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# REVOLT AND REPRESSION IN KENYA: THE “MAU MAU” REBELLION, 1952–1960

JOHN NEWSINGER

THE “MAU MAU” REVOLT IN KENYA is an almost forgotten incident in British colonial history. At the time, it was portrayed by the British authorities as a barbaric tribal response to the pressures of modernization, as a reversion to primitive superstition and blood-crazed savagery caused by the inability of the Africans to cope with the modern world. This racist caricature disguised the grim reality of a revolt against oppression and exploitation, a revolt that was drowned in blood. The scale of the repression unleashed in the Kenya Emergency remains unprecedented in the history of post-war British military operations.

Without doubt, African protest in Kenya, if it had been opposed only by the British Government and the apparatus of the colonial administration, would have secured concessions and started the process towards an attempted neocolonial resolution of African demands without anything like the bloodshed that was to come. But in Kenya, the Africans confronted not just the British Government, but a white settler community that functioned, in Arghiri Emmanuel’s words, as “an independent factor,” that had interests separate and apart from those of the Imperial homeland, and that was prepared in the defense of those interests to unleash repression on a scale that the British themselves would not have regarded as productive.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the 1950s the British perceived their interests as identical with those of the settlers; by the early 1960s they had separated out their interests and were prepared to sacrifice the settlers in order to safeguard those interests. The settlers, unlike their kith and kin in Rhodesia, did not have the necessary social weight to go it alone. In the last instance they were dependent on

1 Arghiri Emanuel, “White Settler Colonialism and the Myth of Investment Imperialism,” *New Left Review*, 73 (May–June 1972), p. 38.

the British Government and it could dispose of them as it wished.

It is with the bloody triangle of interaction between the British Government, the white settlers and the "Mau Mau" movement in the period of the Emergency, and with the resolution of this interaction in the most stable neocolonial settlement in Africa, that this article is concerned. The "Mau Mau" rising, as we shall see, was an important phase in what can usefully be termed "the making of the Kenyan working class." The way in which the rising was defeated played a large part in shaping the Kenyan labor movement that emerged with the granting of independence.

### *The Kikuyu and Revolution*

The "Mau Mau" revolt was largely confined to the Kikuyu tribe, which had borne the brunt of the socially disruptive impact of European rule and settlement. For the Kikuyu, the white settlement was an unqualified disaster. As well as occupying part of their tribal lands, it also occupied lands into which they would have eventually spilled over had the Europeans never come. Now the settlers penned them in. By 1948 one and a quarter million Kikuyu were restricted to landholding in 2,000 square miles of tribal lands, while 30,000 settlers occupied 12,000 square miles, including most of the land worth cultivating.

On the Kikuyu reserves there was widespread poverty, unemployment and underemployment, and chronic overpopulation. There was bitter resentment amongst the great mass of the Kikuyu against those who were prepared to collaborate under the status quo. In the 1947 Kiambu District Annual Report, E.H. Windley wrote of a "tendency to create a landlord class" in the reserves, and many other observers commented on the increasing differentiation among the Kikuyu peasantry, the mass of whom were sinking deeper into poverty and economic insecurity, while at the same time a "kulak" gentry class was emerging that supported the Government.<sup>2</sup> By 1953 almost half the population of the Kikuyu reserves was without land. This process of differentiation was to provide the basis for the civil war within the Kikuyu that became an important aspect of the "Mau Mau" revolt.

2 M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country* (Nairobi, 1968), p. 79.

Over the years of colonial settlement, some 120,000 Kikuyu had been forced off the reserves and had settled as squatters on European farms, with a patch of land for themselves in return for their labor. They were, in effect, tenant farmers. Increasingly their position as independent producers came under attack from their European landlords, who sought to transform them into agricultural laborers without viable landholdings of their own. Whereas before the Second World War a labor rent of 90 days a year had served as payment for five or six acres of land, by 1946 a labor rent of 240–270 days was being demanded for one and a half acres of land. Frank Furedi has estimated that the real income of the Kikuyu squatter population may have fallen by as much as 30 to 40 per cent and that this deterioration was accelerating during the late 1940s.<sup>3</sup> A bitter hatred of the white settlers and a fierce determination to retain their stake in the land made the squatters the backbone of the revolt in the countryside.

Thousands of Kikuyu were forced off the land altogether and driven to seek work in the towns. Between 1938 and 1952 the African population of Nairobi more than doubled, increasing from 40,000 to 95,000. Times were hard. In 1955 the East Africa Royal Commission reported that "the conditions of life of the poorer Asian and the majority of Africans in the towns have been deteriorating over a considerable period." The commission found that the majority of African workers were paid too little to obtain accommodation that was adequate "by any standard," and cited instances of working men sleeping fourteen to a room, while others of necessity slept outdoors. Half the workers in private employment and a quarter in public employment earned less than was necessary to provide for their essential needs as single persons: wages were altogether inadequate to support a family. The African worker was usually hungry, poorly clothed and either badly housed or altogether homeless.<sup>4</sup> It was in these deteriorating conditions, highlighted by racial discrimination and gross inequality, that the spirit of revolt was kindled and that desperate men and women were ready to turn to desperate rem-

3 Frank Furedi, "The Social Composition of the Mau Mau Movement in the White Highlands," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1,4 (July 1974), p. 492.

4 *Report of the East Africa Royal Commission, 1953–1955* (London HMSO 1955), pp. 206, 207, 209.

edies. Nairobi was to become the center of the "Mau Mau" revolt.

The accumulation of resentments and grievances among the Kikuyu in the early postwar years coincided with the closing off of any possibility for peaceful reform or political advance. When the Labor Government's Colonial Secretary, James Griffiths, a former miner, visited Kenya in May 1951, the constitutional Kenya African Union (KAU) presented him with a memorandum demanding twelve elected representatives on the Legislative Council, the abolition of discriminatory legislation, greater freedom for trade unions, and financial aid for African farmers. Independence was a demand. In the best traditions of British social democracy, Griffiths offered to increase African representation on the Legislative Council from four to five nominees. The proposals that he put forward gave the 30,000 settlers fourteen elected representatives, the 100,000 Asians six, the 24,000 Arabs one, and the five million Africans five nominated representatives. The Labour Government's position was that the Africans should, for a long time to come, remain in the paternal care of the colonial administration and the white settlers.

Even the settlers were astonished at this sell-out of African hopes; they had been fully prepared to make greater concessions to the Labour Government at Westminster. There was no opposition from the Labour Left in Parliament, although, outside Parliament, Fenner Brockway attempted to rally support for reform in Kenya. Griffiths' proposals effectively crushed African hopes of peaceful advance. It is worth noting that the Labour Party officially came out in favor of one man, one vote in the colonies only as late as 1956, in its policy statement, "The Plural Society."

