁵⁵ Such rifts inevitably hampered the activities of the movement at a time when the British imperialists had intensified their counter-insurgency operations in the towns and the countryside. They made it possible for the fifth column of the enemy forces to infiltrate the movement, and even recruit some of its personnel to form the pseudo-gangs which dealt a serious blow to Mau Mau. They were deployed in the forest to hunt and shoot the remnants of the guerilla fighters in the forests of Nyandania and Kirinyangu Mountain. One of their harrasts, was the leader of Mau Mau Dedan Kimathi.

Mau Mau's mode of organization before the conference of August 16, 1953, also had inherent weaknesses, as the eight armies of the movement tended to be autonomous, thus conducting operations without consultation and approval of the High Command. This certainly created the spirit of 'warlordism' among some of the units,

with the guerilla's being loyal to their respective commanders, and not so much to the Defence Council. There are possibility of such tendencies causing the ultimate defeat of Mau Mau. In fact, the initiatives of General China to convince the leadership of Mau Mau to negotiate with the British is a testimony of the fact that the movement had been infiltrated by the enemies way back in 1953.

Perhaps one other major limitation of the movement which contributed to its defeat was in the field of propaganda especially after Operation Anvil which broke its backbone in Nairobi. Thereafter the propaganda against Mau Mau as a 'savage, atavistic movement' from the sensational press reports, to government and army handouts and the British Government Corfield Commission proved effective as it infected even the African population. Mau Mau fifth column unit in Nairobi having been suppressed, the movement failed to match the imperialists in this field.

In addition the murder of Ambrose Ofafa and Tom Mbotela, though justified as they were outright allies of the Colonial regime, had negative impact, in that it was to isolate Mau Mau from other nationalities. Ambrose Ofafa was not only a KAU member, but also a leader of the Luo Union Nairobi Branch. Given the degree of political consciousness prevalent among the

majority of the Luo community then, it was inevitable that Ofafa's death was interpreted from a nationality standpoint, and not class. To many of the Luo people, he was a martyr, and it is no wonder a memorial hall was constructed in Kisumu in his honour.

All these factors put together were responsible for the military and political defeat of Mau Mau. But not all the guerilla fighters left the forests. Some of them remained and later regrouped to form Kiana Kia Muingi (KKM), which was a grass-root organization. It was committed to 'free land' through active seizures if necessary. It planned to capture political control of KANU's rural branches, and also to collect arms as insurance against a "sell-out at independence". The greatest weakness of KKM as Mau Mau before it, was organizational. When Kenyatta chose to move against its members in 1961, he easily isolated the leaders, and detained its cadres.⁵⁶ With the defeat of KKM the militant nationalists were left without an organizational base, and they remained a minority faction within KANU. They had failed to create their own sources of funds, their own propaganda organs, and institutionalized popular support.⁵⁷

XII. Recapitulation On Interpretations and Some Lessons To Be drawn on Mau Mau Armed Struggle.

In the introduction we mentioned that Mau Mau has been subject to different interpretations by scholars

and politicians. It is now appropriate that we recapitulate on these interpretations so as to put Mau Mau on its proper place in Kenya's historiography. In the course of our discussion above, we established that the insurgency was prompted by two broad issues: Agrarian crisis, resulting from land alienation in Central Kenya and the Rift Valley for white settlement, and the national independence. There were other variables like forced labour, taxation, kipande system and racial discrimination, and the low wages and poor working and living conditions of the black working class in towns, which impinged seriously on their freedom to self-determination and good living.

By the 1940s and 1950s the wananchi of Kenya could not bear such tribulations any more. They chose to resort to war to resolve these contradictions. That the war was concentrated in Central Kenya and the Rift Valley is indisputable. However, it needs to be emphasized that it is in these areas where the contradictions between the Colonial state, white settlers, and the black people were sharpest. Those who argue that Mau Mau was essentially a Kikuyu affair like William R. Ochieng must know that no movement has ever engulfed a whole country all at the same time. In any case such approach is not only a historical but it also negates the mode of capital penetration of the pre-capitalist Kenyan society, which in turn conditioned the nature of

of responses to imperialism at different stages of the peoples struggle to get rid of it. Perhaps Ochieng wanted the peasants in Majimbo and Rusinga Island to rebel against the white settlers, when the latter had not alienated their land. Obviously peasants in such places conceptualised their enemies in terms of chiefs and their askari kangas, not settlers.

Above all, the argument of the like's of Ochieng is watered down by ample evidence adduced above on the participation of people from other nationalities and races in the movement. Leading among such people were General Ole Kisio a Maasai, Kefa Wanyonyi of North Nyanza, Abdul, a Somali and Pio da Gama Pinto. The last three were responsible for the supply of arms and ammunitions. Furthermore, we have demonstrated in our analysis, that even though land was central in prompting the insurgency, the freedom fighters were equally convinced that their stolen land could not be regained without the attainment of political independence;⁵⁸ and not to mention the crucial role played by the black working class and trade unions. The latter's conceptualization of the problems transcended nationality and racial boundaries.

