

AFRICAN HISTORIES AND MODERNITIES

THE ANATOMY OF NEO-COLONIALISM IN KENYA

British Imperialism and Kenyatta, 1963-1978

W.O. Maloba



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The Anatomy of Neo-Colonialism in Kenya

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*For my daughter
Amanya [Kukhu]
Tomorrow still beckons.*

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Many of the questions tackled, and issues explored, in this study can be considered politically sensitive. To a large degree, many of these issues have hitherto not received extensive scholarly scrutiny and analysis. It is, therefore, not surprising that this study relies heavily on archival sources to provide citation whenever such revelations come into play. The vast majority of the sources for this book are primary sources, many never cited before in scholarly works on Kenya's history. And here I would like to express my profound gratitude to archivists and librarians at several institutions, including the Morris Library, University of Delaware (especially the Department of Interlibrary Loan Service). They were kind and generous with their time as they helped me locate and order all the material that I requested for over the last 10 years of working on this book. Archivists at the National Archives, Kew, London, were extremely helpful in pointing at useful directions to pursue

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W.O. Maloba

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Introduction

Throughout Kenyatta's reign, Kenya as a new nation, was faced with several foundational questions of self-definition and identity: the meaning of political independence; confronting the specter of neo-colonialism; ethnicity and power; the land question; situating the Mau Mau peasant revolt in the national political discourse; corruption, and the value of political power; income and wealth gap between the ruling elite and the majority of Kenyans giving rise to the reality of unequal citizenship; the matter of unequal development among provinces and regions; the role of Kenya in the struggles for liberation in Southern Africa; and then fundamentally, the ideological struggle between radical nationalists (represented by Oginga Odinga, Bildad Kaggia, and Pia Gama Pinto) and the conservative nationalists (grouped around Kenyatta and the Gatundu clique).

After 1963, Kenyans had to deal with the matter of the political relationship between the ruling elite and the masses. Did the nationalist leaders need and require popular legitimacy in order to rule? Did they need to base national policies on campaign pledges in the period leading to independence? How to define and then retain political legitimacy became issues of great contention after 1963. What would later become increasingly clear is that, "it is after all, the logic of a nationalist movement that its degree of popular legitimacy will tend to increase in proportion to its anti-imperialist, and by implication anti-Western, orientation—at least in early stages. When power is deflected from its

original source of authority,” Ellen Ray, William Schaap, Karl Van Meter and Louis Wolf have written, “its quotient of coercion increases.”¹

The stewardship of the post-colonial state in Kenya was placed in the hands of the educated elite. This class, while not homogenous, inherited the state. But how did they intend to marshal and deploy this power in Kenya? J.F. Ade Ajayi’s observations on this subject remain invaluable to any attempt aimed at comprehending the founding of post-colonial Africa. The educated, “believed that they and not the masses—farmers, urban workers, and petty traders—nor the traditional elite, had the knowledge and skills to create political and socio-economic structures necessary to promote national progress and lead the emergent states to their rightful places in the modern world.”² This belief, nurtured in part by their colonial education, was not based on any viable vision for the new states, “outside of vague concepts of Europeanization or modernization.” It was taken for granted in Kenya, as in other African states, that “leaders of the new states would be those who most thoroughly understood the Western cultural models that were to remain the prototypes of the new structures and institutions to be established.”³ Western education was held to be the crucial variable in the fashioning of national development. Yet after more than 50 years of *Uhuru* in Kenya, and other African countries, isn’t it legitimate to revisit this postulate? Is Western academic education enough? Does knowledge of the West and its institutions necessarily translate to development for Africa? Have we reached the stage when we can start talking of the “Curse of the West” in Africa?

The essence of African nationalism in Kenya, like in other African countries, was resistance against alien rule and domination. To be sure, Kenya was a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country. But these factors cannot be used to deny the legitimacy of Kenyan African nationalism. While it is true that “language is often, perhaps usually, associated with nationality ... this is by no means a universal combination ... most large nations and many medium and small ones have more than one language.” The experience of Kenya, as in many other former colonies of European imperialism, points to the fact that the nationalist struggle, “shaking off European domination has made nations out of very many

¹Ellen Ray, William Schaap, Karl Van Meter, and Louis Wolf, *Dirty Work 2: The CIA in Africa* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, Inc. 1979), p. 18.

²J.F. Ade Ajayi, “Expectations of Independence,” *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* (Spring 1982), p. 2.

³J.F. Ade Ajayi, “Expectations of Independence,” p. 2.

colonies that previously had little or no national consciousness.”⁴ It is of course true that nationalism has continued to maintain “a difficult dialogue” with many scholars, including some Marxist scholars and activists. These scholars and activists look at nationalism “as an irrational superstition.” Yet at the time of political independence in Africa, when proletarian internationalism was no longer functional, “the national liberation movement,” was “the most logical if not the only means of fighting colonial and semi-colonial oppression.”⁵

On the eve of *Uhuru*, chiefs and other representatives of the traditional elite remained skeptical or hostile toward the nationalist activists. Although they had “operated within the traditional milieu,” their positions and power owed a great deal to the colonial regime. “They owed their titles and access to power to the colonial rulers [rather] than to traditional rights.” In Kenya, like in other African countries, chiefs and other variants of the traditional elite, “rallied to the defense of the colonial power, and it was often with great dismay that they watched what seemed to them like the abdication of power by the colonial rulers to the nationalist leaders.”⁶

A critical part of Kenyatta’s transformation consisted of fully identifying with these colonial chiefs and their descendants in colonial Kenya. An overwhelming majority of these chiefs had been opposed to African nationalism, certainly to the Mau Mau revolt. They had also vigorously opposed Kenyatta and campaigned against his release from detention. But now they sought to make peace with him, guided as always by self-interest: with an eye on maintaining their political and economic advantages acquired in their service to British imperialism. “The basic expectation of the traditional elite,” Ajayi wrote, “was to preserve as much as possible the power, and privileges they had acquired during colonial days. They sought Western education for their children, invested in business, and speculated in land, forest and other resources available to them.”⁷ In Kenya, the key objective was to gain access to political power and influence. This access led to unrivalled economic advantages and then the power to protect them and their newly acquired wealth.

⁴Horace B. Davis, *Toward A Marxist Theory of Nationalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), p. 9.

⁵Horace B. Davis, *Toward A Marxist Theory of Nationalism*, p. 22.

⁶J.F. Ade Ajayi, “Expectations of Independence,” p. 3.

⁷J.F. Ade Ajayi, “Expectations of Independence,” p. 4.

The bulk of available evidence clearly shows that Kenyatta's government sought no major revision in the structure of the inherited state. The new society to be formed in Kenya was to be based, as Ajayi stated, on European (specifically British) models. And so, "despite their occasional references to African institutions and ideas," the new rulers' "vision of freedom, equality, representative government, and democracy derived from Western liberal models, and they staked their claim to leadership on their superior knowledge of these Western ideals and models."⁸ Linked to this was the matter of inadequate politicization of the masses before the attainment of independence. Neither the Kenyas African National Union (KANU) nor the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) undertook any extensive politicization of the masses before 1963. The party platforms were hurriedly assembled, sometimes with expert Western help. Thus, in Kenya, as "in most parts of Africa, it would appear that on the eve of independence, the level of mobilization and political education was low, and they had formed no clear expectations of what society in the new states ought to be."⁹

In the period after *Uhuru*, there was an intense ideological struggle over the meaning of Kenya: how was the new country to be conceptualized, and constructed? Whose country was it? What values were to guide the forging of the new country? The struggle between the radical nationalists and the conservatives is without doubt one of the most important periods in the history of post-colonial Africa. The ideological struggle in Kenya was one of the most intense and sustained in Africa. Hence, the eventual defeat of the radical nationalists in Kenya had both local and continental implications. And as this book shows, this defeat required intense political, economic and strategic coordination between Kenyatta (and his government) and Western intelligence services and governments. The outcome of this ideological struggle had a definite imprint on Kenyatta's political legacy.

But this defeat of radical nationalists brought to the fore the loaded issue of neo-colonialism. How had this fateful collaboration between Kenyatta and Western intelligence agencies and governments changed the country, and the meaning and extent of its sovereignty? Kwame Nkrumah

⁸J.F. Ade Ajayi, "Expectations of Independence," p. 2.

⁹J.F. Ade Ajayi, "Expectations of Independence," p. 4.

stated by way of definition that, “the essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.”¹⁰ The matter of sovereignty is crucial for any discussion on political independence. Neo-colonialism compromises the essence of national sovereignty by maintaining a chokehold on the country’s economy. This chokehold compromises its sovereignty. Liberal democracy, which the West wished to export to Africa, presumes the existence of,

sovereign individuals and states, both as units of analysis and sites of agency. Individuals are cast as sovereign insofar as they devise their own aims and direct and are accountable for their actions. The sovereign state, similarly, is one presumed capable of managing its interests in the external world; these capacities are what justify the state technically and legitimize it politically in an order in which “the people” are said to rule.¹¹

What happens if the sovereignty of the country is severely compromised? How does this constraint affect the evolution of its internal politics and institutions? On this matter, Hans Kohn argued that, “so long as there is freedom to reject or accept outside terms, then a country is as free as any country can be in this world ... what independence does give,” he continued, “is the key right to reject or accept the terms under which capital will or will not enter.”¹² Yet, as this book amply demonstrates, this level of sovereignty was difficult to discern in the policies and actions taken during Kenyatta’s reign. Any credible study of post-colonial Africa must look at the issue of neo-colonialism and the resultant diminished sovereignty of African countries. This factor affects the exercise of political independence for which the African masses sacrificed so much. “When sovereignty is eroded,” Wendy Brown asked, “can the rights rooted in the presumption of sovereign entities—ranging from subjectivity to statehood—remain intact? What stable, bounded source confers them?

¹⁰Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, Co. Inc. 1965), p. 42.

¹¹Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 10.

¹²Hans Kohn, *African Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: NJ: D. Van Nostrand, Co. Inc. 1965), p. 42.

What stable, bounded, self-identical subject employs them? What independent emancipatory force can they continue to claim”?¹³

The outcome of the ideological struggle in Kenya inaugurated capitalism as the official guide to the country’s economic and social policies. This “bend to the West” merits scholarly scrutiny. This book, while paying detailed attention to the local situation and actors, also seeks to cast this ideological struggle within an international context: the Cold War and its lasting impact on Africa. Kenyatta’s government, with active and strategic support from the West, sought to project capitalism as an African ideology, and communism (or socialism) as alien and dangerous. This was yet another critical transformation in post-colonial Kenya. Imperialism, which had colonized, humiliated, and plundered Kenya, was now to be seen as the country’s indispensable friend and savior. Capitalism would move Kenya to development and social justice. But why had it not done so in the past? What had prevented it from developing Kenya? Why this rapid transformation “the morning after?” Was it possible for imperialism to simultaneously plunder and develop Kenya? These are some of the most compelling questions confronting post-colonial Africa.

What, unfortunately, was not discussed in any meaningful detail in Kenya were capitalism’s inherent contradictions and also the fact that it cannot exist independent of Imperialism. Could Kenya escape the “sins” and contradictions of capitalism? In the West, the home of capitalism and imperialism, these “sins” and contradictions have yet to be resolved. One of the most significant of these contradictions is the matter of capitalism’s perpetual crises. These have occurred with unyielding frequency, and after every crisis more uncertainties surround the lives of people, especially the poor. Here, we must remember that, “crises shake our mental conceptions of the world and our place in it.”¹⁴ Then there is the matter of inequality and its implications on social and racial justice. Inequality of income and wealth has now reached scandalous levels not only in the West, but also in the South. In 1996, for example, the UNO estimated that the “358 richest people in the world possess a fortune equivalent in value to the combined income of the poorest 45 per cent”

¹³Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History*, p. 11.

¹⁴David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. x.

of the world population. During this same period, the “number of people with incomes of less than \$1 per day increased by almost 100 million to 1.3 billion.”¹⁵

A recent book by the French economist, Thomas Piketty, on this subject has, with appropriate figures and sources, drawn attention to this question of inequality within the capitalist system. “The boldness of Piketty’s thesis is belied by its simplicity: Inequality is intrinsic to capitalism.”¹⁶ Contrary to what is now believed in “mainstream economic theory,” Piketty has demonstrated with abundance of evidence that inequality does not eventually decline with economic growth. Western societies provide no evidence to support the theory of “convergence”; which stipulates that, “inequality should eventually decline.” On this question, Piketty correctly believes that it would be wrong for national policies to be set by economists alone. “The history of the distribution of wealth,” he writes, “has always been deeply political, and it cannot be reduced to purely economic mechanisms.”¹⁷ A society’s vision and policies have immense impact on inequality and social justice. Here is Piketty, “The history of inequality is shaped by the way economic, social, and political actors view what is just and what is not, as well as by the relative power of those actors and the collective choices that result. It is the joint product of all relevant actors combined.”¹⁸

In a report issued by Oxfam in January 2015, to coincide with the annual Davos conference in Switzerland of the world’s capitalist elite, it was pointed out that the question of inequality still haunts the world, including the West. There is an accelerated expansion of poverty and desperation on a world-wide scale even as few individuals amass scandalous wealth and power: grinding poverty in the midst of glittering wealth. And so, in 2014, “the richest 1% of people in the world owned 48% of global wealth, leaving just 52% to be shared between the other 99% on

¹⁵UNDP Report, 1997, cited in “Some Key Statistics,” in *The Other Davos: Globalization of Resistance to the World Economic System* (London: Zed Book, 2001), p. 4. Also see, *The Good Society: The Humane Agenda*, by John Kenneth Galbraith (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), p. 60, for similar statistics in the USA.

¹⁶Emily Eakin, “Capital Man,” in *The Chronicle Review [The Chronicle of Higher Education]* (Section B, May 16, 2014), p. B8.

¹⁷Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 20.

¹⁸Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty First Century*, p. 20.

the planet.”¹⁹ A more startling figure pointed out in this report is that, the wealth of 80 billionaires “is now the same as that owned by the bottom 50% of the global population.” Thus, to be direct, capitalism does not have within it, any demonstrated capability to lift the majority of humanity out of poverty, exploitation, and misery.

In the former Eastern bloc (following the move to market economies), the average incidence of income poverty for the region increased sevenfold between 1988 and 1994—from 4% to 32%. The number of poor people in the region increased from 14 million to more than 119 million. In 1993–94, with almost 60 million poor people, Russia accounted for nearly half the income poor in eastern Europe.²⁰

In the former colonies like Kenya, poverty is seen as a permanent problem to be written about, debated, categorized, and continually revisited—but never solved.

The embrace of capitalism in Kenya, like in many other African countries at this time, was in part justified by the ever-present claim “of the enormous powers of production that it generates.” It was touted to be a defender and even a facilitator of individual freedom. That it had always defended individual freedom. Clearly, this had not been applicable to Africans during colonialism. What was most evident is that the power of capitalism allowed it to invent justifications for its indispensability (locally and internationally). “It is the nature of privileged position,” John Kenneth Galbraith observed, “that it develops its own political justification and often the economic and social structure that serves it best.” There follows what Galbraith called the invention of “a plausible or, if necessary, a moderately implausible ideology in defense of self-interest.” And for this purpose, there is always “a corps of willing talented

¹⁹OXFAM Issue Briefing, “Wealth: Having It All and Wanting More” (January 2015), p. 2. In May 2016, Neal Gabler published an article that provided further evidence of this economic divide between the wealthy and the poor. His research, based on official statistics, concluded that, “Nearly half of Americans would have trouble finding \$400 to pay for an emergency.” In the USA, “to struggle financially is a source of shame, a daily humiliation—even a form of social suicide. Silence is the only protection.” See, Neal Gabler, “The Secret Shame of Middle-Class Americans,” *The Atlantic* (May 2016), pp. 52–56.

²⁰UNDP Report, cited in “Some Key Statistics” in *The Other Davos: Globalization of Resistance to World Economic System*, p. 5.

craftsmen ... available for the task. And such ideology gains greatly in force as those who are favored increase in number.”²¹

The defenders of capitalism have avoided discussing it alongside imperialism. Indeed, these defenders, at least during this period of the Cold War, preferred to use phrases such as “private enterprise” and “free enterprise.” The use of these terms was deliberately misleading. It was used to recall “some of the conditions of early capitalism.” These terms were, however, “applied without apparent hesitation to very large or para-national ‘public’ corporations, or to an economic system controlled by them.”²² What has stubbornly remained elusive, is Africa’s development and the promotion of social justice as an indispensable component of this effort. Can any meaningful redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor be undertaken under capitalism? And if it is not, what roles, other than as occupiers of misery and powerlessness, are the poor supposed to occupy, especially in African countries? Can capitalism, and the Western model, claim eternal relevance and an unchallenged supremacy? On this question, it may be useful to remember that, “A better knowledge of societies around the world, including the third world, and of their history, has led to the decline of the idea of a single model of development valid for all human societies.”²³

At the height of the ideological struggle in Kenya in the 1960s, it was asserted by conservatives, that one of the key attractions of capitalism is that it adheres to human nature: a singular and unaltered human nature. That is, people are by nature capitalist in intent and inclination. An extension of this argument implied that selfishness and an avid pursuit of self-interest at the expense of the community and neighbors is also part of this human nature. But is it? In his careful study of this subject, Leslie Stevenson identified *Seven Theories of Human Nature*.²⁴ The

²¹John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Good Society: The Humane Agenda* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), p. 5.

²²Raymond Williams, *Key Words: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 43.

²³Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) p. xiv. Also see, Robert L. Heibroner, *Between Capitalism and Socialism: Essays in Political Economics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 49.

²⁴Leslie Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

fundamental societal question, Leslie Stevenson argued, remains to be, “What is Man?” since the “meaning and purpose of human life, what we ought to do, what we can hope to achieve—all these are fundamentally affected by whatever we think is ‘real’ or ‘true’ nature of man.”²⁵ Inevitably, therefore, there are varieties of theories of human nature and not just a single one identified with ruthless unbending selfishness. “Rival theories about human nature are typically embodied in various ways of life and in different political systems.”

During the Cold War, there was thus, “a tendency for people and leaders of the super-power nations (USA and USSR) to see themselves as in a competition that is not merely one of national rivalries, but of ideologies, each of which” saw “the other as based on a false and pernicious theory of human nature.”²⁶ In this case therefore, socialism or communism, can indeed be discussed and considered as one of the many theories of human nature. It is also evident that Christianity (and by extension, capitalism) and Marxism have very different explanations to the “ills of human life” and then the appropriate solutions.

The Christian believes that only the power of God Himself can save us from our state of sin. The startling claim is that in the life of and death of the particular historical person, Jesus, God has acted to redeem the world and restore men’s ruptured relationship with himself. Each individual needs this divine forgiveness and can then begin to live a new regenerate life in the Christian church.

Marxism disagrees with both this analysis and prescription, since “there can be no real change in individual life until there is a radical change in society. The socio-economic system of capitalism must be replaced by that of communism.”²⁷ On the specific matter of selfishness and human nature, Leslie Stevenson concluded that:

the single assertion that all men are selfish is a diagnosis, albeit a brief one, but it also offers no understanding of why we are selfish and no suggestion as to how we can overcome it. Similarly, a prescription that we should all love one another gives no explanation as to why we find it difficult. The

²⁵Leslie Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature*, p. 3.

²⁶Leslie Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature*, p. 5.

²⁷Leslie Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature*, pp. 6–7.

theory of evolution, although it has a lot to say about man and his place in the universe, does not in itself give any diagnosis or prescription.²⁸

It has sometimes been argued that the drift toward capitalism by “the ordinary folks” and their leaders is a matter of commonsense. But what does this mean? Commonsense means, “the knowledge possessed by those [who] live in the midst and are a part of the social situations and processes which sociologists seek to understand. The term may be synonymous with folk knowledge.” Commonsense provides answers to some questions and is less worried about

how it came by those answers. From the perspective of commonsense, it is good enough to know something is true, or that it is the way of things. One does not need to know why in order to benefit from the knowledge, and arguably one is better off not worrying about it too much.²⁹

Yet without an adequate arsenal of verifiable knowledge, commonsense does not provide a comprehensive and credible explanation about the rise and impact of imperial domination in Kenya (and Africa). “A quick look at history suggests that when commonsense is used for purposes beyond the every day, it can fail spectacularly.”³⁰ In brief, commonsense does not provide a common frame of reference for all members of a society nor can it be relied upon to account for complex historical developments and processes.

Closely related to commonsense is the phenomenon of consumption or consumerism. This has always accompanied capitalism in the West, and has also found its way into Africa. This was very true in Kenyatta’s Kenya. Conspicuous consumption and the quest for status based on the level and quality of material possessions and consumption have fueled corruption and then the eagerness by the ruling elite to “sell their

²⁸Leslie Stevenson, *Theories of Human Nature*, p. 9. Leslie Stevenson adds that, “an ideology, then, is more than a theory, but is based on a theory of human nature which somehow suggests a course of action.” p. 9.

²⁹Duncan J. Watts, *Everything is Obvious Once You Know the Answer: How Commonsense Fails Us* (New York: Crown Business, 2011), p. 9. Watts adds that in considering commonsense, we need to remember that it “exhibits some mysterious quirks, one of the most striking of which is how it varies over time, and across cultures” p. 11.

³⁰Duncan J. Watts, *Everything is Obvious Once You Know the Answer*, p. 19.

countries.” It is worth emphasizing that the consumer culture, like the drive “to make money,” is deliberately cultivated in capitalist states; it is not a natural reflex. In the USA, for example, “consumption ... is now seen as being intertwined with the major themes of national identity and American history—including economic, political, foreign policy, intellectual, cultural, environmental, labor, ethnic, and gender history.”³¹ This American identification with consumerism became central to its foreign policy and propaganda during the Cold War. Expansiveness of consumer goods in huge overstocked and supplied supermarkets and stores became an integral part of American ideological offensive during the Cold War. To be sure, these Cold War warriors did “conflate consumption with capitalism.” Still, this is an image that the West has sought to project in its past and current foreign policy. This has led to an avid export of consumption patterns and habits overseas, quite often to societies without the means to sustain such levels of consumption. And so, at the present period, “Golf courses and gated communities pioneered in the USA can now be seen in China, Chile, and India, contrasting with sprawling squatter self-built settlements designated as slums, favelas or *barrios pobres*.”³²

Some of the major points of contention between the radical nationalists and Kenyatta revolved around questions of foreign investment, extraction and ownership of raw materials by Western multinational corporations, and the urgency of comprehensive industrialization. The aggressive pursuit of foreign investment by Kenyatta’s government reinforced the capitalist framework that was intended to guide the country’s development. This strategy, while immensely beneficial to the ruling elite, has not over the course of over 40 years become the engine of rapid comprehensive national development. A general observation on foreign investment in Africa does not lead to any euphoric celebration of success. Rather, it presents a catalog of negative effects and therefore a need for caution. “The specific negative effects of foreign investment,” Jenny Rebecca Kehl pointed out,

³¹Lawrence B. Glickman, “Preface” in *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. vii.

³²David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*, p. ix.

include monopolies that reduce domestic competition, deprive local industries of investment capital, export profits to home countries, increase dependency through debt and external donor decisions, monopolize production, control distribution, inhibit the growth of domestic infant industries, create cartels, exploit labor, monopolize raw materials, and limit domestic control over raw materials.³³

In spite of these negative effects, African countries continue to participate in the “scramble for investment” by offering ever more lucrative deals to international capital. Many of these countries, including Kenya, “agree to forgo tax revenue; allow profits to be repatriated rather than invested; give away resource rights; mining rights, and valuable raw materials; and absorb the cost of negative externalities in order to attract foreign investors.”³⁴

In Kenya, the question of foreign investment has always been controversial. It has lacked transparency and its performance has not, over the years, been subjected to any credible comprehensive scholarly (or even legislative) investigation. The establishment of the Investment Promotion Council (IPC) in 1982, after Kenyatta’s death, has regrettably failed to impose either discipline or transparency on this economic option. “The IPC does not impose corporate performance requirements, but it does set minimal standards for environment, health, and security requirements for foreign investors. However, the government has, in large part, failed to institutionalize the process of investment.” And above all, “the most substantial problem is that there is no legal code for foreign investment.” Even more troubling is the lax manner apparent in the handling of basic details about foreign investors. Thus, “Kenya does not record data on the country of origin or the industrial sector of foreign investments. As a result, the Kenyan government has very little information about its own foreign investment, which renders decisions about foreign investment uninformed and thus, often ineffective.”³⁵ This lack of effective control, information, and oversight has led the country to absorb the negative effects of foreign investment, including environmental pollution. Jenny Rebecca Kehl

³³Jenny Rebecca Kehl, *Foreign Investment and Domestic Development: Multinationals and the State* (Boulder, CO: Lynee Rienner Publishers, 2009), p. 12.

³⁴Jenny Rebecca Kehl, *Foreign Investment and Domestic Development*, p. 3.

³⁵Jenny Rebecca Kehl, *Foreign Investment and Domestic Development*, p. 51.

cites the example of General Motors, which, during its investment years in Kenya, was able to “extract substantial direct gains in the form of profits and renew tax holiday from the Kenya government. It has also been able to make Kenya absorb many of the negative externalities of its manufacturing operations, such as environmental pollution.”³⁶

The majority of foreign investment in Kenya, as in many other African countries during Kenyatta’s reign and after, was and is, in “the extractive sector”: extracting Africa’s raw materials. These include oil, minerals, cash crops, and even food crops, and lately in the actual takeover of land by foreign countries and companies in the name of “open markets.” This is the selling of a people’s birthright on the cheap. A question arises here on the circumstances under which a country’s irreplaceable resources are sold off without prior consultation with the people who still subsist in poverty. Do corrupt, oppressive, and undemocratic governments have the right to sell off a people’s birthright? In whose name, do they undertake these transactions? And aren’t Western corporations and governments (this also includes non-Western countries and corporations) in such instances guilty of handling stolen property? On this issue of economic progress in former colonies, Paul Baran’s insight is still relevant. “What is decisive,” Baran wrote,

is that economic development in underdeveloped countries is profoundly inimical to the dominant interests in the advanced capitalist countries. Supplying many important raw materials to the industrialized countries, providing their corporations with vast profits and investment outlets, the backward world has always represented the indispensable hinterland of the highly developed West. Thus, the ruling class in the United States (and elsewhere) is bitterly opposed to the industrialization of the so-called “source countries” and to the emergence of integrated processing economies in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.³⁷

Lastly, we should consider racism and its intricate and long-lasting linkage to capitalism. The relationship between Africans and colonialists was, unhappily, mediated through Western beliefs on race and racism. These beliefs have, over the last five hundred years or so, affected

³⁶Jenny Rebecca Kehl, *Foreign Investment and Domestic Development*, pp. 48–49.