The development of the revolutionary movement in Kenya in these years is still shrouded in secrecy and uncertainty. The exact delineations of the movement have still not been satisfactorily laid bare and some doubt must exist as to whether they ever will be. However, we can say with some certainty that it was the General Council of the banned Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) that in the late 1940s decided to launch a recruitment campaign intended to enroll the whole of the Kikuyu in a movement of civil disobedience against the British. Land was the central question that concerned the KCA. Certainly the time was

ripe for such an initiative and, using the legal activities of the KAU as a cover, the movement made great headway. It was bound together by the oathing rituals traditionally important in Kikuyu life. This was the movement that was to become known to the white settlers, and has since become generally known, as "Mau Mau." "Mau Mau" was not its Kikuyu name. To them it was known variously as "Muingi" or "The Movement," "Muigwithania" or "The Unifier," "Muma wa Uiguano" or "The Oath of Unity," or simply as the KCA. It is a tribute to the effectiveness of British propaganda that a revolt in which thousands of Africans were killed still bears the bastardized name coined for it by the British.<sup>5</sup>

While the KCA General Council carried on the oathing campaign and the establishment of secret committees throughout the reserves and the White Highlands, the center of gravity of the movement began to shift towards a more radical leadership in Nairobi. Here the nascent trade union movement, in particular the Transport and Allied Workers Union led by Fred Kubai, and the Clerks and Commercial Workers Union led by Bildad Kaggia, were the backbone of resistance to the colonial authorities. The important part played by the semi-proletarianized urban Kikuyu and their unions in the "Mau Mau" revolt is still often unrecognized, but in fact their participation was crucial. It is most unlikely that any sustained revolt would have taken place without it.<sup>6</sup>

On May 1, 1949 six trade unions came together in Nairobi to form the East African Trades Union Congress (EATUC). Kubai was elected president and Makhan Singh, an Asian so-

5 Donald Barnett and Karari Njama, *Mau Mau From Within* (London, 1966), pp. 54–55. This book is indispensable as an account of the Land and Freedom Armies and of the war in the forests that they waged against the British. Barnett has also edited three highly recommended "Life Histories from the Revolution" that deal with "Mau Mau": Karigo Muchai, *The Hardcore* (Richmond, Canada, 1973); Ngugi Kabiro, *Man in the Middle* (Richmond, Canada, 1973); and Mohamed Mathu, *The Urban Guerilla* (Richmond, Canada, 1974). These are intimate portrayals of "Mau Mau," warts and all. Barnett is reputed to have material for a female life history, but unfortunately this has not yet appeared.

6 The role of the trade unions in the revolt is dealt with in the official report on "Mau Mau": F.D. Corfield, *Historical Survey of the Origins and Growth of Mau Mau* (London, 1960), pp. 255–258. For a pathbreaking academic study see Sharon B. Stichter, "Workers, Trade Unions and the Mau Mau Rebellion," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 9,2 (1975).

cialist, was elected general secretary. Early in 1950 the EATUC launched a campaign against the granting of a Royal Charter to Nairobi because of the city's undemocratic white-controlled council. Africans were urged to boycott the celebrations. The campaign was a great success and caused the colonial authorities considerable embarrassment. Presaging the future, the campaign led to violent clashes between African radicals and loyalists, with unsuccessful attempts to assassinate Tom Mboteli, the vice president of the KAU who had opposed the boycott, and Muchohi Gikonyo, a prominent Kikuyu loyalist. Soon afterwards, at a rally on May 1, the EATUC issued a demand for Kenyan independence. This was too much for the authorities; both Fred Kubai and Makhan Singh were arrested.

On May 16 those EATUC officials still at large called a general strike in Nairobi. The strike paralyzed the city for nine days and was broken only after more than 300 workers had been arrested and a massive show of strength involving heavily armed troops, armored cars and overhead demonstrations by RAF airplanes had been made. The strike spread elsewhere and, according to Makhan Singh, at its height involved more than 100,000 workers. Mombasa was paralyzed for two days.<sup>7</sup> Despite this display of militancy and solidarity, the strike failed. Without trial Makhan Singh was placed in detention, where he remained for the next eleven years, while Kubai was held in custody charged with complicity in the attempted murder of Gikonyo. He was eventually acquitted and released eight months later. This repression effectively smashed the EATUC. The Kenya Labour Department, in its annual report at the end of the year, ascribed the authorities' victory to "the careful preliminary planning of those concerned with law and order" and reaffirmed its belief "that the trade union movement should be encouraged to develop slowly."<sup>8</sup>

After the defeat of the general strike and the collapse of the EATUC, the leaders of the trade union movement threw themselves into the KCA oath-taking campaign. They joined in this campaign with the "Forty Group," a loose association made up mainly of ex-servicemen of the age-group circumscribed in 1940.

7 Makhan Singh, *History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement to 1952* (Nairobi, 1969), pp. 274, 277.

8 Ioan Davies, *African Trade Unions* (London, 1966), p. 77.

The "Forty Group" included among its members a cross-section of African Nairobi: street traders, spivs and petty criminals, the unemployed, and a good many trade unionists (both Fred Kubai and Bildad Kaggia were members). According to Frank Furedi, it was looked upon by the Nairobi Kikuyu as a Robin Hood band.<sup>9</sup> From the beginning this new leadership gave the oathing movement in Nairobi an altogether different complexion from what it had in the reserves or the White Highlands. In Nairobi it was a revolutionary movement committed to the overthrow of colonial rule by militant mass action, by strikes, demonstrations, and armed conflict, rather than to the KCA General Council's timid and ineffective adherence to civil disobedience.

Whereas the radicals had previously ignored the Nairobi branch of the KAU, they now proceeded to capture control of it, packing meetings with trade union members. In the branch elections in June 1951 Kubai was elected branch chairman, J. Mungai, another Transport Union member, was elected vice-chairman, and Kaggia was elected general secretary. Soon after, they established a secret Central Committee to coordinate and control the activities of the oathing movement throughout the city. Both Kubai and Kaggia were also members of this body. It was the effective leadership of the revolutionary movement in Nairobi. Armed squads were formed to enforce its edicts, protect oath administrators from the police, and eliminate informers and collaborators. Kaggia has described how he took part in the trial of an informer in the back of a taxi, found him guilty and immediately had him executed.<sup>10</sup>

From the base they built up in Nairobi the radicals attempted to capture control of the KAU National Executive at the November 1951 national conference. They were outmaneuvered by Jomo Kenyatta, who managed to secure the election of a majority loyal to him. As a consolation both Kubai and Kaggia

9 Frank Furedi, "The African Crowd in Nairobi: Popular Movements and Elite Politics," *Journal of African History*, 14, 2 (1973), p. 285. Furedi argues that the "Forty Group" was the driving force in the revolutionary movement and he describes it as "the most successful populist political initiative in Kenya's history to this day." This account completely ignores the role of the trade unions and is sharply contradicted by other authorities; for example, Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham, *The Myth of Mau Mau* (New York, 1966), argue that the "Forty Group" was "absorbed into the African trade union movement, which rapidly became the most militant force for protest in Nairobi" (p. 240).

