

MAU MAU : A NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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1990

DEAR FATHER

WHEREVER YOU ARE ...

ALWAYS A THOUGHT

SPARED FOR YOU.



जवाहरलाल नेहरु विश्वविद्यालय
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C E R T I F I C A T E

This dissertation entitled "MAU MAU : A NATIONALIST MOVEMENT" submitted by Abani Ballav Deo in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Jawaharlal Nehru University, is a product of student's own work, carried out by him.

To the best of my knowledge this work has not been submitted to any other degree of this or any other University. We recommend that this dissertation be placed before examiners for evaluation.

Vijay Gupta

Professor Vijay Gupta
(Chairman & Supervisor)

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" The dialectic of colonial repression proved that... no colonialist aggressor can overcome peoples who are determined to win their freedom"

- Amilcar Cabral

" To wage a revolution is to annihilate what is bad and build what is good... Our revolutionary work is, therefore, not yet completed, because these evils still undermine and sabotage the constructive process of the Revolution!"

- Ho Chi Minh, 1952

PREFACE

Change is the very essence of history, its eternal theme. Every society encounters movements which promise to bring about changes in it. However, as history is the result of struggle of contradictions, it is perceived as a threat by all the ruling strata in all the oppressive, exploitative systems. Tyrants and their systems are terrified at the sounds of the wheels of history. They try to put the clock back. They attempt to clog the wheels of history. They leave no stone unturned to ensure that progress of history does not jeopardise their own interests. When everything fails, some of them take to the 'writing' of history from their own prejudiced viewpoints, thus churning out the "official history".

The Mau Mau Movement in Kenya has been attacked and interpreted from various angles. But its real nature and character has been ignored by many, some of the times deliberately and at others, unwittingly.

The British entered Kenya in the wake of scramble for Africa in the end of the nineteenth century with colonial intentions. They tightened their grip over the territory by acquiring land and exploiting African labour through administrative actions. The colonialism in Kenya became responsible for the enslavement of Kenyan masses and the systematic destruction of their culture and history.

The introduction of settler plan through coercive policy of taxation and suppression of constitutional means of protest by the Africans led to the Mau Mau Movement. At that historical moment, people of Kenya chose, for the first time in its colonial history, the path of armed struggle to overthrow the colonial yoke. Although it was suppressed, it set in motion the forces which facilitated the process of independence for Kenya.

Mau Mau Movement attracts controversy because there are many distorted views against it. The petty-bourgeois class, which was created by colonial masters, never accorded legitimacy to the Movement because such an act would involve jeopardy to the capitalist interests of theirs and their former colonial masters.

The objective of this present work is to examine whether the Mau Mau Movement was a nationalist movement or not and to examine its influence on the political evolution of Kenya. The historical facts are, therefore, taken to be the most authentic and clear guide in this direction. The present dissertation attempts a method which is simultaneously historical and analytical.

In the preparation of this work, I owe a great debt

of gratitude to my affable supervisor, Professor Vijay Gupta. I have benefitted to a great extent from his valuable suggestions, constructive criticism, incisive analyses, erudite comments and above all unflagging interest and encouragement at all stages of this work. Without his support it would have been difficult for me to complete the present work.

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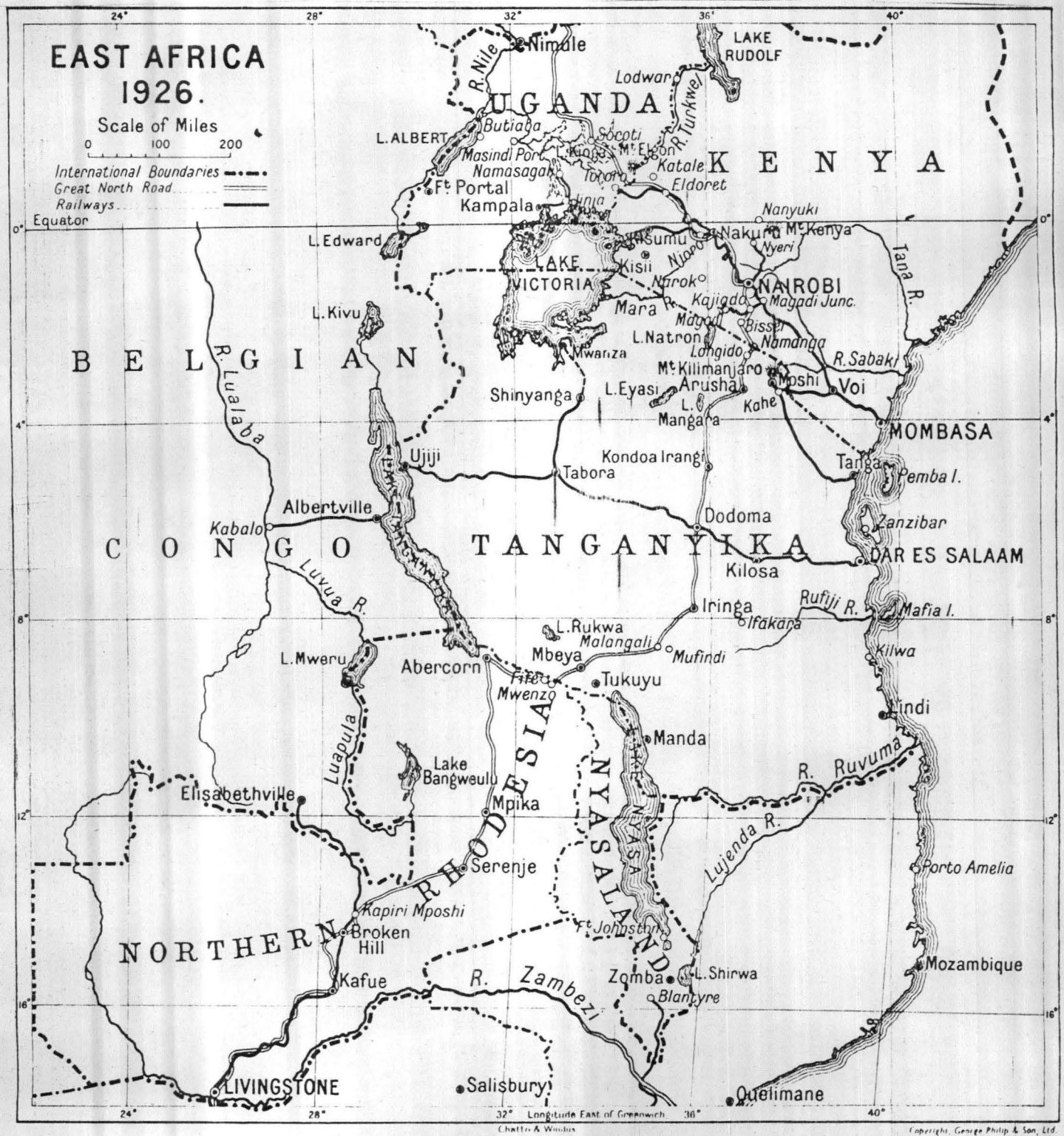
I am very much thankful to my senior friends Bibhu, Gaga, Sukhwant, Anant, Amiya, Ashwini, Biju, Bubu, Sharad, Pankaj, Amit, Sanjay, Anita, Sanghamitra and Nidhi for their advice and co-operation at different stages of the work.

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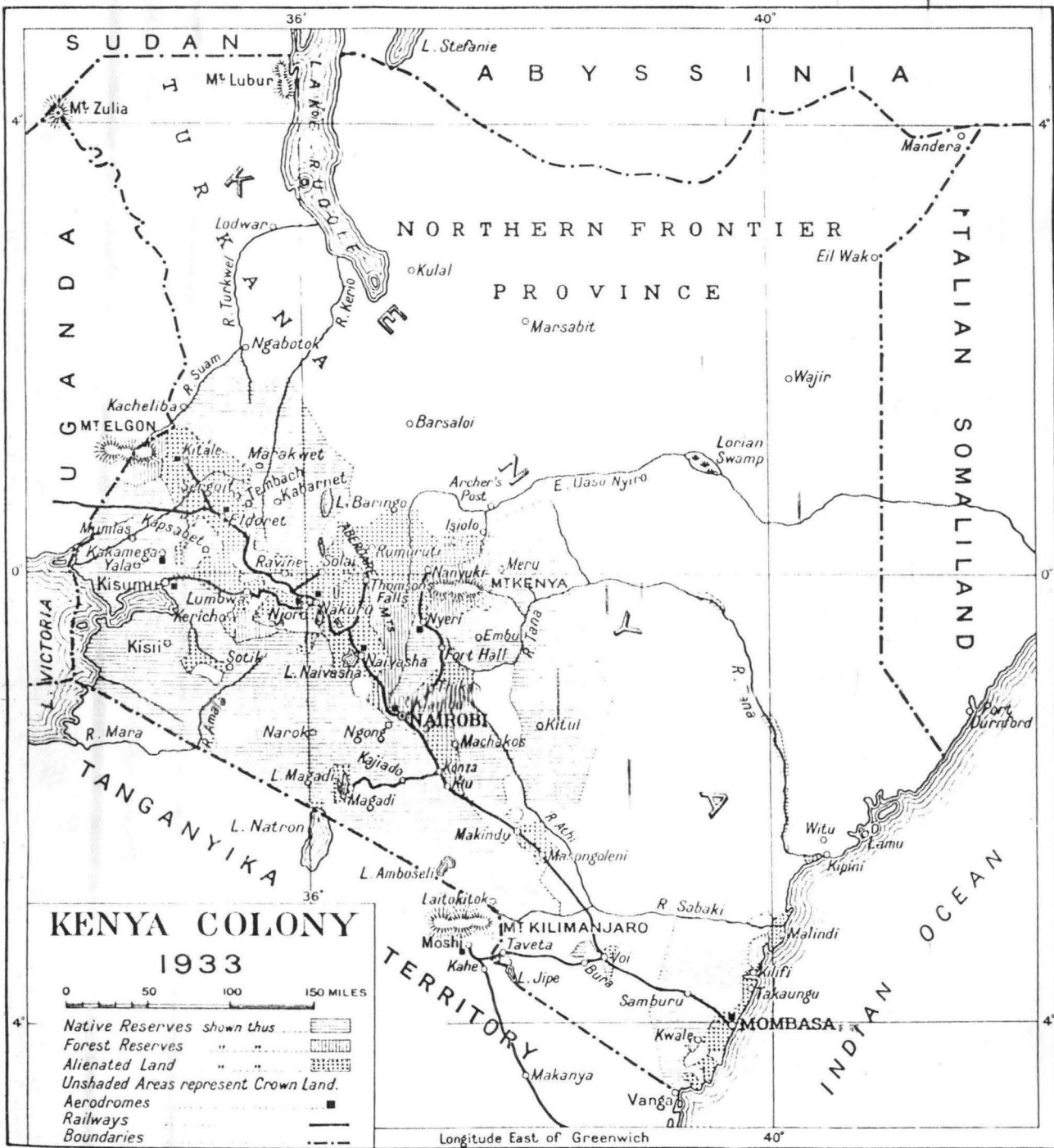
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NEW DELHI
DATED: 20 JULY 1990.

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Source: E. Huxley, 'White man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya', London: Chatto & Windus.



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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION : COLONIALISM IN KENYA AND DIFFERENT
INTERPRETATIONS OF MAU MAU

The Mau Mau Movement started in Kenya around 1948 against British colonialism. The movement was first initiated by a militant group of Kenya African Union (KAU) and later more peasants and workers joined it against the exploitation of Land and labour by the British. When all constitutional and peaceful means failed to attain independence, the 'Mau Mau' emerged as a new mode of resistance against British colonialism. The 'Land Freedom Army' was created by a militant group of KAU to wage armed struggle against the British.

The Mau Mau Movement has been of growing political and intellectual interest because of various interpretations by the historians in regard to the nature and character of the movement. The exact character of the movement has perplexed many. But before discussing various interpretations given by the scholars, we will have to go through the colonial background of Kenya, which was responsible for the outbreak of different forms of anti-colonial movements including the Mau Mau Movement.

The colonisation of Kenya came in the wake of the scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century. In East Africa, though various areas did not seem to promise

immediate economic benefits, the British sought to colonise them to safeguard their future positions. At that time the immediate question was how to make the colony pay for itself.

It is important to mention here that the basic notion of strict political and economic control guided the colonial policies of Britain and other colonial powers. The entry of British colonialism in Kenya was mainly guided by economic reasons, besides geo-political ones. Apart from that the British entered Kenya when capitalism was at a very advanced stage in Europe.¹

At that time many of the colonial officials felt that the Highlands of Kenya might become an attractive area for European settlement. They visualised a bright future of European farming due to temperate climate and stake African settlement. Already in 1893, before Kenya was declared a protectorate, Lord Lugard in his capacity as agent of British East Africa Company had suggested settlement of Europeans in the Kenyan highlands.²

1 Vijay Gupta , Kenya: Politics of (In)Dependence (New Delhi: Peoples' Publishing House, 1981), p. 4.

2 Dan Nabudere , Imperialism in East Africa (London: Zed Press, 1981), vol.1, p. 52.

The early empire builders convinced the British foreign office that European settlement could pay the cost of administration and provide revenues for the Uganda railway which had been constructed by 1902, opening up Kenyan Highlands to settlement. The causes of colonisation of Kenya may be summed up like this:

- Kenya was a road to Uganda, which was the source of the Nile;
- it was potentially a rich market and probable source of rich raw materials.
- British Indian subjects were the main commercial community, whose assistance to British colonisation was certain.
- Mombasa was commercially important and strategically a valuable port in East Africa.³

The process of colonisation of Kenya by the British was started in the year 1888, when a shipping tycoon named Sir William Macinnon founded Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), whose aim was to make profit by monopolising the trade in British manufactured goods

3 Gupta, n.1, p. 6.

and Kenyan products.⁴ But the company failed due to stiff resistance offered by the Africans. The stiff resistance came from the Mazruis of the coastal towns, which saw the total collapse of the company.⁵ Though the Mazrui-IBEAC war totally destroyed the Imperial British East African Company, the British did not leave Kenya. The main purpose was to turn Kenya into a productive colony for British finance capital.⁶ For this they took three steps -

- 1) They turned Kenya into a white settlement colony.
- 2) They alienated all land which was not in actual use of the Africans.
- 3) They permitted Indian immigrants to take up petty jobs of artisans and run petty trade.

The territory which after colonisation came to be known as East Africa protectorate and subsequently Kenya colony, was inhabited by various ethnic groups. The most notable ethnic groups were the Kikuyu, Masai, Kavirando,

4 Ibidem.

5 Ibidem.

6 Nabudere, n.2, p. 51.

Kamba and the Nandi people. These ethnic groups had different political and economic set ups. The land tenure system in most African tribes was very complex. Land belonged to the tribe as a whole and no tribal member had individual rights in it.⁷ In simpler terms land was held commonly by a tribe and each individual member was given land for cultivation by the tribe as a whole for a certain period.

In order to turn Kenya into a white settlement colony, land alienation was necessary on the part of the British. The only way to alienate the land from the Africans was through administrative action only. In the year 1895, Kenya was declared a protectorate.⁸ Thus by declaring Kenya as a protectorate the British got the excuse to acquire the land of Africans through administrative measures.

