



Paths of the Mau Mau Revolution: Victory and Glory Usurped

GATIMU MAINA

ABSTRACT. This paper is a study of major paths to frustration in the history of the Kenya colonial state from the early 1890s that confluenced into the Mau Mau Revolution of 1952 to 1965. The survey shows how the communities of Central Kenya—the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru—reacted to these frustrations at different times. Land issue among these peoples, especially the Gikuyu, remained central to their politics. They ultimately formed a secret movement called Mau Mau that took up arms to liberate Kenya. The survey also shows that while myths are spiritual foods for nationalism, the myths created around Chief Waiyaki, the first Gikuyu nationalist martyr, and Jomo Kenyatta, were misplaced, though they sustained petitional politics and the militant Mau Mau movement. Both the Mau Mau and the colonial state were steeped in a crisis management when the state of emergency was declared in 1952, as none of them was ready for the situation that developed. The colonial state could not contain the Mau Mau tide without military assistance from Britain. Since the Mau Mau themselves had not prepared well for the war by the time it came, it brought about many organisational problems. The Protestant Christian missionaries unwittingly produced the first educated nationalists and directly caused the creation of the Kikuyu Independent Schools movement and the Kikuyu Independent Church which were a big factor in propagating Mau Mau ideals. Although the Mau Mau supporters lost the military battle, they won the war of independence for Kenya. But despite their victory, they were sidelined by the colonial state and moderate national politicians in the process of transferring power to Kenya Africans.

KEYWORDS. Mau Mau movement · Mau Mau guerrillas · Jomo Kenyatta · moderates · squatters

INTRODUCTION

The colonial invasion of Central Kenya began in 1890 when the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) built a fort at Dagoretti in the southern Gikuyu (or Kikuyu in Anglicized spelling) territory near Nairobi. The Gikuyu people around the area did not welcome it and the IBEAC had to abandon it in 1891 because of constant harassment

(Muriuki 1975, 143). Following closely, also near Nairobi, was the construction of Fort Smith near the homestead of Chief Waiyaki, the first Gikuyu nationalist martyr. However, in 1892 Waiyaki and the head of the garrison at Fort Smith quarrelled, ostensibly over Waiyaki's betrayal of a planned punitive expedition to the Gikuyu of Githunguri. This led to Waiyaki's arrest, detention and death. The lore of his death tells us that he was buried alive upside down by the IBEA officials. This *mythical* death became a pillar of nationalist lore of the political movements that appeared later: the East Africa Association (EAA) in 1921 to 1923, the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) in 1924 to 1940, the Kenya African Union (KAU) in 1945 to 1953, and finally the Mau Mau Movement in 1950 to 1965 (*Mau Mau* refers to the movement itself, *the Mau Mau* refers to the members of the movement). These movements initially had the biggest support among the Gikuyu, while the Embu and the Meru peoples were heavily drawn into the KAU and Mau Mau.

Historical facts show that the myth around Waiyaki was misplaced as his political role during the process of colonial intrusion was not nationalistic. Prior to the erection of Fort Dagoretti, Waiyaki had entered into a "blood brotherhood" treaty for mutual friendship and protection with Captain Lugard of the IBEA. In 1887 he had accorded explorer Count Teleki a safe passage through his territory. After his arrest, he advised his warriors not to intervene for his release (Muriuki 1975, 149-151).

There is also no known information that the local council of Gikuyu elders ever sanctioned the treaty with Lugard. These facts explain why Gikuyu warriors did not find it a noble mission to rescue him. He also expressed his personal unwillingness to be rescued. This shows that he expected pardon from his captors. All the same, the myth of his heroism persisted because the IBEA portrayed him as a traitor to the brotherhood treaty which won him African sympathy while he was actually a sympathizer of the IBEA.

Rosberg and Nottingham (1966) advise that the departure of Waiyaki from the political scene immediately released more energy for resistance. Fort Smith was immediately "besieged" and general fighting continued until 1896 (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966, 14; Muriuki 1974, 151). Nevertheless, while the resistance continued, some vagaries of nature took their toll. Between 1895 and 1899 there were swarms of locusts and cattle and smallpox epidemics, all culminating in a big famine and deaths of many people and animals (Muriuki 1974, 155).

These calamities greatly weakened Gikuyu resistance and affected their psychology towards the activities of the colonial intruders. Some warriors who had been hitherto in the resistance army sought employment in Ugandan caravans or in the construction works of the Uganda Railway which was then going through the southern Gikuyu territory. Meanwhile, the British Foreign Office in London sent to Kenya more administrators who intensified punitive military expeditions in the whole Gikuyu territory. Some opportunistic Gikuyus perceived politico-economic opportunities as advantages in this disintegrative situation. They became unbridled collaborators with colonial authorities. Initially, it was Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu near Nairobi, who was followed by Karuri wa Gakure and Wang'ombe wa Ihura in the northern Gikuyu districts of Muranga and Nyeri (Muriuki 1974, 152-153, 158-160). In the game of collaboration, these leaders and their successors were eventually joined by technocrats and Christian converts in the fields of agriculture, education, and health services. These minority people were vertical communicators between the colonial authorities and the African masses. They were fortune *hunters* in the colonial situation. The state had to support them as they formed that African category that provided the colonial state with a semblance of *consent by Africans to be ruled*.