10 Bildad Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom* (Nairobi, 1975), p. 110.

were elected. Under pressure from the radicals, the conference for the first time committed the KAU to the demand for national independence.

While its influence was growing in the KAU, the Nairobi Central Committee was also extending its influence throughout the oathing movement outside of the city. The Nairobi radicals were contemptuous of the KCA General Council's strategy of civil disobedience. Their militancy and advocacy of active resistance won them the allegiance of many local committees in the reserves and in the White Highlands, where younger elements were coming to the fore. By the time of the declaration of the Emergency the General Council's authority was virtually confined to Kiambu District and was being eroded even there.

The movement continued to grow and increase in strength and determination. Its activists, following the lead of the Nairobi Central Committee, became increasingly aggressive: opponents were attacked and sometimes killed in broad daylight, Europeans' property was fired and their livestock were hamstrung. The Governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, only months away from retirement, refused to heed reports of a deteriorating security situation, so the movement's activities went unchallenged. In June 1952, he retired and was succeeded by Henry Potter, who took over as Acting Governor. The following month the Commissioner of Police reported that he considered a plan of rebellion to be already under way. Reluctantly Potter agreed to limited steps to restore the situation. Collective fines and punishments were imposed in particularly disturbed areas, arrests for illegal oathing were stepped up, and an attempt was made to rally moderate and loyalist Kikuyu against the movement. Loyalist chiefs publicly condemned "Mau Mau" and great pressure was put on prominent KAU leaders, particularly Jomo Kenyatta, to repeat and endorse these condemnations. On a number of occasions Kenyatta gave way to this pressure. At a rally at Nyeri on July 26 he condemned "Mau Mau" in front of 30,000 people and on August 24 he repeated this condemnation at Kiambu.

This highlights the crucial ambiguity of Kenyatta's position. He was the undisputed idol of the Kikuyu peasantry; despite his lack of sympathy with the radicals they were forced to acknowledge him as their figurehead. His public condemnations sufficiently alarmed the Nairobi Central Committee for them to ar-

range a meeting with him. Kaggia recalls that up to this time Kenyatta was completely ignorant of the composition of the Central Committee and was surprised to find that it included two members of the KAU National Executive, Kubai and himself.<sup>11</sup> After much argument Kenyatta reluctantly agreed not to continue with his condemnations of the movement. According to Josiah Kariuki, even after this meeting Kenyatta's relationship with the Central Committee was stormy, and he writes of plans being made to assassinate him on two occasions: at a meeting in Nairobi and at the funeral of Chief Waruhiu, himself a victim of radical gunmen.<sup>12</sup> It is arguable that only Kenyatta's arrest saved him from a collaborator's fate and restored him to his position as unchallenged leader of the national movement. This evidence that Kenyatta, far from being the leader of the movement, was in fact its opponent contrasts sharply with the conviction, shared by the colonial authorities and the settlers, that he was virtually its sole instigator, the origin of all the country's problems, and consequently someone whom they had to destroy.

On August 17 the Colonial Office in London received its first indication of the gravity of the situation in Kenya in a report from Acting Governor Potter, who warned of imminent revolution:

The covert organization is the proscribed Mau Mau secret society, the terms of whose illegal oath include the killing of Europeans "when the war horn blows," and the rescue of Kenyatta should he ever be arrested and there is little doubt, though no proof, that he controls this revolutionary organization in so far as it is susceptible to control . . . In brief, public opinion of all races is greatly disturbed and the Kikuyu are sullen, mutinous and organising for mischief.<sup>13</sup>

On October 6 Sir Evelyn Baring arrived in Kenya to take over as Governor of the colony. The day after his arrival radical gunmen stopped the car of the loyalist Chief Waruhiu on the outskirts of Nairobi and in broad daylight shot him dead. This provided Baring with a dramatic demonstration of the threat the movement posed to British rule. He informed London that "we are facing a planned revolutionary movement" and on October

11 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

12 Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, *Mau Mau Detainee* (London, 1963), p. 23.

13 A. Marshal McPhee, *Kenya* (London, 1968), p. 116.

20 declared a State of Emergency.<sup>14</sup> That same day troops and police swooped down on known Kikuyu political leaders, in what they called Operation Jock Scott. By the end of the day nearly a hundred people had been arrested, including Kenyatta. This sweep, it was hoped, would behead and overawe the Kikuyu resistance and permit a quick return to normality. Baring himself envisaged the Emergency as lasting only a few weeks. Instead a bloody revolution was precipitated. Two weeks after the declaration of the Emergency the first European was killed.

### *State of Emergency*

Operation Jock Scott effectively eliminated the first rank leadership of the Nairobi Central Committee, with both Kubai and Kaggia among those arrested, but it failed altogether as an attempt to crush the movement. That was too deeply rooted to be more than shaken by the mass arrests. According to one account there were over 8,000 arrests in the twenty-five days following the declaration of the Emergency.<sup>15</sup> The destruction of European property and attacks on loyalists increased in number in succeeding weeks as the local committees took individual decisions to fight back.

It was not until January 1953 that the reconstituted Nairobi Central Committee, now called the Council of Freedom, met under the chairmanship of Lawrence Karugo Kihuria and decided to launch a war of liberation. The network of secret underground committees was reorganized into the Passive Wing, which assumed responsibility for supplying the Active Wing, the Land and Freedom Armies, with weapons, ammunition, food, money, intelligence and recruits. The Council appointed Stanley Mathenge to command the movement's armed forces, the Land and Freedom Armies, which were already beginning to assemble in the forests. The revolutionary struggle to drive the British out had begun.