The process of alienation of land started between 1897 and 1899, when land Ordinances were passed. Land was acquired from the Africans at very low prices due to the ignorance of the owner about the true value of the land. Further in the year 1901 and 1902, two land Ordinances permitted the European farmers to take over

7 Gupta, n.1, p. 4.

8 Oginga Odinga , Not Yet Uhuru (London: Heinemann, 1968), p. 17.

the unoccupied land.⁹ Among these two Ordinances, the first Ordinance which was known as the Order-in-Council confined the African rights in regard to land to actual occupation, cultivation and grazing, whereas the 1902 Land Ordinance permitted the unoccupied lands to be leased to the European farmers.¹⁰ Under the provision of Land Ordinance of 1902, land was leased to the European farmers even if the land contained African occupied area. The Ordinance provided the lessee to take African lands by paying unspecified compensation for cultivation and their residential huts. The European farmers who needed labour forced the Africans to work on their farms for 180 to 230 days in a year in their farms. In return of this service they permitted the Africans to cultivate some land for producing food and grazing the cattle. The Ordinance of 1902 paved the way to the creation of white Highlands, thus accelerating the process of land grabbing movement by the Europeans. Finally, in the year 1915, Crown Lands Ordinance was passed, which gave statutory recognition to the administrative practice of permanently

9 Gupta, n.1, p. 26.

10 Ibidem.

reserving highlands for Europeans by empowering the government with veto power in regard to transfer of land.¹¹ This bill empowered the government to alienate the lands occupied by the Africans, by declaring their lands as 'Crown Lands'.

The purpose behind the land alienation was three fold:

1. It intended to prevent the African peasantry to be in competition with the European farmers because in order to develop settler economy there should be monopoly of white farming.
2. It intended to force all adult males to work as labourers for the white farmers. For the purpose of farming African labour was required by the white farmers. Unless, until an African was landless, it was difficult on the part of the white farmers to procure labour. Besides for the steady supply of African labour various coercive laws were passed to force the Africans to work for the white farmer. It will be discussed in the following pages while dealing with the question of labour.

11 Gupta, n.1, p. 29.

3. It intended to settle Europeans to develop the colony to be able to pay for its administrative machinery. As earlier mentioned, in East Africa though various areas did not seem to promise economic benefits, the British colonised them to safeguard their future positions. So in order to make the colony to pay for itself, the introduction of settler economy was needed. The high cost of administration and maintenance of Ugandan railway had to be met only by the growth of settler economy.¹²

Land was regarded as the major means of production affecting the political, economic and social life of the Africans. By the land alienation policies, the Kikuyu, Masai, Kavirando, Kamba and the Nandi people were severely affected. Most of the Africans were confined to 'Reserves' due to the process of land alienation. The 'Reserves' or the 'actually occupied' areas were created to restrict the movement of Africans in order to ensure the security of European owned land.¹³ In other words Africans were

12 M.P.K. Sorrenson, Land Reform in Kikuyu Country (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 14.

13 Gupta, n.1, p. 30.

restricted to small areas while the Europeans enjoyed the monopoly of owning the large areas. The loss of land disturbed the socio-economic life of the Africans. Due to reservation of land, the number of their cattle, sheep and goats were limited. The land alienation process became responsible for the creation of labour system, which was absent in the pre-colonial era.

But the occupation of land by the Europeans was never a smooth sailing process for them. Between 1895 and 1905 the Africans fought against the IBEA forces to save their land. Under the leadership of Koitaki, they fought for 10 years, before they were defeated by the British. Again in the case of Nandis, the question of land came. During the same period, they fought with the British forces to save their land and cattle.¹⁴ In the South-Western Highlands of Kenya, the British forces had to fight the Gusii people to occupy their land. Besides, the people of central Kenya, Kikuyu, Embu, Meru, Mbere, Akamba waged battles to save their land. Among the notable example of African resentment was the massacre of a trading caravan by the Kikuyus in the year 1902 and the Kikuyus were cruelly dealt by the British.¹⁵ Thus the African resentment of

14 R.D. Wolff, Britain and Kenya: 1870-1930 (Nairobi: Transafrica, 1974), p. 61.

15 Harlow, V., Chilver, E and Smith, A, ed. ., History of East Africa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), Vol.II, p. 25.

loss of land was suppressed by the British.

In the pre-colonial Kenya, there were no classes. With the coming of colonialism, new classes emerged due to introduction of European and Asian settlers and new economic relations. In the colonial era, the European and Asian settlers, who were the owners of means of production remained at the top of the class structure. The middle class in the colonial set up comprised Asian settlers, who dominated the retail trade. The middle class of Asian settlers, who were from India and Arab countries were encouraged by the Europeans to keep the Africans at bay. In other words in order to safeguard their own privileged position, the Asian settlers were encouraged by the European settlers. Besides traders, there were merchants, professionals and skilled labourers who were Asians. Thus in the class structure under colonialism in Kenya, the Africans were restricted to lower class - the under privileged class.

In colonial Kenya, after the question of land, comes the question of labour. The colonisers might be regarded as the proud creator of the system of slavery, which meant the subjugation of one man by another. After grabbing the most fertile land and restricting the Africans to 'Reserves', the next question before the colonisers

was how to exploit the African labour. For the benefit of European agriculture, African labour had to be exploited. So the coloniser decided to use the coercive administrative machinery to exploit the African labour. Taxes were imposed on them either in the form of cash or labour. But since Africans were prevented from growing cash crops and were restricted to 'Reserves', they had no option but to provide free labour to the European farmers. In the year 1901, a Hut Tax of Rs.2 was imposed for procuring African labour. But when the Hut Tax did not meet the full requirements of labour, due to the pressure from the European farmers, in the year 1909 the government imposed Poll Tax. Under the provision of Poll Tax, every adult male African, who did not own a hut had to pay a tax of Rs.3 in cash or labour for the plantations. In order to get a firm grip over the African labour the colonisers followed humiliating procedures. In the year 1906, Masters and Servants Ordinance was passed to bind the African worker to the work of his master and avoid desertion. This Ordinance empowered the administration to punish a labourer, if he abstained from work. The punishment could be in the form of imprisonment with hard labour or cash. But in almost all the cases, the Africans had to provide labour.

In the year 1915, the Government of Kenya introduced

compulsory registration for all Africans. By doing so the European's grip over the African labour was tightened. The notorious 'Kipande' or the Pass Law was passed to restrict the movement of African workers.¹⁶ Under this provision every African male had to register himself. After the registration he was provided with an identity card, which had to be carried by him through all the time. Giving finger prints for registration was regarded by Africans the most humiliating part of Kipande (pass) system. Finger prints were recorded at a central finger Bureau and used for catching or arresting the unwilling African workers who generally ran away from the place of employment due to humiliating and cruel condition of work. Those who refused to work as forced labourers and 'deserted the employers' were legally punished by fine and imprisonment with hard labour.

Thus through land alienation and forced labour the colonisers destroyed the traditional economy of Kenya. It is important to mention the ideology behind the settler economy which has been cited by E. Huxley in the following lines;

16 F.D. Corfield, Historical Survey of the Origin and Growth of Mau Mau (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Comnd 1030, 1960), p. 25.

Settlers must somehow be found, attracted, encouraged, started off. There was no other alternative but economic stagnation and a perpetuate bleeding of the British treasury. East Africa could be transformed from a liability to an asset only if the government could succeed in getting a thriving white population established to add to the wealth that the world still wanted and was prepared to pay for; to feed the railway; to buy goods from Britain's factories; to provide the outlet of employment for the surplus energies of idle young tribesmen, whose only occupations of raiding and fighting were being barred to them by the spread of law and order; to start the wheels of trade by employing natives and so circulating among them money with which they could buy imported goods and pay hut tax; to bring capital into the country; to pay taxes; permanence and stability to British rule in East Africa. In short, to build by their efforts a self supporting colony.(17)

Thus this settler ideology was the base on which the British built up their colonial economic policy.

From the above, it is clear that establishing colonial rule in Kenya and turning the country into a white settlement area had an adverse effect on the Kenyan people. Due to this various protest movements emerged against the British colonialism. Under oppressive colonial regime, the labour movements started to raise

17 E. Huxley, Whiteman's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya, 1870-1914 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1935), Vol.1, pp. 77-79.

the voice of dissent of the workers.

In the year 1921, the first politico trade union organisation was formed by Harry Thuku. The organisation named as East African Association, carried the struggle against British colonialism on the issue of reduction of the wage of the workers. Harry Thuku, who was a telephone operator by profession, believed in constitutional means to meet the demands of the workers. The East African Association organised mass protests, demonstrations, sent petitions and followed other non-violent actions. But these modes of protest could not succeed in mobilising the colonisers in favour of the workers' demand. Instead of listening to the genuine demands of the workers, the colonial government considering the East African Association as a threat, banned it and arrested the entire leadership of EAA including Harry Thuku.

But in the year 1925, the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) was formed, which replaced East African Association as the organised force. It was organised by a relatively radical group of men like Joseph Kangethe, Jesse Kariuki and James Beauttah. The KCA leadership was centralised and well disciplined due to which it developed into a national struggle. It began to mobilise people on the

question of land, labour and other questions of national interests. Its leadership also followed the constitutional means to meet the demands of the Africans.

But again the African protest went unheard and on top of it, the government followed coercive measure. In the year 1940, KCA was banned as "Communist Subversive" following its agitation against the exploitation of land, Kipande, Hut and Poll Tax. Its entire leadership was arrested and due to government suppression, it failed to gain its position in the national arena.

Finally in the year 1946, Kenya African Union (KAU) was formed under the leadership of Jommo Kenyatta and Bildad Kaggia to fight against the exploitation by British colonialism. By that time, with the colonialism at its peak, the condition of the Africans was very bad. But the KAU's leadership was divided into two groups, i.e. the militants and the non-militants. Dedan Kimathi, Stanley Mathenge and others who were the leaders of the militant group, had no faith in the constitutional means to fight colonialism, as all the previous constitutional means of protests were ruthlessly suppressed by the government.

But the non-militant or the moderate section which was represented by Jommo Kenyatta and others still believed in the constitutional path. Besides, they were not prepared to take any force-ful stand on the question of Land and Independence. That was the reason why the ideology of KAU was vague and did not have any worked out programme. The militants who gained support from the workers and peasants captured the leadership of KAU by sidelining the moderates and formed 'Land Freedom Army' to wage armed struggle against colonialism. These activities were later known as Mau Mau activities. But again government failed to listen the grievances of Kenyans and instead, declared a state of emergency, banned all the associations including KAU and arrested its entire leadership. By doing this it closed all the avenues for the peaceful settlement. The failure of constitutional means led to tremendous growth of the Mau Mau Movement. In the chapter-II, these points have been dealt elaborately.

Due to the introduction of settler economy, the squatter system came into existence under the colonial set up. In order to provide labour to the European farmers, Africans were allowed to stay on the farms as resident labourers. The resident labourers or the

squatters as they came to be known, were required to provide labour to the white farmers and in lieu of labour they were allowed to grow their own food and graze their cattle. But in the later stage, when the European farmers attempted to exploit the squatters more and more, the conflict between them and the squatters became inevitable. Even in the social life of the squatters, the settlers interfered. Any social organisation of the squatters was treated by the whites as a threat to them. Besides, the squatter's land and live-stock were reduced from time to time.

The land scarcity had grown to alarming proportions. The Africans who were confined to 'Reserves' had no land and therefore preferred to be squatters than to be landless. While the number of squatters increased, the amount of land decreased. After the Second World War, ex-European soldiers were allowed to settle in Kenya, which resulted in increased scarcity of land. The scarcity of the land and the deteriorating condition of the squatters led to the rebellion of the squatters. When the militant wing of KAU started Mau Mau Movement, the squatters in the white highlands gave their whole hearted support. In the Chapter III, the squatter problem

and the settler-squatter conflict has been dealt elaborately.

Thus the colonisation of Kenya and the turning of it into a white settlement area had an adverse effect on the Kenyan people. When all the peaceful means of protest were ruthlessly suppressed, the Mau Mau Movement emerged with the aim of over-throwing the colonial yoke by means of armed struggle. Though initially it gained important victories over the British forces, but later it could not sustain its organisation and arms supply source that resulted in its failure and suppression. Since its outbreak, there have been different opinions among the academics due to their allegiance to different schools. According to Roseberg and Nottingham "very few mass movements in Africa have attracted more controversial comment than what has been called Mau Mau".¹⁸ While studying Mau Mau, number of questions come to core of our scrutiny. Questions like what is Mau Mau? Why the Kenyans took the course of such violent actions against British colonialism? Who was behind the movement? Whether it was a nationalist movement or a barbarous anti-European tribal cult? What was the role of Mau Mau in the independence movement of Kenya? Often confuse

18 Carl Roseberg, Jr and John Nottingham, The Myth of Mau Mau: Nationalism in Kenya (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966), p. 16.

the scholars about the nature character and role of Mau Mau Movement.¹⁹

It is very interesting to mention here that the meaning of the term "Mau Mau" has become a matter of acute controversy. There have been different interpretations for the term "Mau Mau". In the course of his trial at Kapenguria, Jommo Kenyatta, when asked about the meaning of Mau Mau replied that "Mau Mau are simply words and have no meaning".²⁰ On the other hand, during the trial of Mau Mau activists, a native witness in Naivasha court said "Mau Mau is a Kikuyu word meaning you want to do something very much and very quickly".²¹ According to C.T Stoneham "Mau Mau has some particular meaning connected with the early religion and traditions of the tribe which existed before the first whiteman was seen in Kikuyu land".²² J.M. Kariuki attributes the use of term

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- 19 D.P. Singh , "Mau Mau : A Case Study of Kenyan Nationalism", Africa Quarterly (New Delhi), Vol.7, no.1, April-June 1968, p. 10.
- 20 Montagu Slater , The Trial of Jommo Kenyatta (London: Secker and Warbugg, 1953), pp. 153-54.
- 21 C.T. Stoneham, Mau Mau (London: Museum Press, 1953), p. 23.
- 22 Ibidem.

to the "enemies of the movement who used it as a term of abuse."²³

Fred Majdalaney is of opinion that "the word Mau Mau" was a code word based on a secret language game which was played by the Kikuyu boys at the time of circumcision.²⁴ Authors Carl Roseberg and John Nottingham are confused about the term "Mau Mau". According to them it may be the corruption of Kikuyu word 'Muma' which means oath.²⁵

However, the most interesting interpretation has been given by D.H. Rawcliff. He is of the opinion that at the religious gatherings of the Watu Wa Mungu²⁶ or

23 J.M. Kariuki, Mau Mau Detainee (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 23-24.

24 Fred Majdalaney, State of Emergency: The Full Story of Mau Mau (London: Longmans, 1962), p. 75.

25 Singh, n.19, p. 11.

26 'Watu Wa Mungu', or 'The People of God' is a 'deni' or religious cult which arose among the Kikuyu in the nineteen twenties. It represented a blend of mission-taught christianity and tribal beliefs as well as the teachings of the Old Testament. The 'arathi' believed that their actions were dictated by the 'Holy Ghost' facing Mount Kenya (a very significant ritual). The political overtones were expressed through their rejection of foreign goods and when they took to wearing skins and began carrying bows and arrows as symbols of protest.

the 'people of God', the 'arathi (Kikuyu word for the 'prophets') during the course of the prayer used to be in a state of frenzy accompanied by violent trembling. They used to roar like lions during the course of ritual, a piece of symbolism based on the fifth chapter of Isaih. It is probable that the name of the secret Mau Mau cult originated from the ritual.²⁷

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Thus from the views expressed above, we find that there is no concrete evidence for the actual interpretation of the term "Mau Mau"; the movement itself is subjected to various interpretations. But before giving the various interpretations of Mau Mau, let us now turn our attention to the question what is a nationalist movement ? Before we attempt to answer this question it would be quite enlightening if we analyse the evolution of the concept of nationalism developing first in Western Europe. With the consolidation of nation states, nationalism brought about the reorganization of Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries and has been the prime force in the political awakening of Asia and Africa. In the first half of the 19th century it was associated with democracy and liberalism. In the later 19th century, however, nationalism assumed

27 D.H. Rawcliff, The Struggle for Kenya (London: Gollancz, 1954), p. 32.



aggressive and intolerant forms (integrative nationalism) identified with military and trade rivalries, national expansion at the expense of other peoples. In the twentieth century it has been the moving force in the rebellion and liberation of colonial people.²⁸ Of the many manifestations that nationalism has assumed in Asia and Africa, territorial nationalism sustains the states created by decolonization.