Following the disintegrative situation in the Gikuyu territory and the arrival of the Uganda Railway in Nairobi in 1899, it was easier for the colonial authorities to subdue the whole of the Gikuyu and the Embu peoples. However, traditionally, these peoples never had a central government to mobilise the whole nation in the event of a national crisis. Whatever resistance there was, it was a local initiative. Thus the resistance was not nationally coordinated and the Gikuyu and the Embu territories were subdued piecemeal by 1902 and 1906, respectively. There were no surrender terms and as Rosberg and Nottingham have observed:

... the tribe as a whole avoided the overall, crushing disasters inflicted in other parts of Africa on people who either were smaller in number or whose social and political organization permitted substantial tribal mobilization against the intruder. The absence of any decisive early confrontation between the Kikuyu and the British meant that...there was no symbolic moment of surrender to the new authority...the resilient Kikuyu seldom behaved with timidity, apathy, or obsequiousness that might be displayed by more decisively conquered people. (15-16).

The same situation applied to the Embu and the Meru.

LAND ALIENATION AND SQUATTER PROBLEMS, 1903-1952

The calamities of the 1890s and the punitive expeditions that followed closely rendered the lands to the north of Nairobi sparsely populated as most owners had retreated to Murang'a and Nyeri districts to seek mutual consolation among their relatives. Thus, when the colonial government started settling white settlers on these lands in 1903, it argued that the lands had been empty. To realise the dream of creating a white man's country in Kenya, the government sent for more white settlers from South Africa. Others came from New Zealand, Australia and England (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966, 19). By 1906 it was not only the lands to the north of Nairobi that were alienated for the white settlers but also lands far afield in the Rift Valley. Some of the southern Gikuyus who lost their land went into the Maasai territory to seek for better opportunities. Yet others remained on the alienated lands to become squatters while others went to the Rift Valley and became squatters or indentured labourers. The Gikuyu people did not take lightly the loss of their lands to the white settlers. This was so because before the 1890s calamities they were expanding southwards into the Maasai territory because of population pressure in their traditional territory. Now the establishment of Nairobi as the seat of the government in late 1890s and the construction of the Uganda Railway on the southern edge of their territory completely blocked their expansion.

For the alienated lands to be satisfactorily developed, additional African labour was required. However, around this time Africans had not been effectively drawn into the money economy. To make them work, the government introduced hut and poll taxes payable in cash. Nominated African chiefs were required to use force to recruit labour for the settlers. This caused a lot of bitterness and further disintegration in the African society. A revealing statement attributed to Lord Delamere, the leader of the white settler community, regarding African labour reads:

We consider that taxation is the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking employment...To raise the rate of wages would not increase but diminish the supply of labour. A rise in wages would enable hut and poll tax of a family, or sub-tribe to be earned by fewer external workers. (quoted in Bogonko 1980, 3)

Taxation therefore became a weapon for forcing more Africans to work for the white settlers. Over the years, this process built up a lowly paid and dissatisfied labour force on the white settlers' farms. In the

meantime, the colonial government saw the dispossessed elements that had ran into the Maasai territory as a source of bad influence on the Maasai people. They were evicted from the Maasai territory in the late 1930s and settled at the Olenguruone settlement scheme in Nakuru District. According to Kanogo (1987), the settlers of Olenguruone were in due course joined by the squatters who had been evicted from white settlers' farms for refusing to attest to the native resident labour ordinances, especially the one of 1937, which greatly curtailed their cultivation and grazing rights on idle white settlers' farms (Kanogo 1987, 97,105). These two groups were a rarefied lot of hardened and combative Gikuyu settlers. Both of these groups believed that the plots they were occupying in the Olenguruone scheme were rightfully theirs and were a compensation for loss of their traditional lands. They reminded the government that the 1932-1933 Kenya Land Commission had "recommended that some lands be made available to them" (the Gikuyu) as they were overcrowded in their native reserves (Kanogo 1987, 105). They argued that it was not the wish of those who had initially settled in the Maasai territory to be in Maasai land from where they had now been removed. They went there because of dispossession of their traditional lands. Again it was not their wish to leave the Maasai territory where they had been settled for more than thirty years and had been leading an independent economic life. Those who had been evicted from the white settlers' farms argued that they had no land in the traditional Gikuyu territory.

Both groups argued that they had the right to own freeholds of land anywhere. Therefore, they objected to the soil conservation conditions and other regulations imposed on the scheme and demanded security of tenure for their plots. To show solidarity in their stand, they resorted to taking an oath of solidarity in the early 1940s as a way out to protect their "newly acquired plots" and themselves. Passive resistance became more and more overt and the Olenguruone settlers moved to the High Court to enforce their rights but with no success. As the conflict escalated, some 11,800 resistant settlers were eventually evicted between 1949 and 1950 to the semi-arid Yatta scheme. Some of those who refused to go to Yatta went back to the already overcrowded southern Gikuyu reserves where they had no land or other means of livelihood. They became a burden to the reserves (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966, 256-258). A few others went into the urban areas and government forests in Nakuru District to become illegal squatters or to hide there.