Donald Barnett, in the indispensable book that he co-authored with Karari Njama, *Mau Mau From Within*, has made a number of pertinent points concerning the declaration of the Emergency. He argues that the movement may well have had

14 Corfield, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

15 Ladislav Venys, *A History of the Mau Mau Movement in Kenya* (Prague, 1970), p. 49.

long-range intentions of engaging in armed struggle against the Europeans, but that at the time the Emergency was declared it was totally unprepared. Ill-timed action by the more restive of the movement's activists precipitated the Emergency, with its attendant repression, long before the movement was at all ready for an insurrection. There was no prepared strategy to guide a protracted guerrilla war, there were no trained guerrilla cadres, there were pitifully few modern weapons and no channels for smuggling them in from outside the colony, and the movement was, as yet, confined to the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru. As Barnett sees it, far from heading off a Kikuyu uprising, the Emergency effectively provoked one before the movement was ready. A section of the settler community saw the Emergency as an opportunity for declaring open season on the Kikuyu to eradicate their political and national consciousness. Beatings, forced confessions and summary executions were common enough to arouse fear among the Kikuyu that the Europeans intended the physical destruction of the tribe. Confronted with this repression, the Kikuyu rebelled. Barnett considers that the revolt really began only in early 1953, when the first of the Land and Freedom Armies began to assemble in the forests.<sup>16</sup>

The revolt did not extend to the whole of Kenya. It was largely confined to the Kikuyu and related Embu and Meru, and was geographically restricted to the Central Province, which included Nairobi and the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru reserves, and to the four white settler districts of Nanyuki, Laikipia, Naivasha and Nakuru in the adjoining Rift Valley Province — all in all, ten districts covering an area of 14,000 square miles at the very heart of the country. Topographically, the area was dominated by the heavily forested Aberdare mountain range and by Mount Kenya. It was here that the Land and Freedom Armies established their camps.

The rebel cause had the overwhelming support of the Kikuyu people. According to General Sir George Erskine, over 90 per cent of the Kikuyu gave the rebels their moral support.<sup>17</sup> This tremendous tide of popular sympathy, together with the authorities' initial shortage of troops and lack of an effective intelligence system, gave the Land and Freedom Armies the ini-

16 Barnett and Njama, *op. cit.*, pp. 69–71.

17 Anthony Clayton, *Counter-Insurgency in Kenya, 1952–1960* (Nairobi, 1976), p. 7.

tiative in the first half of 1953. Large bands were able to move across open country to exact vengeance on collaborators and to attack isolated police and home guard posts. Casualties were heavy, but they were easily replaced by fresh enthusiastic recruits. Only a chronic shortage of firearms prevented the rebels from inflicting serious losses on the police and the settler community. If supplies of modern weapons had been available in these early days, the revolt would have developed very differently from the way it did.

From the beginning the colonial authorities set out to rally the loyalist Kikuyu against the rebels. This local application of the old divide-and-rule tactic was seen as crucially important if the police and troops were to dominate the reserves and successfully uproot the movement's underground organization. The Kikuyu home guard was intended to play an important part in this process, but it never performed satisfactorily, being from the beginning heavily infiltrated by rebel sympathizers. The rebels concentrated considerable effort on the intimidation and elimination of loyalists, so that to some extent the revolt assumed the characteristics of a civil war, a civil war between the haves and the have-nots among the Kikuyu.<sup>18</sup> During the course of the fighting over 2,000 loyalists were killed.

The most notorious incident in this "civil war" was the Lari massacre of March 26–27, 1953, when nearly 3,000 rebels overran the village of the loyalist Chief Wakahangara. This attack had its origin in a protracted pre-war land dispute in which Wakahangara had collaborated with the authorities at the expense of other Kikuyu.<sup>19</sup> Now his village was destroyed and, together with seventy others, including women and children, he was hacked to death. This raid, with its mutilated corpses and burned-out huts, became the lynch-pin of British propaganda to discredit the rebels and their cause. What were not so well publicized were the reprisals that followed, in which hundreds of suspects were killed out of hand by the police and loyalist home guards. At public meetings in the settler districts in subsequent weeks settler leaders, when asked what was being done to hit

18 For an account of loyalism and its social background see: Bethwell A. Ogot, "Revolt of the Elders: An Anatomy of the Loyalist Crowd in the Mau Mau Uprising, 1952–1956," in Bethwell A. Ogot, *Politics and Nationalism in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1972).

19 See Rosberg and Nottingham, *op. cit.*, pp. 286–292.

back, boasted that so far four hundred rebels had been shot out of hand.<sup>20</sup>

In these conditions of rebellion; civil war and government repression, Kenyatta was brought to trial, charged, together with Kubai, Kaggia and others, with managing "Mau Mau." The trial lasted five months. There was no evidence of any substance against him, but his conviction was assured. He was found guilty by Mr. Justice Thacker and sentenced to seven years hard labor, to be followed by restricted residence in the remote north of the country for life. The others all received similar sentences. Thacker subsequently received a secret *ex gratia* payment of £20,000 from the Kenya government for his exemplary services.<sup>21</sup>

Only with the arrival of General Erskine in June 1953 to take up the post of Director of Operations did the security forces begin serious efforts to regain the initiative. Troop reinforcements were drafted, bringing their strength up to 20,000 men. They were placed on an offensive footing. The Kikuyu reserves were declared Special Areas, where anyone failing to halt when challenged could be shot. The shooting of suspects on this pretext soon became commonplace. The Aberdares and Mount Kenya were declared Prohibited Areas where Africans were to be shot on sight. The Army carried out large-scale sweeps in an attempt to bring the elusive rebel bands to battle where they could be destroyed by superior firepower. All these measures failed to stem the tide of revolt.

The gravity of the situation from the point of view of the authorities was evidenced by the somber report of the Parliamentary Delegation to Kenya in January 1954:

It is our view based upon all the evidence available to us, both official and responsible unofficial sources, that the influence of Mau Mau in the Kikuyu area, except in certain localities, has not declined; it has, on the contrary, increased; in this respect the situation has deteriorated and the danger of infection outside the Kikuyu area is now greater, not less than it was at the beginning of the State of Emergency. . . . In Nairobi, which is one of the most important centres in Africa, the

20 Peter Evans, *Law and Disorder* (London, 1956), p. 70.

21 Charles Douglas-Home, *Evelyn Baring: The Last Proconsul* (London, 1978), p. 248. Home makes clear his belief that the £20,000 was payment for a guilty verdict that was in no way warranted by the prosecution evidence. So much for British Justice!

situation is both grave and acute. Mau Mau orders are carried out in the heart of the city, Mau Mau "courts" sit in judgment and their sentences are carried out by gangsters.<sup>22</sup>