In the colonized states of Asia and Africa, the nationalist movements were basically the products of the central contradiction between colonialism and the interests of the native people. The leadership of the movement also based itself on a clear and firm understanding of colonialism. Thus, if the primary contradiction provided the structural basis of the national movement, its grasping through the anti-colonialism provided the ideological basis of immense importance, because active participation in a mass movement cannot take place only on the basis of a sense of being exploited.²⁹ Further,

28 Allan Bullock, Oliver Stallybrass and Stephen Trombley, ed., The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought (London: Fontana Press, 1988), edn. 2 pp. 559-60.

29 For details see, E. Kamenka, Nationalism: The nature and Evolution of an Idea (London: Edward Arnold, 1976)

nationalist movements incorporated different classes of people in its fold who saw their interests as running counter to those of colonizers. Finally, independence from the clutches of the colonizers was the ultimate goal of nationalist movements, because the all-round social, political, economic and cultural development of the people was viewed to be predicated on the throwing away of colonial yoke³⁰

While dealing with nationalism and nationalist movements, it is important to know the meaning of right of self-determination. Because in Africa nationalist movements emerged to get the right of self-determination from the colonisers. Some of these movements based their campaigns on the understanding of self-determination as defined by Joseph Stalin whose interpretation is being challenged today. Since African movements used the term in the light of Stalin's interpretation, we quote from Stalin:

The right of self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has the right forcibly to interfere in the life of nations, to destroy its schools and other

30 For details see, Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

institutions, to violate its habits and customs, to repress its language or curtail it's rights". (31)

According to Lenin who inspired anti-colonial movements, the right to national self-determination should include the right of nations to independence, to be free from the respective oppressing nations. In explaining this theoretical proposition, he pointed out that the answer to the question understood by this term should be sought not in legal definitions deduced from the general concept of law but in a historical economic study of national movement.³²

Thus from the above definitions we get the impression that national self-determination means the right of each nation to decide its own system of government and so to form an independent state. Against this ideological background, we will study the Mau Mau Movement for which historical analysis is necessary. In the following chapters we will study the adverse impact of colonialism on the Kenyan masses, which will give the broad character of Mau Mau Movement.

31 J. Stalin, Marxism and the National Colonial Question (Calcutta: Brumm Publishing House, 1960), p. 36.

32 Lenin, Critical Remarks on the National Questions: The Rights of Nations to Self-determination (Moscow: Progress Publisher, 1969), p. 54.

Different Interpretations of Mau Mau

The Mau Mau Movement is of growing academic interest due to various interpretations. But basically there are two schools of thought; the first school is composed of -

1. Imperialist and Christian School of Thought,
2. The University of Nairobi School of Thought,
3. The Chauvinist Interpretation.

To sum up their interpretations of Mau Mau Movement we find that according to this school, the movement was a "barbaric, anti-white tribal cult which planned to turn Kenya into a land of darkness and death".³³ Now the question is why there are three opinions within the First School of Thought. It is important to mention here, though Mau Mau Movement was suppressed, the colonisers realised the importance of Kenyan dissent and decided to hand over power to the Africans. But even after independence, they intended that their interest in particular and the interest of the International capitalism should be served. That was the reason why in the wake of Kenyan

33 Maina-wa-Kinayitti, "Mau Mau: The Peak of African Political Organisation in Colonial Kenya", Philosophy and Social Action (New Delhi), vol.9, no.1, Jan-Feb-Mar 1983, p. 24.

independence, an African petty-bourgeois class had already been created on the basis of tribal and regional factions.³⁴ This petty-bourgeois class is in power in Kenya; after monopolising power it served the interest of the foreign capital. Mau Mau Movement which was anti-white thus anti-administration and thus anti-colonial in character intended to gain independence for the whole masses of Kenya, not for any particular group or tribe. In view of this, one can say that the 1st school of thought represents the colonial mind, which did not want to give legitimacy to the Mau Mau Movement. Let us see the interpretations of different schools.

Imperialist and Christian School of Thought

The main propagators of Imperialist and Christian School of Thought are L.S.B. Leakey, F.D. Corfield, Fred Majdalaney, Dennis Holman, Ione Leigh and R. Rurak and the leaders of the Christian Church. According to these propagators the Mau Mau Movement was -

a barbarous and atavistic organisation, an anti-white tribal cult whose leaders planned to turn Kenya into a land of darkness and deaths. It

was a product of Gikuyu forest mentality, which was anti-Christian and anti-Western Civilization in Character. (35)

The University of Nairobi School of Thought:

The University of Nairobi School of Thought does not differ from Imperialist and Christian School of Thought. The advocates of this School of Thought William Ochieng and B.E. Kipkorir while representing the colonial mind attack the character of the movement. To sum up their view, we find that according to them Mau Mau was not a nationalist movement, because it had no nationalist programme and it was primarily a Kikuyu affair.³⁶

The Chauvinist Interpretation

This interpretation is another part of interpretation of University of Nairobi School of Thought. Generally it goes like this. "We Gikuyu Embu and Meru fought and died for the independence which we achieved with our blood. So all the positions, power, wealth should belong to us".³⁷ While denying the Mau Mau Movement

35 Kinayitti, n.33, pp. 24-25. For detailed information also see Corfield, n.16; L.S.B. Leakey, Mau Mau and the Kikuyu (London: Methuen, 1954) and his Defeating Mau Mau (London: Methuen, 1954); Majdalaney, n.24.

36 William R. Ochieng, "Review of Kaggia's Roots of Freedom 1921-63", Kenya Historical Review (Nairobi), vol.4, no.1, pp. 138-40.

37 Kinayitti, n.33, p. 27.

as a nationalist movement Chauvinist group intends to use Mau Mau Movement as a tool to monopolize the national leadership to enrich themselves.³⁸

The second School of Thought which is advocated by Maina-Wa-Kinayitti, Dedan Kimathi and Stanley Mathen opined that the Mau Mau Movement was truly a nationalist movement. Because these people were actively involved in the struggle and they knew the actual character and goal of the movement. According to Kinayitti, "It was a nationalist movement whose goals and aims were appropriate to the common desires of many people, which profoundly influenced Kenya's political evolution".³⁹ He further adds that Mau Mau Movement was part of world-wide anti-social onslaught which cannot be dismissed merely with flick of a pen.⁴⁰

Kinayitti while admitting the flaws in the organizational methods and techniques utilized by the movement, argues that the symbols, songs and oaths represented the nationalist

38 Ibidem.

39 Ibid., p. 1.

40 Ibidem.

character of the movement. While refuting allegation that the movement did not spread outside central Kenya, he argues that nowhere in the world a self-sustaining revolutionary movement has been started spontaneously by the masses.⁴¹

Dedan Kimathi, who was one of the chief architects of the movement always argued that the movement was a nationalist one. In one of the pamphlets while condemning the injustice of British Imperialism, he wrote -

If colour prejudices is to remain in Kenya who will stop subversive action, for the African has eyes, ears and brains. It is better to die than to live in distress, why confine distress to soul? (42)

Giving the reasons for taking up arms against the British, Kimathi wrote " We resort to armed struggle because there is no other alternative left to us, because our people were exploited, oppressed, plundered and tortured".⁴³ While refuting the colonialist charge against the movement in one of the meeting Kimathi had said:

I do not lead rebels but I lead Africans who want their self-government. My people

41 Ibid., p. 28.

42 Singh, n.19, p. 18.

43 Ibidem.

want to live in a better world than they met when they were born. I lead them because God never created any nation to be ruled by another for ever. (44)

In a letter to Fenner Brockway, Kimathi wrote -

We are not fighting for an everlasting hatred but are creating a true and real brotherhood between white and blacks so that we may be regarded as people and as human beings who can do each and every thing (45).

Thus, from these interpretations by these two schools it is clear that there is a wide difference of opinions regarding the character of Mau Mau. As we have already defined the nationalist movement and the question of national self-determination, while going through the various colonial conditions in the following chapters, we would like to see whether the movement was a nationalist one or not.

44 Ibidem.

45 Roseberg and Nottingham, n.18, p. 299.

CHAPTER - II

CAUSES AND FAILURES OF DIFFERENT PROTEST
MOVEMENTS AND PARTIES

British colonialism became responsible for the plunder of Kenya. Gradually with the advancement of colonialism, the socio-political and economic life of the Kenyans was affected severely. At the early stage of colonialism, there were scattered protests by the Kenyans against the occupation of their land, but they had little impact on the growth of colonialism in Kenya. Later due to more colonial oppression and growing nationalism among the Kenyans, there arose several protest movements against the British. Class system which was a product of colonialism in Kenya, played a crucial role in the emergence of various protest movements. These movements can be divided under the following heads:

- 1) Labour movements.
- 2) Religio-Political Protest Movements.

Labour Movements:

Labour movement, an organised effort on the part of the wage earners, was intended to fight for their social and economic betterment.¹ In a short span of 40-50 years of colonial conditions, the labour movements had got

1 Vijay Gupta, Kenya: Politics of (In)Dependence (New Delhi: Peoples' Publishing House, 1981), p.50.

maturity.² In simpler term, we may say, under the colonial set up capitalism finds suitable conditions to spread its wings, which is responsible for the exploitation of the workers. Before colonialism there was no working class in the Kenyan society. At that time house-hold was the unit of production and there were no wage earners. In the earlier Chapter, it has been mentioned how the most fertile lands were grabbed by the Europeans. The introduction of settler economy and the coercive administrative measures to extract the African labour justify the fact that the Kenyan working class was created not through the natural process but through artificial measures. As the Kenyans were deprived of their land, their means of production had to meet the taxation policy of the colonial masters and they were forced to take up wages labour.

Under the colonial oppression, the African workers protest was very weak. At that time the best that he could do was to desert the master as a mark of protest, only to be caught later to be jailed or fined or forced to provide labour. Gradually with the growth of capitalist

2 Ibidem.

society, the Kenyan workers became more organised and protested unitedly against the colonial suppression.

Labour Movement in Colonial Kenya

Ever since its origin, the labour movement in Kenya had been anti-colonial in character.³ When there were no political parties in Kenya, the labour organisations or trade unions represented the masses in the struggle against colonialism. During the struggle, the Kenyan Trade Union movement was largely influenced by the Asian Trade Union leaders, such as Makhan Singh who made the movement more progressive. The history of Kenyan labour movement was the history of labour in all sectors of economy. It accommodated all the workers in factories, plantations, transport, domestic and small establishments. When the colonial exploitation was at its height (in the 1920s) the Kenyan workers demonstrated their strength for the first time. In the year 1921, the first politico trade union organisation called East African Association (EAA) was formed under the leadership of Harry Thuku who was a telephone operator by profession. Although Young Kikuyu Association was there before EAA, the formation of EAA intended to organise the workers under

3 Gupta, n.1, p. 56.

a single banner, for which tribal name has be dropped. The East African Association was formed to fight for more wages for the workers and reduction of Hut and Poll Tax.

The formation of East African Association united the African workers and awakened them about their rights and colonial exploitation. More and more workers joined the organisation and showed their solidarity by joining the strike in 1921 which was the first ever organised strike in Kenya. The British Government, as expected, used its coercive machinery to crush the organisation. Harry Thuku and other leaders were arrested and deported. More than two hundred fifty workers laid down their lives.⁴ Thus the first organised attempt on the part of the Kenyan workers to restore their dignity was violently crushed but the fighting spirit among the workers remained. The formation of Young Kikuyu to East African Association under Harry Thuku marked the beginning of organised struggle in the colonial history of Kenya.

In the year 1925, the Kikuyu Central Association

4 Makhan Singh, History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement to 1952 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969), pp. 10-21.

(KCA) was formed to represent the case of the working class in Kenya. The formation of KCA saw the continuity of Kenyan nationalism in the wake of colonial suppression. In the words of Makhan Singh: "In the place of EAA, the formation of KCA was simply a 'tactic' so that political activity in the interests of all Africans could be continued and conducted openly".⁵ On this basis the KCA began to mobilize the people on the burning problems of land, labour and other questions of national interest such as education, forced labour, wages and African representation on the Legislative Council, which were the policies of East Africa Association".⁶ In the absence of banned labour organisations, the KCA filled the vacuum, whose strategy was constitutional. For the next sixteen years, the KCA was actively involved in the national politics. In 1928, it began a mouthpiece group called 'Mwiguithania' or the 'unifier' and helped to establish sister organisations, such as Kavirondo Tax payers Welfare Association, Ukamba Members Association and Teita Hills Association to unify the workers and channalize their grievances.⁷ Thus the KCA succeeded

5 Ibid., p. 25.

6 Ibid.

7 Dan Nabudere, Imperialism in East Africa, (London: Zed Press, 1981), pp. 75-76.

in giving a nationalist outlook to the movement.

By the year 1930, Kenya had a large African working class. The same year also saw the new era in the workers movement in Kenya. In 1934, under the dynamic leadership of Makhan Singh, the Labour Trade Union of East Africa (LTUEA) was formed whose most significant aim was to unite the African and Asian workers in the struggle.⁸ Though it was a difficult task on the part of Makhan Singh, since the Asians were regarded as the collaborators in the eyes of Africans, he succeeded. In April 1937, the Indian building workers went on a strike demanding more wages and better living conditions. It is important to mention here that the African workers also supported the strike and demonstrated hand in hand with the Indian workers.

As mentioned earlier, during those crucial days, the KCA played the vital role in keeping the fire of Kenyan nationalism burning despite the onslaught of the government on the organisations. The KCA which was active among the workers, decided to form a common platform

8 Singh, n.4, pp. 40-46.

with the cooperation of Makhan Singh and others. In 1939, the KCA came up openly to express its solidarity with LTUEA. That same year Jesse Kariuki and George Ndegwa of KCA were elected as the members.⁹

The joint platform of KCA and LTUEA gave a boost to the trade union movement in Kenya which resulted in the most successful Mombasa strike of 1939. The strike which was started by municipality workers, gained the support of other workers in different sectors. Ultimately, the government had to concede majority of demands of the workers. But this time also the workers had to pay a heavy price. The coercive apparatus of the government, as usual, was used to suppress the movement. Leaders like Makhan Singh, Jesse Kariuki and George Ndegwa were arrested and kept in jail for the entire period of the Second World War.¹⁰ But the Mombasa strike of 1939 taught the African workers about the utility of fighting colonialism under one banner. The strike helped them a lot in the course of their struggle in future.