The Olenguruone affair had a central role in nationalist politics and the development of the Mau Mau movement. Psychologically, the Olenguruone settlers won because they resisted the colonial government to the end. While they lost materially, they made a statement to the colonial state that the Gikuyu had not lost sight of their rights to land. This inspired the Gikuyu squatters on white settlers' farms, the peasants in Central Kenya and the politicians in Nairobi, and showed them how to create solidarity.

THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND CULTURAL CONFLICT, 1898-1931

It is difficult to divorce Christian proselytisation from the colonial and liberation processes in Kenya. The first Christian mission was started in Gikuyuland in 1898 at Kikuyu by the Protestant Church of Scotland Mission. Other areas of Gikuyu, Embu and Meru territories were eventually dotted with different Christian missions. The process of proselytisation required that African neophytes be a little literate to read the Bible. Therefore, these missionary stations provided rudimentary literacy facilities. This literacy gave the Christian converts "the possibility of great power" in socio-politico-economic matters in the future (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966, 17). This power was a revolution by itself because it rewarded some pariahs of the society. Those who were recruited by the missionaries into their new institutions were orphans, ex-slaves, and sometimes, disobedient children. Adventurous and curious characters like Johnstone Kamau (later Jomo Kenyatta) who sought security in the exotic institutions were not also lacking. This new breed of Africans was *purposely moulded* to become the purveyors of the new faith and the white man's civilisation. But little did the missionaries realise that the Christian missions were breeding the first crop of outstanding literate African nationalists. The most outstanding Gikuyu nationalist prime movers like Harry Thuku, James Beauttah, Joseph Kang'ethe and Jomo Kenyatta attended protestant missionary schools. These nationalists were a category that spiritually dissociated itself from missionary and colonial ideologies, yet retained some Western values.

Instinctively, these elites felt that loyalty to the colonial ideology was an impediment to their goals. They felt that they should be the intermediaries between the Africans and imperial London. It was against this background that Thuku launched the EAA in 1921 to fight

for African rights. The party's manifesto was mainly against forced labour in public works and for white settlers in the White Highlands, the carrying of identification papers in a metallic container like a dog collar, hut and poll taxes which were not used for African welfare, better working conditions for Africans, and further alienation of African lands. The EAA further demanded issuance of land titles to African landholders in the reserves as a mark of security of land tenure.

The proselytisation process, particularly at the protestant missions, unreservedly depreciated African culture and encouraged total embracement of Christian and Western values. To the dissociatives this was tantamount to losing negritude (African personality). When the missions demanded in 1929 that all their adherents and employees sign *kirore* (agreement, attestation) with the missions to the effect that they would not have their daughters circumcised (clitoridectomy) or join the KCA, drink liqueur, take part in traditional dances, pour out libations to the ancestral spirits, among other things, some were revolted by the requirements. They refused to sign *kirore* and broke away from the missions to form the Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association, the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association and the Kikuyu Independent Church, which were independent of government and missionary management. Enculturation was the aim of the independent churches, for Christianity to reflect some good African values, as not everything touted as Christian was truly Christian. The schools taught nationalism, which was later supportive of the Mau Mau revolution. The education associations in 1938 founded the Kenya Teachers' College at Githunguri near Nairobi. The college became a Mecca of Kenyan nationalism and African pride.

Dr. John Arthur of the Church of Scotland Mission at Kikuyu spearheaded the *kirore* movement of the protestant missions. The Catholic Church was disinterested in the matter and discreetly kept out of it. The Gikuyu, Embu and Meru peoples felt that Dr. Arthur was amending the Bible and that Christ could also wear African culture. In addition to founding the independent church and the schools, they composed a cultural anthem called *Muthirigu*. The song-dance typically ridiculed those who had signed *kirore*, *irigu* (uncircumcised girls; singular *Kirigu*), the missionary stations, or anything that was not culturally right or nationalistic. The land issue was also very visible in the anthem. By 1931, the dance had spread like a bush fire and turned out to be very much anticolonial in nature.

Meanwhile, in 1929 the government had felt embarrassed by the circumcision crisis because Dr. Arthur was in the governor's executive council representing African interests. He was made to resign from his position in the council.

Clitoridectomy took centre stage in cultural nationalism because of the importance of circumcision in the cultures of the central Kenya peoples. Circumcision is a rite of passage and one does not become a full citizen of the society unless one is circumcised. An uncircumcised girl was not considered *capable* of giving birth, let alone being a mother of one's children. Circumcision was not restricted to physical surgery. It was accompanied with intense counseling about personal, familial, and societal responsibilities, interpersonal relationships, morality, ethics, and communal law. Blocking circumcision for women was tantamount to blocking self-procreation for the entire population.