³⁷Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* (New York: Monthly review Press, 1957), p. 11.

the place of the African (on the continent and in the diaspora) in the capitalist world under Western command. And so,

in many quarters, the idea (of black intellectual inferiority) is still very much alive. Ideas, like radio-active material, do not suddenly lose their potency; rather, after the time of their greatest strength, they experience something of a half life. To a large extent, those who persist today in believing in the mental inferiority of the black African sometimes consciously but more unconsciously draw their inspiration from ideas of the past. In a real sense, today's race prejudice is a product of yesterday's racism; hence, to understand today's racial attitudes one would do well to examine their historical origins.³⁸

These ideas backed by a variety of “scientific” rationales over the years, have caused much pain to the black people across the world. During the colonial period in Kenya, there was a vibrant Eugenics movement. In the 1930s, many white settlers and colonial administrators in Kenya were heavily influenced by the ideas of the Eugenics movement. As it happens,

these eugenic ideas were strikingly pervasive among the British educated middle and upper middle classes in the first half of the twentieth century, and most of the British inhabitants in Kenya, official and unofficial, came from these classes. What is remarkable about the eugenics movement in Kenya is the strength of its conclusions about race and intelligence, and the ease with which British eugenics principles could be used to construct such extreme scientific racism.³⁹

In the USA, the premier capitalist country in the twentieth century, racism against African Americans has been an integral part of the country's history: from its founding, and then the establishment of its economic, legal, and social institutions. No one can understand the USA without first and foremost paying attention to the race question and its impact on the evolution of the country and its institutions, habits, and tendencies. From the establishment of the country after declaring its independence from

³⁸Charles H. Lyons, *To Wash an Aethiop White: British Ideas About Black African Educability, 1530–1960* (New York: Teacher's College Press, Columbia University, 1975), p. ix.

³⁹Chloe Campbell, *Race and Empire: Eugenics Movement in Kenya* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 1.

Britain up to the present, the matter of extending any rights to African Americans has been guided by the “notion of popular tolerance.” This means, “how much equality white people would accept,”⁴⁰ at any given time. Thus, progress toward racial equality has been tied to “popular tolerance” and not to any deliberate legal and social efforts aimed at eradicating racism. This seemingly unbridgeable divide led Andrew Hacker to write that indeed “America may be seen as two nations ... As a social and human division,” the racial divide between white and black in the USA, “surpasses all others—even gender—in intensity and subordination.”⁴¹

Capitalism has thus coexisted, with remarkable consistency, with racism. This has led to poverty, joblessness, violence, diminished opportunities for social mobility, which then provides more rationale for racial stereotyping and discrimination. The result is that, “few whites are able to identify with blacks as a group—the essential prerequisite for feelings of empathy with, rather than aversion from, blacks’ self-inflicted suffering.”⁴² Nor does even academic excellence exempt African Americans (and Africans) from discrimination, contempt, and unfair judgment. In a recent article, John Jackson, Jr., himself a renowned academician, observed that, there were many successful African American intellectuals who felt embittered and frustrated due to constant racial discrimination. The scholars in his survey had,

each won all kinds of prestigious awards. Their work has been well cited within their disciplines and beyond. They are tenured at some of the most distinguished institutions in the country. And down to a person, they felt under-appreciated, disrespected, and dismissed as scholars. They had achieved everything, yet they felt that many of their white colleagues treated them with little more than contempt or utter indifference. It was disheartening to hear.⁴³

⁴⁰Joanne Grant, *Black Protest: History, Documents, and Analyses, 1619 to the Present* (New York: Fawcett Premier, 1968), p. 105.

⁴¹Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile and Unequal* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1992), p. 3.

⁴²Derrick Bell, *Faces At The Bottom Of The Well: The Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p. 3.

⁴³John L. Jackson, Jr. “What It Feels Like To Be a Black Professor,” *The Chronicle Review [The Chronicle of Higher Education]*, Section B. January 30, 2015, p. B8.

In the USA, Martin Luther King, Jr. found that the coalition of white and black Americans that had been instrumental in pushing through the initial stages of the civil rights movement, was crumbling fast when the difficult questions of economic and social justice rose to the fore. These questions sought for changes that white liberals were unable and unwilling to endorse. “White America,” Martin Luther King wrote in one of his last books,

was ready to demand that the Negro should be spared the lash of brutality and coarse degradation, but it had never been truly committed to helping him out of poverty, exploitation or all forms of discrimination. The outraged white citizen had been sincere when he snatched the whips from the Southern sheriffs and forbade them more cruelties. But when this was to a large degree accomplished, the emotions that had momentarily inflamed him melted away.

He observed, “White Americans left the Negro on the ground and in devastating numbers walked off with the aggressor. It appeared that the white segregationist and the ordinary white citizen had more in common with one another than either had with the Negro.”⁴⁴ The African American has, therefore, endured racism and bigotry even as the country has proclaimed to the world that it champions individual freedom, human dignity, democracy, and of course capitalism, “the free enterprise system.” These contradictions led James Baldwin, an extremely esteemed and celebrated African American writer, to observe a little while ago that, “The American commonwealth chooses to overlook what the Negroes are never ever able to forget: they are not really considered a part of it.”⁴⁵

The support for political independence (or Civil Rights in the USA) did not translate to economic opportunities on a scale aimed at eradicating poverty and addressing historical injustices. In Kenya, as in similar African countries, neo-colonialism in fact reinforced racism by avoiding, if not dismissing, the centrality of the difficult matter of economic liberation of the national economy. This resurrected with fury, the racist belief of, “Africa the helpless and pitiful” needing perpetual guidance and

⁴⁴Martin Luther King, Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Books, 1967), pp. 3–4.

⁴⁵James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957/1984), p. 70.

instruction from the West. In due time, by the 1980s and 1990s at the height of the Structural Adjustment Programs in Africa, this morphed into “Afro-pessimism,” which holds that, “there is no hope for Africa.”⁴⁶ On this question, few liberals in the West supported economic liberation and empowerment of the newly liberated Africans. It would hence be an error of grave proportion to assume that all those who study and write about Africa are friends of Africa; that they are all dedicated and unflinching supporters of the development and liberation of Africa and Africans.

In Kenya, the nature of settler colonialism and capitalism condemned Africans to feel as foreigners in their own land. Beyond the supply of labor and then loss of land, Africans also provided market for goods and services. Colonialism entailed not only the loss of sovereignty but also a sustained assault on African dignity and respect. The colonized were the lesser beings, and the actions and attitudes of whites in Kenya throughout the colonial period reinforced this racist sentiment with “terrible consistency.” In the colonies, Frantz Fanon observed that the “Western bourgeois racial prejudice as regards the nigger and the Arab is a racism of contempt; it is a racism which minimizes what it hates.”⁴⁷ These factors must be considered in any meaningful discussion about African liberation. As a result, “to fully appreciate the emotional charge that often accompanied the struggle for African independence, one has to know that this was also a struggle to regain African dignity and respect.”⁴⁸

It is against this background that Kenyatta’s political career unfolded, and must therefore be assessed and analyzed. There has been no scholarly biography of Kenyatta since the publication of, *Kenyatta*, by Jeremy Murray-Brown in 1972, when Kenyatta was still in power. As expected, Jeremy Murray-Brown’s book, while full of admirable details and insights, could not be conclusive since Kenyatta was still alive and in power. Since 1972, several factors have changed. There are now new opportunities and possibilities for research on his life and his tenure as President. New documents in several archives are now available

⁴⁶Erik Gilbert and Jonathan T. Reynolds, *Africa in World History: From Prehistory to the Present* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), p. xix.

⁴⁷Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963), p. 159.

⁴⁸W.O. Maloba, “Decolonization: A Theoretical Perspective,” in *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya, 1940–93* (London: James Currey; Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995), p. 11.

to researchers. These documents allow us to gain access to the inner intricate details of how his government functioned in some key areas.

The political transformation of Kenyatta, especially after 1963, was marked by a political compromise between him and the British. This book describes and explains this compromise. It also analyzes the historical impact of this compromise on Kenya's political, social, and economic evolution as a newly liberated country. Some of the country's seemingly intractable and perennially vexing problems, for example, on land, the economy, and even "tribalism," have a direct linkage to this compromise.

One of the central questions addressed in this study is the British influence on local Kenyan politics during Kenyatta's reign. This influence (sometimes direction) had a definite impact in determining the outcome of some of the momentous events in the country's history, including the dissolution of the KADU party. This consideration also includes the crucial role played by the British in the ideological struggles of the 1960s. Varied and multi-faceted, these interventions were, in the end, decisive in the eventual defeat of the radical nationalists. In a recent statement, David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, stated in a moment of unexpected candor that, "Britain is responsible for 'so many of the world's problems.'"⁴⁹ On this occasion, Cameron's statement has unrivaled historical validity. No one, except for the die-hard imperialists and their modern supporters armed with self-serving footnotes, can look at the post-colonial world and its immense social, political, and economic problems, and not see the hand of the British.

At the time of *Uhuru*, Britain's overriding objective was safeguarding its economic and strategic interests. To ensure that this aim was accomplished in the aftermath of political independence, it was imperative to hand over power to "friendly native rulers." In this way, "vital British interests need not be endangered by these changes provided Britain left behind stable and friendly governments."⁵⁰ And so British imperialism "did not have permanent friends but permanent interests." But these imperial economic and strategic interests were rarely, if ever at all, conducive to the national development of the newly independent countries: promotion of sovereign interests, economic development,

⁴⁹ *The Independent* (London) "A World of Troubles—All Made in Britain?" (April 7, 2011).

⁵⁰ Ritchie Owendale, "Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa, 1957–1960," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 38, Issue 2 (June 1995), p. 460.

dedication to social justice and social cohesion, rededication to Pan Africanism, and a rebirth of a national decolonized culture.

It is worth repeating here that this political biography is far more than a study of a “big man.” The political career of Kenyatta, especially after *Uhuru*, had an enormous lasting impact on Kenya: its political, economic, and even social structure. The foundations of what Kenya has become were laid down through the policies formulated and implemented during Kenyatta’s reign. As a result, this is a study of these policies and the key political actors, instrumental in devising and implementing them. This book provides the explanation behind the headlines. How were the key economic, social, and political decisions made? Why those decisions? What strategies were employed to achieve specific objectives? What is the lasting impact of those decisions and policies on post-colonial Kenya? How did Kenya become a neo-colonial country? How did we get here?

The End of Radicalism: “Throwing Oginga Odinga Under the Bus”

At the time of his trial in 1953, and for many years afterwards, Kenyatta had been portrayed as a “Soviet-trained Mau Mau terrorist.” In this capacity, he was reported to have organized “the dreaded Mau Mau secret society which aims to throw the white man out of Kenya.”¹ Thus, Kenyatta’s name was resolutely linked to the Mau Mau peasant revolt, which was portrayed in the influential Western papers as savage and frighteningly murderous. These reports took care to mention that Kenyatta had visited the Soviet Union “several times” in the 1930s and

¹ *New York Times* (April 9, 1953), p. 1.

In the USA, this phrase “has frequently been used to describe various politicians distancing themselves from unpopular or controversial figures.” Although the origin of this phrase is not clear, and thus remains a mystery, it has now found entry into “dictionary of English idioms and idiomatic expressions.” In the *Urban Dictionary* the phrase means, “to sacrifice some other person, usually one who is undeserving or at least vulnerable, to make personal gain.” The phrase captures the selfish action of sacrificing “another for personal gain,” and “getting someone into trouble or giving up information so they will get into trouble.” Also see, “Under the Bus,” by Tony Dokoupil, in *Newsweek* (March 19, 2008). Part of this chapter will describe and analyze the strategic and deliberate distancing of Kenyatta, members of his Cabinet, and the KANU from Odinga leading to his resignation from the party and the government.

“studied at Moscow University,” where he undoubtedly “became sympathetic to socialism.” The new image of Kenyatta in the West had to erase these old positions while erecting new ones in which the curtain opened and Kenyatta emerged as a wise anti-communist nationalist; a valued and even trusted friend of the West.

This remarkable and “outstanding turnabout” was best captured by Carl T. Rowan in his article on Kenyatta published in *Reader’s Digest* in 1966.² Rowan correctly observed that prior to 1963, white settlers in Kenya had been “fearful of change, of losing the rich farmlands they had claimed as their own. They also feared revenge—and Kenyatta.”³ After 1963, these settlers had been pleasantly surprised by Kenyatta’s metamorphosis from “leader to darkness and death” to the “acknowledged statesman he is today.” To their delight, Kenyatta’s “willingness to forgive” had “been so apparent” that “he wasted not one hour in expressions of bitterness toward the whiteman.”⁴

During this period of the re-introduction of Kenyatta to the West, most of the newspapers recounted his legendary political history and then drew attention to his unrivaled political stature in Kenya (and Africa). “His leonine head, his beard and his slow movements,” the *New York Times* observed,

create an impression of ancient times and ancient wisdom ... Because he is more a symbol, Mr. Kenyatta is less an individual; he has to be viewed at a distance. Before a meeting no one can touch him. The image speaks for the man and his voice rolls out over a crowd as if it came from the hills.⁵

²Carl T. Rowan, “The Metamorphosis of Jomo Kenyatta.” *Reader’s Digest*. Vol. 88 (March 1966). Carl. T. Rowan was a veteran African American journalist in the USA who had also held very senior appointments in the federal government. “President Kennedy in 1961 appointed him Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, and later Ambassador to Finland. As Director of the US Information Agency from January 1964 to September 1965, he was the first Negro to sit on the National Security Council and to attend the President’s Cabinet meetings. Returning to journalism he now writes a syndicated column for the *Chicago Daily News* and score of newspapers in USA and abroad.” p. 119.

³Carl T. Rowan, “The Metamorphosis of Jomo Kenyatta,” p. 120.

⁴Carl T. Rowan, “The Metamorphosis of Jomo Kenyatta,” pp. 120–121.

⁵*New York Times* (May 29, 1963), p. 4.

Details about Kenyatta’s life, including his multiple marriages, now added to Western fascination about him.

The man who now runs Kenya—Premier Jomo Kenyatta—clings to at least one of his Kikuyu tribal customs. He practices polygamy, but with a difference: one of his three wives is white. Mrs. Kenyatta No. 2, Edna May, flew from England to Kenya shortly before independence ceremonies. Kenyatta married her in London in 1943. She remained in England, raising their son, Peter, while Kenyatta returned to his native land to fight for its independence.⁶

The reporting always hinted at Kenyatta’s extraordinary ability to navigate through the demands of multiple cultures, an ability that enabled him, for example, to remain married to three vastly different women: “The Premier’s first wife, Grace is a tribeswoman. She is seldom seen in public. Wife No. 3 Ngina, is also a Kikuyu. Much younger than the other two others, she often serves as ‘official’ hostess.”⁷ It is Kenyatta, “once jailed by the British for his part in the bloody Mau Mau uprising,” who was now credited with the salutary achievement of averting “another Congo” in Kenya which would have led to “the white population fleeing, and Kenya’s 20 or so tribes fighting over the rich farmlands and modern cities left by the British.”⁸

In August 1966, *Life* magazine⁹ published a lengthy article on Kenyatta (and a select number of members of his Cabinet). The article, with glossy color pictures, focused on Kenyatta the man and his immediate family. There were pictures of Kenyatta in full ceremonial regalia, with Mama Ngina, then on his farm at Gatundu. Here was Kenyatta the calm, wise, dignified, relaxed, and affable leader. The article drew Western readers’ attention to Kenyatta’s magnanimity and almost infinite disposition to forgive those who had sought to do him harm in the past.

⁶ *US News and World Report* (December 23, 1963), p. 14.

⁷ *US News and World Report* (December 23, 1963), p. 14.

⁸ *US News and World Report* (December 23, 1963), p. 46.

⁹ It is useful to mention here that *Life* was for a long time one of the most widely read and successful magazines in the West. Devoted to photo-journalism, *Life* reached millions of readers.

Jomo Kenyatta had reason to feel vengeful toward white men, who had kept him prisoner for almost a decade. He had cause to mistrust many countrymen, who had stirred tribal enmities in opposing him. He had a good excuse to avoid the burdens of leadership, for he was in the neighborhood of 70 when his African country won independence from Britain three years ago.

But he had refrained from any vengeful acts toward whites. Instead, as President, “the leonine old rebel has shown neither vengeance nor mistrust nor weariness. He encourages whites to help his nation, picks his government with disregard to tribal rivalries and displays the vigor of youth with wisdom of age.”¹⁰

According to *Life*, Kenyatta had, through his leadership and policies enacted by his government, bestowed to Kenya crucial political and social stability. As a result, “foreign investors, private and public” had eagerly sought to do business in Kenya and “tap a promising economy.” The political career of this man of “awesome physique, unflagging energy and indefinite age,” was, as *Life* saw it, a rare example of “the surprising emergence of a former ‘bad man.’”¹¹

In February 1965, Duncan Sandys, now out office but still influential, continued to heap praise on Kenyatta. He was the “architect of Kenya unity.” This unity had been achieved, according to Sandys, by “the coming together of divided tribal groups in Kenya to form a single political party.” Such an outcome “was little short of a miracle.”¹² Sandys, like MacDonald, saw the rise of a one-party State in Kenya as a positive contributory factor towards national unity crafted by Kenyatta. “We might have all sorts of views as to whether a one-party State is a good idea. But it must be emphasized in the case of Kenya that the one-party State has been achieved not by suppressing the Opposition but by winning them over.”¹³ Sandys concluded that Kenyatta had given Kenya “strong paternal leadership.”

On their visit to Kenya in July 1966, British Members of Parliament echoed Sandys’ views on democracy and opposition parties in Africa. These parliamentarians held the position that “Democracy in developing

¹⁰ *Life* (magazine), Vol. 61 (August 5, 1966), p. 36.

¹¹ *Life* (magazine), Vol. 61 (August 5, 1966), p. 45.

¹² *Daily Nation* (February 3, 1965), p. 1.

¹³ *Daily Nation* (February 3, 1965), p. 1.

countries of Africa could not be expected necessarily to be based on the Westminster model ... The new states had their own varieties of democracy because of their different backgrounds.”¹⁴

Once it was clear that Kenyatta had now arisen as the African leader most preferred by the West on the continent, several foreign organizations and governments sought audience with him. In February 1965, he “received a medal from the pope” and in March of the same year, South Korea bestowed on him the “Order of Merit for National Foundation—the highest South Korean award for Head of State,” in recognition of his “selfless and sacrificial fight for the independence of Kenya.” This sacrifice had not only led to the “glorious re-emergence” of Kenya as “independent free nation” but had also “set a shining example for many other nations aspiring to freedom all over the world.”¹⁵

There was, to be sure, a minority of reports in the West during this period, which were not particularly complimentary toward Kenyatta. In June 1963, *Newsweek* published an article on Kenyatta in which it was hinted that imprisonment and then detention may have “sapped his spirit and energy.” While Kenyatta could still deliver an impressive performance on “an election platform, he is inclined to drift into rambling incoherence in private conversation, especially when his interest is not fully engaged.”¹⁶ Then there were the occasions when Kenyatta was deliberately caricatured in the Western media, especially on television. This is what happened in November 1964 when a BBC program deliberately caricatured Kenyatta. Kenya’s High Commission in London issued an immediate and forthright letter of protest to the BBC stating that “the BBC ‘cannot indulge in offensive conduct with impunity.’” The BBC’s response pointed to the “British tradition that even the most sober organs of public opinion may be expected to deal with serious issues in a humorous way.” Therefore, the item that had caricatured Kenyatta had to be seen “against the continuous background of serious political comment on African affairs” which was included in many of the

¹⁴*Daily Nation* (July 18, 1966), p. 3. These Members of Parliament presented the Speaker of the House of Representatives in Kenya with “a set of 120 books on Parliamentary affairs.” They also hoped that they “would be given an opportunity of meeting President Kenyatta.”

¹⁵*Daily Nation* (March 23, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁶*Newsweek* (June 10, 1963), p. 59.

BBC programs.¹⁷ Besides, the BBC argued, the caricature of Kenyatta “was intended for the audience in Britain, where the convention of political humour is well understood.” The Kenya High Commission remained unconvinced, characterizing the BBC’s response as “a naïve attempt to evade responsibility for a shocking display of bad taste.”

A similar incident occurred in West Germany in July 1966 when the Kenya Ambassador lodged a strong protest with the West Germany Foreign Ministry regarding an Italian film called *Africa Addio*. This film, which was being shown in West Germany, had in its comments, depicted Kenyatta as “leader of Mau Mau” and also implied that Kenyatta’s government was “a Government of gangsters with the law of the jungle.”¹⁸ Soon afterwards, the Kenya government “lodged a strong protest to the Italian Government” over this issue of Kenyatta’s depiction in the film. The Italian government agreed to “investigate and report the matter to Kenya.”¹⁹

These, and similar negative portrayals of Kenyatta, were, at this time, isolated and clearly outdistanced by the quickly expanding positive coverage of the man now seen in the West as a cherished and valued ally. The positive coverage, usually in influential newspapers and magazines, came back again and again to the view that Kenyatta had “provided strong leadership for this new nation and that substantial hope for stability and orderly development in East Africa now rests with him.”²⁰

There can be little doubt that this change of opinion about Kenyatta in the West was largely the consequence of the MacDonal formula. The implementation of this political formula inevitably led Kenyatta to declare in the open his anti-communist, anti-radical positions. These found favor and support in the West.

¹⁷ *The Times* (London: November 18, 1964), p. 12.

¹⁸ *Daily Nation* (July 2, 1966), p. 14.

¹⁹ *Daily Nation* (July 8, 1966), p. 4. By this time, Italy had already pledged to undertake major industrial investments in Kenya. In June 1965, Mboya, as Minister for Economic Planning and Development, announced several investment projects by Italy, including: “A machine factory, the first in Africa to be built in Nairobi by Olivetti; A mechanized cashew nut factory to be built at the Coast; A rice milling factory at Mwea-Tebere; a pool service of agricultural equipment from tractors down to be sold to smaller farmers on long term terms.” See, *Daily Nation* (June 19, 1965), p. 1.

²⁰ *New York Times* (October 23, 1965), p. 30.

Within Kenya, the crucial indicator of Kenyatta's embrace and spirited advancement of conservative and anti-radical positions was the warm and sustained support that he came to receive from the white settlers after 1963. The majority of these settlers had chosen to stay on in Kenya. A few had left for South Africa and the then Rhodesia, but after a short stint in these countries, many of them had come back.

The explanation for this newly minted and apparently strong support for Kenyatta by the white settlers was based on economic and ideological grounds. Although some of them would later attribute this change of attitude to "a miracle" or to the "religious metamorphosis of Kenyatta," the underlying causes remained their economic and social self-interest. Kenyatta's Kenya "was one of the few places in the world," some of the settlers told Peter Knauss, "where the free enterprise system permits a good return on one's investments." Their point of reference for this change in attitude toward Kenyatta was his famous speech to their representatives in Nakuru in August 1963 in which he had assured them of the safety of their farms and property in independent Kenya. This act of magnanimity had clearly "exceeded their fondest hopes." Kenyatta not only forgave and absolved them of any responsibility for the past suffering of Africans, but he also pledged to shield them from any threat to their property from radical nationalists, eager to undertake comprehensive nationalization of property as the guide to post-*Uhuru* national economic policy. Kenyatta, they concluded, had "clearly moved closer to the European position on the land question."²¹ Not surprisingly, many of the settlers now felt that "If ever there was a threat of a coup in Nairobi," they "would form a squadron and March down to protect the old man."²²

²¹Peter Knauss, "From Devil to Father Figure: The Transformation of Jomo Kenyatta by Kenya Whites," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9, no. 1 (May 1971), p. 134.

²²Peter Knauss, "From Devil to Father Figure," p. 132. In a confidential memo to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British High Commissioner in Nairobi in 1966, observed that Kenyatta, "who went to into seven year's detention as the supposedly evil genius of Mau Mau," had emerged "as the saviour of the British settlers ... His present policies may be guided by enlightened self-interest, but he would not fail to act unscrupulously should the interests of his country in his judgment require him to do so. So far from being an old man in a hurry, he is anxious to see his country develop into a modern State gradually and not by the revolutionary means advocated by his rival and former friend Mr. Oginga Odinga." See, MAC 71/8/60 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: First Impressions, p. 5.

This new fondness for Kenyatta by the settlers did not extend to Africans in general. Many of the white settlers retained the old colonial racist attitudes that had characterized their whole existence in Kenya. Kenyatta was seen as a “miracle” exception to the rule. “Attitude change ... was profoundly lacking towards Africans in general. Racial stereo-types recurred constantly” when Peter Knauss conducted his research interviews.

These revolved around three familiar themes: Africans have short memories; Africans are inscrutable; Africans are lazy and unreliable. Dissenting views were rare. The modal image of the African, explicitly colonial, was of a docile, happy-go-lucky creature, a salty man of the earth, dominated by physical desires, and subscribing to a comic view of the universe.