Labour Movements upto Mau Mau (Post War Period)

The trade union movement in Kenya grew faster after

9 Ibid., p. 78.

10 Ibid., p.101.

the Second World War due to the growth of industries and new fields of employment which resulted in the increase in number of wage earners. Since the colonial exploitation continued, the workers' struggle became more vigorous. Besides, the Colonial Development Act of 1940 legalised the facilities for the trade unions. The post War period witnessed another important event, the formation of World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which gave support to the anti-colonial movements in different countries.

In Kenya, the government tried to make the movement non-militant by adopting different policies. Besides the threat of banning the unions, arresting the leaders, it tried to control the trade unions by adopting certain measures.

- 1) It tried to recognise some of the trade unions in anticipation that they would dance to its tunes.
- 2) It appointed labour advisers and tried to create dissent among the rank of leadership.

But the government's attempt was frustrated when, in 1947, more than 15,000 African workers defied the ban

on strike and abstained from work. At that time, the strike was totally supported by Kenyan African Union, which emerged after the ban of KCA. Chege Kibachia, the new trade union leader formed African Workers' Federation and united the workers under a single banner. The government became afraid of growing militancy among the workers. In 1948, Makhan Singh, then the Secretary of Labour Trade Union of East Africa, was arrested for organising a labour conference which was attended by delegates from sixteen trade unions.

Although Makhan Singh was arrested and his permanent resident certificate was confiscated after his release due to pressure on the government, after his release he became the force behind the formation, on 1 May 1949, of East Africa Trade Union (EATU) Congress which accommodated the militant wing of KAU leadership. Bildad Kaggia and Fred Kubai who differed with Kenyatta on the course of struggle joined hand with Makhan Singh.¹¹ The EATU aimed at eliminating the economic, social and political deprivation of the working class. It intended to watch and safeguard the rights and privileges of the workers.

11 Bildad Kaggia, Roots of Freedom, 1921-63 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975), pp.66-7.

It fought for the freedom of speech, association, assembly, movement, right to strike, proper working conditions, representation in the legislative council.¹² But as usual the government reacted strongly by arresting the leaders and campaigning against the movement through media. In the year 1950, all organisations were banned and the leaders were put behind the bars.

The trade union movement played a greater role in the Mau Mau Movement. The Land Freedom Army's General China while commending the contribution of trade unions wrote, "At that time the trade unions had the most militant leaders and were the most active groups working for independence in the city".¹³ While the Mau Mau fighters were fighting the government in the countryside, the trade union leaders campaigned in the city. The KAU's militant wing, which later formed Land Freedom Army to fight colonialism drew inspiration from trade union movements. Though the trade union movement in Kenya got serious setbacks owing to suppression by government, it succeeded in crossing the path of thorns

12 Gupta, n.2, p. 66.

13 Warahiu Itote, Mau Mau General (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), pp. 38-39.

and was never a failure though for sometime it had to remain subdued. It came up again and again to fight for the workers and finally strengthened the Mau Mau Movement through its valid contribution.

Religio-Political Protest Movements

With the coming of colonialism, the destruction of African society, culture and religion began. Though white settlers, church, mission, schools appointed chiefs, tax collectors and police, the British tried to dominate and influence every aspect of African life. While the white settlers grabbed the land of Africans, the Church Christianity was imposed on the masses. The mission schools aim was to produce servants for the colonial power. According to Oginga Odinga, "The purpose of education was not to train for independence but subservience".¹⁴ While the Chiefs acted as the contractors for the British to facilitate forced labour, the tax collectors and the police were the part of colonial system. So colonialism in Kenya destroyed the culture, religion and society of the Africans.

14 Oginga Odinga, Not Yet Uhuru (London: Heinemann 1968), p. 63.

The African ideas of religion which was a way of life suffered a lot due to the imposition of Christianity. While the strict christian code of conduct was impossible on the part of Africans to accept, the religious belief and conduct of Africans were looked down upon by the missionaries. Though the Christianity preached equality, the African priest was regarded inferior. So when these developments occurred, the Africans felt that their own cultural heritage was in danger.

The study of religious protest movement will help in putting the history of the Kenyan independence in correct perspective.¹⁵ These movements were the result of racial hatred and economic exploitation by the colonial masters. The racial arrogance and cultural superiority always guided them to hate non-whites.

In Kenya there was political undercurrents in all religious movements. When the tribal norms were shaken by the colonial regime, these movements not only protested against exploitation and ethnic discrimination, they

15 Gupta, n.1, p. 89.

also played a vital role in awakening the national self-awareness. Another important feature of protest movements in Kenya was that they were all mass based. Primarily the peasantry and in the later stage the workers, played the crucial role. But in the politico-religious protest movements, the Kenyan peasantry played the crucial role. With this brief understanding let us study some of the major politico-religious protest movements.

Watu-Wa-Roho or Dini-Ya-Roho (Man of the Spirit)

This movement which started around 1916 is considered to be the oldest politico-religious protest movement.¹⁶ It was anti-colonial and anti-European in character. It was started by ex-communicated members of pentecostal mission Alfago; it spread throughout South Nyanza around the year 1927 thanks to Jakobi Baluku and Daniel Sande. There was strict organisational discipline among the members. Besides prohibition of tobacco and alcohol, the members were allowed to keep two wives each. White long coat, white turban and sporting beard was the uniform of the members, who carried a flag too. The actions of the members were ruled entirely by religious ecstasy and contact with the Roho through dreams. Disobeyance of

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

of government's laws and discarding of European clothes were practised by the members of the movement. In the year 1935, the movement gathered strength and its members fought with the government troops in which their leader was killed. In 1940, Lucas Nuhu who became the leader, spread the movement to North and Central Nyanza. Besides, the members of this movement had close contact with the members of "Watu-Wa-Mungu" movement.

Watu-Wa-Mungu (People of God)

In the year 1920, Watu-Wa-Mungu movement was started by some ex-communicated Kikuyu Christian scholars. They claimed to have discovered a new deity and opposed church's interference in the custom of Africans. The members of this movement lived in a very close circle and had little contact with the people outside the movement. They wore white coloured coat and turban and their personal life was dictated by the Holy Spirit. The movement which considered the presence of Europeans as a threat to their culture and religion, was aimed at ending the white man's world. In 1933, the movement started taking the violent turn. The members boycotted European clothes and goods, defied laws and started arming themselves with bows and arrows. The government tried to impose restrictions on the movement because of

which the members had to fight. In 1934, while fighting with the government forces its three main leaders were killed. This was a severe setback to the movement whose activities decreased after that. But in the year 1947, the members of the movement contributed to the cause of Mau Mau Movement.¹⁷

Ndi-Ya-Jesu Christo (The Men of Christ)

Reuben Kikiko, an ex-member of the Salvation army, started this movement in the year 1936. This movement was most militantly anti-European in character. The followers called themselves the 'Men of Christ' and considered all Europeans as friends of the Devil. The movement aimed at restoring the customary life of the Africans and the right to work on their own land. The members boycotted every article of European origin and discouraged others from seeking employment with the Europeans. It was said that Kikiko had direct contact with God. He believed that the Kingdom of Heaven was near, where the Africans would rule by ending the empire of the British. Finally in 1947, Reuben Kikiko was

17 D.H. Rawcliff, The Struggle for Kenya (London: Gollancz, 1954), pp.30-35.

arrested on the charge of murder and the government succeeded in crushing the movement.¹⁸

Dini-Ya-Masambwa (Church of the Africans)

Dini-Ya-Masambwa (DYM) Movement was started by Elijah Mosinde around the year 1935.¹⁹ Mosinde who was earlier in Friends African Mission was expelled for taking second wife. The DYM movement played the most important role in Kenyan freedom struggle. Corfield has described it as a "politico-religious Sect" which was fiercely anti-colonial in character.²⁰ The members of the movement resolved not to eat European food, take medicine or even use crockery. They vowed to destroy European Churches, schools, hospitals and government property. All Europeans were regarded by them as Kiminani or the enemies of the Africans and all those Africans who helped the Europeans were called Banuli or the messengers of Europeans.

For ten years the DYM worked among the people urging

18 Eone Leigh, In the Shadow of the Mau Mau (London: Gollancz, 1954), p. 28.

19 Ibid., pp. 22-32.

20 F.D. Corfield, Historical Survey of the Origin and Growth of Mau Mau (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Comnd 1030, 1960), p. 215.

them to revive their faith in the African customs. In 1944 the DYM strongly opposed the government decision to recruit Africans for War. This led to the conflict between Elijah and government chiefs. The government reacted by arresting Elijah and putting him in a mental asylum. But in 1947, due to the intervention of Labour government Elijah was released.

After his release, Elijah went on campaigning against European Church and British policies. Again in 1948, when Elijah was addressing a crowd, the police opened fire killing many persons. Elijah was arrested and deported. The DYM was banned.

Even in the absence of Elijah, the followers of the movement continued their struggle. In 1950 Lukas Pkicheh, an associate of Elijah reorganised the movement. Under his leadership the Suka tribesmen occupied the land and fought with the government. The government retaliated by arresting and killing the members of the movement. During the banned period, the DYM changed its name to Dini-Ya-Yomu(DYY) and by 1952 it spread rapidly all over the western province, among the Kalenjin of the Rift valley and among the Suka of Baringo.

Dini- Ya-Kaggia(Religion of Kaggia)

Dini-Ya-Kaggia, started by Bildad Kaggia, a former army man, in the year 1946, aimed at preaching the

"broader view of religion".²¹ During his days with the army he was deeply shattered to see the discrimination and inequality between the Europeans and Africans. He was convinced that foreign religions was the greatest bondage on the Africans. So he decided to liberate the Africans from the teachings of foreign religion. The aim of the movement was -

- 1) to establish an African Church free from European domination;
- 2) to sanctify the church from European domination which had been offered to Africans as part of religious teachings;
- 3) to restore the African customs and culture. To this end it proposed that :
 - a) all new converts had to be baptized or rebaptized in their mother names, erasing all foreign names.
 - b) matrimonial ceremony had to be done according to African customs.²²

21 Kaggia, n.21, pp, 69-87.

22 Odinga, n. 14, pp. 72-73.

Kaggia strongly believed that liberation of mind paved the way for liberation from the colonial yoke and Africans were no way inferior to the Europeans.²³ To put an end to the hypocrisy in the name of religion, Kaggia threw his weight behind movement. The movement spread like wildfire in the whole of central province, Ukambani and Nyanza as a result of which many people were converted and the European Churches had to be closed.²⁴ At the instance of European Church leaders, the government retaliated. While organising a meeting in the year 1946, Kaggia and his followers were arrested. But the arrest of Kaggia prompted many people to join the movement. The Church leaders conspired with the government to ban the movement because of the threat to the colonial government. The movement was responsible for the change of Africans from the "humble European-fearing people" to courageous Africans who attacked the mighty British government.²⁵ It may be mentioned here that during May Mau Movement many of Kaggia's followers actively participated.

23 Leigh, n. 18, p. 100.

24 Odinga, n. 14, p. 73.

25 Kaggia, n. 31, p. 76.

Utsi

Utsi, a religious cum political organisation formed by the Digos in the Shimba region, was opposed to government-appointed head men who interfered with their agricultural practices, recruited labour and tried to undo the traditional administrative organisation.²⁶ By character, it was more a political organisation than religious. During 1920s, Nejambi which was the original administrative body of Digo tribe became difunctional due to large migration of people, was replaced by Utsi.²⁷ Upto 1952-53, the Digos fought for their betterment, but ultimately, during the emergency period, it was banned by the government alongwith other politico-religious organisations.

Though time and again, many protest movements rose due to the threat to African culture and society, they were suppressed by the coercive machinery of the government. But in true sense of the term they succeeded in arising the self-awareness among the Africans. They were not only religious but also political. According to Odinga "there was no permitted outlet for a popular protest against white rule, so protest emerged deviously, in many forms like in Church, in social organizations."²⁸

26 Gupta, n. 1, p. 102.

27 Ibid., p. 103.

28 Odinga, n. 14, p. 75.

Emergence of Political Parties

From the study above, it is quite clear that colonialism in Kenya had an adverse effect on the socio-religious-cultural and political life of Kenyan masses. Though different anti-colonial movements were ruthlessly suppressed by the government, the voices of millions of Kenyan masses could not be drowned by it. The tribes, which suffered most were the Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Taita, Kamba, Giriyama, Nandi and Kipsigis. They built cultural, political and economic institutions to challenge the colonialism. Among them Kikuyus and the Luos were the most affected tribe, so they always took the leadership and formed political associations.

The first political association to be formed was Young Kikuyu Association in 1921 by Harry Thuku. The main objectives behind the formation of this Association was to give representation to the government in matters of workers' wages, introduction of Kipande and the land issue. Harry Thuku got the support from other leaders like Jesse Kariuki, Jonathan Okwiri, Oginga Odinga and others. Criticising the government policies, Thuku declared:

When we went to do porter war work (as porters in the carrier corps) we were told by His Excellency,

the Governor that we should be rewarded. But is our reward to have our tax raised and to have registration papers given to us and for our ownership of our land to be called in question; to be told today that we are to receive little deeds and tomorrow for it to appear that we are not to receive them ? (29)

Soon Young Kikuyu Association (YKA) drew more and more Kenyans for the struggle. The people contributed generously to the fund of the Association and expressed their solidarity by attending the meetings in large numbers. Thuku's uncompromising attack on the settlers and government policies encouraged other tribes such as Luo and Kamba to extend their support to YKA. Later it was realized by Harry Thuku and others that in order to succeed, Africans not only in Kenya, but in East Africa as a whole, must unite under one banner. So they decided to rename the YKA, the East African Association. This was a significant step which threatened the government and the settlers' interests as well. The settlers attacked through their newspaper 'The Leader' on East African Association and urged the government to take strong action.³⁰ The government took the drastic step by

29 Singh, n. 4, p. 11.

30 Ibid., p. 12.

banning the Association and arresting the leaders like Harry Thuku and others and deported them.

It is important to mention the role of another association : Young Kavirondo Association formed by the Luos and Luhyas in the year 1921. This association drew inspiration from Young Kikuyu Association and the leadership was the same. It gave a ten point charter of demands to the District Commissioner. It demanded:

1. an organisation and a president in the country;
2. decrease in the Poll tax;
3. non-exploitation of African labour;
4. not to take their cattle;
5. abolition of forced labour;
6. power to the chiefs;
7. salaries to the chiefs;
8. better education;
9. non-exploitation of the child labour and
10. abolition of harsh punishment.³¹

The formation of Young Kavirondo Association showed the Africans' aspiration to manage their own affairs. Though

31 Odinga, n. 14, p. 27.

both the associations were banned due to government's pressure, the most important contribution of these associations was that they succeeded in laying the foundation of freedom movement. When peasants, workers sought the right means to end their agony, these associations gave them the ultimate choice. They were suppressed for the time being, but only to re-emerge as Kikuyu Central Association and Kavirondo Taxpayer's Welfare Association respectively.