NAIROBI: THE BASTION OF NATIONALIST POLITICS

The founding of Nairobi as headquarters of the colonial state goes back to 1896. Its importance in nationalist politics lay in its endowment with modern communication technology and an African population that was concentrated, enlightened and had a variety of grievances. It was against this background that civil servant Harry Thuku launched the EAA in Nairobi. To the colonial state, the EAA was radical and dangerous. Thuku was arrested and detained in March 1922. The strike that followed Thuku's arrest in Nairobi turned violent and some Africans were shot dead. The EAA was banned in 1923. The banning of the EAA was followed by the launching of the KCA in 1924. While the KCA filled the vacuum left by the EAA, it concentrated mainly on Gikuyu land and their cultural and educational grievances. The party, like the EAA, sent a few memoranda and deputations to the Kenya colonial governors in Nairobi but without success. The intransigence of the colonial state prompted the KCA to dispatch the young Jomo Kenyatta to London in 1928 and 1931 to personally petition the Colonial Office. Kenyatta stayed in London for fifteen years from 1931 and by the time he came back to Kenya in 1946, he had no concessions to show. The KCA was moderate, but it made one more important demand: African representatives in the Legislative Council (Maxon 1980, 100).

While KCA members felt frustrated, they did not adopt a radical stance. This moderation may be explained by the 1922 arrests,

detention, violence, and the trauma experienced by EAA sympathizers. They remained constitutionalist until they were banned in 1940. However, after the ban, they went underground and mobilised secretly until 1946 when they reluctantly joined the KAU.

In addition to the introduction of oathing into political management to create loyalty among its members, the KCA published a Gikuyu monthly journal called *Muiguithania* (The Reconciler) in 1928 (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966, 100-102). Besides being the base of African colonial politics, the other important political KCA constituency that developed in Nairobi over the years was a militant labour movement. The movement nurtured very radical KAU leaders like Bildad Kaggia and Fred Kubai, who eventually became Mau Mau managers.

JOMO KENYATTA AND COLONIAL POLITICS, 1928-1963

There is no single Kenyan who influenced Kenya's colonial politics more than Jomo Kenyatta. Here is a very apt and poetic description of the status of the man during the colonial era:

He summed up their [Gikuyu's] hopes and gave new life and confidence to the struggle. His absence abroad had enabled him to avoid the strains of factionalism of Kikuyu politics. To the old he was not too young, to the young he was not too old; to the illiterate he was not too educated, to the educated, he was nobody's fool. He had the knowledge of the British political system possessed by few Africans. He had written a book, which cried out its faith in the dignity of his people and their way of life. His passage back... brought him to a land where he was all things to all men. His political problem was how to maintain this in a situation where the prospects for African political development were hardly possible (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966, 216).

Kenyatta was a man of fate. As a young orphan, he got a free missionary education. In quick succession he got a job with the Nairobi Municipal Council when he was invited by the KCA to join as its secretary general, editor of the *Muiguithania* in 1928, and sent to England the same year to present KCA's grievances. However, after going to Britain again in 1931, Kenyatta never came back to Kenya until 1946. In the interim, he studied at Moscow University and the London School of Economics; published KCA grievances in the British press; published Gikuyu cultural testament, *Facing Mt. Kenya* in 1938; and helped to organise the Pan-African Congress at Manchester

in 1945. His long stay in Britain and of course his exposure, created a myth around him in his people's minds. After his return to Kenya in 1946, he was again invited to lead the KAU. He was to lead the KAU again in 1961 after his release from detention. He led the party and Kenya to independence in 1963. Kenyatta never created any political party but was always invited to lead organisations created by others. He fitted well in leadership positions because of his charisma.

Kenyatta's KAU had massive support among the Gikuyu, the Embu and the Meru peoples of Central Kenya and the lumpenproletariat of Nairobi. Unlike the KCA, the party allowed young people to hold offices. Some of these young people had been to the Second World War, which had given them exposure. They had been to Burma, India, Middle East, Ethiopia and England in the campaign against the Axis powers. India was a big revelation at this particular time because it was struggling for independence. In 1949, these young men started feeling that nothing much could be achieved through constitutionalism. Therefore, they started hatching plans to take over secretly KAU's leadership. The major leaders of the radical wing of the party were Bildad Kaggia, Paul Ngei, Fred Kubai and Eliud Mutonyi. By 1950, this group understood political undercurrents in the country following the eviction of squatters from white settler's farms, the Olengurone settlers's plight and the general labour unrest in 1947, 1949 and 1950 in Mombasa and Nairobi, respectively (Zezeza 1989, 166). They sought to radicalise the approach to politics by secretly creating solidarity among those who had no faith in petitional politics. Therefore, in 1950 they started administering "the oath of unity" secretly to some KAU members which according to Kaggia resulted in "solidarity and closeness of all members, which was not evident in KAU. After the oath, every single member took it upon himself to recruit others while in KAU members relied on party officers to do the work of recruiting" (1975, 107-108). It was around this time the Embu and the Meru were heavily drawn into Mau Mau activities.

By 1951 the radicals had entrenched themselves unofficially beneath the KAU leadership. This enhanced the pace of taking oath in Nairobi and the outlying Gikuyu districts. Kenyatta and the KAU now started feeling isolated, and coincidentally in 1951, the colonial government asked Kenyatta to condemn the act conducted by a "secret society called Mau Mau." Kenyatta did the condemnation, but in late 1952 the Mau Mau Central Committee did not take it well and advised him to cancel any subsequent meetings meant for the purpose.