In such circumstances, the duty of the white man, as had been the case during the colonial period, “was to train the African out of his old habits into patterns of discipline and order: punctuality, cleanliness, and a greater appreciation for method in general and protection of property in particular.”²³ On some level, therefore, these white settlers saw themselves as continuing to carry-on the “white man’s burden,” even if this was now to be done less overtly in a changed political environment.

The ideological congruity between the white settlers and Kenyatta had a common objective: “the suppression of the threat from the African left.” As a result, the white settlers supported Kenyatta and his position in the post-*Uhuru* ideological struggles within the KANU (and the country). Kenyatta was now seen by many of these white settlers “as a kind and protective father figure.” In this capacity, he had “saved them from possible expropriation at the hands of radical African leaders.”²⁴

To the white settlers, Britain, and later the USA, the arch radical, and therefore the man to be stopped and sidelined in Kenya, was Oginga Odinga. The British intelligence services had, since 1960, been very concerned about the political orientation and intentions of Odinga. Prior to 1960, he had been marked for special monitoring by the colonial security forces after he made the famous speech in the Legco in 1958 praising Kenyatta as the true leader of the Africans in Kenya in their struggle

²³Peter Knauss, “From Devil to Father Figure,” p. 132.

²⁴Peter Knauss, “From Devil to Father Figure,” p. 135.

for *Uhuru*. This speech, the colonial government fervently believed, revived what it would later refer to as the "Kenyatta Cult." Odinga was held responsible for reviving the political career of Kenyatta who, until 1963, was largely unacceptable to the white settlers, the colonial government and the British governments as a possible leader of an independent Kenya. It is fair to say that Odinga was never forgiven for this daring act. "By this one act Odinga, an impulsive and highly emotional man, attracted on himself all the odium of the settlers and of much of British opinion in general. He became the arch radical."²⁵ Among African politicians, there were some who continued to hold a heavy grudge against Odinga for, in effect, resurrecting and adding luster to Kenyatta's political mythology. Many of them believed that Odinga's actions had denied them an opportunity to emerge as national leaders for now they had been forced to work under Kenyatta's shadow. Such politicians, even if they belonged to the KANU, still felt resentment toward Odinga.

It was, however, in 1960, that MI6 (the British foreign intelligence agency) started to focus on Odinga's alleged "communist leanings." During a recess at the Constitutional Conference in London in 1960, Odinga went to East Germany for a short visit. In subsequent periods, he visited other East European countries, in addition to the Soviet Union and The People's Republic of China. He received some funds from these countries for political activity in Kenya. According to Odinga, the money received from the Communist countries "funded vehicles ... for organizers of KANU branches in many parts of the country." Some of the funds were intended to establish "a national press." These visits also facilitated the enrollment of several "Kenya students to study in socialist countries."²⁶

The British intelligence services noted, with increasing alarm, Odinga's access to funds from the Communist countries. Such funds, it was feared, would enable him and his radical allies to ascend to power in Kenya. In the period before 1963, the British intelligence services included Kenyatta among Odinga's allies. Further, these intelligence services noted that Odinga had given some of the funds received from the Communist

²⁵FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁶Odinga Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru: The Autobiography of Oginga* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), p. 192.

countries to Kenyatta.²⁷ MacDonald confirmed this arguing that after his release from detention, Kenyatta

fell further under obligation to his Luo colleague because the latter was the only source from which he received substantial sums of money for financing his renewed political activities. Odinga had been receiving large quantities of cash from Russian and Chinese Communist sources; and Kenyatta probably knew that origin of his own share of the wealth.

In spite of this irrefutable fact of Kenyatta having received “Communist money” from Odinga, MacDonald found a plausible rationalization that effectively saw a clear distinction between Kenyatta’s laudible aims and Odinga’s nefarious intentions. “Having been pronounced by the British Governor of the day as a ‘leader to darkness and death,’” Kenyatta, MacDonald wrote, “had nowhere else to turn for sympathy and help; he needed money for his own genuinely Nationalist political purposes.”²⁸

It was determined by the British intelligence services that Kenyatta had indeed received a substantial amount of “Communist money” “either via Odinga or via Kikuyu emissaries whom he sent abroad on begging missions.” The more “Communist money” Odinga received, the more he gave to Kenyatta. By 1964, according to the British intelligence services, Kenyatta “told the Chinese ... to pay him directly and their payments included one of £75,000 to Kenyatta and Odinga’s joint account in May 1964.”²⁹ Other sources of foreign funds for Kenyatta at this time included £37,000 received from the United Arab Republic.³⁰ Kenyatta’s receipt of “Communist money” seems to have ended “after the middle of 1964 since when internal sources such as ‘harambee’ donations to ‘personal charities’ such as Gatundu Self Help Hospital and Mama Ngina Children’s Home and business projects have provided the required amounts together with use of the KANU party funds under his

²⁷FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives), p. 60. Confidential memo on Leading Personalities in Kenya, 1978.

²⁸MAC 71/8/19 (London: National Archives; Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Odinga, p. 1.

²⁹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

³⁰FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

personal control."³¹ Lastly, on this question of "Communist money" the British intelligence services concluded that after *Uhuru*, "Kenyatta was soon able to milk the state," thus dispensing with his earlier reliance on funds from Communist countries that Odinga had channeled to him. On the other hand, Odinga's reliance on these funds remained.³²

The alarm expressed by the Western powers over what they saw as political mischief being caused by "Communist money" in Africa, sprang in part from the view that Africa belonged to them, to their "sphere of influence," and therefore had to be protected at all costs from any and all threatening intrusions from Communist countries. As a result, the West and its conservative African nationalist allies came to see any possibility of communism finding a foothold in Africa as an intolerable danger and intrusion. Thus, the decolonization process in Africa unfolded against the backdrop of the Cold War in which the West sought to undermine, harass, derail, and defeat radical African nationalists and all those suspected of harboring communist leanings.

In January, 1963, Robert McNamara, the USA Defense Secretary stated before the House Armed Services Committee that, "the large number of newly independent countries in Africa provided opportunities for Communist 'troublemaking.'" While the USA and its allies discounted the danger of actual "Communist military aggression against Africa," they nonetheless insisted that they lacked "the means to prevent Communist infiltration, subversion and other forms of hidden aggression."³³ This question of Communist infiltration quickly became the prism through which any and all economic, political, and social overtures from the Communist countries to Africa was viewed by the Western powers and their African allies. "Soviet infiltration into spheres of influence in Africa," Colin Gibson wrote with a sense of urgency at this time, "is growing ever stronger. Apart from the technical advisers, loans and cultural programmes there are the goodwill ambassadors of the many 'front' groups which represent Soviet influence in disguise. One of these 'fronts'

³¹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya. The British intelligence services also pointed out that Kenyatta had, before *Uhuru* in 1963, "rejected a £30,000 offer from Somalia to cede north eastern Kenya, when according to secret sources, the Emperor of Ethiopia made a larger bid."

³²FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives), p. 60. Confidential Memo on Leading Personalities in Kenya, 1978.

³³*East African Standard* (January 31, 1963), p. 1.

alone, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, has spread its tentacles far and wide.”³⁴

The US State Department issued an equally alarmist report on this matter of Communist infiltration in newly independent African countries. It concluded that, “Communists are making headway in Africa and, through military aid, have secured entry to the security forces of at least five countries—Algeria, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Somalia.” The achievement of *Uhuru* by many African countries at this period afforded the Communist countries an opportunity to engage “in subversion in Africa.”³⁵ Such subversion was carried out under the cover of a variety of economic aid programs. Of particular importance to the State Department, was the education of Africans in Communist countries in multiple fields. “The increasing number of Africans being trained academically in Communist countries (about 5295 as at December 1963) presents perhaps the most dangerous long-term threat to the future of internal stability in Africa.”³⁶

Any pronouncements from Moscow or Beijing affirming solidarity with the peoples of Africa was immediately seen as a declaration of intent to spread communism on the continent. To this end, the extended visit by Chou-En-lai, the Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of China, to several African and Asian countries in 1964, was carefully scrutinized in the West. His statement in Tanzania that “Africa was now ripe for revolution”³⁷ was widely publicized in the West as evidence of China’s overall political objectives in Africa. Chou En-lai’s report on this extensive trip to the National People’s Congress in Beijing also received attention in the West. “He said ... the welcome his delegation received in the African countries demonstrated the comradeship-in arms between the African and Chinese peoples.” He also pointed out that, “China supported the African and Arab peoples in their struggle to oppose imperialism and colonialism, new and old, and supported the pursuance of a policy of peace, neutrality and non-alignment by the African and Arab countries.”³⁸

³⁴ *East African Standard* (January 9, 1962), p. 4.

³⁵ *East African Standard* (April 1, 1964), p. 4.

³⁶ *East African Standard* (April 1, 1964), p. 4.

³⁷ William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks: A Personal Adventure* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 249.

³⁸ *East African Standard* (April 27, 1964), p. 2.

The USA and the rest of the Western powers remained convinced that the main intent of China and the Soviet Union was to sponsor radical revolutions in Africa. In 1964, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the US State Department, produced what it claimed were genuine Chinese military documents. According to the Bureau, these documents, “obtained in an undisclosed manner showed that China was following a strategy of stalemate towards the United States while pursuing its aims of promoting revolutionary movements in underdeveloped nations, particularly in Africa.”³⁹ It was feared in the West that the pursuit of this strategy by China, especially “when the opportunity is ripe,” would result in “the wave of revolution,” capable of rolling “up the continent of Africa like a map.”⁴⁰

By the early 1960s, Communist agents were reported to be almost ubiquitous in the newly independent African countries. Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the British Prime Minister (October 1963–October 1964), was sure that there were “trained communist agents, right through Africa.” These agents were trained in “Communist techniques, in Moscow and in China, and there are plenty of them around the continent of Africa.”⁴¹

In a bid to highlight and then reinforce the imminent danger that the West faced in Africa, Communist agents were portrayed as shrewd, sneaky, driven, earnest, and flexible. They worked through the few viable established Communist parties on the continent, even if these parties appeared “to be weak and often prone to the nationalist heresy.” More crucially, the Communist agents worked through individual African politicians who occupied critical strategic positions that could enable them to advance the communist cause. Such politicians received “Communist money” to be used in the subversion and destabilization of the new independent governments. In the case of Kenya, it was repeatedly stated that, “large sums of money have been paid to individuals ... for disruptive

³⁹ *East African Standard* (April 25, 1964), p. 3.

⁴⁰ *East African Standard* (April 25, 1964), p. 3.

⁴¹ *East African Standard* (February 22, 1964), p. 3. Sir Alec Douglas-Home became the British Prime Minister in October 1963, following Harold Macmillan’s sudden resignation due to health reasons (prostrate trouble), and also the political storm in his own party and the country over the Profumo Affair. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, he had held senior political positions in many British governments.

purposes. The spate of allegations and denials ... indicates one thing at least—there is no smoke without fire.”⁴²

Throughout the colonial period, and then after *Uhuru*, the British intelligence services had in their possession, detailed information on the question of the possible spread of communism in Kenya. “During the Emergency the Colonial Government forbade all political activity, greatly enlarged the police force, particularly its Special Branch, and rigidly controlled entry into and departure from Kenya. Thus, the Communists were totally excluded.”⁴³

In post-colonial Kenya, these British intelligence services concluded without any hesitation that, “The history of Communist penetration of Kenya is largely that of Mr. Odinga’s political activities.”⁴⁴ These activities, as already pointed out, were understood by the British intelligence services to have been wholly financed by “Communist money” from China, the Soviet Union, and other Communist countries. The finances had been disbursed to him directly since Kenya did not have a Communist party or even its equivalent in the period between 1960 and 1966.

But why did Odinga seek “Communist money?” The answer, according to the British intelligence services, had more to do with competition for power in nationalist politics than any commitment to communism.

From 1957 onwards Tom Mboya, the rival Luo leader was receiving considerable financial support from the United States through the trade union channels. Odinga to meet Mboya’s challenge asked the Americans to support him also but having consulted Mboya they refused. Odinga then turned to the Soviet bloc for funds. At the same time the British business support was being given to “moderates” such as Moi and Ngala. Odinga’s decision was therefore the result of his failing to obtain support from the West because of American backing for Mboya and British backing for those politicians who wished to keep Kenyatta out of politics for good.⁴⁵

⁴² *East African Standard* (January 9, 1962), p. 4.

⁴³ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 2.

⁴⁴ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 1.

⁴⁵ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

Odinga had therefore sought "Communist money" in order to counter "the meteoric rise of Mr. Mboya, subsidized on a lavish scale by the Americans."

The bulk of the evidence gathered by the British intelligence services on Odinga, nonetheless, came to the conclusion that he was not a Communist.

Odinga never has been, and is not now, a Communist. To this day he retains (and still further extends) his capitalist business interests; he agrees that the traditional system of individual land usage in most Kenyan tribes makes a Communist system of agriculture inappropriate in this country; and he is not a Marxist.⁴⁶

Odinga, according to these intelligence services, "was in fact one of Kenya's first African capitalists." Why, then, was Odinga dangerous? What caused him to be identified by MacDonald, the West and Kenyatta as an ideological threat and a political menace to the very survival of the country?

Within Kenya, Odinga was a threat because the radical voices and groups in the KANU had, in a short period after 1963, coalesced around him thereby signifying a potential ideological and operational alternative to the Kenyatta government. These diverse groups included the former Mau Mau guerillas and detainees who seemed eager to adopt more radical positions on land ownership, and then the former squatters who pushed for nationalization of land. To this list must be added the poor, landless, unemployed and economically disadvantaged sections of the population across the country. There were also the radical members of Parliament whose opposition to the government's policies was becoming more persistent and unrelenting. Odinga had become "the spokesman" of these diverse groups that represented an increasing "popular discontent" against Kenyatta's government. These diverse multi-ethnic groups espoused not only radical nationalism but also radical solutions. Their nationalism was more defiant and assertive. It seemed to embrace cultural nationalism and semi-socialist economics. These positions, while not fully developed into a coherent ideological framework by 1965, posed a serious challenge to the conservative nationalism of the Kenyatta

⁴⁶MAC 71/8/19 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Odinga, p. 1.

government. Odinga had to be removed in part because of his symbolism: he symbolized an unacceptable radical nationalism that tended toward radical solutions in post-colonial Kenya.

For MacDonald's bet on Kenyatta to be worthwhile as an investment, the new government had to be resolutely pro-West in its foreign and domestic policies. In order for this to happen, Kenyatta had to move the KANU and government closer to the policies and positions originally embraced by the KADU, thus renouncing radical politics, aspirations, policies, and inclinations. Kenyatta then had to "sell" these conservative positions and policies to an increasingly restive public by portraying them as authentically African in origin and inspiration and therefore most appropriate for the country. This most vital effort on behalf of conservative policies could not succeed if Odinga and the radicals were still prominently represented in the KANU and the government, and also if they still had an open access to the general public where "popular discontent" was markedly evident at this time. Odinga and the radicals had to be removed from the political stage so that Kenyatta's conservative policies and tactics could take root and flourish without contest.

In the period after 1964, MacDonald remained worried about Odinga's overall popularity in the country. Part of this popularity, MacDonald wrote to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was the result of Odinga distributing "Communist money" to politicians, trade unionists, and several ordinary citizens targeted for their political value.

During the last two years he has spent brilliantly the large sums of money which his Communist pay-masters have given him, keeping little of the cash for his own personal purposes, and distributing it with discreet, well judged cunning in countless small or large amounts as bribes among key back-bench members of Parliament, local party officials, and others who could subvert the KANU political party and the trades union movement in his direction—and against Mboya and other competitors, including if necessary Jomo Kenyatta himself.⁴⁷

Odinga's evident popularity, which remained worrisome to the West, could also be attributed to what MacDonald called "his thoroughly African character." Unlike many prominent national politicians and

⁴⁷MAC 71/8/19 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Odinga, p. 2.

even senior African civil servants, Odinga had "not become partially Westernised by any period of education in Britain or America." As a result, he was still "racy of the African soil; and he keeps in close touch with the ordinary, simple African people, such as peasants, workers and idlers—the voters. His democratic behaviour and popular, down-to-earth oratory appeal to them. They feel that he remains more one of themselves than does any other member of the present Government."⁴⁸ MacDonald also acknowledged that Odinga's identification with the "common under-privileged people," was genuine and he really wanted "to help them." Although he remained opposed to Odinga and his politics, MacDonald nonetheless pointed out that he was "a truly sincere African nationalist with (in spite of his own capitalist connections) a Socialistic sympathy for the poor 'under-dogs.'"⁴⁹ Odinga's radical nationalism and popularity had the terrifying potential of undermining the MacDonald formula now being implemented by Kenyatta's government.

In a nutshell, the appeal of Odinga's radicalism extended far beyond "his fellow-tribes-men, the Luos." MacDonald, alongside Kenyatta and the Western powers eager to support him at this time, all recognized this fact. The possibility of creating a multi-ethnic coalition of the "under-dogs" opposed to Kenyatta's conservative nationalism, posed the most potent threat yet to the MacDonald formula and the Kenyatta government that it had so carefully created. Odinga's "demagogic passionate powers as an agitator," MacDonald observed,

are capable of winning strong support from many humble people belonging to those other tribes who are unemployed, poverty stricken, and discontented. And his command of money for bribing them can do the rest—for such cash so used (even in small contributions of a few pounds) talks louder in Africa than it does on any other continent.⁵⁰

⁴⁸MAC 71/8/20 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Odinga, pp. 2–3.

⁴⁹MAC 71/8/20 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Odinga, p. 3.

⁵⁰MAC 71/8/20 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Odinga, p. 3.

Within Central Province, the British intelligence services observed that the “Kikuyu establishment” perceived Odinga as “a political danger only in so far as he attracts the support of the discontents and the have-nots and enjoys the popular support of the Luo in Nyanza.” The list of “Kikuyu dissidents” and discontents that could have been attracted to Odinga’s radicalism thereby breaking “the solidity of Kikuyu tribal backing” for Kenyatta’s government, included:

the ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters whose hunger for the land they feel to be their due in independent Kenya they helped to create has not been appeased; the extremists whose sympathies lie with Odinga Odinga’s radical form of nationalism ... men like Bildad Kaggia; and of course trouble makers in any developing society, the jobless, those not favoured by “brotherisation” (the Kenya form of nepotism), the under-privileged whose means do not match their ambitions.⁵¹

The fear in the West, and especially in Britain, was that the political triumph of Odinga in Kenya “might provide the conditions favourable to the communist doctrine in Africa.”⁵² As a popular radical nationalist, Odinga represented a veritable danger to Western political and economic interests in Africa. A related fear was that the triumph of a prominent radical nationalist with established links to Communist countries might serve as an unacceptable example to budding radicals in other newly independent African countries. MacDonald saw this as a clear danger to the West. It led him to increase his efforts toward the ousting of Odinga from the political stage. In MacDonald’s view, Odinga had in “self confident semi-innocence” mistakenly assumed “that he could use his Communist allies more for his political purposes than they could use him for theirs.”⁵³ It was MacDonald’s view that Odinga had arrived at this dangerous conclusion because “he is not blessed with conspicuous brains or understanding.”

⁵¹MAC 71/8/85 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives: Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Tribalism in Kenya, p. 8.

⁵²Michael Blundell, *So Rough A Wind: The Kenya Memoirs of Sir Michael Blundell* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964), p. 232.

⁵³MAC 71/8/19 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Odinga, p. 2.

Having determined that Odinga was the arch-enemy of the West in Kenya, there followed a sustained effort aimed at undermining his personal and political credibility. The singular political purpose of this multi-faceted undertaking was to show Odinga as being unfit to rule the country. Unlike Kenyatta at this time, Odinga would be portrayed as lacking in wisdom and even simple patriotism. The policies advocated by him and his allies, would be discredited and even ridiculed by Kenyatta and his local and international allies, as alien to Kenya; foreign inspired and, therefore, unAfrican. Odinga would be portrayed, with vicious consistency, both in Kenya and in many Western countries, as a stooge of Communists eager to enable the spread of this most unAfrican doctrine in the country.

The starting point in the political and administrative campaign against Odinga was to systematically undermine his character. The key element in any consideration about Odinga, MacDonald informed London, was that he was “mentally unbalanced.” How did he come to this knowledge? “I am told,” he wrote, “that at one period of his life he was for a while an inmate of a mental home, possibly only for cautionary observation.”⁵⁴ On top of this, he was a very emotional man. This was seen as a dangerous character trait to possess especially because he was “mentally unbalanced.” There was hardly any mention or discussion of Odinga from this period until his detention in 1969 that did not draw attention to him being an emotional man easily aroused to anger.

His emotions are strong, and passion never lies far beneath the surface of his thoughts and actions. When it is aroused, he swiftly becomes over-excited. Then he talks fast, gesticulates somewhat wildly, and—as he gets really worked up—begins to froth at the mouth. At those moments the touch of mental unbalance in his make-up (if my analysis is correct) takes command of him. Nor do those moods last only briefly; they are apt to continue for hours. It is then useless to attempt to argue with him. One has to wait patiently until he slowly recovers his cool charm and sweet reasonableness.⁵⁵

⁵⁴MAC 71/8/19 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Odinga, p. 19.

⁵⁵MAC 71/8/20 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Odinga, p. 20. Also see, *New York Times* (April 16, 1965) coverage on Odinga as the “Leftist Voice in Kenya.” The coverage drew attention to Odinga’s volatility and his association with communism. “He is a volatile, restless man, likely to burst into song

To be sure, Odinga had “charming good humour, disarming candour (when he is in the mood), gentlemanly courtesy, considerable generosity and native friendliness.” Nonetheless, MacDonald still found him objectionable since “his intellect is mediocre, his judgment is erratic, and his wisdom is muddled. His heart usually rules his head; and the warmth of his heart can make him very hot headed.”⁵⁶ These misgivings on Odinga were further reinforced by the resistance of the white settlers toward his brand of nationalism and then his widely publicized linkages to Communism and “Communist money.”

Michael Blundell ably articulated the ideological and cultural basis of white settlers’ resistance to Odinga. Partly basing himself on Odinga’s performance during the 1962 Constitutional Conference in London, Blundell’s criticisms sought to highlight these supposed ideological and cultural deficiencies. In his contributions at the Conference, Odinga would start slowly and then

he was soon in full spate, not a pause occurring between sentences as he quickly replenished his lungs with a curious droning gulp through which the words were temporarily suspended. Flecks of foam appeared at the corners of his mouth and were wiped away with a crumpled handkerchief with sudden swift gestures in between the flailing arms. Kenyatta on other side was continually ducking and bobbing as an expansive arm would swing out in a wide gesture ... Mboya sat with a frozen look on his face as if a relative was committing a terrible social gaffe on some notable occasion.⁵⁷

and dance even at a public meeting. This aspect of his character often leads opponents to underestimate the political shrewdness of Jaramogi Ajuma Odinga, Vice President of Kenya. Since his youth Mr. Odinga had been an annoyance to British colonial officials. Since Kenya’s independence he has repeatedly been accused by his own countrymen of espousing the goals of the Soviet Union and Communist China ... Mr. Odinga’s several trips to Moscow and Peking have embroiled him in controversy both before and after Kenya’s independence” p. 6. This coverage noted in passing that “despite his frequent use of Communist rhetoric and phraseology, however, informed observers do not label Mr. Odinga as a Communist.” For additional discussion in the West on Odinga as an emotional man see, *The Reds and the Blacks* by William Attwood. Odinga is described as a “colorful and erratic leader of the wrong tribe ... His weaknesses were his emotionalism and a vast ignorance of the outside world,” pp. 238–240.

⁵⁶MAC 71/8/20 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Odinga, p. 20.

⁵⁷Michael Blundell, *So Rough A Wind*, p. 301.

This narration served the purpose of illustrating Odinga's supposed lack of self-control. It was used to reinforce his reputation, repeatedly cited at this time, as an angry out-of-control radical African nationalist.

But beyond this performance at the Constitutional Conference, there was also the matter of what Odinga represented: his vision for Kenya and Africa. Here, white settlers found themselves holding onto two contradictory positions. Odinga was a Communist, or at least a Communist sympathizer, but he was also "too African," by which it was meant essentially anti-modern progress. Both positions were employed interchangeably to condemn Odinga as unfit to lead Kenya. "Oginga Odinga," Michael Blundell wrote, "seems to me to represent that emotional slightly bewildered resentful section of the African people who have been precipitated protestingly into the twentieth century ... in his heart of hearts," Odinga is "drawn towards the past without the sergeant major-like presence of the white technician, industrialist or scientist."⁵⁸ On the other hand, Odinga's political opponents, such as Mboya, were forward looking, that is, modern. "Mboya is intent on creating a modern country in which citizens are demonstrably competent for the tasks which they have undertaken."⁵⁹ Still, Odinga had to be taken seriously as a political threat to the creation of a modern nation championed by moderate leaders. His views remained popular and appealing to what Michael Blundell called "the rather conservative, backward and simpler peoples of Central Nyanza." Also, his "bizarre, gaudy methods are attractive to the uninhibited, flamboyant streak which lies in many Africans."⁶⁰

The composite picture of Odinga's character, painstakingly chiseled by his political opponents, was that he was simply too radical, erratic, emotional, and strange to ascend to power in the country. Also, perhaps, "too African." And there was always the matter of him being a "Communist stooge." Even his mode of dress became an issue of concern to his political opponents.⁶¹ MacDonald's summary to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was that Odinga was an unusually strange man. "In all my experience of countless public personages in numerous countries around the world," MacDonald wrote about Odinga, "he is

⁵⁸Michael Blundell, *So Rough A Wind*, p. 232.

⁵⁹Michael Blundell, *So Rough A Wind*, p. 232.

⁶⁰Michael Blundell, *So Rough A Wind*, p. 232.