The alarm registered in this report was certainly justified. A settler account of the Emergency published that same year describes the "Mau Mau" as "beginning to dominate the city: they forbid Africans to travel on buses, and buses are taken off the road; they forbid Africans to smoke in Nairobi, or to frequent Asian cafes, and their orders are obeyed." This author believed that "ninety per cent of the Kikuyu in the city are secretly engaged in Mau Mau activities."<sup>23</sup>

The inability of the security forces to defeat the rebels was attracting men and women from other tribal groups to the path of armed struggle. Already the authorities had uncovered a secret Kamba Central Committee in Nairobi, which was allowed one representative on the all-Nairobi Central Committee that had been established after the arrest of the Council of Freedom in April 1953, and had ascertained that thousands of Nairobi Kamba had been enrolled in the movement. The leadership of the rebel Kamba were all railwaymen and they effectively dominated the railway workforce, using the railway system as their own lines of supply and communication. This development boded ill for the British since the Kamba were the backbone of the African units in the Army and of the African police. As the Corfield Report on the "Mau Mau" observes, for the rebels to have enlisted the Kamba in their revolt "would have been a resounding triumph."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, rebel Masai bands were becoming active in the Narok district of the Southern Province and this necessitated the despatch of troops and police to hunt them down before the revolt caught hold there. It was no wonder that the settler leader, Sir Michael Blundell, could subsequently recall how in March and April, 1954, he feared that the colonialists "were going to lose the battle for the mind of the African everywhere."<sup>25</sup>

In Nairobi the movement remained inextricably involved

<sup>22</sup> *Report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Parliamentary Delegation to Kenya: January 1954* (London HMSO 1954), p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Ione Leigh, *In the Shadow of Mau Mau* (London, 1954), pp. 166, 169.

<sup>24</sup> Corfield, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>25</sup> Sir Michael Blundell, *So Rough a Wind* (London, 1960), pp. 170-171.

with, and heavily dependent on, the trade unions. A number of union leaders were members of the Council of Freedom, which had established a special committee to supervise trade union work. When the Special Branch temporarily disrupted the Council in April 1953, among those arrested were the general secretary, the treasurer and three executive members of the Transport and Allied Workers Union and the chairman of the Domestic and Hotel Workers Union. Even after this setback, union involvement in the revolt continued, organizing and coordinating the activities of the Passive Wing and providing the armed squads that enforced the movement's edicts in the city. It was in Nairobi that the weapons, the supplies, the funds and the recruits were raised to keep the revolt going. Without access to this source, the Land and Freedom Armies would soon have withered and died.

The backbone of the rebellion in Nairobi and consequently throughout the rest of Kenya was provided by the nascent labor movement. The urban petty bourgeoisie, the white collar workers and intelligentsia, which have predominated in the leadership of national liberation movements in many other countries, were nowhere in evidence. They were either altogether opposed to the revolt or were only reluctantly forced by fear of reprisals to go along with it. What is particularly remarkable, given this situation, is that the revolt lacked any socialist dimension. The rebels demanded the expropriation of the white settlers' land, an end to racial discrimination, freedom for the trade unions, and political independence, but did not challenge the capitalist system. They were against white ownership of industry, trade and commerce, rather than against private ownership. The Kenyan working class was still in the process of formation, and most workers were only semi-proletarianized in that they still had roots in the countryside. In addition, the movement was totally isolated from contacts outside the colony.

In an effort to combat rebel influence in the trade unions the Kenya Labour Department adopted a policy of encouraging moderate trade unionism. In March 1953 the Kenya Federation of Registered Trade Unions (KFRTU) was established under the auspices of the Labour Department and an attempt was made to build it into a rival focus against the more militant unions controlled by the Nairobi Central Committee. The Federation had

its main base among white collar unions, such as the Kenya Local Government Workers Union and the Kenya African Civil Servants Association. Towards the end of 1953 the ambitious Tom Mboya, a Luo, became general secretary of the Federation and converted it into a platform for constitutional nationalism. He was completely opposed to the revolt, but blamed it on the injustices perpetrated by the authorities and the settlers. While the Labour Department encouraged this development as the best way to defeat the rebels in Nairobi, the settlers and the military were barely capable of distinguishing Mboya from a hardened "Mau Mau."

Despite this myopia on their part, the KFRTU was soon in conflict with the Central Committee. Early in 1954, the KFRTU opposed the boycott of the bus service called by the Central Committee, but was completely ignored. Soon after, when the Committee prepared to call a general strike that would have constituted a major challenge and embarrassment to the British, the authorities, in Mboya's own words, "sought the assistance of the Federation to stamp out this threat." The KFRTU played a large part in undermining the Committee's plans and forcing a postponement. In Mboya's own words once again, though many of its officers were "threatened by the terrorists . . . fearlessly they went on to stamp out the strike threat."<sup>26</sup> This development had serious implications for the future, but in the short term, the whole trade union movement was to feel the full weight of military repression.

Only after some time did the British become aware of the extent of the rebel organization and of the part played by Nairobi. Once this was realized, the security forces achieved their first tangible success, marking the turning point of the Emergency. On Saturday, April 24, 1954 Operation Anvil began. Some 25,000 troops and police cordoned off the city and proceeded to round up the entire African population for identification and screening. Among those arrested was Mboya. He noticed that many of those rounded up had white paint splashed on their faces to indicate that they had tried to escape or were picked up in suspicious circumstances.<sup>27</sup> The haphazard nature of the operation was offset by the sheer numbers that were sub-

<sup>26</sup> Stichter, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>27</sup> Tom Mboya, *Freedom and After* (London, 1963), p. 37.

sequently detained without trial: over 15,000 men and women, almost all Kikuyu. Thousands more were deported from the city and returned to the reserve.

The repression struck the trade unions a heavy blow: Mboya reported that detentions and deportations reduced membership of his own union, the Kenya Local Government Workers Union, from 1300 to 500. However, the main weight of the repression fell on the Transport and Allied Workers Union and the Domestic and Hotel Workers Union, both of which were known to Special Branch as organizing centers for the revolutionary movement. Nineteen of the officers of these two unions were detained, virtually beheading them. An interesting commentary on the attitude of the military was provided when a Labour Department official attempted to secure the release of a number of moderate trade union leaders only to be told at the Manyani detention camp that everyone carrying a union card was automatically placed in detention.<sup>28</sup>

Operation Anvil dealt the movement a blow from which it never recovered. The attempt to enlist other tribes in the revolt came to an abrupt halt as the whole Nairobi organization was simply swept away into the detention camps. The Nairobi Central Committee, which had provided the political leadership in the struggle, was gone, and although attempts were made to reconstitute a leadership in the forests, none were successful. The freedom fighters had their most important source of supplies and recruits eliminated almost overnight. From that point on they became an increasingly heavy burden on the already hard-pressed people in the reserves. As a corollary, militant trade unionism in Kenya was decisively crushed and the way was left clear for Mboya's KFRTU, which, although itself battered, was still intact.