This was the first time Kenyatta came face to face with the Mau Mau Central Committee members (Kaggia 1975, 113-114). At the same time, the colonial authorities doubted Kenyatta's sincerity in the condemnation. Meanwhile, sporadic violence started occurring and it was blamed on the Mau Mau. This volatile security situation drove the colonial governor to declare a state of emergency on October 20, 1952. Kenyatta and other prominent leaders of the KAU like Kaggia, Ochieng Oneko, Kun'gu Karumba and Kubai were arrested for allegedly "managing" the Mau Mau society.

All along Kenatta had been a moderate constitutionalist. He understood the suffering that violence would cause to the people and possibly delay independence for many years (Kenyatta 1968, 42). But his absence from Kenya for fifteen years could not have brought him to terms with the depth of the people's frustrations. This was one of the causes of the difference in approach between the KAU radicals and himself. The people had reached the end of the tether and had nothing more to lose by being violent. However, like Waiyaki's, Kenyatta's constitutional political activities were criminalised in the process of looking for a scapegoat for the volatile security situation in Kenya. He was imprisoned and detained from 1953 to 1961. By imprisoning him, the colonial authorities made him a martyr. The best authority to prove that Kenyatta was not connected with the management of the militant Mau Mau Movement is Rawson Macharia (1991, 9) the chief prosecution witness at Kenyatta's trial, who said: "I shall regret, throughout my life, my appearance as chief witness against Mzee Jomo Kenyatta at that notorious Kapenguria Trial. [But] still, I feel much relieved to have the chance, at least, to confess my fatal guilt conscience while some of those I betrayed are still alive."

THE MEANING OF MAU MAU

Unlike many liberation movements whose names reflect the ideology of the movement, Kenya's liberation movement did not initially have such a known name. Magrougi ole Kedogoya was charged in 1950 before a magistrate at Naivasha for allegedly having attempted to recruit his supervisor into "a secret society" with intent to overthrow the legal colonial government of Kenya. When questioned, the man told the magistrate in the Gikuyu language that:

"Ndingikwira maundu mau mau nderirwo ndikoige ni kياما. Ni hitho iitu. Ninyui mwatutunyire bururi nahinya; mugitutu ngombo

cianyu...Bururi uyu ni witu, twatigiirwo ni Aaguna Aagu. Tutiakaurekia". (I cannot tell you those, those things I was told not to tell you by the movement. It is our secret. Besides, you are our enemy. You [white people] took our land by force and made us your slaves... This is our country; we inherited it from our ancestors. We shall never abandon it.) (Quoted in Kinyatti 1992, xiii-xiv)

The English colonial press could not grasp the statement and out of confusion seized upon the words *mau mau* (those those) to characterise the secret movement (Kinyatti 1992, xiv). Because of the wide coverage of the local and international press, the world came to know "Mau Mau" as the name of the secret movement. However, according to Kaggia the movement had been using the *Kiswahili* language word *muhimu* (important) as a password for the movement and its activities (Kaggia 1975, 115). However, after *muhimu* declared an open war on the British colonial government, the combat forces referred to themselves as the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA). In October 1953, when Field Marshal Dedan Kimathi, the supreme of the guerrillas, published the ideological position of the liberation movement, he introduces the name of the movement name by stating that:

We reject being called [Mau Mau or] terrorists for demanding our people's rights. [It is derogatory]. We are the Kenya Land [and] Freedom Army. (Kinyatti 1986, 16)

Thus, Kenya Land and Freedom Army became the name of the liberation forces by which Kimathi referred to the whole Mau Mau movement, passive and combat wings. However, the derogative word Mau Mau remained the popular name of the movement because of the British propaganda machinery. Further, this propaganda machinery depicted the movement as a primitive, chauvinistic and anti-white tribal cult of the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru peoples. Some of these tags came about because of western interpretation of the Mau Mau oaths and their symbols. There were three major oaths. The oath of unity was the first oath taken by all Mau Mau initiates. The oath inducted new members into the Mau Mau society and emphasised unity and solidarity of the members. The second oath, the *batuni* oath (platoon, warrior) was administered to those who were going to take up arms against the colonial state. It emphasised consecration of one's life to the cause of liberating Kenya and redeeming the alienated lands. The third oath, the leaders' oath, was administered to the leaders of the

movement of all levels. The oaths emphasised loyalty to the struggle and the people in it. It stressed secrecy and courage. The oaths were a stronger bond than commands from the leaders. Counseling was undertaken when the oath was administered. Code of conduct was also issued (Gikoyo 1979, 33-34; Wachanga 1975, 34-39; Kinyatti 1986, 137-138).

Besides Kimathi, the other important leaders of the KLFA were Field Marshal Macaria Kimemia, General Stanley Mathenge and Field Marshal Muthoni Kirima (a woman). These leaders operated from the Aberdare Forests. Outstanding leaders in Mt. Kenya forests were Generals Itote China, Kassim Njogu, Kimotho Tanganyika, Kubukubu, Gititi Kariba, Field Marshal Musa Mwariama and Bamuingi. General Kimbo Mutuku operated in the European settled areas of the Rift Valley. General Kago Mboko operated in the reserves. General Enock Mwangi commanded the urban guerrillas.