⁶¹William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 238.

individual to the point of uniqueness. I have known quite a selection of astonishing people in high places in Britain, Europe, America, Asia, Antipodes and Africa—but never one quite like the clever, charming, endearing and wickedly crazy Oginga Odinga.”⁶² This was “a very muddled man who is part angel and part devil.”

On the local scene, Odinga’s political opponents succeeded in linking his political credibility (and even legitimacy) to the ideology of Communism. This was the result of a deliberate and steady political strategy aimed at gnawing at his popularity with “the common underprivileged people.” An assault on Communism was therefore, at this time, also a drive against Odinga and his national political influence. There followed what can only be described as a carefully choreographed political confrontation between Kenyatta and Odinga on the future of Kenya: its central and governing economic, political, and social policies. All the discussion in this duel between radical and conservative nationalism, revolved around communism and its relevance to Kenya.

The initial alarm against Communist infiltration and subversion within Kenya was sounded by the white settlers and the colonial government. This was especially true during and after the Mau Mau peasant revolt. After 1960, this ideological cause was taken up by the African political leaders of the KADU, some members of the former Home Guards and Western-oriented leaders in the KANU and then the New Kenya Party (NKP). In early 1962, Masinde Muliro, Vice President of the KADU and Minister of Commerce, “announced the formation of a Christian Democratic Movement to fight Communism in Kenya.” Muliro was prepared to work with any religious group, such as “Muslims and Moral Re-Armament,” to fight against Communism. As a Roman Catholic, he wanted Kenyans to arm themselves, “spiritually against Communism.” He believed that Christianity could be effectively deployed to save the country from Communism. “It will be difficult in independent Kenya,” Muliro declared, “if we find we have individuals in high positions who have sold themselves to Russia and China.”⁶³ In October 1962, Moral Re-Armament took out a multipage advertisement of its cause in the

⁶²MAC 71/8/19 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Odinga, p. 19.

⁶³*East African Standard* (January 12, 1962), p. 11. For more details on “Communist Hostility to Religion,” see, *East African Standard* (January 19, 1962), p. 15.

East African Standard, in which, among other things, it announced that it was welcome in 17 African nations.⁶⁴

The KADU, some of the KANU delegates, alongside the NKP and their supporters in the British government, made constant references to the looming danger of Communist infiltration in Kenya at the 1962 Constitutional Conference in London. In March 1962, the KADU delegates to this conference from Western Kenya—Muliro, Okondo, Khasakhala, Wabuge, and Amalemba—sent a message to their supporters in Kenya that warned them and the country “about Reds.” They had been informed by “reliable sources” in London that “there is more and more Communist money being poured into Kenya for the purpose of confusing our people and to divide them into small groups so that the Communist agents in Kenya may take over power and leadership making it possible for Russia and China to enter when the British go.”⁶⁵

In the period after the dissolution of the KADU in 1964, Kenyatta’s political allies in the KANU, who included many of the former leaders of the KADU, assumed the role of defenders of Kenya against foreign ideologies, that is, Communism and radical nationalism. It is significant to mention here that at no stage was there any elaborate and informative discussion on Communism as an ideology and why it was deemed to be so ill-suited for Africa. The reasons advanced against Communism by Kenyatta’s political allies revolved around two main points: land ownership and religion.

At public rallies and also in the Parliament, allies of Kenyatta poured scorn on Communism and its supposed advocates in Kenya. J. Odero-Jowi, an Assistant Minister for Labour and Social Services doubted the sanity of Karl Marx. “I think Karl Marx was a psychological case,” and his “premise that there existed a basic conflict in every society ... clearly did not apply to African society in Kenya.”⁶⁶ In some instances Communism was equated with “wanting free things” and fomenting

⁶⁴*East African Standard* (October 19, 1962). In this advertisement, the Moral Re-Armament boasted about their work in the rehabilitation of the Mau Mau detainees. The organization was especially proud of its “all African film ‘Freedom,’” used in the rehabilitation programs. Kenyatta had apparently seen this film and had been very impressed by its message. He wanted a Swahili version of the film shown to as many Africans as possible. He said, “It is what our people need.”

⁶⁵*East African Standard* (March 8, 1962), p. 1.

⁶⁶*Daily Nation* (May 8, 1965), p. 6.

social discord and resistance against Kenyatta and his government.⁶⁷ The aim at these rallies was to make the audience afraid of Communism. Its implementation would lead to untold misery and hardship in their lives. To this end, “Mr. L.G. Sagini, Minister for Local Government, told a rally at Kenya Market in Kisii District that nationalization of all property in the country on the Communist pattern would lead to transferring people from their home areas by force.”⁶⁸ Predictably, the crowd responded, “To hell with that system!”

On religion, an issue of considerable importance in the lives of many Africans in Kenya, Communism was presented as an enemy. This was a repetition of the old argument of “Godless Reds” long employed in the West against Communism. J.M. Gachago, an Assistant Minister for Lands and Settlement, warned Kenya Muslims to “beware of Communism if they wished to preserve their religion,” because “Communism does not respect religion ... Communists do not believe in God.”⁶⁹

The question of land ownership produced the most sustained opposition by Kenyatta’s allies toward Communism. This was not just against nationalization of land but also any mention of efforts to consider imposing limits on amount of land any one individual could own. Such consideration produced voluble vitriolic opposition. E.E. Khasakhala, formerly of the KADU and now Chairman of the Kenya Agricultural Marketing Board, “condemned those who spread false rumours among the farmers that Kenya land and farming problems could be solved by freely distributing land to every one, without regard to the consequences.”⁷⁰ Daniel arap Moi, now Minister for Home Affairs, condemned state ownership of land as misguided and “a concealed type of Communism which could not be accepted by the Kalenjin people.” He reiterated that he “had been opposed to Communism since the days of Kadu and now that he had joined Kanu he would continue to oppose it for it was not compatible with the non-alignment policy to which Kenya was committed.”⁷¹ The key current and future objectives

⁶⁷ *Daily Nation* (September 28, 1965), p. 38.

⁶⁸ *Daily Nation* (May 12, 1966), p. 10.

⁶⁹ *Daily Nation* (April 16, 1965), p. 5.

⁷⁰ *Daily Nation* (April 16, 1965), p. 14.

⁷¹ *Daily Nation* (May 19, 1965), p. 13. Moi also “dispelled rumors that the Government would take over big farms and distribute them to those who had none. These reports were vicious lies which could only undermine the spirit of co-operation and disrupt the agricultural industry in Kenya.”

for his people was to "fight foreign ideologies" and to "demonstrate their loyalty to the Government and show confidence in Mzee Jomo Kenyatta."

Nationalization of land continued to be attacked at public rallies and political functions across the country by the conservative wing of the KANU. "The policy of State ownership of land," L.G. Sagini told a rally in Majoge-Basi, "was tantamount to Communism because it reduced landowners to mere employees of the State without any sense of ownership."⁷² The conservative wing of the KANU had positioned themselves as defenders of individual ownership of property. J. Otiende, Minister for Health and Housing argued that, "Human beings have 'ownership instinct'—for owning perhaps a piece of land and a home." Therefore, he continued, "There is nothing wrong with wanting to own something." Otiende further asserted that, "Socialism had failed in some countries because there was no ownership of land. Work had become mechanical in those countries; pride had gone out of the job and production had gone down."⁷³

But what were the prospects of Communism getting established in Kenya at this time? The view of the British intelligence services was that "previous Communist support for the removal of Colonial rule from Kenya, as from other Western Colonies, naturally inspired a feeling of gratitude in the minds of Kenya nationalist leaders." Also, "the difficulty of independent Kenya's birth, and the violence which preceded it, reinforced these sentiments of gratitude."⁷⁴ There was also the matter of race and class in Kenya's troubled colonial history. This history had over time produced "powerful racial emotions" directed at what now seemed like resilient white privileges. Therefore, "the presence within Kenya of many white and brown people linked by sentiment or nationality with Britain and the West, and the economic and political strains stemming from poverty, land hunger and racial and tribal jealousies, all offered fruitful

⁷² *Daily Nation* (May 19, 1966), p. 10. "The meeting was attended by leading personalities from Kisii District who included the Minister of State in the President's Office, Mr. James Nyamweya, Mr. Patroba Makone, MP, Kitutu West, Mr. Joseph Oseru, MP, North Mugarango and Mr. Winston Rayori, the Kanu district chairman."

⁷³ *Daily Nation* (June 28, 1965), p. 5.

⁷⁴ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism. p. 6.

opportunity for Communist mischief.”⁷⁵ Thus, even the British intelligence services acknowledged that these were potentially powerful ingredients for a Communist movement in Kenya, yet none had yet arisen. “Considering the apparent fertile field for cultivation, it may seem surprising that Communist impact in Kenya, significant as it is, is not even greater.”⁷⁶

The lack of a viable Communist Party or movement in Kenya was of course linked to the country’s unique political history under colonialism. The British colonial authorities had been successful in steering the development of African nationalist politics along “tribal and local rather than national and ideological” lines. But now after *Uhuru*, there existed the potential for the growth of ideologically based radical nationalism. This was partly the result of the social and economic developments arising from the Emergency and then the impact of policies pursued by Kenyatta’s government.

The Emergency ... split the Africans into pro and anti-Government and created a class of “loyalists” or “collaborators” who had reason to fear reprisals should the ex-Mau Mau leaders gain power. These loyalists and those Kikuyu who were not subject to severe measures were sometimes able to profit from the situation so that at the end of the Emergency the beginnings of class divisions were apparent within the tribe together with the differences between the various districts, Kiambu, Murang’a, Nyeri, Kirinyaga and Nyandarua.⁷⁷

These class and district divisions within the Kikuyu alongside the “political strains stemming from poverty, land hunger and racial and tribal jealousies,” had by 1964 enabled Odinga’s allies to make worrisome inroads of resistance among the Kikuyu and other tribes.⁷⁸ While clearly these inroads did not readily constitute the rise of a Communist Party or movement, the British intelligence services remained very concerned because of the immediate and long-term implications of Odinga’s “call for radical social reconstruction” of Kenyan society. This call evidently drew “substance from the uneven distribution of the national wealth,

⁷⁵FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism. p. 6.

⁷⁶FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism. p. 6.

⁷⁷FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

⁷⁸FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 1.

aggravated by the conspicuous concentration of immigrant communities at the top of the economic ladder." These policies, "however ostensibly suitable to Kenya's circumstances," had to be stopped because they were "very evidently open to Communist exploitation."⁷⁹

Also of concern to the British intelligence services, was the realization that Odinga's influence had continued to grow among "radical politicians within KANU, together with a number of Left-wing journalists, trade unionists and increasing number of students returning from behind the Iron Curtain." All owed "allegiance to Mr. Odinga and" were "all, to some extent, influenced and financed by the Communists."⁸⁰ It was therefore not surprising that Odinga came to be portrayed, with devastating results, "as the most notorious Communist sympathizer on this side of Africa."

In 1964, there were two momentous developments in Kenya and East Africa, whose total impact on the local political scene was to accelerate and intensify the coordinated and multi-pronged drive against Odinga and his radical allies. The first one was the revolution in Zanzibar on January 12, 1964. "The Arab dominated government was overthrown" in an "armed insurrection." This dramatic development "was so unexpected and was over so fast ... that outside observers were at a loss to understand what had happened."⁸¹ Initial hurried reporting on the Zanzibar revolution painted a picture of an organized "Pro-Communist insurrection supported by Cuban and Chinese units."⁸²

Political anxiety in East Africa and the West increased when it became apparent that radical Zanzibar nationalists, including Communists, had assumed very prominent positions in the new government. Of particular importance to the West and the governments of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika, was the rise to prominence of Abdul Rahman Mohammed Babu, described by William Attwood as "an astute, hard-boiled, Marxist-trained correspondent for Chinese Communist publications."⁸³ There was also a lot of initial mystery surrounding the life and circumstances of

⁷⁹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 3.

⁸⁰FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 3.

⁸¹Helen- Louise Hunter, *Zanzibar: The Hundred Days Revolution* (Santa Barbara, CA; Denver, CO; Oxford, UK: Praeger Security International, 2010), p. vii.

⁸²*East Africa and Rhodesia* (January 16, 1964), p. 409. Also see, "Coup in Zanzibar" by Keith Kyle in *Africa Report*, Vol. 9. No. 2 (February 1964), p. 20.

⁸³William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 156.

the apparent military leader of the revolution, John Okello. He was from Uganda and he made fantastic claims of having trained “his fighters for a fortnight before the revolution.”⁸⁴ Was this revolution in Zanzibar the opening salvo in a pre-planned Communist take-over in East Africa?

Available information on this revolution showed that although “in the four years before the revolution ... the growth in Communist influence and activity was remarkable” on the island, there was no evidence at all that Communists and/or Babu “played a significant part in the revolution ... he apparently had no advance knowledge of the coup that materialized on January 12.”⁸⁵ This revolution was the result of specific local circumstances related to the British endorsed constitution that bestowed power to “an Arab coalition government, a coalition of the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) and the Zanzibar and Pemba People’s Party (ZNPP), which had managed to win a majority of the seats in the legislative council, although it had not won a majority of the popular votes.”⁸⁶ This arrangement, unfair and unjust, fuelled popular resentment at the government, which seemed to be sitting, “on the edge of a volcano.”⁸⁷ The Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) led by Abeid Karume had been so outraged by this political arrangement that it had started to plan for a revolution. The ASP supporters, mainly Zanzibar Africans, “had been seething with discontent over the fact that a party with an overall majority (the ASP) could be sent into opposition because of what was obviously an unfair boundary delimitation system.”⁸⁸

The revolution of January 12 was, however, not planned. “It was more of a spontaneous action. Basically, it was an African revolution to put Africans in control of a country that they felt was in the hands of a racial minority only because of an unfair constituency system.”⁸⁹ Neither the ASP nor Babu’s Umma Party played any direct role in the revolution’s conception or execution. Also, there was no Cuban involvement in the revolution at all. “It was done by Zanzibaris alone, without any outside help whatsoever.”

⁸⁴ *East African Standard* (January 18, 1964), p. 1.

⁸⁵ Helen-Louise Hunter, *Zanzibar: The Hundred Days Revolution*, p. 7.

⁸⁶ Helen-Louise Hunter, *Zanzibar: The Hundred Days Revolution*, p. 4.

⁸⁷ Keith Kyle, “Coup in Zanzibar,” p. 18.

⁸⁸ Helen-Louise Hunter, *Zanzibar: The Hundred Days Revolution*, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Helen-Louise Hunter, *Zanzibar: The Hundred Days Revolution*, p. 9.

John Okello (later self-styled as Field Marshall John Okello) played a crucial role as a result of his bravery in "actual fighting with the police." He led attacks on armories. Although not "a central figure in the instigation of the revolt," he came to play a crucial role toward its success largely due to "his abilities as a street fighter ... Without his example of bravery, the ASP rebels might well have held back from actual combat with the government forces."⁹⁰

The reaction in East Africa was initially very positive, yet guarded. Kenya, Uganda, and then Tanganyika, all recognized the new revolutionary government in Zanzibar. In Kenya, a lengthy joint statement was issued by J.K. Gatuguta, (Secretary of the KANU backbenchers), and J.P. Mathenge (Leader of Government Business in the Senate). "For a long time the majority of the people in Zanzibar and Pemba were denied their democratic right to choose the leaders they wanted to form the Government. The present revolution," the statement continued, "is an expression of the people's will and we wish to make it quite clear that African people all over the world are dedicated to freedom and as such it is quite natural for us to sympathise with the leaders of the present revolution." The statement then mentioned that the revolution in Zanzibar was in fact, "long over due and it is a pity that Mr. Karume was not the first to form the Government." On the question of violence and political change, the statement welcomed the success of the current revolution for after all Kenya had also "experienced some kind of bloodshed in our struggle against imperialism." After *Uhuru*, the statement concluded, "we do not believe in bloody revolution. But the facts of history are that when the will of the people cannot be expressed constitutionally because of totalitarianism, then the alternative is a revolution like the one in Zanzibar."⁹¹

The West was slow in granting recognition to the new revolutionary government. This delay, it would later be determined, clearly "alienated Karume and the other pro-Western Zanzibaris by portraying the revolution as Communist." The Communist countries on the other hand, were quick to recognize the new government and to pledge economic and other forms of assistance. The conclusion in the major Western capitals was that "while the Communist bloc had not engineered the coup, it,

⁹⁰Helen-Louise Hunter, *Zanzibar: The Hundred Days Revolution*, p. 8.

⁹¹*East African Standard* (January 14, 1964), p. 5.

[had] managed to derive considerable advantage from the revolution.”⁹² This development in Zanzibar, together with Babu’s consolidation of “his position within the government,” was eagerly seized upon by the West and locally by conservative nationalists as evidence of their long-standing fear that radical nationalism could, with determined guidance, easily morph into Communism.⁹³

In Kenya, the focus was on Odinga. Was he connected to the events in Zanzibar? The most pernicious of these rumors linked Odinga to John Okello, initially suspected of being a Luo. Although later it would be confirmed that Okello was from Uganda and was not a Luo, this did not put to rest lingering suspicions among Odinga’s political opponents that the two knew each other and may be Okello’s next stop was Kenya. After all, didn’t they share some sort of vague cultural identity? Odinga was forced to issue a statement denying any knowledge of Okello and his political activities in Zanzibar. “I have never known this man John Okello and have never talked to him at any time.”⁹⁴ He denounced what he called “‘malicious insinuations’ made against him” and reiterated that he had nothing to do with the revolution in Zanzibar. He had, however, been in contact with Karume after the revolution to express Kenya’s disapproval “of the intended hanging of ex-Ministers.” Apparently, this appeal had been successful since “no hanging took place.”⁹⁵

Before Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika had sufficiently absorbed the shock of having to adjust to a radical revolution in Zanzibar, there occurred what initially looked like a coordinated series of army mutinies by African soldiers in the three countries. Between January 20 and 24, 1964, African

⁹²Helen-Louise Hunter, *Zanzibar: The Hundred Days Revolution*, p. 10. William Attwood later alleged that “Communist China and East Germany are trying to turn Zanzibar into ‘a kind of non-African State to be used as a staging base for political manoeuvres’ on the mainland.” See, *East African Standard* (April 4, 1964), p. 3.

⁹³It is useful to mention here that Babu’s influence on the course of the revolution in Zanzibar ended abruptly after only one hundred days when the new United Republic of Tanzania was formed in April 1964. At that time, “the internal struggle was resolved in Karume’s favor by the sudden transfer of Babu to Dar-es-Salaam.” It would appear that Nyerere “deliberately exaggerated his fears that Zanzibar was falling under Communist control as an argument that he could use most convincingly in the West to win support for his move to absorb Zanzibar into Tanganyika.” See, Helen-Louise Hunter, *Zanzibar: The Hundred Days Revolution*, pp. 11–12.

⁹⁴*East African Standard* (February 1, 1964), p. 5.

⁹⁵*East African Standard* (February 1, 1964), p. 5.

soldiers staged a series of mutinies in the three countries. African leaders in these newly independent countries were visibly shaken. They were not only worried about their hold onto power but also if there was any linkage between these mutinies and the events in Zanzibar. Was this the feared take-over of government in these countries by Communists or their allies? These events received wide ranging international coverage, especially when the governments of these countries urgently requested British help in subduing the mutinies. "British forces went into action in three newly independent East African countries," the *New York Times* reported, "to put down mutinies by African troops. Striking at the request of the three governments, the British troops disarmed mutinous soldiers in Tanganyika, seized a camp of mutineers in Uganda and broke a sitdown strike by soldiers in Kenya."⁹⁶ Preliminary inquiries into the underlying causes showed that these uprisings "were over demands for more pay and for the dismissal of British officers still commanding the African units."⁹⁷

Pictures of white British soldiers seen standing guard over subdued and huddled African soldiers, very soon after the attainment of *Uhuru*, was obviously disturbing. It brought back old memories of white troops launching "punitive expeditions" against Africans. Conservative pro-settler publications like *East Africa and Rhodesia* seized on these humbling developments to re-state their thesis that these countries were not ready for *Uhuru*.

The requests of the African Governments of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika (in that order) for the urgent dispatch of United Kingdom troops to quell the mutinies in their own small armies and to maintain order was deservedly front page news, but it has not been brought home to the readers in general that the threatened collapse of administration was the inevitable consequence of Macmillanism; that such a result had been foretold (first in these columns more than four years ago and almost week by week since); that British Ministers, though themselves ignorant about Africa, had refused to listen to warnings from many other quarters; and that shamefully few Members of Parliament of any party had the sense to

⁹⁶ *New York Times* (January 26, 1964), p. 1. Also see, "The Brushfire in East Africa," in *Africa Report*, 9, no. 2 (February 1964).

⁹⁷ *New York Times* (January 26, 1964), p. 1.

recognize and the courage to pronounce the truth that recklessly premature abandonment of Britain's obligations risked disaster for all Africa.⁹⁸

In Kenya, *East Africa and Rhodesia* speculated that the mutinies were the result of "thousands of Mau Mau thugs" having been "set free to engage in whatever nefarious activities they like" by both Macleod and Kenyatta. British troops had saved East Africa from political chaos and exposed both the "incompetence and the inability of their Governments to discharge the elementary duty of maintaining law and order."⁹⁹

Kenyatta was outraged but also shaken by this mutiny. He condemned what he called "acts of disloyalty and betrayal" by the soldiers. "During the colonial days," he stated, African soldiers "served the British Government loyally. Now that we have our own African Government, the world and our own people are justified in expecting even greater loyalty from the Kenya Army."¹⁰⁰ An armed uprising now entered Kenyatta's political consideration as a possible challenge to his power. And so, he proceeded to meet some of the immediate grievances of the soldiers by reviewing the pay scales not only of the army but also of the police and the prisons.¹⁰¹ He retained Brigadier Hardy (British) as Commander of the Army plus a few British officers on administrative duties.¹⁰² MacDonald thought that Hardy's "capable and popular tenure of command is a very steadying influence."

African students returning back to Kenya after successfully undergoing military training in Communist countries were now perceived as a credible political and military threat. Kenyatta and his allies, especially the British, took it for granted that these returning students would be politically loyal to Odinga and, possibly, Communism. As MacDonald saw it, "Odinga probably expected that such students would be accepted into the Kenya armed forces, that they would constitute a fifth column for him there, and that they would be in a position to use the Communist

⁹⁸ *East Africa and Rhodesia* (February 6, 1964), pp. 460–461.

⁹⁹ *East Africa and Rhodesia* (February 6, 1964), p. 461.

¹⁰⁰ *East African Standard* (January 22, 1964), p. 5.

¹⁰¹ John Spencer, "Kenyatta's Kenya," *Africa Report*, Vol. 11. No. 5, p. 14.

¹⁰² MAC 71/8/41 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Can it Happen Here? The Possibilities of Coup d'état in Kenya.

arms in his cause."¹⁰³ Consequently, Kenyatta directed Njoroge Mungai, Minister of Defense, to deny the absorption of these returning students into the army at any level and for any position. This directive led to two immediate outcomes: it produced a discontented group of young people unable to get employment. Some of them were very critical of Odinga when he vigorously counseled them to desist from wishing to mount a coup.¹⁰⁴ Also, this action was meant to demonstrate Odinga's relative powerlessness vis-à-vis Kenyatta at this time. In this way students sponsored for studies in Communist countries would find it hard to be readily absorbed in employment upon their return to Kenya.

But how about the army itself, was it capable of launching a coup against Kenyatta's government at this time? This matter received close attention by the British intelligence services. In a confidential memo to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, MacDonald reassured the British government that a coup d'état "engineered by or through the armed forces is unlikely in the near future in Kenya." Why so? First, because the senior African officers in the army lacked "adequate education, conspicuous intelligence or notable initiative; and they are potentially jealous of one another as well as being envied by their juniors." The conclusion was that it was highly unlikely for the senior officers to initiate a coup. Second, the younger officers were more educated and energetic, but they "were immature and inexperienced in handling men." There was also the fact that many of the new officers were Kikuyu while the mass of the soldiers were Kamba.¹⁰⁵ The calculation here was that ethnic loyalty of the Kikuyu officers would prevent them from mounting a coup against Kenyatta and his Kikuyu dominated government. Third, the rank of ordinary soldiers was still dominated by the Kamba. A plan to modify this situation had been in place, especially since 1964,

¹⁰³MAC 71/8/13 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), *The Political Situation in Kenya—II. The Present*.

¹⁰⁴FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), *The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya*. Other reasons advanced to justify the rejection of these students from being absorbed into the army were: "technical difficulty arising from different methods and content of instruction." These students returning from Communist countries were seen as politically indoctrinated thus making them "clearly unwelcome. Moreover, the majority of these Communist trainees are from the Luo or associated tribes, and their absorption would upset the carefully calculated tribal balance in the security forces." See, FCO/31/2330 (London: National Archives), *Kenya: Communism*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵Jonathan Spencer, "Kenyatta's Kenya," p. 14.

aimed at producing what MacDonald called “a safer tribal balance in the army, which in practice means chiefly the insertion of a considerable scale of Kikuyus.” The expected result of this deliberate strategy was that it would increase “the points of possible inter-tribal friction within the force,” and lessen “the likelihood of concerted action by any considerable, united part of it in support of anti-Government political move.”¹⁰⁶ MacDonald dismissed the possibility of Njoroge Mungai using his position as Minister of Defense, to instigate a coup. This was on two grounds. First, he was “a shallow and rather unreliable man for whom the armed forces have little respect.” Second, he was “at least a loyal Kikuyu,”¹⁰⁷ and Kenyatta’s close relative and personal physician.