The tide was turning decisively against the revolutionary movement. Having successfully cleared Nairobi, the military now carried out similar operations in other areas, until, by the end of the year, there were 77,000 Kikuyu in detention. Some 100,000 Kikuyu squatters were forcibly uprooted from the White Highlands and deported back to the reserves. In June 1954, the authorities decided on a massive program of compulsory villagi-

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Clayton and Donald Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya* (London, 1974), p. 389.

zation throughout the reserves. This would enable the Kikuyu to be effectively policed and kept under close surveillance. The program was modeled on the resettlement of the Chinese squatters in Malaya, but was on a much larger scale and was carried out with considerably more brutality. Poverty and starvation were to haunt the new villages as thousands of Kikuyu were herded in, without work, without land, without hope. The program was carried out with incredible speed and was completed in October 1955, by which time 1,077,500 people had been resettled in 854 villages. At the end the Kikuyu were subject to "a degree of direct administration . . . unparalleled among any other people in the history of British colonial Africa."<sup>29</sup>

The inability of the rebels to prevent or seriously disrupt this resettlement program signaled the beginning of the end. The Passive Wing throughout the White Highlands and the reserves was completely disrupted and the Land and Freedom Armies were penned into the forests and isolated from their popular base. They were cut off from their supplies of food and increasingly found their existence dominated by the mere effort to stay alive, leaving no energy to fight the British. There was now no way for losses to be made up and the ranks of the rebel forces were soon depleted. From an estimated strength of 15,000 at the end of 1953, the number of rebels in the field fell to an estimated 2,000 at the end of 1955. According to the account of one freedom fighter, by this time the rebels were in such dire straits that they were forced to raid their own impoverished people for food. After this

it became evident that people from the Reserves were forsaking the forest fighters . . . their sympathy for the warriors was alienated as they saw forest people come and take away the little that had been left by imperialist denudation.<sup>30</sup>

The resettlement program was the second crushing blow that won the war for the British and brought the Emergency to an end.

Throughout 1955 massive sweeps involving thousands of troops and auxiliaries were carried out in the forests in an attempt to comb out the remaining rebel bands. The effort in-

<sup>29</sup> Rosberg and Nottingham, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

<sup>30</sup> Joran Wamweya, *Freedom Fighter* (Nairobi, 1971), p. 151.

volved in these operations was out of all proportion to the results obtained and they were subsequently abandoned. Instead the pseudo-gang technique was introduced into the forests. This technique had already been employed in Palestine and Malaya and was first introduced into Kenya by the then Captain Frank Kitson.<sup>31</sup> It involved the use of bands of renegades, of captured rebels who were prepared to change sides, pretending to be still loyal to the revolutionary movement in order to make contact with the surviving rebel bands so that they could be broken up and eliminated. Kitson believed this to be the most effective way to kill rebels. By September 1956 it was estimated that there were only 500 rebels still at large. Then the following month pseudo-gangs captured the almost legendary guerrilla leader, Dedan Kimathi, commander of the remaining Land and Freedom Armies. He was subsequently hanged. This success marked the end of the campaign. At the end of the year the Army was withdrawn from active service. The fighting was over, although the Emergency remained in effect until January 1960.

So far this account has concentrated on the military side of the Emergency, but this is only half the story. The repression was accompanied by political and social reforms that played an equally important part in containing the revolt. The political developments will be dealt with separately, but here we shall look at the social policies the colonial authorities pursued. The Government introduced a program of land reform, the Swynnerton Plan, intended to consolidate the fragmented land-holdings of the Kikuyu into single holdings. The intention was to speed up

31 See Frank Kitson, *Gangs and Counter-Gangs* (London, 1960). The now Major General Kitson achieved notoriety as the author of *Low Intensity Operations* (London, 1971), which advocated an active role for the British Army in maintaining order on the British mainland, a role way beyond anything ever carried out in the past. Kitson envisaged Britain itself as the field of counter-insurgency operations against the left and militant trade unions in the not too distant future. A close reading of his various books reveals that he is no Colonel Blimp figure of the General Walker type, marshaling mythical private armies to establish some form of right-wing retired officers Valhalla. On the contrary Kitson's successes as a counter-insurgency specialist derived from his ability to think himself into the position of his opponents, something that requires a degree of imagination, sympathy and sensitivity that the overwhelming majority of Army Officers are completely incapable of. His efforts to educate the British officer corps are likely to have been pearls cast before swine. Of all the accounts of "Mau Mau" written by members of the security forces, Kitson's is the only one to show any sympathy or respect for the rebels. Paradoxically it was this that made him all the more effective against them.

the process of differentiation of the Kikuyu into a gentry Kulak class on the one hand and a mass of landless laborers on the other, to expand the social base of loyalism. In June 1956, C.M. Johnston, Special Commissioner for Central Province, told an audience that the authorities had

embarked on what amounts to an agrarian revolution in the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru Districts — its nearest equivalent is the 18th and 19th century enclosures in England . . . it will have the effect of creating a solid middle-class Kikuyu population anchored to the land who has too much to lose by reviving Mau Mau.<sup>32</sup>

While just over 3,500 rebels had their land confiscated, a growing number of other Kikuyu were given a stake in the status quo. The land reform program, which was completed by the end of the 1950s, was accompanied by a relaxation of the ban that had forbidden Africans to grow coffee, a profitable cash crop. This had long been a bitter grievance of the African farmers and they profited greatly from its removal. Between 1955 and 1964 the recorded value of output from African smallholdings rose from £5.2 to £14 millions. The Kikuyu gentry were the main beneficiaries of this remarkable increase.<sup>33</sup>

A somewhat similar picture is seen in the towns where the authorities recognized that the revolutionary politics of the labor movement could most effectively be undermined by combining repression with reform. After Operation Anvil had crushed the movement in Nairobi, the way was clear for concessions. The Report of the Carpenter Committee on African Wages in 1954 prepared the way for substantial rises in African wage rates. Between 1955 and 1964 the annual average wage for African workers doubled from £52 to £107. These rises greatly strengthened the position and standing of the moderate KFRTU and its leader, Tom Mboya. Sharon Stichter argues that the whole character of the labor movement changed in this period and that it was finally constituted as a labor aristocracy — a junior partner of the petty-bourgeois politicians who were eventually to negotiate the neocolonial settlement in Kenya.<sup>34</sup> While

32 A. Sorrenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–118.

33 Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya* (London, 1976), pp. 52–53.