In the year 1925, the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) was formed under the leadership of Jesse Kariuki and Joseph Kangethe. The formation of KCA was permitted by the government because of the visit of a Parliamentary Commission led by Ormsby-Gore. Earlier, the East African Association whose very name threatened the colonialists was banned when it turned itself into a nationalist movement. Perhaps, that was the reason why the Association re-emerged as Kikuyu Central Association. It was a move on the part of the government to force the leadership to name it as a tribal association. But the colonialist move to take the steam out of the nationalist movement did not succeed in damping the spirit of nationalism. Though KCA had a tribal name but it opened its rank to all tribes. By its nature, it was "anti-government and

anti-European.³² Very soon the KCA became very active in mobilizing the people on the problems of land, labour, education, forced labour, wages and the African representation in the legislative council which were the issues pursued by East Africa Association. The KCA took a firm stand on these issues, started bringing more and more people to its fold. In a letter Jommo Kenyatta as the General Secretary of KCA wrote the aims and objectives of KCA. The letter was published in Manchester Guardian on March 18, 1930. The KCA's aims were briefly summarised as :

1. to obtain a legal right, recognised by the local government for the tenure of lands held by the tribes before the advent of the foreigner and to prevent further encroachment;
2. to obtain educational facilities of a practical nature, to be financed from the portion of the taxes paid by Africans to the government;
3. to obtain the abolition of hut tax on women;
4. to obtain the representation of native interests on the Legislative Council by native representatives elected by the natives;

32 Corfield, n.20, p. 40.

5. to be permitted to retain the tribal customs.³³

The KCA was not the only political organisation; there were others too, whose support was sought by the KCA. The Ukambas who were against the policies of government had their own association called Ukamba Members Association (UMA). In 1939 UMA associated itself with KCA and adopted its programme and policies on land, labour and other national question..

The Teita people, who lost their land during the First World War, were forced to live in small reserves. For the struggle to get back their land, they had formed one association called Teita Hills Association (THA). It was KCA's land policy which attracted THA to join hands for a common and organised struggle.

The North Kavirondo Central Association (NKCA) which replaced Kavirondo Taxpayer's Welfare Association also joined KCA for a united struggle.

The secret behind KCA's success as the only

33 Jommo Kenyatta, Suffering Without Bitterness (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968), p. 35.

political organisation to be actively involved in national politics for sixteen years, despite its tribal name, was that it succeeded in bringing the other organisations to its fold for a national struggle. The Associations of UMA, THA and NKCA and KCA gave a broader platform to the people of Kenya to express their grievances. Finally, it may be mentioned that in the trade union activities also the KCA took an active part. By 1939, the KCA had assumed a national character covering people from all walks of life.

Though KCA leadership was centralised and well disciplined, because of which it developed onto a national struggle with relative political radicalism, it suffered from the absence of experienced leaders. The ideological commitment of the leadership was anti-colonial and anti-European in nature, but it was vague in the sense that it had no clear programme for strengthening the struggle. The greatest flaw on their part was that they never talked of independence or self-government. The KCA's mouthpiece 'Mwigithania' or the 'Unifier', which was edited by Jommo Kenyatta, instead of arousing people against colonialism, taught them to be proud Kikuyus or Africans. Perhaps due to these policies KCA failed to achieve independence for Kenya. Nevertheless, it had

created a path towards independence, which was achieved much later.

Finally, in 1940, the KCA was banned as "Communist Subversive". Along with KCA, the UMA, THA and NKCA were also banned. The KCA's mouthpiece 'Mwiguithania',³⁴ was closed and KCA leaders were arrested. Though after the ban, the KCA was run by five men committee, it failed to gain its position in the national arena. Later its leadership was captured by militants and staunch anti-Europeans who were against constitutional methods and advocated the cause of armed rebellion.³⁵ Finally, in the year 1944, it merged with Kenyan African Union (KAU) under the leadership of Jommo Kenyatta.

The formation of KAU as a political union was characterized by increasing mass-resistance and expression against British colonialism. The KCA leadership who had petty-bourgeois background, took the mantle of leadership of KAU after their release in 1944. As far as political system was outlined its horizon was constitutionalist, reformist at best and parliamentary. Though

34 Maina-wa-Kinayitti, 'Mau Mau : The Peak of African Political Organisation in Colonial Kenya,' Philosophy and Social Action (New Delhi), vol.9, no.1, Jan-Feb-March 1983, p. 12.

35 Odinga, n.14, p. 111.

it asked for self-rule, its path to attain the goal was constitutionalist. In other words, it favoured negotiations to revolutionary violence. To sum up, the KAU was formed

to unite the people of Kenya; to prepare the way for introduction of democracy in Kenya; to defend and promote the interests of the African people by organizing, educating and leading them in the struggle for better working conditions, housing etc; to fight for equal rights for all Africans; to break down all racial barriers; to strive for the extension to all African adults the right to vote and be elected...; to publish a political newspaper periodically; to fight for freedom of assembly, press, movement, and to raise and administer the funds necessary to effect these objects (Constitution). (36)

On this basis, the Kenya African Union became the new spokesman for the people of Kenya because it came into existence at a time when there were acute economic problems in Kenya.

The KAU got more support from the workers from all areas and it spread to 28 districts of Kenya, thus proving itself as a mass based organisation. In order to pursue the African demands, the KAU launched a non-cooperation movement against the government, thus

36 K.Njama & D.C. Barnett., Mau Mau from Within (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966), p. 39.

boycotting the use of European goods while demanding the African representation in the local and legislative Council. It also challenged the legality of minority rule over the majority Africans.

At that time, the trade union movement was at its peak all over Kenya. January 1947 witnessed the greatest ever organised strike in the history of Kenya's liberation movement. Workers from all sections—railways, dock, municipal, transport and press asked for more wages and better living conditions. Although the twelve day old strike was suppressed by the government, it gave a new boost to the workers' morale. Under the leadership of Chege Kibachia, African Workers Federation was set up to unite the workers for their fight. But the government promptly arrested Kibachia and detained him.

During that period, the KAU had its problems in its ranks and files. Its leadership was divided into two groups: the militants and non-militants. On the question of political and economic demands there was unanimity among the KAU leaders, but on methods there was sharp division. While moderates or non-militant leaders like Jommo Kenyatta and others believed in constitutional

means;³⁷ like demonstration, dharanas and petitions to achieve their demands, the militant group led by Dedan Kimathi and Stanley Mathenge believed that words will have no impact on the colonial masters; the only way to achieve goal is the path of armed struggle. Besides, as mentioned earlier, the militants drew their inspiration from the trade union movement, which was led by most progressive and militant leadership like Makhan Singh.

As a result, the moderate wing of the leadership of KAU lost control over the Union for not asking immediate independence and not choosing the path of violence, which was demanded by the militants who were majority in numbers.³⁸ The militants urged all Africans to join the armed struggle against the government. Oath taking ceremony concerned with land and political objectives took place on a large scale during 1947 to 1950. The oath taking activities were initiated by KAU which was under the control of militants and later came to be known as Mau Mau activities. In August 1950, the Mau Mau was

37 D.W. Throup, 'The Origins of Mau Mau', African Affairs (London), vol.84, no.336, July 85, p.431.

38 Odinga, n.14, pp. 110- 11.

declared by government to be an illegal society and took steps to fight against it.

The increasing popularity of KAU wrought havoc among the European settlers, who pressurised the government to ban KAU and other African organisations. In 1952, in Nairobi, the government banned all political meetings and put several restrictions on the political organisations. But by that time, the situation had gone out of control because the African protest had already touched its nadir to break the colonial shackles. On 21st October, 1952, the government made an attack on the African political movement by declaring the state of emergency to maintain law and order. It arrested the whole of KAU leadership including Kenyatta and charged them of being the leaders of Mau Mau. Militants like Dedan Kimathi, Stanley Mathenge fled to forest to organise and continue the armed struggle.

Thus a new dawn came on the history of Kenyan freedom struggle. The road was all set for Mau Mau, which was a necessity. It ultimately became a reality.

CHAPTER - III

ORIGIN AND CAUSES OF MAU MAU MOVEMENT

Establishing colonial rule in Kenya and attempting to turn the country into a white-settlement area had a profound effect on the local African population. Not only did the alienation of African lands disinherit and dislocate many Africans, but the subsequent development of settler plantations and mixed farms created a demand for a large number of wage labourers.¹ In the previous chapters, we have already discussed how the colonial masters took political and economic measures to create the required labour supply.

One of the major reasons behind the origin of Mau Mau Movement is the squatter problem. In this chapter, we will discuss the squatter problem and the conflict between settlers and squatters, which led to Mau Mau. The larger section of the chapter will deal with the squatter problem. It had been discussed earlier that after the land alienation, the Africans were forced to live in Reserves. When the Reserves became overcrowded, the British encouraged the squatter system. The squatter means as stated earlier an African labourer who takes up residence on a settler's farm to provide him labour. In return, he is allowed to an area to grow his own food and graze his cattle. Besides various reasons, which have

1 For details see, Mwanji-wa-Githumo, Land and Nationalism: The Impact of Land Appropriation and Land Grievances upon the Rise and Development of Nationalist Movements in Kenya, 1885-1939 (Washington D.C : University Press of America, 1981).

been already mentioned, the squatter problem is considered as the root cause of Mau Mau Movement. Under colonial rule, besides Nandi, Masai, Wakamba, Embu, Meru, the Kikuyus and the Luos suffered the most. That is the reason why most of the Kikuyus and Luos led the liberation movements against the British. It is important to mention here that the Kikuyu squatter labourers comprised the majority of resident labourers on settler plantations and estates in the Rift Valley Province of the white Highlands in Kenya. The story of the squatters in white Highlands is essentially a story of conflicts and contradictions between two agrarian systems, i.e. the settler plantation economy and the squatter peasant option. The episode, which was one of major reasons of Mau Mau Movement, was a product of colonial rule.

When Kenya was declared a protectorate by the British, Kikuyu settlement stretched northwards of Nairobi to the slopes of Mount Kenya.² The European settlement of the white Highlands began in the Southern district of Kikuyu country. The land alienation started rapidly from the year 1903. The Europeans paid the Kikuyu owners a meagre

2 C.C. Wigley, "Kenya: Patterns of Economic Life: 1902-1945" in V. Harlow and others, ed., History of East Africa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), Vol. II, p. 212

3 rupees per acre as compensation for their loss of rights. The indiscriminate alienation of African land rendered several thousand Africans landless. By July 1910, there were 11,647 Kikuyu on the Kimabu-Limuru settler farms cultivating approximately 11,300 acres of land owned by the European settlers.³

By the end of the First World War, the squatter system had become an established part of the socio-economic structure of European farms and plantations in Kenya, with Kikuyu squatters comprising the majority.⁴ Besides Kikuyu, there were also Akamba, Nandi, Kipsigis, Marakwet, Keiyo and Tugen squatters and after the First World War, the Luo, Luyia and Kissi squatters made their presence.⁵

Thus the alienation of land and creation of squatters went on side by side, which was boosted up by coercive policies of the British to meet the required African labour.

3 M.P.K. Sorrenson , The Origins of European Settlement in Kenya (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.184

4 C.Leys , Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of NeoColonialism, 1964-1971 (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 47.

5 Tabitha Kanogo, Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau, 1905-63 (London: James Curry, 1987), p. 27.

Settler-Squatter Relationship:

During the First World War years, the settlers were determined to consolidate their position on squatter labour and productive machinery in the white Highlands. This period marked the beginning of conflict between settlers and squatters. In order to develop their economy, the settlers pressurised the government to introduce various labour regulations for cheap and adequate supply of labour. Though in the squatter system the resident labour was allowed to grow his own food and graze his own cattle, the settlers were determined to curtail that also. Even the settlers expected the squatters to neglect their own farming and concentrate on settler's plantation. In order to regulate the squatters labour and create a stable supply of labour for the white Highlands, in 1918, the government introduced Resident Native Labourers Ordinance (RNLO) which declared that "it is desirable to encourage resident native labour on farms and to take measures for the regulation of squatting or living of natives in places other than those appointed for them by the government of protectorate."⁶ This Ordinance legalised the squatter system and provided a legal framework for its social

6 Y.P. Ghai and J.P.W.B. McAusian, Public Law and Political Change in Kenya (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 83.

control.

The Ordinance required a squatter to provide not less than 180 working days per year on a farm. In return, the worker and his family were allowed to live on the farm and cultivate a part of settler's land for his own use. This ordinance also made the provision for minimal wage to be paid to the squatter but never specified the number of stock allowed per squatter. Illegal squatting was also prohibited. But the RNLO of 1918 largely failed to ensure adequate supply of labour. The squatters continued to pursue activities that undermined and evaded the colonial government's sole reason for allowing them into the area. They neglected the work of the settlers because the squatter system was more beneficial to settlers than the Africans. Squatter's stocks were also not allowed by the settlers. This led to conflict between the squatters and the settlers.

The settlers hoped that the 1918 RNLO would be reinforced by the existing Masters and Servants Ordinance of 1906, under which workers were liable to pay heavy penalties for negligence or absence from work. But since the squatters belonged to labour tenants, rather than servants, it was difficult to prosecute them. The settlers continued to pressurise the government to include

squatters under the Master and Servants Ordinance.⁷ So from 1919 onwards, the labourers were required to carry an identification certificate (Kipande) on which owner's previous labour and current history was entered, including the nature of employment, date of engagement, length of contract and wages paid.⁸ The Kipande system made desertion very difficult and turned the labourer into a virtual prisoner. The combination of RNLO and Kipande had an adverse effect on the Squatters. By law the settlers forced the squatters to provide adequate labour. Even uncontracted continued to reside illegally because there was no land left for them. In other words, to many Kikuyus, squatting was an attractive alternative to being landless in the Reserve.

In the late twenties European commercial farming was strengthened with the help of government. This was the reason why all sectors of European agriculture became developed. With the rise of European Commercial Agriculture which gave priority to coffee and sisal production, the goal of the settlers was to obtain a steady supply of cheap labour. So the European farmers

7 Kanogo, n.5, p. 34.

8 Ibidem.

sought a shift in the existing relationship of European land lord and Kikuyu tenant to that of employer and labourer. In other words, they tried to eliminate the squatters as independent producers and make them agricultural labourers.

By the year 1921, there was a steady flow of Africans from Reserves to white Highlands. These migrations were the result of cumulative effect of the colonial economy in the Reserves. The Africans were compelled to leave Reserves due to shortage of land and the need for new cash requirement. This migration caused panic among the settlers who feared illegal squatting. The period from 1929-39 saw a general assault by settlers on the squatters' way of life. They were forbidden to graze cattle and grow cash crop.

Due to new restrictions imposed on the squatters, in the year 1929, the squatters went on protesting in large numbers. Thousands of them refused to sign new contracts, went on strike, occupied European owned land and refused to accept many of the settlers attempt to restrict their agricultural activities.

In order to curb the squatters protest the government

threw its weight behind the settlers. The amended Resident Native Labourers Ordinance of 1937 provided the legal basis for a much more rigorous and vicious form of squatter control by the settlers. The Ordinance gave the European settlers powers to limit the number of acres under squatter cultivation, to eliminate squatter stock and to increase the number of working days from 180 to 240 and then to 270 days per year. It also stated that as long as a squatter worked for a settler, he remained on his farm.⁹

The systematic reduction of squatters land and stock was not compensated for by an increase in wages. Besides, the increase in number of working days added to the woe of squatters. Furthermore, the squatters could not sell their produce freely. One of the main complaints of the squatters was the low price that the Maize Marketing Board offered for their produce. The African squatter received 14 to 15 shillings per bag from the European landlord, while the Europeans received 32 shillings per bag as a result of government subsidies.¹⁰ Besides

9 N. Leys., The Colour Bar in East Africa (New York: Negro University Press, 1970) pp. 41-48

10 F. Ferudi, 'The Social Composition of Mau Mau Movement in the White Highlands', Journal of Peasant Studies (London), vol. 1. no.4, 1974, p. 493.

this there was a feeling of insecurity among the squatters as their position was always liable to change by the settlers dominated District Councils. The absence of any ties with land in the Reserves made the threat of eviction all the more significant for squatters.