Kenyatta’s personal security did not cause much worry to the British at this time. They had good reason. They were responsible for setting it up. “His redoubtable bodyguard should be a match for anything that Mr. Odinga, not to mention Mr. Ngei, could concoct against him.” Kenyatta’s feared and fierce bodyguard was trained by the British Special Air Services (SAS) force. This arrangement lasted for a long time. It was part of the secret security agreement between Britain and Kenya.¹⁰⁸ It is useful to mention here that the SAS is as an integral part of Britain’s “Military intelligence personnel.” It is the British Army’s “paramilitary and counter insurgency force, although their chain of command lies outside the formal army structure.”¹⁰⁹ Regarding its mission overseas, it is

¹⁰⁶MAC 71/8/41 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Can it Happen Here? MacDonald also knew that the army had been kept quite busy and thus did not have much idle time to plan a coup. Besides, access to weapons for such an undertaking was difficult since, “Reserve stocks of weapons are kept at Nairobi and in Gilgil (near Lanet), components being stored separately—for example, rifles apart from their bolts, and explosives away from their detonators.”

¹⁰⁷MAC 71/8/41 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Can it Happen Here?

¹⁰⁸PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives), 1970, Kenya. Also see, Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action: Africa, Middle East, and Europe since 1945* (Dingle, Co. Kerry: Brandon, 1983), pp. 47–48.

¹⁰⁹Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 31. “Other restless ex-SAS men join one of a plethora security firms which provide bodyguards, training units and mercenaries. The mercenary business is often misinterpreted as a purely commercial exercise, albeit rather seedy. In fact it is subject to relatively tight political scrutiny and operations which run counter to official foreign policy are blocked. Some initiatives are discreetly promoted by Whitehall because, in the event of some mishap, they are completely deniable. Mercenaries are preferred if the British government wishes to support

worth pointing out that the presence of a training team like the SAS in a country, "constitutes a form of covert action, because it represents an attempt to enhance the stability of the favoured regime in the same way as covert funding to a political party is designed to increase its electoral chances (if undiscovered). As a valuable by-product, it also provides useful cover for intelligence-gathering."¹¹⁰

The founder of the SAS Col. David Stirling later worked as president of the Capricorn Africa Society. After 1960, he formed Watchguard, an officially sanctioned private security company. It was responsible for "training Kenya's special forces, including the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU). He got this job because of his friendship with Bruce McKenzie, a leading white politician in post-independence Kenya and an old friend of Stirling's from Capricorn days."¹¹¹ Col. Stirling's company was also responsible for the training of the personal security for Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, "whom he had met in the course of his work for Capricorn." Through the SAS or Stirling's company, the aim of the British government remained the same: "They wanted bodyguards trained for rulers they wanted to see survive."¹¹²

Although his own personal security was assured through the presence of the SAS, Kenyatta, as Odinga correctly observed, "seemed not to recover from the shock of the army mutiny and he seemed to be plagued by a fear that the government was not safe from internal revolution."¹¹³

As early as December 1964, correspondents of the British *Sunday Telegraph* based in Nairobi reported that, "Kenya was in a real danger of falling directly under Communist influence."¹¹⁴ These reports alleged widespread dissent within Kenyatta's government, and then alluded to an impending take over of the government by Communists. Both Odinga's allies and his political opponents strongly condemned these reports in the British press. Achieng Oneko, Minister for Information,

an insurgency, for it is sensitive to allegations of subversion and careful to preserve its international reputation," p. 46.

¹¹⁰Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 46.

¹¹¹Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 47.

¹¹²David Sterling cited in Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 48.

¹¹³Oginga Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, p. 281.

¹¹⁴*East African Standard* (December 1, 1964), p. 1.

Broadcasting and Tourism and a strong ally of Odinga, called for the offending journalists to be punished. And they were. On December 3, 1964, the two British journalists, Richard Beeston and Douglas Brown, were “declared prohibited immigrants under orders signed by the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Odinga.”¹¹⁵ Mboya, certainly not allied with Odinga at all, was severely critical of the “absurdity of the allegations ... about disunity in the Kenya Government” which had appeared in reports in the *Sunday Telegraph*. “This paper,” Mboya stated, “could not have chosen a worse time in its notorious manoeuvres and efforts to sow the seeds of dissension and suspicion among our people. I am glad,” he continued, “that our people have reacted fittingly to this irresponsible and stupid journalism. I am glad that it has been treated with the contempt that it deserves.”¹¹⁶

Still, rumours continued to spread throughout the country regarding an impending take over of the government by force of arms. At the beginning of April 1965, Kenyatta and his closest advisers felt it necessary to secretly ask MacDonald “through Mr. Njonjo whether British troops could be standing by to come to help the Government to maintain law and order in case of such trouble.”¹¹⁷ As expected, the British government denied any such movement of its troops to Kenya to help in the suppression of a suspected Communist revolution.¹¹⁸ What had led to this seemingly all enveloping fear of a possible use of force to overthrow Kenyatta’s government?

Rumours linking Odinga to Communist violent take over of the government and therefore the country, gained momentum in the aftermath of the revolution in Zanzibar and then the army mutinies. More specifically, rumors circulated at first hinting, and then later loudly proclaiming, that in fact Odinga was illegally importing weapons from Communist countries with the sole intent of overthrowing Kenyatta’s government. No institution, even the Parliament, could shrug off the social force of these rumors at this time. On April 2, 1965, the Parliament held a rather raucous session on a motion tabled by T. Malinda, which asked the government to investigate reports of an alleged plot to take over the

¹¹⁵ *East African Standard* (December 3, 1964), p. 1.

¹¹⁶ *East African Standard* (December 9, 1964), p. 7.

¹¹⁷ MAC 71/8/13 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), *The Political Situation in Kenya—II. The Present*.

¹¹⁸ *Daily Nation* (May 14, 1965), p. 1.

government by force. According to Malinda, there was evidence "that arms and ammunition are continuously being smuggled from Communist and other foreign countries into or through Kenya for the purpose of overthrowing our beloved Government."¹¹⁹ The motion also alleged that the other intent of the conspirators was to involve Kenya in an external conflict, possibly with neighboring countries. In the stormy debate, Ngala stated that he, together with "the majority of Members were aware of the matter," which involved foreign embassies smuggling arms into the country to facilitate the armed Communist revolution.¹²⁰

This debate in the Parliament also touched on the mysterious document that appeared in Kenya at this time promising Communist revolution in East Africa. With no known author or accreditation, the document was assumed to be "from the East." Citing from it, Ngala said that Kenya was in danger of Communist invasion. He cited from page 27 of the document, which stated that, "The revolution will spread to Kenya and Uganda and nationalists and reactionaries such as Nyerere and Kenyatta and Obote who try to talk with both sides of their mouths at the same time will suffer the same fate as the former Sultan of Zanzibar."¹²¹

In his response, Njoroge Mungai, Minister for Internal Security and Defense, assured an over-anxious nation that "the government intelligence services had no information to show big arms smuggling operations in the Republic." The Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the Special Branch (SB) and other intelligence agencies had no information linking any one, let alone Odinga, to any arms smuggling into Kenya with the aim of launching an armed revolt. "I want to assure the nation," Mungai stated, "that the Kenya Army is ready to handle anyone

¹¹⁹ *Daily Nation* (April 2, 1965), p. 1. Also see, *Time* (April 23, 1965). In this article, *Time* magazine linked Odinga directly to the illegal importation of arms from Communist countries. The article further alleged that, "Vice President Oginga Odinga, wealthy 53-year old leader of the Luo tribe, which forms an important part of Kenyatta's KANU party coalition, has been openly attempting to turn the new nation toward Communism," p. 39.

¹²⁰ *Daily Nation* (April 3, 1965), p. 2.

¹²¹ *Daily Nation* (April 3, 1965), p. 2. For his part, William Attwood was certain that the mysterious document, entitled *Revolution in Africa*, was "a Chinese pamphlet printed in Albania and circulated in East Africa." See, William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 246.

who tries to smuggle arms or bring about a revolution to upset our popularly elected Government.”¹²²

There was also at this time, a widely publicized report that alleged that in fact Odinga had not only clandestinely imported weapons from Communist countries, but had stored them in the basement of his office. On April 8, 1965 “a consignment of small arms was removed from the basement of Odinga’s Ministry to the armoury.”¹²³ To Odinga’s political opponents, local and foreign, the removal of these weapons was visible “evidence” of his advanced plans to seize power by force. What was the story behind these arms in the basement? According to Odinga, both Kenyatta and Murumbi knew of the existence of these small arms for after all the three of them had ordered for them “before Britain handed over control of the police force to Kenya’s independent government.” Why? So that the Prime Minister could, “if necessary,” be able “to equip the police independently of Britain.” The arms had been “consigned to the Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta.” An agreement among Odinga, Kenyatta, and Murumbi directed that part of the arms should be stored in the basement of Odinga’s Ministry. Kenyatta retained the rest of the arms “for safe keeping.”¹²⁴

In the heat of the moment, Odinga’s version of events surrounding these arms was dismissed and ridiculed. Duncan Ndegwa, Kenya’s first African Chief Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, thought that “Odinga’s explanation fell short of conviction and logic because procedure demanded that such arms be handled by scheduled police officers and be deposited with the official armourer. Odinga could not explain why that had not been done and why he had handled the arsenal as if it was his personal cache.”¹²⁵ What Ndegwa and Odinga’s other critics were not able to explain was this: how was it possible for Odinga, at this time, to import and then store several trucks of personal weapons from Communist countries in a government office building without being detected by the Kenya Special Branch and British intelligence services, who were all trained on him? At the time, Njoroge Mungai

¹²² *Daily Nation* (April 3, 1965), p. 1.

¹²³ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹²⁴ Odinga Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, p. 278.

¹²⁵ Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story* (Nairobi: Kenya Leadership Institute, 2006), p. 384.

downplayed the threat to national security implicit in this transfer of arms from Odinga's office stating, "We do transfer equipment from one Government building to another all the time. This is no cause for rumours."¹²⁶ Of related importance was the conclusion of the British intelligence services that "in fact these arms had been stored," in the basement of Odinga's Ministry, "on Kenyatta's orders."¹²⁷

Soon after this incident, a new row broke out over the seizure, by Kenyan authorities, of eleven trucks of Chinese made weapons in Kisii area in Nyanza province. Odinga was immediately suspected of being linked to these weapons, for after all the trucks were carrying Chinese made weapons and they were travelling in Nyanza province, his home province. Further, at the time when these arms were seized in Kisii, Odinga was in neighboring South Nyanza district.¹²⁸ The implication, fashioned by rumors, was that Odinga was in Nyanza to receive and store these weapons. As Ndegwa states, "The suspicion that they were Odinga's sprung up because in April of the same year, some imported arms had been found in the basement of his office."¹²⁹

Preliminary investigation soon established that in fact these seized weapons belonged to the Uganda government and that the drivers had taken a detour through Kenya due to difficult road conditions.¹³⁰ Kenyatta was nonetheless outraged and ordered the weapons seized and the drivers arrested. He called this unauthorized transit of weapons through Kenya, "an act of criminal folly and a serious violation of Kenya's territorial integrity." The weapons underwent thorough inspection by representatives from Kenyatta's Cabinet and also from the

¹²⁶*Daily Nation* (April, 15, 1965), p. 24. Even Attwood who clearly did not favor Odinga, observed that, "Of course there was not much Odinga could do inside Kenya without Kenyatta knowing about it. Catling and Hinga were directly responsible to the Prime Minister's Office. Their orders were to keep an eye on Double-, and they did." See, Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 241.

¹²⁷FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹²⁸Oginga Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, p. 292.

¹²⁹Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles: My Story*, p. 384. Also see, *New York Times* (May 19, 1965), p. 7, for further information on Kenyatta's reaction to the arms shipment through Kenya.

¹³⁰See a statement by Felix Onama, Uganda's Minister for Internal Affairs, in *Daily Nation* (May 18, 1965), p. 1.

(GSU), the para-military force.¹³¹ The ensuing tense diplomatic rift between Uganda and Kenya was only resolved after Obote flew to Kenya for discussions with Kenyatta and apologized for the infraction.¹³²

The last and most serious incident involving the importation of arms from Communist countries was the arrival of “Soviet ship Fizik Lebedyev at Mombasa on 24 April 1965 with a cargo of arms including tanks, guns and vehicles.”¹³³ In his initial statement to the Parliament, Njoroge Mungai stated that this Soviet ship was delivering arms given as a gift to the Kenya government. This was the result of “an agreement between the two governments made ‘since independence.’” As to their projected use and value, Njoroge Mungai stated that, “they would be used in fields where ‘we don’t have this type of equipment, weapons and ammunition.’” He also revealed that as part of this gift of arms, “a few Russian technicians would be coming to show Kenya Army men how to assemble the arms ... ‘but the Russians are not going to train our army.’”¹³⁴

In spite of Njoroge Mungai’s clarification, rumors continued to swirl around these Soviet arms. The consistent rumor, which spread rapidly across the country, was that “Odinga had negotiated for the arms with the Russians.” The acceptance of these arms by the Kenya government, Ndegwa has written, “would have been a seal of approval for Odinga’s alliances with the East. The acceptance of the arms would have meant that the Russians would be sending technicians and instructors to follow.”¹³⁵ An erroneous impression was thus created which suggested that, “the Soviet ship had arrived uninvited and that Odinga was responsible.” Even MacDonald in his initial hasty report on the matter forwarded to London concluded, erroneously, that the “Russian gift—which was too large for clandestine delivery” was meant to come under Odinga’s influence. But was this accurate? Subsequent analysis of the events and details

¹³¹ *Daily Nation* (May 19, 1965), p. 1.

¹³² See, *Daily Nation* (May 26, 1965), p. 1, and (May 27, 1965), p. 1. As a result of the agreement, “the whole arms convoy seized by Kenya Police on May 15 and all 47 Uganda soldiers and civilians arrested with the consignment,” were released. Also see, *New York Times* (May 27, 1965), p. 6.

¹³³ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹³⁴ *Daily Nation* (April 15, 1965), p. 24.

¹³⁵ Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles: My Story*, pp. 384–385.

surrounding this matter of Soviet arms by the British intelligence services reached a conclusion that differed from MacDonald's initial report.

According to the British intelligence services,

the decision to ask for the Soviet Union to supply arms had been made by Kenyatta in Cabinet following the army mutiny at Lanet barracks in January 1964. This mutiny had greatly worried Kenyatta and some of his Ministers who believed that discontent with obsolescent British equipment was one of the causes of the mutiny.¹³⁶

In March 1964, Odinga, Njonjo, and Murumbi were authorized by Kenyatta to start discussions with the Soviet Ambassador to Kenya about the possibility of getting arms from the Soviet Union. As a result of these discussions, in May 1964, "Odinga and Murumbi (then Minister of State for Defense) were sent to Moscow by Kenyatta with a personal letter from him to Khrushchev and formally requesting arms."¹³⁷ Once an agreement was reached on the supply of the arms, the problem facing Kenyatta's Cabinet was how to "conceal these supplies from the British who were still in command of the armed forces." No course of action was taken on this matter at the time, leaving it open to improvised strategy when the arms arrived at Mombasa port in April 1965.

The Soviet officers strenuously objected to these arms "coming under British control." They wanted to "hand over their cargo to Kenyan officers," and later sought audience with Kenyatta to discuss this matter. In the meeting, Kenyatta complained that "the equipment seemed to be very old and ... that Kenyan Ministers and Army officers would wish to inspect it to see if it were of any use." To facilitate this process, the "British Commander of the Kenya Army was specially made a Kenyan Citizen by Njonjo so that he could inspect the consignment without accusations of bias."¹³⁸ Mungai, McKenzie, and Murumbi were

¹³⁶FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹³⁷FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹³⁸FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of the Soviet Influence in Kenya. There is evidence suggesting that several days before the Soviet ship docked in Mombasa, "McKenzie had advance warning of this and had alerted Kenyatta, outlining his plan of action." See, Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgeald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 155.

the Cabinet Ministers who accompanied the British Commander to Mombasa to inspect the arms.

The British Commander's report, which clearly was supposed to carry a lot of weight, indicated that "only some heavy mortars and troop carriers were worth having, the remainder either requiring special training or was not required." This report was, however, forwarded to Kenyatta by Njonjo in a modified form. "In his reports to Kenyatta, Njonjo managed to convey that the equipment was old, useless or second hand."¹³⁹ This fact, together with the Soviet insistence on having their own training team to accompany the arms, led to Kenyatta's dramatic decision of April 28, 1965 rejecting the whole shipment. With a flourish, Kenyatta announced that he had rejected the Soviet arms because "all the arms are old, second hand, and would be of no use to the modern army of Kenya."¹⁴⁰ There is no doubt that Kenyatta's disposition toward the Soviet arms had undergone a significant shift since the signing of the agreement with the Soviet Union. By May 1965, it had become politically imperative for him to maintain public distance between himself and Soviet products. The presence of Soviet technicians and instructors operating in the army was now perceived as a security threat to Kenyatta's hold onto power. These Soviet instructors and technicians, it was now believed, would have allegiance to Odinga thereby increasing the magnitude of his political threat. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that the British High Commission in Nairobi was kept "closely informed ... as usual" by Njonjo and McKenzie on this matter.¹⁴¹

All of these rumors of an impending violent Communist coup, illegal arms import, plus the political fall-out from army mutinies, and then the revolution in Zanzibar, created fear and nervousness among the majority of the population in the country. Rumors were asserted as fact, which in turn was used effectively to shape subsequent discussion on related

¹³⁹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya. The Ambassador of the Soviet Union to Kenya, "issued a statement saying that the arms were 'modern types, and were just as good as any foreign arms of the same category' and besides 'full agreement was reached on the type of arms to be supplied by the Soviet Union.'" See, Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 155.

¹⁴⁰*Daily Nation* (April 29, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁴¹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

issues. This was the practical power of what has come to be called *factoids* in propaganda, and defined as,

an assertion of fact that is not backed up by evidence, usually because the fact is false or because the evidence in support of the assertion cannot be obtained. Factoids are presented in such a manner that they become widely treated as true. In our work places and neighborhoods, they are known as rumors, gossip and urban legends.¹⁴²

Thus, the absence of evidence may not necessarily invalidate the power of the rumor to shape public political opinion. Indeed, it is clear that factoids "can influence not only political and judicial but also consumer decision making." In Kenya, this was evidently true in the 1964 and 1965 period, when rumors and innuendos effectively rivaled factual information in the political discourse between the rulers and the ruled.

This condition of fear, anxiety, and nervousness among the majority of the population was further exacerbated by hunger and starvation in several parts of the country at this time. A report by the Ministry of Agriculture issued in September 1965 showed that the country's maize crop was "50% below the annual average." Conditions were quite dire in some parts of Kambaland, especially those areas beyond the towns and urban centres.¹⁴³ Several other areas of the country were also affected including: "Baringo, Turkana, Kitui, Laikipia, Marakwet, South Nyanza, Moyale, Marsabit and parts of Kakamega," and then sections of the Coast Province. In September 1965, a National Famine Relief Committee was formed with Moi as its Chairman. In that capacity,

¹⁴²Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *The Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 2000), p. 104. Also see a speech by Wasonga Sijeyo (MP) on this matter of political rumors and fear in the country in *Daily Nation* (December 17, 1965), p. 4. Wasonga Sijeyo "stated that the citizens of Kenya were in a state of fear and uneasiness as a result of a strong rumour now being spread throughout the Republic by Cabinet Ministers. The rumour was that 'there exists a group planning to overthrow the popularly elected Government.'" Sijeyo urged the "Government to reveal the names of members of this group and their intentions 'to ease the feeling of the electorate'... the Government had either to announce the names of the plotters, if this was true, or ensure that these rumours were not spread. He accused Ministers of paying members of the public to spread panic in an attempt to campaign for the Presidency and Ministries."

¹⁴³*Daily Nation* (September 14, 1965), p. 7.

Moi toured some of the “drought stricken areas of Machakos ... to see for himself the plight of the district’s starving families who are suffering because of the severe famine there.”¹⁴⁴ As this crisis intensified several Western voluntary and aid agencies descended on Kenya to provide relief, for example, USAID and Oxfam.

It was however the USA, through USAID, that supplied most of the desperately needed maize under two schemes: “supplies free of charge for famine relief to be rationed to people who cannot buy it and have no food”; and “maize supplies to assist the financing of the Development Plan.”¹⁴⁵ In October 1965, E.A. Andere, General Manager of the Kenya Maize Marketing Board, announced that he had negotiated for more maize to be delivered from the USA. The first shipment, which arrived at the end of October, included 3000 tons was to be “rushed to famine areas.” This was “a special gift from the US Agency for International Development.”¹⁴⁶

The USA, through its aggressive and ubiquitous ambassador, William Attwood, was able to exploit this food aid to further extend its influence on Kenyatta’s government. This was still true despite Kenyatta’s disappointment at the “landings at Stanleyville (now Kisangani) of Belgian paratroops carried in American aircraft.” Kenyatta was the Chairman of the “ad hoc Commission on the Congo established by the Organization of African Unity.” And in that capacity, he had, with Attwood’s participation, endeavored to secure the release of Western hostages in Congo. Unfortunately, his efforts were brushed aside by the USA and Belgium who chose a military intervention. “Such military adventurism,” Kenyatta would later write, “which in fact failed to prevent the murder of many hostages, completely disrupted the pattern of reconciliation which had been taking shape.”¹⁴⁷

After this military incident, Attwood knew that Kenyatta felt “let down and humiliated.” Some Members of his Cabinet were very angry with Attwood whom they accused of “double-dealing,” and for not having dealt with Kenyatta in good faith. Attwood worried that a condemnatory strident statement issued by Kenyatta asserting this fact would

¹⁴⁴ *Daily Nation* (September 11, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Daily Nation* (September 24, 1965), p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ *Daily Nation* (October 6, 1965), p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968), p. vii.

cause “irreparable damage” to USA–Kenyan relations. To help avert this crisis, Attwood sought MacDonald’s help. He “filled him in on what had been going on, and told him of my concern that Kenyatta might say something he’d later regret.” Attwood knew that the best way to get some positive movement on this question was to seek MacDonald’s help, for it was evident to all that “Kenyatta trusted him.”¹⁴⁸

And indeed, no strident statement was issued from Kenya about the incident. Attwood was in fact reassured that the campaign to get him expelled from the country was dead.¹⁴⁹ Also, the USA, a major target of angry demonstrations over the Congo had come “out of it all, relatively unscathed.” This anger over the Congo crisis, which Attwood felt had been orchestrated by Odinga and his allies was no longer a factor in determining the course of the USA–Kenya relations. Instead, “Kenyatta’s inner circle of advisers was more concerned about whether” the USA’s and Attwood’s “emotions had been stirred up to the point that,” the USA “had lost interest in helping Kenya’s development.”¹⁵⁰ The attention of Kenyatta’s inner circle was now focused on “Odinga, the Luo chief.”

Attwood was very conscious of the fact that food aid to Kenya at this critical time had a very beneficial affect on the USA’s image in the country (especially after the Congo crisis). Provision of maize for “drought stricken areas,” was part of an expanding US aid program to Kenya that now included:

C-47 ordered for the Police Air Wing; more than one hundred Peace Corps volunteers were now working in schools, cooperatives and settlement schemes; the National Youth Service was recruiting unemployed young men at the rate of four hundred a month and putting them to work with American trucks and shovels. And the government appreciated the leads we were able to furnish them on certain strangers in town.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 217.

¹⁴⁹William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 226.

¹⁵⁰William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 226.

¹⁵¹William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, pp. 249–250.

Attwood's linkage to Kenyatta would become critical in the CIA's involvement in the campaign to oust Odinga and his radical allies from the political stage.¹⁵²

For Odinga's political opponents, fear and anxiety, which were fanned by rumors and innuendos, provided the most appropriate political environment in which to launch the final offensive against him and his radical allies. "Fear," as is now well known, "can be a powerful motivating psychological force, channeling all our thoughts and energies toward removing the threat so that we don't think about much else."¹⁵³ An added factor here is that governments have routinely used fear to secure an otherwise elusive support from the ruled. This is especially true if the object of the fear is perceived to be an external enemy. Under such circumstances, a government can rally the support of the country to confront an external threat in order to secure the security of the nation and the individual.

In Kenya, at this period, Kenyatta and his allies had succeeded in identifying Communism as the paramount external threat to the country's security and *Uhuru*. Consequently, all those politicians linked to Communism, or Communist countries, were now portrayed as threats to national security and could therefore not be entrusted with political office. As rumors and innuendos and hunger continued to spread fear and anxiety across the country, Kenyatta was portrayed as the indispensable source and immovable center of national stability.

Rumors, innuendos, and fear could not be let to get out of hand for then Kenyatta and his allies would be seen as weak and unable to provide security. This may, in part, explain Njoroge Mungai's constant assurances of security to the nation at this period. There had to be just enough fear and anxiety to enable Kenyatta and his allies to emerge as steady and redoubtable patriots pitted against selfish and erratic politicians who had no qualms about "selling their country" to foreigners peddling Communism. Not surprisingly, fear provided a pretext for accelerated attacks on political dissent in the country at this time.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵²Ellen Ray, William Schaap, Karl Van Meter and Louis Wolf, *Dirty Work* 2. p. 61.

¹⁵³Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *The Age of Propaganda*, p. 210.

¹⁵⁴For an informative discussion on the general use of fear by governments to shape and direct national policy, especially in recent USA history, see, Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, *Weapons of Mass Deception: The Uses of Propaganda in Bush's War on Iraq* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2003). "It seems to be a law of history that times of war

MacDonald believed that the success of the propaganda offensive against Odinga, especially in the 1964–1965 period, was due to the “revelation that [he is] associated with Communist China and Russia in their subversive activities in East Africa, and that he is therefore neither a loyal adherent to Kenya’s policy of non-alignment in international affairs, nor even perhaps a reliable Kenyan patriot.”¹⁵⁵ Yet, as MacDonald knew, this “revelation” alone, was not enough to remove Odinga from the political center stage.