THE BATTLE LINES ARE DRAWN

By being intransigent right from the 1920s, when the Africans started showing political consciousness until 1952, the colonial government had chartered paths for a revolution from five constituencies. Revolutionaries would come from the squatters and the Olenguruone settlers, the lumpenproletariat of Nairobi and other smaller urban areas like Nakuru, the radical political wing allied to the KAU, peasants in the Central Kenya reserves, and to a lesser degree, the petty bourgeoisie who felt deprived of opportunities for self-improvement. Additionally, the declaration of emergency, the occupation, and closer administration of the reserves by the colonial armies and the administrators from 1952 onwards created a lot of tension.

Masses of young men and women who could not stand this occupation escaped into the forests to join the nuclei of guerrilla forces that were already there. The rapid build-up of the guerrillas became a big strain on the resources available to the forest fighters. On the other hand, this build-up became a very big challenge to the colonial authorities in Nairobi who had to call for reinforcements from Britain. According to Basil Davidson, Britain and the Kenya colonial authorities marshalled 50,000 troops for the Mau Mau War (1987, 263). These troops were well armed with bomber airplanes, tanks, personnel carriers and other sophisticated weapons (Kinyatti 1992, 127). The mobilisation of such strong forces by London and Nairobi proves how the colonial state viewed the gravity of the Mau Mau liberation effort.

General H. K. Wachanga who took part in the forest combats and was also a field secretary of the KLFA, tells us that the guerrilla armies comprised more than 51,000 cadres (1975, 182-187). They were armed with rifles, shotguns, homemade guns, and grenades and crude traditional weapons of all kinds. While they were poorly armed, they ingeniously shot down bomber planes and razed down some government establishments. Efforts that were valorized in Mau Mau songs. Colonial state statistics point to guerrilla strength ranging between 10,000 and 25,000. This war was the first great war of liberation in Africa and was emulated by later guerrilla movements in Africa. The fighters did not enjoy any external material support, yet they were so resilient and resourceful.

While the colonial administration thought that it would contain the activities of the Mau Mau by arresting and detaining the KAU leaders, it made the situation even worse. Mau Mau supporters escalated their anti-state activities. Those who could not go to the forests but remained in the rural areas formed themselves into cells to provide intelligence, food, and safe passage for the guerrillas. Some supporters in the urban areas, mainly Nairobi, became urban guerrillas and continued eliminating their perceived enemies—Europeans and their African collaborators. Like in the rural areas, there were cells in Nairobi that facilitated transmission of intelligence, firearms, medicines, and new recruits to the forests and other towns. Meanwhile, some more stubborn Gikuyu squatters and their families had become *persona non grata* in European-owned farms and they had to be repatriated to the crowded Gikuyu reserves. Most of them were defiant of the scheme and some decided to go to the forests directly or drifted into urban areas to join urban guerrillas.

Having no good centrally organized structure to meet the guerrillas' needs, the big number of new guerrillas strained the movement. This situation resulted in the trend of the guerrillas founding their bases closer to their home areas where they could expect security, food supplies, and moral support. This tended to weaken the attempts of their leaders to create a centrally controlled guerrilla movement through the Mau Mau War Council and the Kenya Parliament of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army.

Parallel to the guerrilla build-up in the forests, defence posts were built in the reserves by the government to provide security for the collaborators. In addition, whole communities, whether Mau Mau supporters or collaborators, were removed from their scattered farms

and forced to build new concentration villages where collaborators could be easily protected and where perceived Mau Mau supporters' movements could be monitored. This move was aimed at cutting off the Mau Mau passive wing from any contact with the guerrillas. The perceived adult Mau Mau supporters were forced to provide unpaid labour for public works. Such activities could take ten hours a day and the Mau Mau had barely two hours in a day to tend their needs. Hunger, malnutrition, disease and school dropout among Mau Mau families were a scourge. While the Mau Mau in the reserves were being punished, the armed forces were besieging the forests from the ground and the air. This conventional approach was not effective enough because the guerrillas had ingeniously developed survival tactics. They continued attacking the colonial forces heavily until 1956. From this date the guerrillas were on the defensive and being not quite centrally commanded, the forest forces could not be forced to surrender all at once. Only individuals surrendered. This prolonged the struggle to 1965.

To weaken the main base of Mau Mau support in Nairobi, the colonial government mounted Operation Anvil in 1954 to arrest, screen, and detain suspected Mau Mau supporters. Because of the operation, there were additional 17,000 convicts and 50,000 detainees in prison (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966, 335). However, detaining and jailing so many people within a short time had its problems. The detention camps, which had been hastily built, were forced to accommodate more than the acceptable number of inmates. The government found itself confronted by diseases, deaths, and even rebellion by the inmates.