With the deterioration in their standard of living, the squatters were pushed to the wall. There was no choice left for them except to protest against the government. After the end of the Second World War, when more European settlers arrived, the squatter protests became intensified and were carried out in a more systematic manner. The sufferings of the squatters at the hands of the settlers, backed by the government, finally took the form of militant protest by the squatters. This was one of the major causes of the outbreak of the Mau Mau Movement.

From the study above it is clear that the relation between the settler and the squatter was the relation between exploiter and exploited. The conflict between the settler and squatter emerged due the settler's attitude towards the squatter. For the benefit of settler economy, the African squatter was squeezed out

of his land. After losing his land, labour was also extracted from him for the growth of settler plantation. But the miseries of the African squatter did not end there. Even after becoming a resident labour his social life was also threatened. In the following pages while discussing the social organisations of the squatters in the white Highland, we will discuss how far the social life of squatters was destroyed.

Social Organisations of the Squatters

Colonialism in Kenya is largely responsible for destroying the socio-economic and political institutions of Africans. But even the transformation of Africans from land owners to squatters could not stop them from reviving their social organisation, which was a way of life to them. The social organisations of the squatters in the white Highland always helped them to tie each other in a bond to maintain their own identity.

The social organisations among the squatters kept the fire of nationalism burning in true sense of the term. The settlers and the government saw these organisations as a threat to their existence. When they opposed these organisations, they only invited the wrath of squatters. Having been exploited economically, the

squatters saw their socio-political life also being threatened. They revolted and when the Mau Mau begun, they found the right platform to express their dissenting voices.

Let us now discuss some of the social organisations that existed among the squatters in the White-Highland in Kenya and the settlers' and government's response to them.

Ciama (The Elders Council)

Ciama or the Elder's Councils were formed by all Kikuyu squatters and were run according to traditional Kikuyu cultural norms, values and practices. Membership was restricted to elderly and respected squatters residing on the farms.¹¹

In singular term Ciama were called Kiama, which dealt with all aspects of life. It dealt with settling disputes among squatters, circumcision, marriage and other traditional rituals. Even the unlawful pregnancy, theft, rape and other anti-social practices were arbitrated by the Kiama and the sentences were passed.

¹¹ Kanogo, n.5, p. 75.

If the members of the Kiama saw the importance of certain cause, especially on dispute involving people from different farms, then they had the right to convene interfam Kiama. Generally Kiama used to impose fines in the form of a ram, which would be slaughtered and eaten by the elders of the council.

Thus the formation of Kiama was an attempt to safeguard the interests of the squatter community and to maintain the healthy social structure in the community. While colonialism succeeded in destroying the economic, political and social life of Africans in Kenya in general, the Kikuyu squatters succeeded in keeping their culture alive even in the settlers white Highland. It made them feel at home even on the eve of occupation by the outsiders.

But the settlers and the government saw the Kiama as a threat to their existence. Any unity among the Africans was never taken lightly by the government. It was highly critical of Kiama's deliberations and questioned its legitimacy. They regarded Kiama and its laws as highly unconstitutional as they did not fall under British system of law.¹² But the majority of the squatters

¹² Kenya National Archives, Naivasha District Annual Report, 1926, p. 4.

were surprised when they were informed that the sentences passed by the Kiama were considered illegal by the government.¹³ Besides the under current reason, that is, unity among the Kikuyus, the government was dissatisfied with Kiama due to following reasons:

Firstly, the litigants' dissatisfaction with Ciama's decision resulted in administrative officers presiding over a large number of civil suits.

Secondly, the settlers expected the Ciama to curb desertion, illegal squatting, uncontrolled cultivation and grazing by the Africans. When Ciama did not respond, it invited the wrath of government.

Finally, the settlers did not want any rival hierarchy of authority in the settled areas.

These were the reasons why the government proscribed Ciama in the year 1924.¹⁴

13 Ibid., p.5.

14 Kenya National Archives, Naivasha District Annual Report, 1924. p. 3.

Circumcision

In the settled areas the important Kikuyu customs - circumcision - was observed by the squatters. Circumcision marked the transition from childhood to adulthood, formed the basis of Kikuyu age grade system and was used to induct the initiated in Community's norms.¹⁵ But there were restrictions for circumcision in the settled areas. It was necessary to receive written permission for the ceremony to take place. Licence had to be obtained for brewing traditional liquor.

Before colonialism, the prosperity of the community could be judged from the amount of food stuff and traditional liquor that were prepared for the occasion. The prosperity of the Kikuyu community lied with the amount of land and live-stock. Live-stock were vital to most rites, rituals and transactions.

When the de-stocking campaign was started by the settlers, due to which the Kikuyus were to keep restricted live-stock, the Kikuyu traditions began to die away with

15 Jommo Kenyatta , Facing Mount Kenya
(Nairobi : Heinemann Educational Books,
1971), p.2.

the extinction of live-stock. By 1937, only one labourer per farm was allowed to keep goats for selling to other squatters for various rituals and transactions.¹⁶ After the Second World War, the condition of the squatters became worse due to large scale destocking and it was obvious that their cultural activities were seriously affected. Their cultural activities like marriage ceremonies suffered due to increase in bride price as a result of destocking; circumcision had to be cut down. It was difficult on the part of the squatters to make adjustments to cope with their deteriorating economic strength.

Nevertheless, the continuing cultural practices among the squatters brought a coherent structure to Kikuyu communities in the settled areas. They succeeded in keeping the social fabric of their indigenous society in the settled areas. Towards the end, this helped them in their fight against colonialism.

Education

Prior to 1918, before moving to the White Highlands, some of the squatters received atleast minimum elementary

16 Kenya National Archives, Native Affairs Department, Annual Report, 1937, p. 8.

education from the missionary school. Due to racial structure of education in Kenya, the African education lagged behind that of other races, namely the Europeans, Asians and Arabs. Up to the mid-1930s, various missionary groups were responsible for African education in the Reserves. But basically African education remained neglected. The taxes collected from Africans were used to subsidise transport, educational and social services infrastructure which were for the benefit of the white community. The government was concerned for the whites, their economy and their education because they would also provide country's ruling elite.

In comparison to the European education, the Africans were educated with a view to producing certain kinds of manpower, such as clerks, artisans and technicians, to serve the colonial administration. The settlers needed semi-literate or semi-skilled Africans as clerks, farm overseers, carpenters and filters.¹⁷ During the early colonial period these jobs were held by Asians. But later the settlers argued that Asian labour was too

17 D.N. Sifuna , 'European Settlers as a Factor Influencing Government Policy and Practice in African Education in Kenya 1900-1963', Kenya Historical Review (Nairobi), vol.4, no.1, 1976, pp. 63-84.

expensive. Besides, by this time, the Asians were posing a major threat to the European Community by challenging its economic and political supremacy. In order to obtain cheap labour, the settlers started advocating technical education for the Africans.

But the settlers were opposed to the education of squatter's children because the demand for education would any way jeopardise the supply of child labour to the settler economy. At the peak of harvest period, child labour was essential for tea and other plantations. During that time, the children provided an abundant and cheap supply, but at other times of the year they also performed all manners of odd jobs on settler farms as kitchen hands or herds boys. Even the settlers used to give preference to the squatters, who had children of an employable age.¹⁸

In order to give their children education, some squatters sought employment on farms, where the settlers allowed them to run schools. But they struck a compromise by allowing schools to be established on their farms provided they did not interfere in their labour demands. Therefore, the squatters were forced to hold schools

18 Kanogo, n.5, p. 79.

either in the afternoons after the children had worked on the farms or in the evenings when the squatters and their children retired from work. On some farms classes were held in the morning or at weekends, when labour demands were minimal.¹⁹ But the ultimate result was the gross negligence of education for squatter's children. In order to check revolt among the squatters the settlers allowed them to run schools, but it was mockery in the name of education as under those conditions it was impossible on the part of a child to be educated properly.

The squatters had to obtain settler's permission before running a school on the farm. Once the permission was granted, the squatters would pull their resources to build the school which was made of mud and grass and was badly lit. The Community's self help group (muingi) was responsible for teacher's salary. Generally, the squatters hired the services of an African teacher whose educational qualification was less than five years of formal education. The teacher was capable of giving only bare introduction to reading, writing and arithmetic beyond which he was incapable of progressing. In the

19 Ibid., p. 80.

absence of any centralised and clearly defined educational system for African children and the cold attitude of settlers towards their education, it could be said without any exaggeration that the education for African children was a myth. The squatters with the help of their community self help group maintained this system until 1929. After that the Karinga school movement and Kikuyu Independent School Association took up the cause of education for the African children.

Indigenous Schools

The Karinga school movement and the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association grew up as a reaction against mission control over formal education in general and against the missionary onslaught on Kikuyu traditions in particular.²⁰ Until 1930s, missionary bodies like Church of Scotland Mission, the Church Missionary Society and the White Fathers had a control over education. But after the formation of Karinga school movement and Kikuyu Independent Schools Association the situation changed rapidly.²¹

20 Carl Roseberg and John Nottingham The Myth of Mau Mau: Nationalism in Kenya (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966), pp. 125-26.

21 Ibid., p.127.

In the previous chapter, while discussing socio-religious protest movements, it had been described how Christianity was imposed over Africans and how, as a result, the African religion which was a way of life for many Africans, suffered badly. The break-away Churches, which revolted against white monopoly of religion and discrimination, started Karinga school movement and KISA. These two movements established several schools on a self help basis.

The Karinga movement which started in southern Kiambu had a radical outlook. It combined educational matters with political issues such as land alienation and population pressure in Southern Kiambu.²² The Karinga movement was widespread in the forest villages of Rift Valley farms, in Kissi and Kipsigis in the West, in Moshi and Arusha in Northern Tanganyika and at the Olenguruone settlement.²³

KISA operated largely in Northern Kiambu Fort Hall and Nyeri districts. Being more concerned with

22 Ibid., p. 131.

23 Ibid., p. 126.

educational and religious matters, KISA was affiliated to the South-African based African Orthodox Church and gave priority to the welfare of schools.²⁴

Neither KISA nor Karinga school movement succeeded in drawing right strategy to control or organise schools in settled areas due to opposition from the government. But they succeeded in spreading the ideology and injecting the spirit into squatters.

Squatters Movement

Though the squatters earlier resisted the economic-socio and political exploitation by the settlers by deserting them or refusing to sign new contract, these resistances were scattered and had little impact on the settlers. By the end of Second World War the relationship between the two had been severe. By that time the squatter's live-stock were restricted to an average of only 15 sheep; the amended Resident Native Labour Ordinance required them to work a minimum of 270 days with no wage increase. Though their subordination was virtually complete, the settlers continued to press for further restrictions.

24 Ibid., p. 130.

But it was the Olenguruone crisis from which the squatters resistance was born. The Olenguruone crisis had arisen out of the following factors:

1. Findings of Kenya Land Commission of 1933;
2. the effects of 1937 RNLO and
3. the government policies.

The 1932-33 Kenya Land Commission recommended that the Kikuyu needed more land and some land be made available to them. The Commission acknowledged that due to land alienation some land holders had lost their land. Some of the land holders had become colonists in Masailand while others had moved to the White Highlands as squatters. But under the amended provisions of RNLO of 1937, many squatters were declared redundant who along with the colonists in Masailand were settled in Olenguruone. In Olenguruone, a prolonged anti-government crisis developed which lasted for ten years.

After the Second World War the government formulated the policy for agricultural improvement and soil conservation in the African Reserves. The settlers in their campaign against squatter cultivation and grazing, held the squatters responsible for agricultural negligence and soil destruction. They pressurized the government

to take action. The government took Olenguruone as a test case for agricultural improvement and imposed a host of agricultural regulations which resulted in the suffering of the people. In the ensuing conflict Olenguruone residents organised mass defiance of regulations and sought the help of other disgruntled squatters in the White Highlands.

The Africans had been demanding the return of their stolen lands for years. The Kikuyu Central Association kept the battle for lost lands alive through petitions, memoranda and public meetings. Although banned in 1940, the KCA continued to operate underground and after 1944 when it emerged revitalised by a massive membership drive and the introduction of a loyalty oath to fight against colonialism, the KCA leaders in central province and Olenguruone settlement spearheaded the opposition to government policies.

Olenguruone provided a rallying point for all disgruntled Africans, who took the oath of loyalty to fight against colonialism. In the wave of militant politics that swept Olenguruone, squatters in other areas began to feel the need for leadership which Olenguruone provided. When Land Freedom Army was formed by the militants of the KAU, the squatters gave their whole

hearted support to it.

So, besides various colonial suppression, the squatter crisis was the root cause of Mau Mau. A revolution is not like a bombshell exploding at a mere touch of fire. Over the years the Africans were exploited economically and politically. Their economic-social-political institutions were destroyed by colonialism. After the Second World War, African nationalism was at its peak. The colonial government was not in favour of giving full independence to Africans. It tried to gag the voices of millions of Africans by banning their political parties, by using its coercive machinery.

Finally, another important reason for the outbreak of Mau Mau was the policies of KCA and KAU which have been dealt in the second chapter. The KCA for 16 years remained as the largest political party, but it had no clear cut programme and ideologically it was vague. They never demanded independence for Kenya. Due to this after its re-emergence as KAU after 1944, it was divided into two. When the moderates failed to mobilize the masses and feared militancy, the militant group in KAU decided to go for armed struggle, as all the avenues of

constitutional path had been ruthlessly ignored by the colonial government. At that time the progressive leadership of Trade Unions supported the militants, who formed the Land Freedom Army to fight for independence. The peasants or the squatters, the labourers through trade unions contributed to the Mau Mau struggle. The Mau Mau which marked a new phase of resistance was the last phase of struggle for Kenyans.

CHAPTER - IV

CHARACTER OF MAU MAU AND ITS COMPARISON
WITH OTHER MOVEMENTS

Ever since the outbreak of the Mau Mau, opinions have differed among scholars about the character of this movement. Very few mass movements in Africa have attracted so much controversy as the Mau Mau. In this chapter while analysing the character of Mau Mau, we will go through various interpretations and examine their validity. But before that let us analyse nationalism and on that basis, we will examine the nature of nationalist movement.

Nationalism is a potent force in modern politics. Writers and politicians have fanned the fire of national sentiment in theoretical formulation and political movement. According to Hayes, "it is akin to primitive tribalism in that it directs the supreme loyalty of its adherents to a community of language, customs and historic traditions."¹ But it differs from tribalism because it is inculcated through propaganda and mass education. According to Oxford English Dictionary, nationalism is "patriotic feelings, principles or efforts. It is the policy of national independence".² On

1 Quoted in Amar Roy and Mohit Bhattacharya, Political Theory: Ideas and Institutions (Calcutta: The World Press Private Limited, 1988), p. 108.

2 The Concise Oxford Dictionary (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 725.

nationalism Lipson is of opinion that "when people do feel this way, that is when they unite around a national symbol, they think and live and act - and if necessary, die in war-fare not as Athenians or Romans or Christians, but as Americans or Frenchmen or Russians".³ From the definitions above it is clear that a nationalist movement is one which represents the goals and aims of many people of a nation and through which common desire of many people is achieved. To support this we can quote Roger Scruton according to whom, "Nationalism is the sentiment and ideology of attachment to a nation and to its interests".⁴

In the previous chapter, we have analysed the causes of Mau Mau Movement. Here before analysing its character let us analyse its organizational and operational side and the response of the government to it.