A matter of crucial concern to the Kenyan, British, and US security agencies was to determine how Odinga managed to translate the financial resources from the Communist countries into an expanding, vibrant, and increasingly multi-ethnic “movement” of the have-nots. Attwood was convinced that one of Odinga’s key “political assets” was Pio Gama Pinto, “a brilliant tactician.” Pinto, an Asian (Goan) Member of the Kenya Parliament, was, according to Attwood, “Odinga’s principal liaison man with Communist embassies as well as his chief political adviser.”¹⁵⁶ MacDonald’s view was that Pinto was

a cunning Goan Member of Parliament, who (unlike Mr. Odinga and most of his other associates) was a dedicated Communist, and the principal brain behind the whole secret organisation of Odinga’s movement. He was responsible, for example, for the recruitment of a growing number of his fellow back-benchers against Mr. Kenyatta and the moderates in the government ... Odinga and his fellow conspirators depended on him almost vitally.¹⁵⁷

Pinto’s success in the advancement of radicalism had reached a point where it caused grave worry to Kenyatta and his allies. Odinga’s access to “Communist money,” his popularity, plus

and national fear are accompanied by rollbacks of civil liberties and attacks on dissent,” p. 145.

¹⁵⁵MAC 71/8/42 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Situation.

¹⁵⁶William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 245.

¹⁵⁷MAC 71/8/12 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), The Political Situation in Kenya—II. The Present.

Pinto's organizing genius, working in zealous partnership together, seemed well on the way to enticing a majority of the back-bench Members of Parliament to defeat President Kenyatta's Government on some convenient issue. And in the country side they were gradually gaining necessary support among the disgruntled sections of the all important Kikuyu tribe led by the professional rebel Bildad Kaggia.¹⁵⁸

Thus, Pinto was identified as Odinga's indispensable lieutenant whose "organizational genius" seriously threatened the parliamentary and national survival of Kenyatta's government, not to mention the MacDonald formula on which it was based.

On February 24, 1965, Pinto was gunned down and killed "in full view of his year old youngest child, Tresca, whom he was letting out of the car in the drive of their bungalow home."¹⁵⁹ Most Cabinet Ministers and fellow Members of Parliament immediately condemned this brutal murder. Kenyatta issued a statement condemning "this shocking crime." By Pinto's death, Kenyatta stated, "our country has lost one of the conscientious workers for freedom who suffered many years in detention for his uncompromising stand in politics."¹⁶⁰ It was clear however, that this had been a political murder. "Although two men were later arrested and jailed for the murder," Attwood would later write, "it was never satisfactorily explained."¹⁶¹ A later assessment by the British intelligence services on this question concluded that, "Odinga's Goan adviser and fellow MP, Pio Pinto Gama, was murdered in a plot probably arranged by the President's bodyguard (who probably organized Kariuki's murder a decade later)."¹⁶²

MacDonald looked at Pinto's death as a turning point in Kenyatta's struggle against Odinga and his radical allies. It denied Odinga access to crucial tactical and organizational assistance and guidance at a time when he desperately needed it. "Odinga's political forces," MacDonald wrote with some satisfaction, "received a crippling blow," resulting in

¹⁵⁸MAC 71/8/20 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya: Odinga.

¹⁵⁹*Daily Nation* (February 25, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁶⁰*Daily Nation* (February 25, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁶¹William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 245.

¹⁶²FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Annex A. The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

his movement’s’ political forces being “thrown into considerable disarray.”¹⁶³ Kenyatta and his allies were now emboldened to undertake decisive maneuvers to finally oust Odinga and his allies from the government and the KANU. “Soon afterwards,” MacDonald recorded, “President Kenyatta—backed by a large majority of his cabinet colleagues—decided that the time had come to assert his grand qualities of authority, strength and wisdom.”¹⁶⁴

Prior to February 1965, Kenyatta had discussed “these matters confidentially,” with MacDonald. This enabled MacDonald to write to London confidently that he knew how Kenyatta’s “mind moved.” Initially Kenyatta trusted Odinga completely. This changed when “he ceased to be dependent on Odinga for financial support.” At about the same time, according to MacDonald, Kenyatta started to receive “intelligence reports of,” Odinga’s “subversive activities.” Kenyatta was however not inclined to immediately oust Odinga from the government. The reasons were a mixture of loyalty to past friendship and also tactical.

His reason was that if the personable, persuasive, and powerful Luo leader ceased to be a member of the Government (and especially if he were forced out of it against his will), he would become an unqualified rebel. In anger, he would use his skill at popular agitation to stir up opposition to the Administration; and he would probably succeed in carrying an overwhelmingly majority of his fellow Luos with him.¹⁶⁵

This was especially true when Kenyatta and his allies were still wary of the power of Odinga’s tactical and organizational skills under the astute direction of Pia Gama Pinto.

Odinga was left in the government for a while, in order “not to disappear from” Kenyatta’s sight. As a Cabinet Member, he would have to support the official government doctrine. What Kenyatta and his allies wanted was for Odinga to voluntarily resign from the government. He “would then be held to blame for the unfortunate consequences which

¹⁶³MAC 71/8/13 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), *The Political Situation in Kenya—II. The Present*.

¹⁶⁴MAC 71/8/20 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Odinga.

¹⁶⁵MAC 71/8/21 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Odinga.

would follow for the nation.” In 1965, MacDonald believed that “things might develop that way; Odinga might become increasingly dissatisfied with his rather frustrating position in the Government, and, since he was not always wise, he might then begin to make foolish mistakes.” There was a firm belief within the Kenyatta camp that if Odinga “were given enough rope, he might hang himself.”¹⁶⁶ It was important for Odinga to carry the blame for resigning from the government and the party. What could be done to get Odinga to voluntarily resign?

From 1964 to 1966, Odinga was deliberately subjected to the sort of treatment meant to either publicly embarrass or humiliate him in his capacity as deputy leader of the KANU and the country’s Vice President. Attwood, no fan, recorded that by this time, “Odinga was also being provoked into losing his temper by deliberate slights,” for example,

when President Kaunda arrived on a state visit, Odinga was not even asked to accompany Kenyatta to the plane; on UN Day, Mungai, who represented Kenyatta at the official ceremonies, did not bother to address the Vice President, who sat with him on the rostrum; after Odinga attended a party at the home of an East German correspondent, his host was summarily expelled from Kenya.¹⁶⁷

Several other slights would follow. One of the most prominent was the announcement in June 1965 that Murumbi, Minister for External Affairs, would lead “the Kenya delegation to the meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London.” Vice President Odinga had initially been “scheduled to lead the team.”¹⁶⁸

A direct call for Odinga to resign from government came after his speech in Kisumu at the end of May 1965, in which he was reported to have openly criticized the roles that the British and American Ambassadors were playing at the time in Kenya politics. In the speech, widely reported in the daily newspapers, Odinga specifically mentioned Ngala and Mboya as the politicians the British were “working through,” in their attempt to spoil Kenya.¹⁶⁹ What particularly infuriated the

¹⁶⁶MAC 71/8/21 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Odinga.

¹⁶⁷William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 260.

¹⁶⁸*Daily Nation* (June 4, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁶⁹*Daily Nation* (June 1, 1965), p. 1.

conservative wing of the KANU and the government was Odinga’s mention that “the British and American envoys frequently tried to influence President Kenyatta.” It is the implication of this charge that Kenyatta’s allies found most troubling. If it remained unchallenged, it would deal a severe blow to Kenyatta’s prestige as a wise, independent, and strong patriotic leader. Kiano, Minister for Commerce and Industry, wanted Odinga to “either apologise to the President or resign from the Cabinet.” Mboya thought that Odinga’s remarks constituted “cheap politics” and were certainly in “bad taste.” Further, Mboya thought that Odinga’s remarks attacked “the status of the President ‘by insinuating that he takes orders from the British High Commissioner and the American Ambassador.’”¹⁷⁰

Condemnation of Odinga’s remarks gathered momentum, as did calls for him to resign. Ngala and J.K. Gatuguta, another Member of Parliament, “called for the replacement of Mr. Odinga as head of the Kenya delegation,” to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ conference in London, since he “had shown himself to be too prejudiced.” Unlike Odinga, Ngala stated, he had refrained from “attacking any Kanu politician” since disbanding the KADU. What was needed was for Odinga to “preach the Cabinet approved doctrine of African Socialism ‘instead of wasting his time defending Communism.’”¹⁷¹ This defense of Communism had made Odinga a mere “puppet of the East in a non-aligned country.” He was the one now responsible for the disunity in the country.

Not surprisingly, when Odinga later issued a more conciliatory clarification of his remarks that suggested that all that he had done was to condemn all those against national unity and called for national solidarity against disunity,¹⁷² this was summarily dismissed by Kenyatta’s allies. Mboya angrily dismissed this clarification as “a poor attempt at white-washing the truth and deceiving the public.” Further, since the “entire

¹⁷⁰*Daily Nation* (June 1, 1965), p. 1. A similar call for Odinga to resign had been issued following his speech in which he reportedly stated that, “‘there is nothing wrong in Communism’ and that ‘Communism is just like food.’” See, *Daily Nation* (May 4, 1965) p. 1. While widely discussed in both local and international press, this speech did not lead to an expanding call for Odinga’s resignation from the government compared to the speech that he delivered in Kisumu toward the end of May 1965.

¹⁷¹*Daily Nation* (June 1, 1965), p. 20.

¹⁷²See, *Daily Nation* (June 1, 1965), p. 20.

proceedings were recorded,” Mboya had “access to the tapes and also met persons who attended the meeting.”¹⁷³ Hinting at the need for Odinga to resign, Mboya thought that these statements had failed to “enhance the status and prestige” of the Office of Vice President. “It is the person who fills the office who must carry it with dignity and ensure for it the respect it deserves.”¹⁷⁴

Kenyatta’s allies saw in this story what they were desperately looking for: a significant misstep by Odinga that they could capitalize on in their drive against him and his radical allies. Odinga would henceforth be portrayed as disloyal and disrespectful to Kenyatta. If well packaged, this is a story that could gain traction across the country. For this strategy to work, there would need to be a concerted effort to diminish, or at least cast doubt, on the extent and value of Odinga’s contributions to the nationalist struggle.

In his several statements on this story, Mboya said that “it would be a sad day for Kenya if Mr. Odinga were to think that he was the only true nationalist in the Kenya Cabinet or Parliament. ‘In any case, such claim would be blatantly false and vain.’” As to the value of past glory, Mboya curiously thought that, “no country or leader could afford to live all the time on past glories.” How about the role that Odinga had played in the demand for Kenyatta’s release from detention? Here, Mboya thought that Odinga had over played this card. “It is not necessary for the Vice President always to refer to his part in demanding Mr. Kenyatta’s release. It is in fact untrue,” Mboya asserted, “to suggest that he is the only one who demanded or fought for Mr. Kenyatta’s release.” Before Odinga’s famous statement in the Legco, which Mboya now termed as the “monotonously referred to ... statement, many people had spoken in Kenya. Many more people suffered and sacrificed for Kenya’s Uhuru. But,” unlike Odinga, “they do not sing about it at every public meeting. This alone,” Mboya concluded, “is not a passport to future leadership.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ *Daily Nation* (June 3, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ *Daily Nation* (June 3, 1965), p. 16.

¹⁷⁵ *Daily Nation* (June 1, 1965), p. 20. Also see the joint statement on this matter issued by J.M. Gachago, W.M.K. Gatuguta, J.G. Kiano, and J.H. Okwanyo. The statement, read to the press by Gatuguta, declared that Odinga’s speech, “was the most improper and most unbecoming of the Vice President of the Republic. There were insinuations in the speech ‘that our great President, who has been the torch-bearer of Pan Africanism and non-alignment is not so non-aligned after all ...’ Mr. Odinga tries to paint himself as the top

Moi, “speaking on behalf of tribes in the Rift Valley Province,” heavily criticized Odinga and urged him to resign “if he truly believed the President was a stooge of the Americans and the British.”¹⁷⁶ The sole purpose of Odinga’s remarks and statements, Moi asserted, was to “further the cause of Communism,” and destroy Kenya’s *Uhuru*. He poured scorn on this “self-appointed ‘saviour’ and ‘champion’ of *Uhuru* and for the release of our President from prison,” who all along had after all been “bent on destroying what Mzee has built in the last 40 years—namely, the freedom and the independence of the sons and daughters of Kenya.”¹⁷⁷ The sum total of Odinga’s political activities, Moi concluded, had “been directed towards undermining our beloved leader.”

As this controversy gained traction, few prominent politicians mounted a vigorous and open counter-offensive on Odinga’s behalf in the press or at public rallies across the country. It would have been difficult to do so at this time. Could one defend Odinga without being branded as disloyal to Kenyatta and a possible Communist sympathizer? One of the few who came to Odinga’s defence was Luke Obok, a Member of Parliament. He issued a statement in which he accused Kiano of being “guilty of ‘mischief’” for “demanding that Mr. Odinga should apologise to President Kenyatta.” Obok reminded Kiano and his allies that, “it had obviously escaped attention that the Vice President was, in his own right, entitled to respect. Just as no one would tolerate any one giving orders to the President,” Obok observed, “how could any one tolerate ‘abominable suggestions’ that the Vice President should challenge the Government by first resigning from the Government?”¹⁷⁸ The obvious reality pointed to in Obok’s statement was that Kenyatta’s allies in the KANU and the government were by 1965 onwards, now at liberty to launch political attacks on Odinga without fear of official reproach or consequences. These attacks came to routinely cast doubt on Odinga’s loyalty to Kenyatta and also question his patriotism. Radical nationalism was not only equated with Communism, but it was also seen as evidence

nationalist in the country, next to Mzee Kenyatta. This is mere exaggeration completely out of proportion to the actual work done by Mr. Odinga individually, because the struggle for Kenya’s independence was not a one-man job.” *Daily Nation* (June 1, 1965), p. 20.

¹⁷⁶ *Daily Nation* (June 4, 1965), p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ *Daily Nation* (June 4, 1965), p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ *Daily Nation* (June 3, 1965), p. 16.

of disloyalty to Kenyatta and Kenya. The margin of error in this increasingly ferocious debate was very narrow.

For his part, Kenyatta initially issued general warnings against foreign interference in Kenya's internal affairs without pointing to Odinga by name as the key national threat. This was left to his allies in the KANU and the government. As MacDonald saw it, Kenyatta's initial strategy was to remain "patient, watchful and shrewd. He took calculated risks. He was tolerant of Odinga's irresponsible conduct when that was expedient, and firm in action when circumstances made that prudent. He made no mistakes himself, allowing the Home Minister/Vice President to enjoy a monopoly of that pastime."¹⁷⁹ Tactically, Kenyatta did not want to undertake any action that might create sympathy for Odinga. This would "play into Odinga's hands by making KANU supporters generally feel that he (Kenyatta) was to blame for their rift, so swinging sympathy to the other's side." It was therefore critical for Kenyatta to "wait for an issue on which most sensible men would see that Odinga, not he, was in the wrong ... So Kenyatta bided his time, awaiting the right moment for whatever action might be required."¹⁸⁰ The consistent aim was to show that Odinga was disloyal and working in concert with Communist powers. Kenyatta's strategy and tactics received high praise from Attwood and, as expected, from MacDonald. By 1965 MacDonald reported that distrust of Odinga had substantially increased and "spread especially among the Kikuyu, the Kalenjin, the Masai and other non-Luo tribes."

In April 1965, Kenyatta undertook his first major frontal assault at the radicals. At a public rally in Murang'a, he angrily dismissed rumors of an impending revolution in Kenya, as "rubbish because," Kenya had "strong forces to deal with any uprising."¹⁸¹ The bulk of his vigorously angry address was however directed at Bildad Kaggia, who was present at this rally. "Pointing to Mr. Kaggia all the time with his ebony stick," Kenyatta admonished him for advocating for free things. He also told Kaggia that he had failed to take advantage of opportunities open to him as a former fellow political prisoner/detainee. "Kaggia you are advocating for free things, but we were together with Paul Ngei in jail. If you

¹⁷⁹MAC 71/8/21 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Odinga.

¹⁸⁰Malcolm MacDonald, *Titans and Others* (London: William Collins, 1972), pp. 272–273.

¹⁸¹*Daily Nation* (April 12, 1965), p. 9.

go to Ngei’s home, he has planted a lot of coffee and other crops—what have you done for yourself?”¹⁸² The same was true for Kubai who now had a “big house and a nice shamba,” and Kungu Karumba who was “now running his own buses.” To Kenyatta and his allies, Kaggia’s basic fault was his stubborn and politically embarrassing refusal to capitalize on his status and position and enrich himself. He had not taken advantage of his position in government to amass wealth. This refusal was largely the cause for his dismissal from his position as an Assistant Minister for Education, very soon after *Uhuru*. “I gave Kaggia a good job in the Government,” Kenyatta told the rally, “but he did not want to work. He did nothing and stayed idle saying that the Government was bad, so I sacked him.”¹⁸³

At this rally, Kenyatta touched on Communism and “free things” by drawing on his legendary past as one of the very few Pan Africanists who had studied and lived in the Soviet Union. Not even Nkrumah could make this claim. It is a status that Kenyatta employed, whenever politically necessary, to demolish his opponents. Neither Odinga nor Kaggia had lived and studied in the Soviet Union. Kenyatta could therefore claim that he knew more about Communism than his political opponents. He had been there. “He had studied in Moscow University before joining the London School of Economics. While in Moscow he learnt a lot about Russian life and there were no free things for every body.”¹⁸⁴ Kenyatta thus sought to portray Kaggia, Odinga, and other proponents of radical nationalism as ill-informed individuals who had been duped into propagating ideological falsehood by Communist agents. Kenyans “who visited Russia and other Communist countries for a few days brought back false stories about free things. Such people,” Kenyatta warned, “should not be listened to as he had been to these countries longer than those who told such stories.”¹⁸⁵ As for landlessness among the Kikuyu, Kenyatta informed his audience that even before colonialism, “not everybody in Central Province owned land. There were people with no land who were known as tenants (*aboi*).”

¹⁸² *Daily Nation* (April 12, 1965), p. 9.

¹⁸³ *Daily Nation* (April 12, 1965), p. 9.

¹⁸⁴ *Daily Nation* (April 12, 1965), p. 9.

¹⁸⁵ *Daily Nation* (April 12, 1965), p. 9.

Denunciation of Communism was part of Kenyatta's official address to the nation on June 1, 1965, during the *Madaraka Day* celebration. He told the nation that, "In a world of power politics, the East has as much designs upon us as the West and would like us to serve their own interests. That is why," he proclaimed, "we reject Communism ... To us Communism is as bad as imperialism."¹⁸⁶ What the country wanted was Kenyan nationalism, African socialism, and a policy of non-alignment. It was therefore naïve to overlook the "danger of imperialism from the East." Equally, it was "a sad mistake to think that you can get more food, more hospitals or schools by crying 'Communism.'"¹⁸⁷

This denunciation received wide approval and coverage in the Western press. *Time* magazine sympathized with Kenyatta's difficulty in trying to steer "a middle course between East and West" while his radical Vice President was "travelling through the countryside heaping Red-tinged scorn on Kenyatta's ties with the West."¹⁸⁸ The speech was appealing in the West because it equated Communism with imperialism, the old style European colonialism in Africa. It thus added African weight, of considerable stature, to the Western ideological and propaganda position that saw Communism as the enemy of freedom, and the countries under Communist rule as not free.

¹⁸⁶ *Daily Nation* (June 2, 1965), p. 6.

¹⁸⁷ *Daily Nation* (June 2, 1965), p. 6.

¹⁸⁸ *Time* (June 11, 1965), p. 40.

African Socialism and the Rise and Rise of Conservative Nationalism

Prior to 1965, the conservative wing of the KANU did not have any coherently articulated response to the criticisms leveled against Kenyatta's government by radical nationalists. As these criticisms mounted, especially after 1964, Kenyatta's government felt an urgent need to provide the ideological rationale and justification for its economic and political positions. Kenyatta gave Mboya the the "important ideological assignment" to "prepare as quickly as possible a definitive documentary statement of Kenya's guiding philosophy and its practical implications."¹ The product of this assignment was the now famous, *Sessional Paper No. 10: African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*.² Drafted in a hurry in Mboya's Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, the document was seen, then and now, as "one of the clearest declarations published anywhere of what a nation stands for and where it is going and indeed is one of the three pillars on which Kenya is founded, the other two being the KANU Manifesto of 1963 and the Constitution."³

¹David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget* (Nairobi/London: Heinemann Books; New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1982), p. 234.

²Government of Kenya, *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya* (Nairobi: 1965).

³Tom Mboya, *The Challenge of Nationhood: A Collection of Speeches and Writings* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 73.

By the time Kenyatta's government produced *Sessional Paper No. 10*, African Socialism had become a widely discussed phenomenon in Africa. In December 1962, Senghor had taken the lead in convening a conference in Dakar to discuss and examine the character of African Socialism.⁴ Senghor's conception of African Socialism was more metaphysical and in the end allied to the tradition of French socialists. He sought to integrate what he called "Negro-African cultural values, especially religious values" into African Socialism. As Senghor saw it, African Socialism could never morph into Communism because of Marxism's inherent inability to incorporate "metaphysics, or ethics or religion" or philosophy in its ideological postulates.⁵ But African Socialism could not wholly embrace Western capitalism either because it placed too much emphasis on materialism: "high salaries, refrigerators, washing machines, but with less art and less freedom of thought."⁶ African Socialism therefore sought for a middle course, a sort of ideological "third way," that espoused "a democratic socialism, which goes so far as to integrate spiritual values, a socialism which ties in with the old ethical current of French socialists."⁷ Senghor urged Africans, once again, to "assimilate without being assimilated" by remaining rooted "in our *Négritude*" while continually "integrating it with most modern, fruitful, and effective discoveries and inventions."

A marked feature of African Socialism, unlike "other movements in socialism" was that it was "not the product of a single thinker." As a result, there existed varieties of African Socialism across the continent. It quickly became the "product of diverse leaders operating within a variety of exigencies in their own countries." This development helped to "account for the lack of development of a unified theory" and also a lack of specificity on many of its ideas.⁸

⁴William H. Friedland and Carl G. Rosberg, Jr., "The Anatomy of African Socialism," in *African Socialism*, edited by William H. Friedland and Carl G. Rosberg (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1964), p. 1.

⁵Leopold Sedar Senghor, *On African Socialism* (New York/London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 36.

⁶Leopold Sedar Senghor, *On African Socialism*, p. 46.

⁷Leopold Sedar Senghor, *On African Socialism*, p. 46.

⁸William H. Friedland and Carl G. Rosberg, Jr., "The Anatomy of African Socialism," p. 1.

Still, African Socialism came to be associated with some common ideas, even if there was variation in emphasis and articulation in different African countries. Projected as rooted in indigenous cultural values, African Socialism's "essential contention is that Africa has always contained much indigenous socialism." The characteristics of this indigenous socialism included communal ownership of land, the egalitarian character of society, and the extensive network of social obligations that led to considerable cooperation.⁹

African Socialism was portrayed as intrinsically African, unlike Communism which was alien and whose core concept of class struggle was most unAfrican and therefore not useful in any bid to comprehend the continent's social, political, and economic problems. It could be argued that one of the key objectives of those African leaders who embraced African Socialism, was to debunk the ideological relevance of Marxism, especially the concept of class struggle, in post-colonial Africa. Such leaders adopted what Abdul Rahman Mohamed Babu referred to as the "Traditionalist View of Africa's Past." This enabled them to seek to "avoid the development of class antagonisms by judiciously grafting new aspirations on to old traditions in an attempt at striking a harmonious social equilibrium. Class struggle as such is said to have no meaning in terms of African culture, and the conditions for its presence allegedly do not exist."¹⁰

Nyerere of Tanzania became one of the most respected contributors to the expanding literature on African Socialism through his writings on *Ujamaa*. In what later became one of his most controversial statements on this subject, Nyerere asserted that socialism was after all "an attitude of the mind." Therefore,

In an individual, as in the society, it is an attitude of the mind which distinguishes the socialist from the non-socialist. It has nothing to do with the possession or non-possession of wealth. Destitute people can be potential capitalists—exploiters of their fellow human beings. A millionaire can equally well be a socialist; he may value his wealth only because it can be

⁹William H. Friedland and Carl G. Rosberg, Jr., "The Anatomy of African Socialism," p. 5. Also see Basil Davidson, *Which Way Africa?: The Search for A New Society* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 118.

¹⁰Abdul Rahman Mohamed Babu, *African Socialism or Socialist Africa?* (London: Zed Press, 1981), p. 55.

used in the service of his fellow men. But the man who uses his wealth for the purpose of dominating any of his fellows is a capitalist. So is the man who would if he could.¹¹

Central to Nyerere's formulation of African Socialism was his contention that traditional African society offered a "sense of security to its members." There was also "universal hospitality." These two principles made the traditional African society inherently socialistic. Not surprisingly, the traditional African society did not have capitalists "or the landed exploiter." Also, this society did not have,

that other form of modern parasite—the loiterer, or idler, who accepts the hospitality of society as his "right" but gives nothing in return! Capitalistic exploitation was impossible. Loitering was unthinkable disgrace ... working was part and parcel, was indeed the very basis and justification of this socialist achievement of which we are so justly proud.¹²

Nyerere also dismissed the possibility of having what he called "acquisitive socialism" since of necessity, "socialism is essentially distributive."

Other aspects of African Socialism looked at it as a contribution toward the perennial goal of Pan African integration. In order to achieve this historic objective, the economic goals of Pan Africanism were premised on the idea that Africans "were frustrated by foreign ownership of mines, plantations and factories, and by the racial inequality of alien managements, alien skilled craftsmen, alien workers paid more than African workers on similar jobs." Also, that Africans were consequently "humiliated by the social superiority and segregation which these privileges involve."¹³ Economic domination, a carry-over from the colonial period, amounted to economic occupation. This gave rise to the need for economic liberation from "their economic masters." It was thus hoped that African Socialism would, in some indeterminate future, facilitate the eventual creation of "a United Socialist States of Africa."¹⁴ This socialist

¹¹Julius K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism* (Dar-es-Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 1.