THE KLFA CHARTER OF 1953

The only known communication between Mau Mau and the outside world was the KLFA Charter of 1953, which attempted to explain the political position and programme of the movement. The Charter was sent to the British government. Copies were circulated to some foreign governments, such as Indian, Egyptian, French, American, and Russian. Pan-Africanists such as Kwame Nkurumah of Ghana, George Padmore and W.E. B. Dubois were also sent copies. To whip public support in Britain, a copy was sent to Fenner Brockway, who was a sympathiser of the Mau Mau cause (Kinyatti 1992, 16-17). The thrust of the Charter was self-government for Kenya. The major corollaries were an

African judiciary based on African laws, African control of the economy and the withdrawal of British armed forces from Kenya. The distribution of the charter to foreign governments and personalities was also a big attempt at foreign policy.

The launching of the KLFA Charter, coupled with the sustained armed struggle and the eventual creation of the Kenya Parliament in the forests on February 5, 1954 was in effect a unilateral declaration of independence for Kenya by the KLFA. This should be considered as *the independence date of Kenya* as the Mau Mau had total control of the forest areas and some reserves in Central Kenya. This was a bold and determined step. It is a pointer to how the Mau Mau perceived themselves and their national role in redeeming Kenya.

THE DECOLONISATION PROCESS, 1954-1963

By 1954, the colonial state had come to grips with the real situation created by the Mau Mau war. Immediate reforms towards independence became urgent. The government started implementing the Swynnerton Plan to improve agriculture in the Central Kenya reserves. Those who had been loyal to the state were allowed to grow cash crops. The Leyttelton Constitution of 1954 allowed a multiracial government, though with a European majority and a minority nominated African representatives (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966, 311-314). The Lennox-Boyd Constitution of 1957 allowed African representatives to be elected to the Legislative Council. In 1959, these representatives demanded a constitutional conference and it was granted (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966, 316-318). This led to the independence constitutional conferences between 1960 and 1963, which led to the negotiated independence of 1963. In 1960, these African representatives formed the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), which were countrywide African political parties. The KANU became the successor of the KAU of 1945-1953.

Those Africans who were taken on board in the Leyttelton Plan were collaborators represented by people like Musa Amalemba, while the major African figures that took part in the constitutional conferences, except Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, were literate moderate nationalists like Jomo Kenyatta, James Gichuru, Dr. Gikonyo Kiano, Tom Mboya, Taiita Arap Toweett, Ronald Ngala, Moinga Chokwe, and Ole Tipis, among others. The major settler representatives were Group Captain Briggs, Michael Blundel and Bruce Mackenzie.

Britain negotiated from a position of strength and because British citizens and corporations had invested heavily in Kenya, Britain adamantly stated that such investments had to be secured in independent Kenya and in the context of international conventions. In this context, the collaborators and the moderates had to be strengthened with a view to making them political and economic proxies of neocolonialism.

With his release, Kenyatta had been certified moderate by the colonial state. He was seen as a leverage between the extreme nationalist forces personified by Odinga, John M. Kariuki and Bildad Kaggia. Oginga himself was not a Mau Mau but espoused Mau Mau's undiluted cause of land and freedom. However, the moderate negotiators never fought for the Mau Mau leaders to take part in the constitutional conferences. The all-important Mau Mau constituency was sidelined at this epoch-making phase of Kenya's history. Reaction took root and by the time the negotiations started, the colonial government had already effectively put in place a programme of promoting loyal African middle class through cash crop agriculture. The White Highlands were opened up in 1959 to the collaborators and the moderates who could raise some risk capital. In addition, they were given soft loans underwritten by the World Bank and Britain to buy out the white settlers. Some collaborators and their children were trained in public administration. All this time the Mau Mau were either in the forests, detention camps, jails or in the reserves under surveillance. However, even with the full knowledge of Mau Mau's role in forcing drastic changes in Kenya, the moderates and the collaborators, like the colonial state, chose to relegate them to their shadows. By the time they were demobilised in 1963, land and freedom had been handed over to the moderates and the collaborators. That is why some Mt. Kenya guerrillas demanded that "before they called off the armed struggle, the KANU government must dismantle the colonial military machinery and its political machinery without conditions or compromises, and recognize the guerrilla army as a national army. But when the Kenyatta government rejected these fundamental demands—including the all-important issues of land redistribution and war reparations—the negotiations broke down and the guerrillas returned to the forests to continue with armed struggle until their demands were met (Kinyatti 1992, 50). After independence the Mau Mau were advised by Kenyatta's government to form cooperative societies to buy "marginal" lands in the White Highlands.

During the process of constitutional making and after independence, the only prominent persons who raised the question on the fate of the Mau Mau were Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, J.M. Kariuki and Bildad Kaggia. For this, Odinga's entry in the transitional government was initially refused by Britain, but even after joining Kenyatta's independent government, he and Kaggia were removed from the government for their solidarity with the Mau Mau. Kenyatta continued condemning the Mau Mau movement. J.M. Kariuki was later assassinated. An unaudited letter to the editor of the *Daily Nation* April 8, 1986 cites a statement by General Tanganyika during his trial and eventual execution in 1955. He told the white trial judge that:

After you have killed me, where I go if I find you ruling my country
[unjustly] *[sic]*, I will go to the forest and start fighting you again.