When Professor B.A. Ogot argues that Mau Mau ideology was rejected by the 'nationalists' in 1960 he is actually referring to how the moderate and re-

actionary petit-bourgeois politicians in collusion with the imperialist forces isolated and neutralized the militant nationalists, and squeezed them out of the mainstream of Kenya's post-independence power politics. Ogot's 'nationalists' are those who frustrated the popular programme and political line of the militant nationalists. The people who were ideologically and materially committed to the promotion and protection of Western Capital. These are the people who sided with the imperialist to defeat Mau Mau Armed Struggle in Kenya.

Some Lessons.

For lack of space, we cannot delve into the details of the tactics and strategies used in the battles fought between Mau Mau and the British forces, which lasted for ten years. However, certain salient issues are worth noting.

Firstly, the real backbone and engine of the Mau Mau armed struggle was the working class small though it was, the peasantry and the lumpens.

Secondly, that only revolutionary violence can succeed in dismantling an institutionalized state oppression and exploitation. The Reform measures initiated during the State of Emergency, and the granting of political independence resulted from the eruption of the insurgency. This spate of changes', as one poli-

tician once observed, ...'perhaps ... would never have taken place; at any rate, they would never have come as quickly as they did' if not for Mau Mau. The experience of Mau Mau simply reaffirms the experiences of Angola, Algeria, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, and Uganda in the recent past.

Thirdly, the lukewarm participation of the middle classes in the war denied the movement of articulate intellegentsia who would have countered the propa- ganda of the Colonial regime, and become an organic component of the fighting cadres of the movement.

Fourthly, the inability of the Mau Mau leadership to make a concrete analysis of the socia-economic and political conditions of the colonial economy, limited their scope to identify their principal and secondary allies from foes. The mass oaths undertaken by the movement were perhaps necessary at the initial stages, but over time an attempt ought to have been made to recruit only persons who were prepared to sacrifice their life for the future of their country.

Lastly, the way the British forces were able to isolate Mau Mau cadres from the broad mass of the Kenyan people, is a clear indication of organizational weakness of the movement, and the fact that the leadership suffered from near sightedness, and failed to estimate the actual and potential strength of their enemies, and

change tactics accordingly. In fact some of the isolated acts of violence before the Emergency period were manifestations of the spirit of adventurism. They warned the British Colonial state and the settlers about the impending war, and this explains why the Governor seized the initiative and declared a State of Emergency on October 20, 1952. The movement was then forced to go to war against the British forces without adequate preparation. This certainly proved costly to Mau Mau.

Conclusion:

In our analysis we have demonstrated that even though Mau Mau was decisively defeated by the British and their African allies, the fact still remains that the self-sacrifice of thousands of Kenyan people forced the independence issues. Kenya was eventually granted political independence by the British. More than that, Mau Mau made the British considerably vulnerable and susceptible to the demands for self-determination elsewhere in Africa.

Mau Mau Movement answered the call of the African people to resolve the agrarians and national independence questions. As the contradictions between settlers and the colonial state and the people heightened in the late 1940s, and 1950s, KAU's negotiatist standpoint and leadership became more and more irrelevant. The people wanted

a new organization and new leadership to articulate and champion their cause.

We have also demonstrated that the characterisation of Mau Mau as a 'tribal' or peasant rebellion is incorrect, more so it negates the vital role of lumpens, and the black working class and their trade unions led by Kenyans of black and Asian origin, in the movement. Furthermore those who took part in the organization and the actual of Mau Mau armed struggle did so to regain their lost land and independence. Indeed they saw themselves as belonging to one nation - Kenya. At no time did the Mau Mau leadership and combatants self-determination of the Gikuyu and related nationalities outside the existing framework of Kenya as a nation-state.

Central to the struggle was the resolution of agrarian and national independence questions in the interests of the broad masses of Kenya. This explains why twenty four years after 'independence' in Kenya, Mau Mau still remains an inspiration and symbol of national consciousness to the many Kenyans who are engaged in the struggle to eradicate landlessness, unemployment, the continued domination of the economy by western capital, and the presence of foreign military bases of Britain and the USA. In a word neo-colonialism. The re-emergence of militancy and clandestine

political activities among the intellegentsia, soldiers, prison warders, students, the working class and the peasantry, under the auspices of MWAKENYA and UKENYA, drive home one fundamental lesson that so long as the Agrarian and National Democratic questions are not resolved in the interests of the populace, the people will always rise up to demand and fight for their rights. Here lies the significance of Mau Mau Armed Struggle to Africa, as it demonstrates the fatality of interpreting African crises in terms of the nationality question per se. It, further, demonstrates that central to conflicts in Africa is the questions of democracy, national independence and the agrarian reforms.

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