¹²Julius K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*, p. 5.

¹³Fenner Brockway, *African Socialism: A Background* (Chester Springs, PA: Dalfour Editions, 1963), p. 14.

¹⁴Fenner Brockway, *African Socialism: A Background*, p. 124.

Africa would, ideally, be able to achieve economic independence thus ousting the evil of neo-colonialism from the continent.

Yet as African Socialism was invoked in the formulation of policy, as was to be the case in Kenya, there was an inescapable reality easy to observe: it remained frustratingly amorphous and consequently imprecise on descriptions and then definitions of key concepts. Also, the historical rationale adduced to support some of its key concepts rested, in many cases, on blanket generalizations that lacked any reference to changes in the African historical experience. All of these endeavors were, in the 1960s and 1970s, played against the backdrop of the Cold War. Many of the leaders who became strong advocates of African Socialism attained their political maturity in a world “ringing with anti-communist propaganda. These leaders innocently accepted the extra-ordinary Western inspired proposition that to be pro-communist was to be against independence. It was difficult for them to take a different position, given the circumstances of the time.”¹⁵

On April 27, 1965, Kenyatta formally presented the *Sessional Paper No. 10* to the public at a press conference in Nairobi. Flanked by Mboya, Oneko, and Kibaki, Kenyatta made two crucial comments that would later have a significant bearing on the political future of the radicals in the Parliament and the Cabinet: the document was “Kenya’s bible” and it had been unanimously approved and supported by his Cabinet.¹⁶ Although prepared under the stewardship of Mboya (supported by Kibaki), Kenyatta deliberately spread responsibility for this document to cover the whole of his Cabinet stating, “The cabinet had collectively prepared the White Paper and were collectively responsible for it.”¹⁷

Kenyatta looked at this document as constituting the “end of ideology” in Kenya; the end of any and all debates on the country’s ideological direction. This Sessional paper, he declared, “discusses in detail

¹⁵ Abdul Rahman Mohamed Babu, *African Socialism or Socialist Africa?*, p. 35.

¹⁶ *Daily Nation* (April 28, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁷ *Daily Nation* (April 28, 1965), p. 1. It was nonetheless known that “The Paper itself was primarily the responsibility of one man, Mboya; and although it was submitted to the Cabinet Development Committee and to the Cabinet, it was never submitted to the Party for either discussion or consultation.” See, “Socialism or Capitalism? Sessional Paper No. 10 Revisited,” by Ahmed Mohiddin in *East Africa Journal* (March 1969), p. 10. For Mboya’s response to Mohiddin see, “Sessional Paper No. 10: It is African and it is Socialism,” by Tom Mboya, *East Africa Journal* (May 1969).

both the theory of Democratic African Socialism and its application to planning in Kenya. There has been much debate,” he continued, “on this subject and the Government’s aim is to show very clearly our policies and also explain our programme. This should bring to an end all the conflicting, theoretical and academic arguments that have been going on.”¹⁸ These ideological debates could no longer be tolerated since they threatened national unity and stability. There could be no “political stability and atmosphere of confidence and faith at home,” if these ideological debates continued on “theories and doubts about the aims of our society.”¹⁹ To Kenyatta, the conservatives in the KANU who had commissioned and directed the drafting of the *Sessional Paper No. 10*, and their British and American supporters, the time for national dialogue on the direction of Kenya’s development, had come and gone. But had it?

Briefly, *Sessional Paper No. 10* contained these main features: “political democracy; mutual social responsibility; various forms of ownership; a range of controls to ensure that property is used in mutual interests of society and its members; diffusion of ownership to avoid concentration of economic power; and progressive taxes to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and income.”²⁰ In his lengthy address to the Parliament, Mboya stated that African Socialism in Kenya “must draw particularly on those African roots that are essentially among all tribes of Kenya: political democracy and mutual responsibility.”²¹ Under the provisions of this document, private ownership of land and property would continue as an integral part of national policy. Further, there would be no “indiscriminate nationalization.” In those few cases where nationalization occurred, the government would make “prompt payment of full compensation whenever nationalization is used.” This document, however, did not see any merit in the economic justification for nationalization. “The money paid to nationalize resources and the people who managed them before nationalization would most likely leave the country increasing our foreign exchange and skilled manpower problems.

¹⁸Jomo Kenyatta, “Statement by the President,” in *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*. Also see, *Daily Nation* (April 28, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁹Jomo Kenyatta, “Statement by the President.”

²⁰Government of Kenya, *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*, p. 16.

²¹Tom Mboya, *The Challenge of Nationhood*, p. 77.

There is also the firm likelihood that nationalization would discourage additional private investment.”²²

Both in the document itself and also in Mboya’s speech to Parliament, a lot of emphasis was placed on underscoring the “irrelevance of Marxism” in Africa, and especially in Kenya. Marxist critique was valid for nineteenth-century European society. Kenyan society in 1965 was markedly different from nineteenth-century European society that was riddled with sharp class divisions, massive economic and social exploitation, and the overt lack of political democracy. The social, economic, and political relations and structures described and then criticized by Marx, Mboya concluded, “bears little similarity to Kenya today,” since “under colonialism Kenyans did not have political equality or opportunities, and their property rights were not always respected.” And more fundamentally, “African traditions have no parallel to the European feudal society, its class distinctions, its unrestricted property rights, and its acceptance of exploitation.” More to the point, “the historical setting that inspired Marx has no counterpart in independent Kenya.”²³

The Marxist emphasis on antagonistic social classes was alien to Africa, and therefore inappropriate for Kenya, since “no class problem arose in traditional African society and none exists among Africans.” Mboya confidently proclaimed that the implementation of African Socialism in Kenya would avert the rise of antagonistic social classes based on ownership of property.

African Socialism must be designed to prevent the emergence of antagonistic classes among Africans and must eliminate through its Africanisation Programme the sharp economic differentials that now exist among the races in our country. The concept of political equality in Africa rules out in principle the use of economic power as a political base.²⁴

The Sessional paper took care to mention that the ideology of African Socialism was both original and independent of foreign control. It did not “rest on a satellite relationship with any other country for

²²Government of Kenya, *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*, p. 26.

²³Tom Mboya, *The Challenge of Nationhood*, p. 81.

²⁴Tom Mboya, *The Challenge of Nationhood*, p. 86.

its success.”²⁵ In light of the ongoing ideological struggles within the KANU, the Sessional paper purposively pointed out that African Socialism was, “positively African” and not “imported from any country” nor was it “a blue print of any foreign ideology.”²⁶ It was a flexible doctrine able and willing to incorporate “useful and compatible techniques from whatever source.” One of the desirable consequences of basing national policy on this doctrine, it was declared, was that the “practice of sending needed capital abroad, allowing land to lie idle and undeveloped, misusing the nation’s limited resources, and conspicuous consumption when the nation needs savings” would henceforth be considered as “examples of anti-social behaviour that African Socialism will not countenance.”²⁷

But what role had the KANU party members and the public played in the formulation of the ideas now contained in the Sessional paper? What was clear in 1965 is that the Sessional paper had been “unveiled with a minimum of prior discussion.” The document contained no input from Members of Parliament or the ordinary members of the KANU in far-flung provinces and districts, let alone villages. It was a document imposed from above. The policy prescriptions that it eloquently espoused had not been discussed with the ordinary members of the party or even the Members of Parliament. In his speech to the Parliament, Mboya dismissed out of hand criticism of the process that had produced the Sessional paper. Any suggestion that the document should have been “constructed as a consensus of the views of provincial, district and local party leaders and Members of Parliament,” Mboya bristled, “is based on four false assumptions: that the Government is out of touch with the people and their representatives; that the Government has no responsibility to lead but only to follow; that we can afford the time involved in soliciting and collecting suggestions, from every conceivable source; that socialism is basically a new idea that has not been thoroughly explored

²⁵ *Daily Nation* (April 28, 1965), p. 6. In early May 1965, Mwai Kibaki reiterated that the *Sessional Paper No. 10*, constituted the correct ideology for Kenya. It was “a manifesto that deals with the problems facing us now.” See, *Daily Nation* (May 8, 1965), p. 6.

²⁶ Government of Kenya, *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*, p. 2.

²⁷ Government of Kenya, *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*, p. 5.

before.”²⁸ The government had decided to sidestep extensive public discussion or consultation on this crucial matter because as Mboya put it, the Cabinet Ministers who had approved the Sessional paper were “themselves representatives of the people.” Together with Kenyatta, these Ministers had “already earned the reputation of spending more time in personal contact with the people than the Ministers of any other Government in the world today.”²⁹ This was a clever argument although fundamentally inaccurate and not informative on the key matter of public input in the drafting of the Sessional paper.

There was no evidence that Cabinet Ministers had, in the period since 1963, been engaged in extensive countrywide discussions with the public on this matter of African Socialism. Indeed, the KANU party had lost momentum very quickly after *Uhuru* and was no longer seen as a crucial institution in the country’s governance. Apathy and neglect of the party by its national leaders did not provide a setting conducive to vigorous discussion on an important matter such as the adoption of African Socialism as the guide to government policy.

This fact of the KANU having become “moribund and rusty” with a diminished membership and now enduring an existence that “seemed irrelevant” was well known to the British intelligence services. It was quite evident that the leaders of the KANU, now in government, were eager “to be supported, not opposed.” Having used the party to attain key positions in the government (or even elected to the Parliament), these leaders “especially Mr. Mboya, the Secretary General on whose driving force so much depends, were” not “as interested as they claimed in revitalizing the Party. They preferred to work through the well organised Administration inherited from the Colonial regime and to strengthen Parliament as the forum of national discussion.”³⁰ By the end of the 1960s, however, the Parliament was functioning under severe restrictions imposed by the government.

In his report to London, MacDonald observed that Kenya lacked what he called, “an effective political machine” since the KANU had “grown rusty from complacent lack of use.” By 1965, the KANU

²⁸Tom Mboya, *The Challenge of Nationhood*, pp. 74–75.

²⁹Tom Mboya, *The Challenge of Nationhood*, p. 75.

³⁰MAC 71/8/49 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Report on the KANU Party Conference on 11, 12, 13 March 1966.

officials, including Cabinet Ministers, had failed to maintain “regular contacts with the constituencies.” The result was “an unfortunate lack of liaison between the rulers and the ruled.”³¹ MacDonald saw the possibility of political problems arising from this situation in which “a significant gap” had “begun to yawn between the governmental authorities and the popular masses in many parts of the country.”³²

In May 1965, the Parliament voted unanimously to endorse the Sessional paper as the official “blueprint for the whole economic future of the Republic.” Hailing this victory by the government, Mboya made a symbolic appeal to Kaggia “to join in a fresh start of unity and co-operation.”³³ Kaggia’s contributions to the debate in the Parliament prior to the vote, showed that there still existed a wide chasm between his definition of African Socialism and the one advanced by Kenyatta’s government in the Sessional paper. “African Socialism” Kaggia stated, “should have three important objectives: to provide fair and equal distribution of wealth to all people of Kenya; to eliminate exploitation; to make it possible for everyone in the country to have medicine ... free education, free medicine and land.”³⁴ He was troubled by the continued existence on settler farms of the denigrating “master–slave relation” brought to Kenya by colonial rule. Africanization of property alone would not lead to equity and social justice. “If we have 20,000 rich Africans instead of 20,000 rich European settlers—we will have gained nothing.”³⁵

The task of defending and publicizing the Sessional paper in the country was largely the responsibility of Mboya. This period, from 1965 to 1966, marked one of the highest points of his political career. He had what his biographer calls “unfettered power ... he had never been quite so strong before, and would not be again.”³⁶ Kenyatta and his closest allies had briefly bestowed this power on Mboya to help them politically vanquish Odinga and the radical nationalists. In these years, like in the past, “he was indispensable to Kenyatta in the government’s major

³¹MAC 71/8/52 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Prospect.

³²MAC 71/8/52 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Prospect.

³³*Daily Nation* (May 8, 1965), p. 1.

³⁴*Daily Nation* (May 8, 1965), p. 6.

³⁵*Daily Nation* (May 8, 1965), p. 6.

³⁶David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 233.

operations.” On this matter of African Socialism, Mboya’s legendary capacity for hard work, “sheer drive, mental adroitness and ruthless fixity of purpose” made him indispensable to Kenyatta and his allies. But Mboya also shared these ideological positions with Kenyatta and the conservative wing of the KANU. To the public, unaware of the furious struggle for power around Kenyatta, Mboya was the man very close to the center of power. He “came to be publicly perceived as the active leader of the conservatives.”³⁷

In this drive against Odinga and the radicals, Mboya fought not only to win, but more crucially, to

eliminate his opponents from the contest entirely. The conflict that had been building up for several years was now brought to a climax. Mboya wanted to have done with it once and for all, and so he fought by nothing less than zero-sum rules: winner takes all, and crush the loser.³⁸

Mboya dominated the airwaves in this period as he rebutted what he thought were false claims by the radicals or elaborated on some aspect of African Socialism or denounced any calls for the government to expand its dealings with Communist countries as evidence of its non-alignment. In April 1965, T. Okelo-Odongo, an Assistant Minister for Finance stated in a public speech that in order for the country to achieve true non-alignment, it was vital to “bend a little more to the Eastern Bloc.” He observed that the Kenyan economy was “still aligned to Great Britain, the USA and West Germany.” Perhaps even more troubling was his statement that Kenya’s “Six year Development Plan was compiled by an American professor.”³⁹ Lastly, he called for a more aggressive Africanization of the economy.

In response, Mboya denied that the government’s policies were contrary to true non-alignment. “Our policy,” he clarified, “is non-alignment not of non-commitment.” As for the continued close economic ties with Western powers, Mboya informed the public, and especially the radicals that, “it would be a betrayal of ‘our policy to suggest that because of our past colonial history, we should lean towards the East.’” In a bid to achieve rapid economic development and secure much needed capital,

³⁷David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 234.

³⁸David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 232.

³⁹*Daily Nation* (April 9, 1965), p. 20.

the Kenya government had decided to look “in the traditional directions for investment and trade and in our own interests we have even found it necessary to continue economic and trade relations with our former colonial masters.”⁴⁰ This continued trade and economic close ties with Western powers, especially Britain, did not undermine Kenya’s independence, for after all “when we fought for independence we made it clear that our struggle was not against British people but against British colonial power—against the regime imposed on us.”⁴¹ He suggested that these continued economic relationships with Britain were now structured differently from those that obtained during the colonial period. “We have sought to create a new sort of relationship with the West. Relations are now on a completely different basis. We have our eyes open and we do not intend that our urgent need for development should be manipulated to force us to pursue policies acceptable to the former colonial powers.”⁴² Mboya provided no details then, or in subsequent period, of the revisions undertaken by Kenya in its post *Uhuru* economic relations with Britain. It is also significant that he did not directly address the sensitive question of the country’s development plan having been “compiled by an American professor.”

Regarding economic and political relations with Communist countries, Mboya warned that it was politically irresponsible to advance the position that “everything from the East is good for Africa and that everyone from the East means well for Africa.” Although it was true that none of the Communist countries had colonized any part of Africa, “this did not mean that they have no Cold War designs upon Africa.” In any case, he concluded, Kenyatta’s government and the KANU had made it “clear that we reject the ideology of Communism.”⁴³

Local reactions to the Sessional paper were, as expected, an indication of the ideological divide that still existed in Kenyan society at this time. Leaders of the business community (still dominated by whites) spoke favorably about this document and did not in any way seem alarmed about their future in the country. M.M. Madan, President of the Central Chamber of Commerce and Sir Colin Campbell, President of

⁴⁰ *Daily Nation* (April 12, 1965), p. 6.

⁴¹ *Daily Nation* (April 12, 1965), p. 6.

⁴² *Daily Nation* (April 12, 1965), p. 6.

⁴³ *Daily Nation* (April 12, 1965), p. 6.

the Federation of Kenya Employers, both supported the Sessional paper, especially the provision that urged private companies to institute “training programmes by foreign enterprises to promote Africanisation.”⁴⁴ Campell later elaborated on his organization’s support. “Private enterprise,” he observed, “is being encouraged in Kenya by Government action to stimulate it. Kenya had,” he continued, “avoided the mistake of ‘over-government’ which has brought close to disaster a number of countries, especially India.”⁴⁵ He urged the business community to help the Kenya government build what he called “a property -owning democracy” as an effective weapon against Communism. “When a man has something to lose, he is no longer a prey to the authoritarian attitude of the Left.”⁴⁶

The local press, which at this time principally referred to the *East African Standard* and the *Nation*, was supportive of the Sessional paper. Both papers had very close connections to the Kenyatta government. And their editors, Kenneth Bolton of the *East African Standard* and George Githii of the *Nation*, were close to key figures in Kenyatta’s government at this time. Indeed, what made Githii “an ideal candidate” for the position of Editor-in-Chief of the *Nation* was having been “Kenyatta’s press secretary” and therefore “close to the centre of power.”⁴⁷ The British intelligence services were aware of this close relationship between these papers and Kenyatta’s government during this period. Both editors were “susceptible to, and have received, guidance from the highest political quarters. It is inconceivable that they would run a campaign of political significance without the explicit or assumed concurrence of State House.”⁴⁸

It was, therefore, not surprising when the *Nation* wrote a strong editorial in support of Sir Colin Campbell’s position on the primacy of private enterprise to the development and future of Kenya, as part of his organization’s endorsement of the Sessional paper. “To promote rapid industrialization in developing countries,” the editorial stated, “it is in

⁴⁴ *Daily Nation* (April 29, 1965), p. 16.

⁴⁵ *Daily Nation* (June 24, 1965), p. 3.

⁴⁶ *Daily Nation* (June 24, 1965), p. 3.

⁴⁷ Gerard Loughran, *Birth of a NATION: The Story of a Newspaper in Kenya* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 84.

⁴⁸ MAC 71/8/57 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Corruption in Kenya.

the ultimate interests of all concerned that Governmental control should be kept to the minimum ... In Kenya's circumstances, and according to the philosophy of African Socialism, it is imperative that some type of private property must be allowed to co-exist with public property." The editorial concluded by praising Kenyatta's government for extending a "welcoming hand to private investors, internal and external, to play their part in building up the economy."⁴⁹

The labor movement did not initially have a unified position on this question. It needs to be recalled that at this time the labor movement was briefly divided between, "the Government-accepted and Western inclined Kenya Federation of Labour and a dissident faction [Kenya African Workers Congress] led by Ochola Mak'Anyengo and Dennis Akumu," who controlled "the powerful Petroleum and Dock Workers Trade Unions."⁵⁰ As expected the Kenya Federation of Labor led by Senator C. Lubembe, warmly "congratulated the Government for 'a truly African paper.'" On the other hand, Ochola Mak'Anyengo, on behalf of his union, gave qualified support. The Kenya Petroleum Oil Workers' Union "accepted the document in principle as a step towards social justice." The union however was intent on proposing "certain amendments when the Paper was debated in Parliament."⁵¹ This, of course, was not to be as the Sessional paper was unanimously endorsed by the Parliament without amendments.

At a May Day rally in 1965 in Mombasa, the Dock Workers' Union led by Denis Akumu called for "greater socialization of Kenya's economy." Akumu's definition of socialism differed from that contained in the Sessional paper. "Socialism," he insisted, "must mean eventual ownership of all means of production, land, exchange and distribution. It must mean centralization of education, and the granting of free welfare services."⁵²

It was feared in the government that the radical labor union leadership posed a credible political threat. The British intelligence services noted that Akumu and Mak'Anyengo, "both Luo" had "travelled extensively in Eastern Europe," and also that, they had been encouraged in their activities by

⁴⁹ *Daily Nation* (June 25, 1965), p. 6.

⁵⁰ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 4.

⁵¹ *Daily Nation* (April 29, 1965), p. 16.

⁵² *Daily Nation* (May 3, 1965), p. 5.

“the Hungarian, Czechoslovak and Russian Embassies.”⁵³ Kenyatta moved quickly to squelch this threat by dissolving both the Kenya Federation of Labour and the Kenya African Workers Congress. In their place, “a new Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU)” was formed in September, and went into effect in November 1965. In the new arrangement, the “government would have fairly wide powers to take part in COTU’s affairs, including the choice of the national officials.”⁵⁴ In practical terms, this new development neutralized the political threat of the trade union movement to conservatives and their agenda in Kenya.⁵⁵

With the passage of time, the Sessional paper came to be subjected to a variety of local and international scholarly analyses and commentaries. In 1965, however, the article “Problems Facing Our Socialism,”⁵⁶ by Barack H. Obama, was one of the few robust and intellectually sophisticated published critiques of the Sessional paper. Obama’s critique pointed to the doctrine’s lack of definition and specificity. This vagueness made it difficult to see “those characteristics in which Kenya is unique.” The Sessional paper was equally vague in the matter of African Socialism being independent “from foreign ideologies.” What did this mean? “What foreign ideology is meant here? Does what occurs in Ghana, Tanzania, Great Britain or the USA be considered foreign?”⁵⁷ It was difficult, Obama correctly noted, to “talk of the independence of something people do not know.” What is the basis of such contention?

Obama’s critique also touched on the sensitive question of land ownership and especially the rationale given in the Sessional paper for endorsing individual title deeds to land. The African tradition, which formed the philosophical basis of the Sessional paper, “is fundamentally based

⁵³FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 5.

⁵⁴David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 241. Also see, *Daily Nation* (September 2, 1965), p. 1. “President Kenyatta yesterday nullified all Kenya’s existing trade unions and announced that the Government’s plan was to set up immediately a Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU) ... The President made it clear that that he personally will appoint the Secretary-General of the new body—but from a list supplied by its governing council.”

⁵⁵David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 241.

⁵⁶Barack H. Obama, “Problems Facing Our Socialism,” *East Africa Journal* (July, 1965).

⁵⁷Barack H. Obama, “Problems Facing Our Socialism,” p. 27.

on communal ownership of major means of production and sharing of fruits of the labours, so expended in production, to the benefit of all; and yet the paper advocates land title deeds and private ownership of land—a major means of production. How do these two conflicting factors reconcile?” he asked.⁵⁸ On social classes, Obama raised questions that would be repeatedly asked in subsequent scholarship. Is the African society essentially immune from this phenomenon? “If one says that the African society was classless as the paper says, what is there to stop it from being a class society as time goes on?”⁵⁹ Regarding the future, the relevant question was whether what was outlined in the Sessional paper, “if implemented was enough to eschew this danger.” Lastly, he touched on the matter of economics and political power. The linkage between economic power and political influence was clearly evident in most of the Western world. Thus, it was “strange for the government” to hold on to the proposition that “the principle of political equality eliminates the use of economic power as a political base.” One of the inevitable outcomes of maintaining the “free enterprise” system is that “some will accumulate more than others.” Under such circumstances, the poor are most likely to be persuaded, “to vote for those who offer them money.” This practice was in fact, already afoot in the country.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Barack H. Obama, “Problems Facing Our Socialism,” p. 27.

⁵⁹Barack H. Obama, “Problems Facing Our Socialism,” p. 28.

⁶⁰Barack H. Obama, “Problems Facing Our Socialism,” p. 30. It is useful to mention here that Barack H. Obama was a Harvard trained economist and the father of Barack H. Obama, the first African American President of the USA, inaugurated as the 44th President. In 1995, Barack H. Obama published the now famous book, *Dreams From My Father* (New York: Times Books/Random House, 1995), as “a record of a personal, interior journey—a boy’s search for his father, and through that search a workable meaning for his life as a black American” p. ix. The somewhat tumultuous life and career of Obama in Kenya after arriving from Harvard with a Master’s degree is ably covered by his daughter, Auma, in her recent book: Auma Obama, *And Then Life Happens: A Memoir*. Translated by Ross Benjamin (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2012). Auma points out that her father’s career was negatively affected due to his opposition to “ethnically motivated cronyism” that gave rise to “corruption and nepotism” with most senior positions in the government occupied by the Kikuyu. “My father,” Auma writes, “refused to play along with the game of corruption and nepotism. He criticized vocally those two elements of political praxis—and was thus systematically chastised as a ‘know-it-all’ Luo and marginalized to the point that he ultimately lost his position. His efforts to find a new job were blocked nationwide. He then had to surrender his passport so he could not go abroad” pp. 63–64.

The most pointed local criticisms toward the Sessional paper came from students of the Lumumba Institute. The institute, funded mostly by the Soviet Union, had been in existence since 1964. Kenyatta and Odinga served as its trustees, and Kaggia as Chairman of its governing board. The institute was supposed to “provide party officials with organizational and ideological training.”⁶¹ It was clearly the most visible ideological center associated with the radicals in the KANU in the period before 1966. From its inception, the British intelligence services viewed it as a possible “training ground of Left wing intellectuals and revolutionaries throughout East Africa.”⁶²

In their criticisms, the students urged the government to undertake a much more aggressive and forthright commitment to “widespread nationalization in Kenya as a corner stone of African Socialism.” Their definition of African Socialism was very close to Scientific Socialism. And this would, in part, translate to “public ownership of land, factories, banks, heavy industries, communications and commerce.” They faulted the government for having taken rather timid and contradictory steps in the Sessional paper. They argued that, “if our African Socialism falls short of ... scientific explanation, it is nothing but a kind of perpetuation of exploitation of the capitalist system in disguise.”⁶³ The original vision of the KANU to enact in Kenya a “welfare state seemed to be vanishing away.” What had gone wrong? Why had the promise of the welfare state not materialized? According to the students, it “was because the party machinery came into the hands of imperialist money show-boys, semi-nationalists, pseudo-nationalists, exploiters and opportunists who prefer to fill their bellies and to align with imperialists rather than with the poor people of Kenya.”⁶⁴

The reaction of the conservatives within the KANU and the government was immediate and predictably hostile. “Within a day Parliament had approved a private member’s motion, seconded by Mboya, for government takeover of the Institute.”⁶⁵ In the debate on this motion, Mbiyu Koinange, Minister of Education, stated that he “refused to

⁶¹David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 234.