As mentioned earlier, the KAU was divided with regard to the course of action to attain independence. When moderates like Eliud Mathu, Joseph Katithi and

3 Leslie Lipson, The Great Issues of Politics (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1973), p. 339.

4 Roger Scruton, A Dictionary of Political Thought (London: McMillan, 1982), p. 315.

Jonuno Kenyatta stuck to the constitutional methods to attain independence, the militants lost their faith in their leadership. Criticizing the policies of the moderates Mohammed Mathu writes :

The mind of the Kenyan people turned toward violence and revolt by preachings and political agitation of men such as Kenyatta, Koinange and other KAU leaders. The question we now ask is: why did these men abandon us in our hour of greatest need ? (5)

Disgusted with the moderate policies, the militants had decided to resort to armed struggle because over the years all the constitutional means were ruthlessly suppressed by the government. The militant wing of Bildad Kaggia, Fred Kubai, J.D. Kali, James Beauttah got the uncompromising support of leaders of working class movement such as Chege Kibachia and Makhan Singh. The militants believed in Kimil Sungh's famous saying :

History has not yet seen any instance of imperialists making a gift of independence to colonial peoples, nor any case of a people derived of their country that received independence from others without waging armed struggle.(6),

5 Mohammed Mathu in E.J. Ba-xter, ed., The Urban Guerrilla (Richmond: LSM Information Centre, 1974), p. 17.

6 Quoted in Maina-wa-Kinayitti, ed., Kenya's Freedom Struggle: The Dedan Kimathi Papers (London: Zed Books, 1987), pp. 1-2.

First of all it started in Nairobi where Africans were suffering from chronic unemployment and housing problem. The people's suffering had reached such a point that when the militants formed a group to chalk out the plan to fight colonialism, the Nairobi people gave their wholehearted support. The group was known as 'Forty's Group' and consisted of the members such as Fred Kubai, Charles Wambaa, Mwangi Macharia, Eliud Mutonyi and Issac Gathanju, Stanley Mathenge.⁷ This group was regarded as 'Mau Mau Central Committee' which was fully backed by progressive trade union leaders. The military wing of the movement, which was later named as Land Freedom Army, decided to fight the government from the country-side under the leadership of Dedan Kimathi.

Thus the Mau Mau movement started with the objective aim of defeating colonialism to win national independence and to regain the stolen land. The movement showed the Kenyans the road of armed struggle in which the workers and peasants became a leading political force. It saw the death of KAU as a political force. It seems the

7 D.P. Singh, 'Mau Mau: A Case Study of Kenyan Nationalism', Africa Quarterly (New Delhi) vol.8, no.1, April-June 1968, p. 14.

organizers of Mau Mau were not in favour of a movement of particular class. Because it opened its ranks to each and every African except the collaborators and traitors. This can be judged from the Mau Mau songs, which have been translated by Kinyatti:

We are fighting for our land
 Some of our people don't seem to understand
 The root causes of our struggle.
 Can't they see that we are tormented
 Because of asking for our independence
 And full rights to our land (8)

Between the year 1950 and 1952 Mau Mau's strategy was to educate, mobilize and unite people against the British occupation. It used oath taking ceremonies as a method to unite the people. The oath served not only as a political instrument, but also as a tool to strengthen the movement. From the oath it was clear that the movement was pledged to uphold the national patriotism:

I swear in the name of my country, in the name of this movement, that I will use all my power for the total liberation of Kenya from British colonialism sacrificing even my own and my family's lives. I shall never reveal the name of members of this movement nor those of the leaders, even if I am caught, tortured or killed. I shall always be loyal to the leaders of the movement. If I betray this vow, I shall deserve every punishment meted out to me as a traitor. (9)

8 Maina-wa-Kinayitti, "Mau Mau: The Peak of African Political Organisation in Colonial Kenya", Philosophy and Social Action (New Delhi), vol.9, no.1, January-February-March 1983, p. 17.

9 Kinayitti, n.6, p. 3.

During the early period of the movement the primary duties of the military wing were :

- 1) to help the central committee in mobilizing the masses by organizing oath taking ceremonies;
- 2) to recruit Kenyan youth for the Mau Mau armed forces and to train them;
- 3) to eliminate the enemies of the movement, to boycott the European goods and public transport and
- 4) to collect funds, weapons and strategic information for the movement.

Thus according to the planned strategy, by June 1951 the militants had already consolidated their position. The moderate leaders like Kenyatta had already lost the control and had been sidelined. It seemed Kenyatta was following a middle path between KAU moderates and militants. He avoided opposing the militants openly fearing the loss of his prestige and danger to his life.¹⁰ Though he tried to ensure a peaceful transition to African self-government by opening fresh dialogue he did not

10 D.H. Rawcliff , The Struggle for Kenya (London: Gollancz, 1954), p. 46.

succeed due to stiff opposition from the Europeans. Thus the militants drew more support from the people. The oath taking ceremonies began slowly and spread all over central Kenya. During the later part of 1951, the pace of oathing in Nairobi increased significantly. As the movement grew, even the criminal elements and prostitutes also joined.¹¹ The militants found mass support in the over crowded African Reserves, among the squatters of the Rift Valley because, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the squatters and the people residing in Reserves, had suffered immensely. Being pushed back to the wall, when the militants offered a new course of action the people simply joined the movement. In the districts of Fort Hall, Nyeri and Kiambu, there was increasing participation in the oath ceremony. By August 1952 many of the militants had started preparing for resistance in forests as the government started taking coercive measures. There are certain reasons behind the success of militants for mobilising the masses. First of all, in the 1951 elections the militants had taken the control of KAU, which helped them to formulate

11 J.M. Kariuki , Mau Mau Detainee (London: Oxford University Press, 1963),p.23.

whatever policies they liked and got no opposition while executing those policies. Secondly, their organizational structure worked successfully. Outside the formal KAU structure, the militants had set up two chambers of leadership, the Parliament and the Forty group. The twelve members of the Parliament used to decide the policies and then convey them to the Forty group who used to relay them to districts and for the execution of policies the district committees passed the orders to the local committees below them. There were also members forming shadow groups and parliament who acted as second line of leaders, in case of the arrest of frontline leaders. There were also two committees to look after the resources and counter-intelligence. The participation of the people in the organisation was not limited to Kikuyus only. There was strong support among the Wakamba, Nyanza and Masai people.¹²

But the government became aware of the activities of the militants. Though at the first stage the government used to overlook it, the conditions deteriorated after the assassination of Chief Waruhiu on 7 October 1952,

12 Oginga Odinga, Not Yet Uhuru (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 112.

who was loyal to the government.¹³ On 20th October 1952 the new governor Evelyn Baring signed a proclamation declaring the emergency.¹⁴ The emergency was declared to confer special powers on government and its officers for maintaining the law and order. On the second day of the emergency another loyal Chief Nderi was murdered, which showed the gravity of the situation. The government started taking Mau Mau quite seriously.¹⁵

The declaration of emergency was the most unfortunate moment in the history of Kenya. It was marked by a series of arrests and government repression. The government, suspecting Kenyatta, Kaggia and Paul Ngei as the men behind Mau Mau, arrested them.¹⁶ By doing this the government committed the mistake of closing all peaceful avenues for the solution to the deteriorating condition. All the arrested men were put on trial on 24 November

13 Fred Majdalaney, The State of Emergency: The Full Story of Mau Mau (London: Longmans, 1962), pp. 94-95.

14 Singh, n.7, p. 16.

15 Majdalaney, n.13, p. 107.

16 F.D. Corfield, Historical Survey of Origins and Growth of Mau Mau (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Cmd. 1030, 1960), p. 219.

at Kapenguria. The trial which lasted from November 1952 to March 1953, found Kenyatta and others guilty of organising Mau Mau and the judge sentenced Kenyatta and others to seven years of hard labour. It may be mentioned here that after the arrest of Kenyatta and others, violence only increased. According to Roseberg and Nottingham "much of the violence that occurred during the emergency was not simply a continuation of either pre-emergency political tactics or the government's security measures but from the conditions of emergency itself".¹⁷

The declaration of emergency resulted in the repressive measures taken by the government. But this could not save the situation as more and more people joined the Mau Mau forces in the jungles. The coercive machinery of the government became responsible for the greater mobilization of the people and made them more determined to fight the colonial forces. Commenting on the situation Roseberg and Nottingham observed that "the assertive character of people's radical politics was transformed into desperate resistance as they sought to preserve their hopes and ideals as a people under severe siege

¹⁷ Carl Roseberg and Jhon Nottingham, The Myth of Mau Mau; Nationalism in Kenya (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966), p. 277.

conditions".¹⁸

Even before the declaration of emergency, militant leaders like Dedan Kimathi, Stanley Mathenge had advocated fighting from the forests and had already begun to survey the forest areas to store arms and to make plans for supply. About 15,000 people entered the Aberdare Forests after the declaration of emergency. After that militant leaders like Dedan Kimathi and Stanley Mathenge with prices on their head, entered the forest to wage armed struggle and the common people were forced to enter into the forest because of repression by the government. Later these people joined the Mau Mau forces to fight the government. At the height of military struggle there were around 30,000 Mau Mau fighters in the jungle. Due to wide-spread arrests, the central leadership of KAU which was dominated by the militants was defunct. This was the reason behind the lack of coordination among the ranks and files of Mau Mau fighters. During that period there were several relatively autonomous zones of resistance and fighting. Besides Nairobi, which was the main supply centre, there were Kikuyu Reserves, Mount Kenya, which was under the leadership of General China, the Aberdare Forests and the settlers' farms of Rift

18 Ibid., p.276.

Valley, which were the main centres for Mau Mau activities.

In order to bring co-ordination among the Mau Mau fighters, in August 1953, Dedan Kimathi organized inside the forests, a five day meeting in which lines of general strategies were laid down.¹⁹ The meeting decided that direct clashes with government forces would be avoided and the weak points of the enemy would be aimed at. Besides this, areas of operations were assigned to different divisions. Six months later 'Kenya parliament' was revitalised to plan for an overall strategy to gain independence for Kenya. Oginga Odinga writes that the 'Kenya parliament' and its army represented an all Kenya nationalism with advanced and clearly stated political aims.²⁰

After the capture of General China the government tried to persuade the fighters to surrender; the Mau Mau leadership rejecting the efforts said:

We are fighting for all land stolen from us by the Crown through its orders in Council of 1915, according to which Africans

19 Odinga, n.12, pp. 117-18.

20 Ibid., p. 119.

have been evicted from the Kenya High lands. The British Government must grant full independence under African leadership and hand over all land previously alienated for distribution to the landless. We will fight until we achieve freedom or until the last of our warriors has shed his last drop of blood. (21)

The above statement lays down the Mau Mau case very clearly. They had decided either to attain independence for Kenya or to lay down their lives for the cause of independence.

Between 1952 and early part of 1955, the Mau fighters achieved very significant victories over the government forces. Among the notable victorious actions were the attacks on Naivasha Police post under the leadership of Kaniu and Mbuthia, Nyeri Police post and Kairuthi home guard post by Stanley Mathenga, Kinyona home guard post by Kago Mboko, Nyeri Chiefs' Camp by Waruhiu Itote and British army camps at Muranga and Kamacharia by Ihura Kareri and Nyoro Kiragu respectively. These attacks showed the heroism and determination of Kenyan fighters to achieve their goals.²² Among these there were two incidents which had great impact on the course of emergency: the successful raid

21 Ibid., pp. 119- 20.

22 Ibid.

on Naivasha Police Station on 26 March 1953, in which the Mau Mau fighters succeeded in capturing a truck load of ammunition, rifles and automatic weapon, and the murder, on the same day, of about hundreds of government loyalists at Lari by Mau Mau. To prepare an overall plan to control the movement, General George Erskin was made Commander-in-Chief in June 1953.

In the early part of 1955 the British and Kenyan colonial government launched operation Anvil with around 25,000 soldiers and police and tanks, Royal Air Force planes. The entire force was used to kill and arrest the 'Mau Mau'. In order to weaken the popular base of the Mau Mau over 100,000 persons were arrested and sent to detention camps. In fact, the whole country was converted into an armed camp. Under villagization programme the government gathered the spread out peasants into villages to cut off the rural roots of the Mau Mau guerrillas. By the end of 1955 the tide seemed to be turning against the Mau Mau forces.²³ The Operation Anvil proved to be a success.

There are several reasons for the success of 'Operation Anvil'.

23 D.C. Barnett and Karari Njama, Mau Mau From Within (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966), p. 375.

Firstly, the government successfully destroyed the major base of Mau Mau in Nairobi by arresting and detaining more than 70,000 people who were the supporters of the movement. The Nairobi base was important for the Mau Mau guerrillas as they were receiving from Nairobi the major supply of arms, ammunition, medical supplies, clothing, well trained cadres and money. By disrupting the base the government succeeded in cutting the supplies for the guerrillas.

In the second instance, the capture of General China, the leader of Mau Mau forces in Mount Kenya, became a turning point. Commenting on this, Karari Njama says "China's confession and ultimate collaboration with special branch officers affected the entire Mau Mau activities and communication".²⁴ From General China the security forces came to know about the entire operational tactics of Mau Mau, which helped them to strike successfully against Mau Mau.

Thirdly, the introduction of 'villagization programme' by the British in the country-side resulted in the isolation of guerrillas from the peasant masses who were the source of supplies.

24 Ibid., p. 630.

Fourthly, the anti Mau Mau forces had infiltrated the ranks which resulted in the break down of discipline among the fighters and the ideological division among the leading Mau Mau generals. This weakened the fighting spirit of the guerrilla forces.

Fifthly, the highly trained British forces with superior weaponry, Royal Air Force with the experience of 2nd World War caused tremendous damage to the guerrillas.

Finally, in October 1956, Dedan Kimathi, the man who courageously fought the British forces in the jungle was captured and executed, thus marking the beginning of an end of a movement which succeeded in bringing the colonialists back to their senses.

As pointed out in chapter one, opinions are divided sharply between two schools of thought regarding the character of the movement. The first school of thought comprising three stands, namely the Imperialist and Christian school of thought, the University of Nairobi school of thought and the Chauvinist interpretation, does not give the Mau Mau the credibility of a nationalist movement. If we sum up their interpretations we draw the conclusion that the Mau Mau was a 'primitive, barbarous and atavistic organisation'. It was "an

anti-white, tribal cult" whose aim was to turn Kenya into a land of darkness and death . According to this school, it was not at all nationalist in character because the movement was confined to Kikuyu people only and failed to spread outside central Kenya.

However, the second school of thought represented by Maina-wa-Kinayitti, Dedan Kimathi, and Stanley Mathenge always opines that the Mau Mau Movement was a true nationalist movement which represented the hopes and aspirations of many Kenyans.