34 Sharon Stichter, "Imperialism and the Rise of a 'Labor Aristocracy' in Kenya, 1945–1970," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, XXI (1976–1977), pp. 159, 171.

the notion that the whole African working class is to be viewed as a labor aristocracy has to be rejected, it has to be acknowledged that the revolutionary nationalism so evident in the early fifties had by the end of the decade turned into political quiescence. The question is whether the causes of this development are structural, as the labor aristocracy thesis maintains, or the result of less fundamental and more contingent factors (I hope to discuss this more fully in a later article).

*The Scale of the Repression*

During the course of the Emergency the most brutal methods were used by the security forces. D.H. Rawcliffe, in a book published in 1954, and promptly banned in Kenya, described how:

During the first months of the Emergency the beating of prisoners and suspects became almost a routine measure if it was thought that information was being withheld. One young man told the author: "It's no use beating the beggars; I've beaten them until I was tired of it!" Every European in the security forces knew about these beatings, talked about them and very often had ordered them or participated in them. . . . There was a tacit conspiracy involving the Kenya Government, the police and the press not to reveal or even hint at anything which the outside world would term acts of brutality or callous behavior towards the Kikuyu . . . . However, a report of one appalling case, out of several similar ones, involving a Kikuyu who had been flogged to death, did reach the British press months after its occurrence. It was so well substantiated that the authorities could no longer ignore it; two Europeans were charged with manslaughter and were later fined. In Kenya white men are never convicted of murder if the victim is black.<sup>35</sup>

Torture inevitably accompanies counter-insurgency operations. In Kenya it was particularly widespread, almost routine. It was used not just to extract intelligence, but as an instrument of terror. Suspects were beaten, physically mutilated and summarily executed.<sup>36</sup> Prosecutions of members of the security forces for

<sup>35</sup> D.H. Rawcliffe, *The Struggle for Kenya* (London, 1954), p. 68.

<sup>36</sup> See Kariuki, *op. cit.*, p. 41. Also Montagu Slater, *The Trial of Jomo Kenyatta* (London, 1955), p. 246. Slater reports the trial and sentencing of a Captain Griffiths "to five years imprisonment on six charges of disgraceful conduct which included ordering a soldier in his company to cut off the testicles of a prisoner." This trial was a public relations exercise following the public outcry over Griffiths' earlier acquittal on a technicality of the charge of murdering a prisoner.

such activities were, as one account of the Emergency puts it, only touching the tip of the iceberg.<sup>37</sup>

The Emergency was remarkable for the savagery of the legal sanctions imposed against the rebels. The death penalty was introduced for a wide range of offenses, including the administering of illegal oaths, consorting with or aiding rebels, and possessing firearms. In the first eight months of the Emergency a mere 35 rebels were hanged, but this restraint soon went by the board. Towards the end of 1954 they were being hanged at a rate of fifty a month. Between the declaration of the Emergency and November 12, 1954, 756 rebels were hanged. Of these, 508 were executed for offenses less than murder, including 45 killed for administering illegal oaths and 290 for possessing arms or ammunition. By the end of the year over 900 rebels had been hanged and by the end of the Emergency the gruesome total was over 1,000.<sup>38</sup> This was nothing less than a judicial massacre. Only the fact that the victims were black allowed this butchery to take place. A comparison with British performance elsewhere is instructive: in Palestine, eight Zionist guerrillas were hanged, in Cyprus nine EOKA guerrillas were hanged!

The number of rebels officially killed in action during the Emergency was put at 11,503, but the actual number was considerably higher. Many must have died of wounds in the forests, unknown to the authorities, while others must have been disposed of quietly by the loyalists or the police. Estimates go as high as 50,000, and this is certainly nearer the truth than the official figures. The casualties suffered by the security forces were considerably lower: only 63 European soldiers and police were killed, 3 Asians and 524 Africans. This disparity emphasizes the overwhelming superiority in terms of firepower that the military had over the rebels. One typical British infantry regiment, the Buffs, during their tours of operation, in Kenya killed 290 rebels and captured 194, while suffering only one fatal casualty themselves. Among the weapons they captured were a mere nine precision firearms.<sup>39</sup> Despite the popular image of the revolt as a massacre of the settler community, only 32 settlers were

37 Clayton, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

39 Gregory Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart* (London, 1971), pp. 280-281.

killed, fewer than died from traffic accidents in Nairobi over the same period.

One question remains to be considered: did the rebels have any prospect of victory? Realistically the revolt was doomed to defeat despite its tremendous support among the Kikuyu, despite the extent of the revolutionary movement's underground organization, which could be destroyed only by massive repression, and despite the courage of its fighters. In the first eighteen months of the Emergency the rebels had the initiative, the security forces appeared unable to stem the tide of revolt, panic seized hold of the settlers, and other tribes were beginning to stir. But they were unable to translate these opportunities into military successes. Why? The rebels were virtually unarmed and, isolated as they were, they could not make the decisive breakthrough. They received no outside aid whatsoever. In these circumstances the overwhelming superiority of the security forces was bound to prevail in the end. But while the movement suffered military defeat, it still managed to inflict a major political defeat on the settler community by revealing the fragility of their position, and by demonstrating the complete reliance of the settlers on the support of the British Government. Once the British Government perceived the settlers as an obstacle to a secure political settlement in Kenya, their fate was sealed.

### *Not Yet Uhuru*

Both the Conservative Government and the Labour Opposition at Westminster were united in the conviction that the revolt had to be suppressed. They were divided over how this was to be accomplished. Labour was critical of the scale of the repression and favored immediate concessions as the way to strengthen the hand of the moderate African nationalists and undermine the rebels. This, of course, was the opposition position. Their earlier behavior, when they were in Government, suggests that their practice would have been little different from that of the Tories. The Conservative leaders, on the other hand, wholeheartedly endorsed the repression and were only reluctantly compelled to accept the need for reform and concession. It is interesting in this regard to look briefly at what united the politicians over Kenya.

The most vociferous critic of Government policy was Fenner Brockway, the former ILP leader and a committed advocate of decolonization. Brockway continually emphasized how moderate the demands of responsible African leaders were and argued that those who advocated armed struggle, no matter what the provocation, were the real enemies of the African people. "Mau Mau," he believed, was a reversion to barbarism that illustrated the power witchcraft still had over the Kikuyu. While he conceded that Europeans had committed atrocities, he nevertheless saw a qualitative difference between these and those committed by the rebels; he pointed out that the Europeans had an ethical tradition inherited from Greece and Rome, the tradition of Christianity. He argued this after Auschwitz and Hiroshima! Brockway offered to broadcast an appeal to Africans not to support the rebels, but this proposal was rejected by the Kenyan authorities.<sup>40</sup> He could sympathize with the African as victim, but he recoiled in horror from the African in arms.