A statement like this shows the depth of perception with which the Mau Mau regarded injustice, whether from a colonial power or fellow African rulers. General Bamuingi (People's General), who was the chief negotiator for the guerrillas between 1963 and 1965, understood clearly that the independence that had come to Kenya fundamentally benefited the "barren" of the land (collaborators and moderates). The moderate Kenyans who had been on the sidelines and the collaborators who had been fighting the Mau Mau had stepped in to claim victory and that was why he and his KLFA guerrillas returned to the forests. However, unfortunately for him, some guerrillas had laid down their arms because Kenyatta's government had convinced them that "independence has been achieved." Bamuingi and his guerrillas were routed in 1965.

General Bamuingi and [General] Chui were killed on the battlefield. Their bodies were paraded in Meru Township for three days [as the last chiefs of the Mau Mau terrorists]. (Kinyatti 1992, 50-51)

Bamuingi, like other guerrillas, had sacrificed much to win solid independence for Kenya but such treatment for a freedom hero reveals the character of the national psyche. The relegation of the Mau Mau to their shadows actually and symbolically killed the glory of Kenya's struggle for liberation. History will not absolve Kenyatta's republic that usurped and betrayed the revolution and its heroes.

James Connolly of the Irish Citizens Army told his liberation forces in 1916 that:

If we win we will be great heroes, but if we lose we'll be the greatest scoundrels the country ever produced. In the event of victory, hold on

your rifles, as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. And there will be others from the sidelines, including our enemies, who will rush in to claim victory. We are all out for economic as well as political liberty. (Quoted in Fredi 1989, 221).

Connolly clearly understood the intrigues besetting a liberation movement. The situation, squarely applied to the Mau Mau movement about fifty years later. While the Mau Mau won the war of independence, they were shoved off and disinherited by the moderates and the collaborators. They were treated as scoundrels simply because independence did not fall into their hands.

CONCLUSION

The Kenya Africans, especially the Gikuyu of Central Kenya, who started showing political consciousness during the earlier days of invasion, never welcomed the establishment of the colonial administration in Kenya. This was mainly because the colonisation patterns took the form of land alienation for white settlers. Land alienation created direct conflict between the Gikuyu and the colonial state because the former were agriculturalists and were seeking to expand into the Maasai territory at the onset of the colonialism. The alienation of the lands created a lot of pressure among them and they had to seek livelihood involuntarily outside their traditional territory. This resulted in the squatter system on the white settlers' farms and the urban proletariat. The squatters worked under oppressive native labour ordinances. This led to their frustrations and their eventual militarisation.

The Olenguruone settlers had expected to own the plots they held on a freehold basis. However, this did not materialize as the government wanted controlled use of the settlement scheme to demonstrate how agricultural productivity could be improved in small holdings. The settlers resisted and eventually became Mau Mau supporters. The urban proletariat worked under difficult conditions and experienced colour bar. They were the first to mobilise into political parties in Nairobi and eventually evolved into a militant labour movement. The intransigence of the colonial state underestimated the depth of African frustrations. The frustrations crystallised into disillusionment with petitional politics. This led to the growth of the Mau Mau movement.

The Mau Mau movement won Kenya's war of liberation but were never able to gain the independence they deserved. They were

marginalised in independent Kenya. The process of marginalization occurred between 1954 and 1963 when the colonial state started creating a loyalist middle class consisting of collaborators and moderates who were allowed to go into commercial agriculture and elective politics. At the same time, some of them were coopted into administrative posts in the colonial state to prepare them to manage independent Kenya. The Mau Mau was not allowed to take part in any of these programmes. In 1960, when these moderates and collaborators took part in drafting the constitution for an independent Kenya they totally ignored the role of the Mau Mau movement in bringing about independence. Mau Mau's views about independence and the future of Kenya were never sought. The collaborators and the moderates negotiated independence that secured British interests. Some examples are Kenya's independent government accepting to buy back from the settlers the alienated lands, *instead of developments thereon*; and paying pensions to the white civil servants who were to remain in the transition government. To enable Kenya to buy back these lands, Britain and the World Bank gave Kenya long-term loans. These loans were in turn advanced to the new middle class to buy large white settlers' farms. As the Mau Mau supporters could not even raise risk capital, they did not benefit from the official land acquisition programme. Some of them became squatters on these newly acquired large African farms while others drifted into urban areas where employment is not easily available.

The Mau Mau revolutionaries had brought glory and victory to the country but were sidelined when it came to enjoying the fruits of independence. Today, forty years after independence, they and their children languish in poverty. What history will absolve those who took over from the colonial state after sidelining the real heroes of independence? ❀

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GATIMU MAINA was born in Kiambu, Central Kenya, to peasant parents who were members of the Mau Mau movement. He was prevented in 1956 from joining the Mau Mau guerrilla forces on account of his tender age. He studied economics at Silliman University, Philippines and banking at the University of London. He holds associate fellowship at the Institute of Bankers of England. He is also a development banker trained at the Economic Development Institute of the World Bank. Prior to going into private business in 1987 he was chief executive officer in state and private corporations in Kenya.