Statements of various leaders of Mau Mau and particularly the documents of Dedan Kimathi, the chief architect of the movement make the political and national ideals for which the Mau Mau fought clear. In October 1953, Kimathi published an important document, which came to be known as the Charter of the Kenya Land Freedom Army. The Charter consisted of 79 articles and the copies of the document were sent to Colonial Office, London, the Indian Government, the Chairman of the Pan African Council, President Eisenhower of USA, George Malenkov of USSR, the French Government and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. A cursory look at the extract from the Charter will show that Mau Mau Movement represented nationalist aspirations.²⁵

25 Ione Leigh , In the Shadow of the Mau Mau (London: Gollancz, 1954), pp. 190-92.

Its demands were not restricted to resolve the problems Kikuyus only but the entire Kenya. It proves that Mau Mau never fought for any particular tribe or class of people and aimed at the attainment of independence for Kenya. The extract from the documents runs like this :

- 1) We want African self-Government in Kenya now.
- 2) We reject foreign laws in Kenya, for they were not made for Kenya and are therefore not just.
- 3) We want an African Magistrate's Court with full authority, which will judge us lawfully and justly.
- 4) We strongly reject a foreign Attorney General in Kenya, one who deals with appearances more than justice.
- 5) We reject the trial of 'criminal' and 'murder' cases by European judges, for we have discovered that the death penalty is used to sacrifice many of our people.
- 6) We want to know who handles the money paid by settlers for our land and where the money goes.
- 7) We reject being called terrorists for demanding our peoples' rights. We are the Kenya Land Freedom Army.
- 8) We want to know why so many churches have come to Kenya. Since there is only one God in heaven, is one Church not enough ?
- 9) We strongly object to foreigners sleeping with our wives and daughters; we also oppose imprisonment of females and carrying of passes.
- 10) We demand Africans should have control of gold, markets, roads, cooperative societies and auctions.

- 11) We reject colonization in Kenya because it has turned us into slaves and beggars.
- 12) We claim the full authority to make firearm and all other kinds of weapons without any restrictions.
- 13) We demand that Europeans, rascals, troops and policemen be withdrawn from Kenyan African Reserves.
- 14) We reject the imprisonment of KLFAs cadres.
- 15) We oppose the dropping of poisons from the air, as the Europeans in Kenya are now doing to Africans.
- 16) Our real fight is not against the white colour but against the system carried on by the white rulers.
- 17) Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom. Only when we have achieved our independence can our people have genuine peace.
- 18) Our people will chase away the foreign exploiters, wipe out the traitors and establish an independent government of the Kenyan people. (26)

The above document clearly indicates that the Mau Mau Movement was not merely a tribal insurrection or a revision to barbarism. Their demands covered the entire people. No where the document emphasizes the fight for a particular tribe or class. In fact, throughout Kimathi's writings and speeches and in the reports of the meetings held by forest groups, there is a consistent emphasis on the need for justice, on the possibility of reconciliation and on the right to self-government".²⁷

26 Kinayitti, ed., n.6, pp. 16-17.

27 Roseberg, and Nottingham, n.17, p. 300

Further, calling Mau Mau as 'atavistic' ignores the facts of genuine economic, social and political grievances of the Africans. Moreover, it fails to take into consideration other ideological and political factors without which Mau Mau would have failed to acquire its extraordinary tenacity and the support of the masses.²⁸

Mau Mau can also not be regarded as a terrorist and communist subversive movement as argued by imperialist from anti-colonial forces of the whole world. If we closely look at the background of the leaders like Dedan Kimathi, General China, Bildad Kaggia, who were in the armed forces before joining the freedom movement, we find they had served outside Kenya and watched how people of other countries under colonial regime fought. When they came back they spread the gospel of liberty and equality among their people. If we go through the history of colonial Kenya without any bias, we will find that Mau Mau was a product of substantial African grievances. The Africans lost their land, their people, their culture and society; when they protested through constitutional means, they were ruthlessly suppressed. For the outbreak of Mau Mau,

28 Rawcliff, n.10, p. 100.

it was the colonial condition which was responsible. Its major aims were to achieve self-government, end colour discrimination and to bring back the lands stolen by the Europeans. The movement was launched by people, who had lost faith in the constitutional means due to colonial government's attitude. Only the road of armed struggle was left for them.

While analysing the character of the movement, let us examine the interpretation of Njama Karari and Donald Barnett. According to them "it was a peasant revolt, a battle between the landless and the landed; of poverty against privilege, of the modern concept that all men are born equal against the ancient doctrine of race superiority".²⁹ No doubt economic under-privilege and land problem were behind the crisis of Kenya. This was the reason why large number of squatters joined the movement. The Africans reacted sharply not only to the economic exploitation but also to the arrogance displayed by white settlers. But calling it a peasant movement is to restrict the broadness of the movement. The involvement of workers through trade unions, common people from all sections of life is only possible in a nationalist movement.

29 Barnett and Njama, n.23, p. 401.

The Mau Mau is interpreted as the Kikuyu Chauvinist and tribalist organisation by the University of Nairobi school of thought. Fred Majdalaney also agrees with this school of thought when he says "Mau Mau was to establish an independent Kenya under Kikuyu domination".³⁰ In other words, it was mere Kikuyulism guided by tribalistic ambitions. To support the view they argue that Mau Mau failed to spread beyond central Kenya, the Kikuyu heartland.

First of all, this argument completely ignores the ideological aspect of Mau Mau. It sets aside the aims and ideals widely expressed by the leaders of the movement. Moreover, nationalist movement seldom originates with the masses. They always owe their toot to most effected or enlightened who spread it to others. No doubt, a number of Kikuyus were involved but that is because Kikuyus suffered most under colonialism. Besides, the movement was not only supported by Kikuyus but also by Luos and Luhiyas. Oginga Odinga, himself a Luo, has no doubt in calling the movement a nationalist movement. As such, there is no contradiction between Kikuyulism and Kenyan nationalism. In Kenya both are finely blended together. In true sense of the term, Mau Mau embodied

30 Majdalaney, n.13, p. 70.

the Kenyan nationalism.

As mentioned earlier, because the Kikuyus suffered most than any other tribe under colonialism in Kenya, they took the cause of resistance first. The very question of the land goes a long way to explain why Mau Mau was confined to central province and Rift Valley.³¹ In Kenya there was difference in social mobilization among diverse cultural sectors.³² It determined the nature and intensity of responses of other tribes to the political movements in the country. To support this we may quote Tom Mboya who says, "the movement penetrated non-Kikuyu areas later, both because the frustrations were fiercer among the Kikuyus and because they had already organized before the war in the Kikuyu Central Association."³³

Another criticism of Mau Mau by the Imperialist and Christian School of thought is that it was an anti-white tribal cult. But this view can be dismissed without any hesitation because this notion lacks facts. During

31 Tom Mboya , Freedom and After (London: Deutsch, 1963), p. 50.

32 Roseberg and Nottingham, n.17, p. 352.

33 Tom Mboya., n.31, pp. 53-54.

the whole course of the movement only thirty Europeans were killed. Even former Governor Sir Philip Mitchell himself confesses: "if they had intended an anti-European rising and slaughter of the Europeans, well, they could have killed five hundred or two thousand or more of them on the first night",³⁴ Finally, the Charter of Kenya Land Freedom Army clearly states that the "Kenyans' real fight is not against the white colour but against the system carried on by the white rulers".³⁵ From the arguments above it is clear that to call Mau Mau as anti-white tribal cult is far from true.

The European view of Mau Mau as an advanced form of group insanity is based on a wrong conception of oath ceremonies prevalent in African Society. The practice of oath had tremendous social and political significance. It served two major functions -

- 1) It helped to promote social solidarity.
- 2) It raised the level of political commitment among the masses.

During the course of the movement the oath, in most of

34 Singh, n.7, pp. 20-21.

35 Kinayitti, n.6, p. 17.

the cases, was taken voluntarily by many people. Even the people paid fees for oath taking and the money was used to buy arms and ammunition. During the movement, by taking oaths, the people demonstrated that their political meaning had precedence over the social aspect.

Thus from the foregoing analysis, one can take it to be the fact that the character of Mau Mau was undoubtedly nationalist restricted by the objective reality of the social and production relations. To call Mau Mau 'atavistic', anti-white, tribal cult is to ignore Kenyan nationalism, which was broadened by Mau Mau despite the colonial economic relations.

While comparing Mau Mau Movement with other resistance movements in Kenya, the first and foremost aspect which comes to the core of our study is that, for the first time, this movement demanded total independence for Kenya without any compromise. In other words, we may say that it had clear-cut programme - to gain independence through armed struggle. If we study the early stage or the first stage of resistance movement in the history of Kenya, when Gussi people, Kalenjin people, Mazauis, Nandis, Kikuyus and Galas fought against the Europeans, we find that these resistance movements were scattered and uncoordinated.

Since the colonialism had not spread its wings fully, the question of declaration of independence never came before these people. They only fought to save their lands from occupation. Unlike Mau Mau, where peasants, workers and other general masses fought from a common platform, those resistances were scattered because of which the people of Kenya were defeated without fulfilling their goals.

The socio-religious protest movements emerged when the society and religion of Africans were severely threatened by the advancement of colonialism. The cultural superiority and racial arrogance of Europeans resulted in widespread discrimination even in the day-to-day affairs of the Church. Christianity was imposed forcibly on the African religion, which was a way of life for many Africans. The socio-religious protest movements mainly aimed at preserving the customs and tradition of African society. They were suppressed by the repressive measures by government, but later some of them re-emerged to contribute to the cause of Mau Mau. Here also there was lack of coordination among the movements. In most of the cases they could not survive longer; but they succeeded in awakening the people. We may say the goals of socio-religious protest movements were quite limited in comparison to Mau Mau.

While comparing the labour movements with Mau Mau, we see many common things. It may be noted here that in the May Day rally, which was organised by Makhan Singh for the first time in the history of Kenya's freedom struggle, independence for Kenya was demanded. The leadership of labour movements in Kenya was progressive and had clear-cut programme. Radicalism was first sighted in the rank of leadership of labour movements. Perhaps that was the reason why the militant wing of KAU, who took over the leadership of Mau Mau, was highly inspired by trade union leaders. May be for their identical goals, both of them joined the same platform to wage battle against colonialism. The unconditional and unquestionable support of labour unions to the Mau Mau Movement made it the peak of Kenyan resistance against colonialism.

The Mau Mau Movement, the armed struggle by the Kenyans had its origin in the KCA, which dominated the political field for 16 years. Its centralized leadership had support of the masses but its constitutionalist course of struggle created dissatisfaction. During its legal existence it never demanded independence although it united people against colonialism and taught the people to be proud of themselves. When it re-emerged as KAU, some of the leaders were still in favour of adopting the

constitutional means to achieve goals. Since constitutionalists were not succeeding in making any head-way the militants took to arms.

In comparison to other political movements, Mau Mau Movement was certainly the peak of African political organisation. It had clear-cut programmes (Charter of KLFA), a central committee and 'parliament' to monitor its activities and the course of action without any compromise. It was the final phase of struggle with a new path of armed struggle. Due to the matured stage of colonialism, when Kenyans were desperate for a solution, the Mau Mau Movement accomodated all, the peasants, workers and people from all walks of life.

CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION : WHETHER A NATIONALIST MOVEMENT
OR NOT AND ITS INFLUENCE

Here we look into the various aspects that emerged during our study of the Mau Mau Movement. While studying the history of colonialism in Kenya, we have studied different resistance movements and particularly the Mau Mau Movement.

The object of our study was to find whether the Mau Mau Movement was a nationalist movement or not; whether its goals and aims were appropriate to the common desires of the Kenyan masses or not. Another object was to find out the extent of its influence on the political evolution of Kenya.

Colonialism in Kenya was responsible for the enslavement of the Kenyan masses. It became responsible for destroying their culture and society. The economic and political institutions of the Kenyan people perished under colonial rule. Brutal methods were used to rob the people of their most fertile land and to extract cheap labour for the settler economy which was the backbone of British colonialism in Kenya.

While the agrarian question formed a very important aspect of national struggle, it was the exploitation of workers and peasants at the level of colonial production

that added fire to the anti-colonial movement in Kenya. From the beginning of colonialism, the Kenyans, in various phases of their struggle, opposed the rule of minority over the majority of Africans.

We have studied in the earlier chapters how the voices of protest of Africans were ruthlessly suppressed by the colonial government by using its coercive machinery, thus denying the just rights to the Africans. The Mau Mau Movement which is considered as the last phase of struggle by the Kenyan masses has been a centre of controversy. While many academics opine that it was not at all a nationalist movement, others have no doubt in regarding it a nationalist movement. In the fourth chapter, while analysing the character of Mau Mau, we have analysed the various interpretations.

From the study, it has been found that the Mau Mau Movement was certainly nationalist in character. After analysing its organizational structure and its goals and aims, it becomes clear to an analyst that Mau Mau Movement answered an urgent desire of the Kenyan people, the peasantry and the workers. Mau Mau was essentially a product of colonial conditions, which aimed at ending the agony of millions of Africans by gaining independence for Kenya through armed struggle. It is sad to note

that those historians, who have vehemently criticised the movement, have ignored the history of Kenya. To deny the nationalist character of Mau Mau is to deny the Kenyan nationalism, because undoubtedly Mau Mau helped to broaden the base of nationalist movement in Kenya. The most important contribution of Mau Mau to the cause of freedom and independence in Kenya was that it succeeded in spreading the gospel of nationalism from urban areas to rural areas. Every social movement of protest against alien rule is a manifestation of nationalism and we may say Mau Mau was a manifestation of the self-assertion of Kenyan people. It was part of an on-going, rationally conceived, nationalist movement.

Mau Mau certainly paved the way for Kenya's independence. Though it was suppressed, it succeeded in giving the message to the colonial government that they could not be master of Kenya for all times to come. The colonial government was not prepared to hand over independence to the workers and peasants because they wanted to retain the privileges for themselves. Thus they tried to create a bourgeois class of Africans through whom they could rule over the masses. They encouraged the African petty-bourgeois class to emerge

and handed over power to them. These small groups of people enjoyed the power by monopolising it. The new rulers, in their desire to delink themselves with the pre-independence confrontations, clashes and armed struggles with the British colonialists underplayed the role of Mau Mau. When Land question was not solved the Mau Mau way and there was possibility of revolt against the government the beneficiaries condemned the Mau Mau Movement itself.

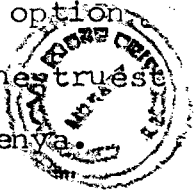
The colonial class structure is very much there. The sacrifices made by Dedan Kimathi and scores of Mau Mau fighters have become meaningless because the Mau Mau leadership a new land and labour relationship in independent Kenya. Some of the anti-Mau Mau elements are big landlords today, holding the same position as the whites once held.

The present state of affairs of Kenya lies with the suppression of Mau Mau Movement. If the movement would have succeeded, the picture of an independent Kenya would have been different. When Mau Mau broke out, the colonialists sensed the outcome of the future political system. That is the reason why most of the historians who are biased in favour of the government are denying

the fact that Mau Mau was truly a nationalist movement. It is difficult on their part to give legitimacy to the movement because this is the only way how they can vindicate the stand of new political and economic magnets.

Despite criticism and attack on the character of Mau Mau Movement, it will always retain a greater place in the history of Kenya's freedom struggle because it was this movement that forced the British to grant political power to the Africans.

From the above study, we have drawn the conclusion that Mau Mau was truly a nationalist movement which represented the oppressed voices of many Kenyans. Its impact on the political evolution of Kenya cannot be denied. For the violence that accompanied the movement, the Africans are not to be blamed because without waging an armed struggle, the colonised people could hardly have succeeded in removing the shackles of slavery. After being pushed to the wall, they had no option except an armed struggle. Mau Mau can, in the truest sense, be called the Little Revolution of Kenya.



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