Brockway's horror at the revolt was, of course, shared by Conservative politicians. Oliver Lyttelton, later Lord Chandos, recalled that when dealing with Kenyan affairs as Colonial Secretary, he felt the close presence of the forces of evil. On occasions, while reading documents relating to the Emergency, a horned shadow fell across the page — the shadow of the devil himself reading over his shoulder. But devil or no devil, even Lyttelton eventually recognized that Africans would have to be given a "share" in the Government. The only alternative was the indefinite continuation of rule by force, and this was not a practical proposition. First of all, Britain no longer had the necessary force, and secondly, the shifting balance of world power made such a policy untenable.<sup>41</sup> The suppression of the revolt, moreover, imposed a severe financial strain on the British Government, costing some £55 millions. A renewal of the fighting after 1956, especially with the prospect of the rebels receiving aid from abroad, was not appealing.

Direct election of African members of the Legislative Assembly was conceded before the 1956/57 elections; the Lennox-

<sup>40</sup> Fenner Brockway, *African Journey* (London, 1955), pp. 137–138, 169. Brockway advocated a seven point plan to reconcile the races in Kenya. His modest list of reforms excluded independence. The package was advocated as a way of strengthening African opposition to "Mau Mau" (*Daily Herald*, November 20, 1952).

<sup>41</sup> Lord Chandos, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London, 1962), pp. 394–395, 397.

Boyd Constitution increased the number of African members to fourteen and the Lancaster House Conference of January 1960 pointed out the way to majority rule. What these political concessions involved was the sacrifice of the white settler community in order to facilitate the establishment of a stable neocolonial regime in Kenya. The rebels had not been strong enough to defeat British Imperialism, but they had determined the fate of the white settlers. This was a major achievement although it was certainly not a predetermined development, as some accounts seem to suggest.<sup>42</sup> Rather it was accomplished only by armed struggle involving the self-sacrifice of tens of thousands of heroic men and women. During the immediate postwar years in Kenya white supremacy reached its apogee, with the settlers increasingly looking towards the examples of Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. Their ambitions were shattered by the revolt. What the rebels accomplished was the separation of the interests of the British state from those of the settlers.

Colin Leys, in his book, *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, has cogently shown the economic basis for this separation of interests. While the settlers dominated Kenya politically, this was by no means true economically. The settlers probably owned no more than 15–20 per cent of the foreign assets invested in Kenya by 1958, the remainder being owned by British and foreign companies that were quite prepared to accommodate themselves to Africans. The settlers were essentially an "epiphenomenon": they were marginal to the more fundamental relationship that existed between foreign capital and the Africans. When the intransigence of the settlers was seen to endanger foreign capital, they were abandoned in favor of an alliance with African leaders prepared to safeguard foreign investments.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, while reform and even some form of eventual self-government was accepted as inevitable, this was envisaged as taking place over a considerable period. In January 1959, Lennox-Boyd, Lyttelton's successor as Colonial Secretary, warned that Kenya could not expect independence until after 1975.<sup>44</sup> Later that year, Sir Evelyn Baring told a settler audience

42 See David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945–1961* (Oxford, 1971), p. 28, for an example of this argument.

43 Leys, *op. cit.*, pp. 39, 42.

44 David Goldsworthy, "Conservatives and Decolonization," *African Affairs* (July 1970), p. 279.

that Kenya would never get more than some form of limited home rule because of its strategic importance.<sup>45</sup> This dilatory strategy was swiftly overturned.

Iain Macleod, who became Colonial Secretary in October 1959, was fearful of a fresh outbreak of fighting after the fatal beating of eleven detainees by guards at the Hola internment camp earlier that year. There was evidence that Kikuyu militants were stockpiling weapons and that rebel bands were reforming in the forests. Supported by Prime Minister Macmillan, Macleod greatly speeded up the process of British withdrawal, disregarding the protests of the settlers. Macleod even allowed a certain Peter Poole to become the first European in Kenyan history to be hanged for killing an African. This was a crucial sign of the times, demonstrating Macleod's lack of concern for settler susceptibilities if they stood in the way of negotiating a settlement.<sup>46</sup> He proceeded to negotiate an agreement with the moderate nationalist leaders, including Kenyatta, that effectively abandoned the white settlers but secured the position of foreign capital, which was the overriding concern of the British Government. The final handover of power to the Kenyatta Government took place on December 12, 1963. The regime that emerged has since proven to be a classic example of neocolonialism. The fruits of the revolt were reaped by others.

The "Mau Mau" revolt was unlike other African national liberation struggles in that its leadership was not provided by a section of the petty bourgeoisie. In Kenya the revolt was the work of the urban working class and the peasantry, with the petty bourgeoisie looking on. It was a struggle in which a section of the developing Kenyan working class, centered in Nairobi, played a vital leading role. This militant, aggressively independent labor movement was decisively crushed in the course of the Emergency. What emerged in its place was a labor movement subordinate to petty bourgeois nationalist politicians, a labor movement that accepted restrictions from the Kenyatta regime that would have provoked strikes and rioting if imposed by the old colonial authorities. This transformation was obviously related to economic and social developments in Kenya that have now been under way for many years, but it is important to note

45 Phillip Darby, *British Defence Policy East of Suez, 1947-1968* (London, 1973), p. 206.

46 Nigel Fisher, *Iain Macleod* (London, 1973), p. 151.

that these developments were not inevitable and would not have taken place without the defeat of the militants. If the revolt had, against all the odds, triumphed, then whatever the character of the regime that finally emerged, the labor movement would have been a powerful independent force within it. Today as the Kenyan economy falters in the wake of the world economic crisis, the possibility for the revival of independent working class politics arises.

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**SEVENTH WORLD CONGRESS  
of the  
INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION  
(1983)**

The International Economic Association is organizing in 1981, 1982 and 1983 various round-table conferences leading up to a world congress on "Structural Change, Economic Interdependence and World Development."

Authors of recent contributions to aspects of the above subject matter are invited to send abstracts of their work to the Secretariat of the IEA (4 rue de Chevreuse, 75006 Paris, France) so that they may be forwarded to the different organizers likely to be interested in their contributions for a round-table conference or for the Congress. A copy might also be sent directly to the President of the IEA, Professor Victor L. Urquidi, at: El Colegio de Mexico, Camino al Ajusco No. 20, Mexico 20, D.F., Apartado Postal 20-671, Mexico.