⁶²FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 4.

⁶³*Daily Nation* (April 30, 1965), p. 24.

⁶⁴*Daily Nation* (April 30, 1965), p. 24.

⁶⁵David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 235.

accept the authority of the lecturers” at the Lumumba Institute, “to define the ‘developing subject’ of African Socialism.”⁶⁶

Conservatives saw the Lumumba Institute as a dangerous anti-African Socialism institution. Senator W. Wamalwa expressed, in the Parliament, “surprise at the Government’s decision to endorse the institute,” which was teaching “scientific Communism” and not African Socialism. This was intolerable since from “what he had heard of Communism, once it is concentrated in a country that country never recovered ‘and your cousin is no longer your cousin.’” Further, there was no conceivable value in forging links with Communist countries. What help did Kenya expect “to get from China ‘which has over 600 million people most of whom are starving ... and yet we have surplus food?’”⁶⁷

These sentiments of the conservatives in the KANU were supported by the USA through Attwood, its Ambassador to Kenya. He was pleased that the Sessional paper “encouraged private investment and explicitly rejected Marxism and ‘scientific socialism.’” He summarized the Sessional paper as “a flexible, pragmatic document that reflected Mboya’s practical thinking.”⁶⁸ Western journalists based in Nairobi or visiting Kenya on assignment at this time arrived at similar conclusions. Attwood mentioned that Roscoe Drummond, a powerful US journalist with a syndicated column that appeared in over “150 newspapers in the USA and overseas” had characterized the intent and vision of the Sessional paper as “standing ‘about midway between Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society and the conservative wing of British socialism.’”⁶⁹ The inference was clear: this document was not a threat to capitalism or Western interests.

Similar positive assessments were published in the *New York Times*. On April 28, 1965, the paper noted with satisfaction that Kenyatta’s “brand of African Socialism would not countenance taxes so high that they would inhibit accumulation of savings or discourage flow of capital into the country.” Also of interest to its readers was that although nationalization was permitted, nonetheless the Sessional paper made it

⁶⁶ *Daily Nation* (May 1, 1965), p. 1.

⁶⁷ *Daily Nation* (July 3, 1965), p. 4.

⁶⁸ William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 247.

⁶⁹ William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 247. Drummond died in 1983. His syndicated column “reflected the view point of a moderate Eisenhower-style Republican.” See, *The Milwaukee Journal* (October 1, 1983), p. 6.

very clear that “the Government remains committed by the Constitution and by the manifesto of the Kenya African National Union, the country’s only party, to ‘prompt payment of full compensation whenever nationalization is used.’”⁷⁰ The *New York Times* was evidently pleased with Kenyatta and his policies in Kenya at this time. “In recent months,” it wrote, “Mr. Kenyatta has booted out Chinese Communist agents, cracked down on the left wing of his own party and helped fashion for Kenya a brand of ‘African Socialism’ relying heavily on private initiative and private capital.”⁷¹

Attwood’s ideological agenda in favor of individualism, capitalism, Kenyatta, and the propertied powerful people around him, was unable to find any rationale for the existence of radical nationalists, let alone Odinga’s political inclinations. He derisively referred to Odinga as “Double O” and in the end dismissed him as irrelevant but dangerous, on account of his “emotionalism and a vast ignorance of the outside world.” To Attwood, the radicals all appeared “as opportunists hunting for a grievance.”⁷²

MacDonald supported the Sessional paper, which he called a “rather remarkably wise document.” His only problem was that there hadn’t “been any vigorous and concerted effort to propagate” its teachings.⁷³ The British intelligence services concluded that the need to “raise the African mass economically and socially” was “behind the cloudy and much quoted philosophy of ‘African Socialism.’” What concerned these intelligence services was the fear that some of the initiatives to be undertaken “with the urgency” that Kenya’s “difficult situation requires” may damage the “British, and Western position, both politically and economically.”⁷⁴ The rise of what they called “a more authoritarian structure of society” and some form of “State Socialism” was seen as

⁷⁰ *New York Times* (April 28, 1965), p. 8.

⁷¹ *New York Times* (October 23, 1965), p. 30.

⁷² Clyde Sanger, Review of *The Reds and the Blacks*, by William Attwood, in the *New York Times* (March 19, 1967), p. BR 22.

⁷³ MAC 71/8/52 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Prospect.

⁷⁴ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 7. In 1964/65, the fear was that through the influence of the radicals who had yet to be jettisoned from the KANU, the government may be “tempted to draw on ready-made Communist theories, techniques and organization.”

“almost inevitable” in Kenya. Still, these intelligence services warned that the British government and its organs needed to exert themselves “to prevent this going so far as to threaten the British investment and the British community in Kenya.” An effective way of achieving these goals was to continue to give “support and sympathy to Mr. Kenyatta’s government.”⁷⁵

The position of non-alignment stipulated in the Sessional paper, and subsequently reaffirmed with vigor at public rallies by Kenyatta and his Ministers, did not alarm the British. There was no fear of an imminent erosion of British influence in Kenya. The conclusion of the British intelligence services was that, “In Kenya’s present stage of development, the influence of the West means the influence of Britain, the one country they really know well, and which they respect and trust, though they do not like to admit it publicly.”⁷⁶ An example of this very “close and multifarious” relationship between the two countries, was the fact that the British diplomats were “exempt from the restrictions which the Kenya Government have placed on the size and freedom of movement of foreign Missions; restrictions which the Kenyans try particularly to enforce on the Communist Embassies.”⁷⁷ This “special relationship” between Britain and Kenya at this time, recognized two essential points: That “Kenyatta’s home policy is non-tribal African Socialism favouring the Kikuyu,” while “his external policy may be described as non-alignment favouring the West.”⁷⁸

Why did the British provide such strong and “multifarious” support for Kenyatta’s variety of African Socialism? What did Kenyatta’s Kenya mean or signify to the British at this time? The answer was provided, in detail, by Sir Edward Peck, MacDonald’s successor as the British High Commissioner to Kenya, from 1966 to 1968.⁷⁹ In his own words:

⁷⁵FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 7.

⁷⁶FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 6.

⁷⁷FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), Kenya: Communism, p. 6.

⁷⁸MAC 71/8/62 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: First Impressions.

⁷⁹See, Clyde Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), p. 405. Sir Edward Peck died in August 2009. In 1968, he left Kenya after only two years to be appointed as the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee of the British Government. He later served as the British representative to NATO (1970–1975). See, *The Guardian* (August 4, 2009), p. 38.

In the final analysis, the British interest in Kenya is to maintain and nurture a success story. We have already done better here since independence in 1963 than many people 10 years ago believed possible. We wish stability preserved in Kenya, not only in order to secure a market for British exports (although that is important), nor simply to protect about 30,000 European settlers, businessmen and advisers who are United Kingdom citizens (although that is also important), but in order to create a viable truly independent African state where the lives of her inhabitants of all tribes and races will get better and better as the country develops. In short, we want stability, peace and progress in Kenya as a further proof to ourselves and the rest of the world that our policies of colonial emancipation and Commonwealth co-operation in the last two decades have not been in vain.⁸⁰

In these initial years of *Uhuru*, Kenyatta's Kenya gave Britain a warm feeling of satisfaction at its imperial mission and its aftermath in Africa. As the British saw it, this was clearly a "success story" to be both celebrated and protected. "If one considers Kenya in relation to the circle of her immediate neighbours," Peck wrote to London, "she stands out like a sane man in a lunatic asylum."⁸¹

For conservatives in the KANU, the major issue remaining to be resolved between 1965 and 1966 concerned the membership of Odinga and the radicals in the party. Odinga's political power had been systematically eroded and his influence in the government immeasurably reduced by his appointment to be Vice President without portfolio. But he was still the Vice President of the KANU and therefore in line to succeed Kenyatta in the event of his death or some other unforeseen reason. This scenario was clearly not acceptable to the conservatives, the Americans, or the British who had all worked so hard to push Odinga from power and influence.

The road map toward this goal sought to avoid calling for the general party conference to elect new leaders until the conservatives were assured of the final victory. To facilitate this, the party branches had to be purged of supporters of the radicals. Also, it was vital to ensure that the radicals no

⁸⁰MAC 71/8/85 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Tribalism in Kenya.

⁸¹MAC 71/8/62 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: First Impressions.

longer had access to any funding to use in mounting a counter-offensive that would embarrass the conservatives.

In March 1965, Mboya called for party reorganization at the district level. “We are fully aware,” he stated “of the importance of an effective party machine.”⁸² Within the same month, Mwai Kibaki, who also served as the party’s Executive Officer, offered an explanation of the inactive past and a formula for the way forward. The party had not been able to work “out the practical meaning and application of its election manifesto.” From its inception until 1963, the KANU had been able to “rally the minds and hearts of the people around one objective—which was the united struggle for independence.” In the post *Uhuru* period, the party “must interpret the practical meaning of African Socialism in economic and social terms which the manifesto commits us to do.”⁸³ To be relevant once more, the party needed to show the “ordinary man in the street what African Socialism means in terms of wages, rents, crops, and ownership of property.”

A vivid indication of both the frustration and power struggle that was now underway in the KANU occurred in July 1965 when 27 officials claiming to represent “17 Kanu branches throughout the country” attempted to seize the KANU headquarters in Nairobi and declare themselves the new officers of the party “pending an immediate annual-delegates’ conference.”⁸⁴ Attwood characterized them as “a gang of KANU officials” who had recently graduated from the Lumumba Institute. The British intelligence services saw them in a similar manner as products of the Lumumba Institute who had “tried to seize KANU HQ to elect fresh national officials.” According to these intelligence services, these KANU branch officials were encouraged in this high-stakes challenge to the KANU and therefore the government by “the Chinese officials” and not Odinga or the Soviet officials.⁸⁵

Njonjo reacted, in Attwood’s phrase, by “throwing the book at them.”⁸⁶ He personally appeared in the Nairobi Magistrate’s court “for the Republic” and described what had occurred at the KANU offices

⁸² *Daily Nation* (March 8, 1965), p. 3.

⁸³ *Daily Nation* (March 22, 1965), p. 3.

⁸⁴ *Daily Nation* (July 7, 1965), p. 1.

⁸⁵ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

⁸⁶ William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 256.

as an “abortive coup d’etat.” This failed coup plot had been “master-minded by a very responsible person in the country.”⁸⁷ Indeed, as the case unfolded, the government sought to reaffirm Njonjo’s claim. One of the accused branch party official was alleged to have said, “We have come to clear up the party headquarters and shortly the Government of the Republic will also be cleared up in the same way.”⁸⁸ The group, according to its “manifesto” read in court, was particularly incensed at Mboya due to the “arrogant, careless and irresponsible manner” that he had run the party’s administration and failure to adequately manage its affairs.⁸⁹

While not rising to the level of an “abortive coup d’etat” as Njonjo alleged, it was nonetheless evident that the accused represented radical local party officials opposed to Mboya and the conservatives. Was the timing of this event, a miscalculation on their part? Did they want to force the issue hoping, even at this late hour, that Kenyatta was after all a closet radical and would in the end side with them?

The end was predictable. All members of the group were jailed. The government came back to this theme of a coup d’etat. “It is ... clear from the evidence that after having taken over Kanu, the ultimate aim was of the accused was to take over the Government of the country.”⁹⁰ This was clearly a deliberate overstatement. Njonjo’s office did not produce in the court the nature or even the details of this elaborate plot to take over the government. For the conservatives, the trial and imprisonment of these party branch officials had been a significant strategic victory. Attwood, privy to secret strategic details at this time, pointed out the ultimate impact of this confusing but widely publicized episode.

KANU branches got the message straight from Gatundu: all Lumumba Institute graduates—whom Odinga had selected and Russians had so carefully groomed to take over the party—were now out. The hotheads who staged the abortive raid on party headquarters had clumsily played into Kenyatta’s hands; by challenging Mboya they were also challenging the

⁸⁷ *Daily Nation*, (July 8, 1965), p. 1.

⁸⁸ *Daily Nation* (September 11, 1965), p. 1. The accused were alleged to have also stated that the aim of the take-over was to eliminate “imperialist agents.” These included: Tom Mboya, Joseph Murumbi, Kariuki Njiri and John Keen, p. 4.

⁸⁹ *Daily Nation* (September 14, 1965), p. 4.

⁹⁰ *Daily Nation* (September 29, 1965), p. 1.

party leadership, and KANU's president was also Kenya's President, Jomo Kenyatta.⁹¹

Mboya was uncompromising and defiant in his response to the criticisms against the KANU and him personally, by the now jailed branch party officials. "The story of KANU," he insisted, "is a story of achievement and success." He, however, acknowledged that the party's major weakness was "lack of activity in the branches."⁹² Not surprisingly, the party's senior officials turned most of their attention to the branches. The sole purpose of this belated attention was not to generically reactivate them for the good of the party in general, but to influence and then ensure the selection of officials almost certain to support the conservatives and their agenda at the forthcoming party conference. Prior to the end 1965, the radicals were heavily represented within the district branches of the party. This factor, in part, accounted for the hesitation of the conservatives to call for party elections. The fear was that such elections might have handed victory to the radicals.

By early 1966, the conservatives in the party led by Mboya "with President Kenyatta's blessing considered that they had been able to reverse this position—by various, often no less questionable methods than those of their opponents, including the establishment of rival district Party branches."⁹³

One of the most effective weapons that Kenyatta employed to help his position and that of his conservative allies against the radicals was to ensure that Odinga had no access to external funding in the crucial period before and after the party conference in March, 1966. By mid-June 1965, Kenyatta and Attwood reached an agreement through which Western (mainly US) "labor groups would stop subsidizing Mboya and the KFL," and in turn Kenyatta would ensure that "Russian and Chinese aid to the leftist leader, Vice President Odinga, would also end."⁹⁴ The CIA had been keen to cultivate Kenyatta after 1963. The USA had two initial objectives: "to insure that he did not support the Congolese

⁹¹William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, pp. 256–257.

⁹²*Daily Nation* (October 2, 1965), p. 3.

⁹³MAC 71/8/45 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), KANU Party Conference, 1966.

⁹⁴Ellen Ray, William Schaap, Karl Van Meter and Louis Wolf, *Dirty Work: The CIA in Africa*, p. 61. For Attwood's account of these events see, *The Blacks and the Reds*, p. 241.

rebels, and more generally to get him to close ranks against the agitating Kenya left. It was a strategy which has become familiar enough: utilize the credibility of the appropriate flexible militants to crush the rest.”⁹⁵

To put this agreement with Attwood into practice, Kenyatta summoned Ambassadors from the Communist countries and told them to desist from disbursing funds to Odinga and his allies. If they did not heed his warning “he would demand their instant recall from Nairobi.” MacDonald relayed to London all the details about this meeting between Kenyatta and these Ambassadors, whom he called the “red Santa Clauses.” The Ambassadors acceded to Kenyatta’s demands. Afterwards, “each of them in turn talked privately to Odinga, telling him that he would receive no more subsidies from them.” MacDonald noted with satisfaction that this sudden withdrawal of funds had left Odinga stunned. It had led to the “crippling of his influence throughout the land.”⁹⁶

Desperate for funding, especially in this charged period when the conservatives were on the march, MacDonald knew that Odinga had, in short order, flown to London for the key “purpose of contacting the Russian, Chinese and other Communist Embassies in Britain in the hope of persuading them to get the decision communicated to him by their lesser colleagues in Nairobi reversed.” This did not happen and indeed the “the suspension of monies announced in Nairobi was confirmed.”⁹⁷

Back in Nairobi, according to MacDonald, the Ambassadors suggested a course of action that they hoped would be useful to Odinga. While they were disappointed that “many of the individuals whom he had bribed had proved unreliable allies who subsequently shifted their

⁹⁵Ellen Ray, William Schaap, Karl Van Meter, and Louis Wolf, *Dirty Work: The CIA in Africa*, p. 61.

⁹⁶MAC 71/8/42 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Situation.

⁹⁷MAC 71/8/42 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Situation. There can be little doubt that the British intelligence services had managed by this time to infiltrate into Odinga’s inner circle. MacDonald got the details of Odinga’s trip to London and the refusal by these countries to fund Odinga anymore, through Odinga’s “own account in a private conversation.” MacDonald also reported to London that even after this episode, the Communist Ambassadors still regarded Odinga as “a possible useful comrade at a later stage of affairs; and possibly they continue to give him funds on a much lower scale than hitherto through some undetectable source.” See, MAC 71/8/42.

support to President Kenyatta,” they nonetheless wanted Odinga to focus on the future given that Kenyatta had managed to consolidate his power and would remain so for a few more years. “They therefore advised Odinga to mend his political fences with Jomo Kenyatta, to cooperate more or less loyally with him for the next period of time ahead, and to suspend” what MacDonald called “all obvious conspiratorial actions against him.” The Ambassadors also “counseled him not to resign from the KANU Party to form an opposition Socialist party, but to continue adhering to the one-party system in Kenya, using every endeavour to recover support for himself and those who think like him within KANU—and to bide his time.”⁹⁸ Odinga, according to the British intelligence services, apparently received similar advice from the “British Communists in London.”⁹⁹

The power of this counsel to Odinga as a recommended operational strategy was quickly overtaken by events. The conservatives now assured of electoral victory, called for what appeared like an abrupt general party conference at Limuru in March 1966. Mboya’s announcement of this conference was most “certainly unconstitutional.” He had “neither consulted the national executive, nor given three weeks’ notice, nor issued an agenda and statement of accounts, all of which were required by the KANU constitution.”¹⁰⁰ But this abruptness was not an afterthought on the part of Mboya, the result of poor planning, or even incompetent administration. It was a deliberate strategy with an in-built element of surprise. The aim was to thwart any efforts on the part of Odinga to organize his supporters prior to the conference. Attwood applauded this effort by Mboya and the conservatives in the KANU as a wise strategy that prevented Odinga being able to “buy votes if given time.”

Still, there was opposition to Mboya’s announcement. “A group of about 10 Senators and 40 Lower House Members, including three Assistant Ministers” signed “a memorandum to President Kenyatta asking him to put off proposed national Kanu elections for at least a month.” Included in the group were: Dr. M. Waiyaki, Assistant Minister, Office of the Vice President; John Keen, the Party’s national organizing

⁹⁸MAC 71/8/42 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Situation.

⁹⁹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹⁰⁰David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 242.

secretary; J. Konchellah, Assistant Minister of Education; T. Okelo Odongo, Assistant Minister of Finance; H. Wariithi; J.D. Kali; J.M. Kariuki; B.M. Kaggia, and M. Muliro.¹⁰¹ This group pointed out that Mboya's announcement was evidently unconstitutional. Also, time was needed to properly conduct "new elections in all the branches," under the "supervision of administrative officers and police or a commission appointed by the President."

A counter petition to Kenyatta urging him to allow the conference to proceed as per Mboya's announcement was signed by over 100 Members of Parliament. "The petition stated that signatories 'stand by and support the arrangement made for holding of the conference, that they are confident that the holding of the conference meets with the expressed desire of the Kenya nation, and that the proper consultations have been carried out prior to the fixing of the date of the conference.'"¹⁰² As expected, the KANU Parliamentary Group, now dominated by the conservatives, duly endorsed Mboya's announcement.

On the eve of this conference, Odinga provided one of his most detailed reactions to what he correctly categorized as a long and systematic campaign by the conservatives to oust him from power. This campaign, he contended, had been "inspired by the imperialists' to isolate and ridicule him and to try to 'eliminate my public activities and service to our people.'"¹⁰³ Some of the actions and rumors advanced against Odinga included: unfounded and malicious rumors that he planned to overthrow the government; political murder of Pio Gama Pinto; attack on Lumumba Institute as a Communist institution; exclusion from delegation to the Commonwealth conference for having charged the British and American Ambassadors with interfering in the affairs of the country; the story of the Uganda arms convoy; deliberate embarrassment at the United Nations Day when a Minister appeared to represent the President and took the salute in the presence of the Vice President; the calling of the KANU general conference without the Vice President of the country and party knowing about it before hand.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ *Daily Nation* (March 9, 1966), p. 24.

¹⁰² *Daily Nation* (March 10, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁰³ *Daily Nation* (March 10, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Daily Nation* (March 10, 1966), pp. 1, 16. Attwood alleges that "A Czech working in the Ministry of Information helped draft" Odinga's statement. See, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 266.

There were not many, if any at all, among the KANU delegates converging on Limuru willing to see any merit in Odinga's narration of repeated humiliation and the impact of rumors spread against him with the intent of damaging his political position and aspirations in the country. Indeed, the government dismissed his complaints as being unfounded. And once again, there were loud calls for Odinga to resign from both the party and the government.

Another development deliberately timed to have an impact on this conference was the expulsion of diplomats from several Communist Embassies in the country. "The USSR Embassy lost both its First Secretaries ... The list also included the Second Secretary at the Czechoslovak Embassy and a clerk at the Embassy of the People's Republic of China," plus journalists from the Czechoslovak News Agency and the Soviet News Agency.¹⁰⁵ No official explanation was immediately provided for the expulsions. Attwood, with obvious knowledge of this matter, stated that, "all six happened to be intelligence agents with records of close association with Odinga and his lieutenants." Subsequently it would be stated that the diplomats had been "expelled from Kenya for paying money to Odinga."¹⁰⁶ Attwood understood the propaganda value of these expulsions coinciding, as they did, with the KANU conference. "The expulsions were headlined in the morning papers, along with a statement by Ngala and one hundred members of the Parliament, denouncing Odinga and his supporters as 'agents of rapacious international Communism'. These were the stories that the delegates read on their way to the opening of the conference at Limuru."¹⁰⁷

The British intelligence services, while obviously supporting these expulsions, nonetheless expressed some muted concern about their possible impact on Kenya's image among fellow African countries. "The deportation of 11 Communist diplomats and correspondents which accompanied the Conference may raise doubts about Kenya's non-alignment in the minds of other African Governments, and later on, she may well be tempted to take some compensating actions to redress the

¹⁰⁵ *Daily Nation* (March 11, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁰⁶FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), *The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya*.

¹⁰⁷William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, pp. 266–267.

balance.” The conclusion was that almost all African governments “were pre-occupied with the problems of their own internal instability” and as such, they were unlikely to put any external pressure on Kenyatta’s government due to these expulsions.¹⁰⁸

Expenses for this “swift and well organized” conference were paid largely by the USA. As Mboya’s biographer aptly notes, “Up-country delegates were afforded lavish accommodation and hospitality. In view of KANU’s notorious indebtedness, the embittered radicals had good cause to suspect outside—that is, American—assistance ... of course money was important and no doubt it helped make up various delegates’ minds for them.”¹⁰⁹ This was not lost on Odinga who came “to see his defeat as the work of the Americans supporting Mboya and Moi.” The British intelligence services agreed noting that, “it did appear that large sums of money were spent on accommodating the delegates.”¹¹⁰

Kenyatta’s opening speech at the conference acknowledged how the dissolution of the KADU had substantially changed the face of Kenya politics. “Our greatest triumph as a party and nation,” he declared, “came with the voluntary dissolution of Kadu. This is the test and justification for our policies in our first year of independence.”¹¹¹ This conference had therefore been convened to affirm the ideological and tactical triumph of the conservatives. In the end, former members of the KADU were elected to no less than six of the new positions.

The new KANU constitution ratified at this conference abolished the post of Deputy President of the party. This was by far the most important and consequential provision of the new constitution. This post was until then held by Odinga. The rationale given by the party for this change touched on the obvious matter of succession. “Having rejected the concept of automatic succession for the Republican Constitution, and desiring greater unity, under one undisputed leader without a shadow, it is not felt necessary to have a Deputy President over and above the Provincial Vice Presidents.”¹¹² Instead of a single Vice

¹⁰⁸MAC 71/8/47 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), KANU Party Conference, 1966.

¹⁰⁹David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 242.

¹¹⁰FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹¹¹*Daily Nation* (March 12, 1966), p. 3.

¹¹²*Daily Nation* (March 10, 1966), p. 3.

President, there would be “eight co-equal Vice Presidents; one from each Province and from Nairobi.” The new constitution considerably strengthened the positions of the President and the Secretary General of the party.

The conservatives were briefly stunned by the unexpected victory of Kaggia to the post of Vice President of the party for Central Province handily defeating Gichuru. Kenyatta “refused to accept the result” and after his personal intervention, aggressively canvassing delegates from Central Province, Gichuru was elected “by a show of hands” and not by secret ballot as had been the case before when Kaggia won.¹¹³

The outcome of the Limuru conference has to be seen as the ultimate triumph of the conservatives within the KANU. But in reality, this outcome was not simply a Kenya affair with two ideological camps appealing to the electorate for votes. Attwood acknowledged that, “good team work had given Kenya’s constructivists a political victory.”¹¹⁴ Here, the US and British intelligence services, Kenyatta and his conservative allies, had co-operated to oust the feared radical nationalists from power. It is worth pointing out that co-operation between the US and British intelligence services in the advancement of Western interests especially in the former colonies was, and is not, uncommon. Indeed, this was remarkably common during the Cold War.¹¹⁵ This continuous involvement by Western intelligence services in Africa, may partly account for “Africa’s condition as a continent in almost perpetual turmoil.” In the past, this has been achieved through, “secret financing of political parties through clandestine mercenary wars to sponsored coups against established rulers. British contribution, rooted in the experience of colonial administration, was among the most important and relatively successful in their terms.”¹¹⁶

Certainly, in Kenya, the ousting of Odinga and the radicals from the KANU and power was, a “British inspired coup.” More precisely, “MacDonald guided Kenyatta to an arrangement which placed the

¹¹³FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya. Also see, MAC 71/8/46 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), KANU Party Conference, 1966.

¹¹⁴William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 269.

¹¹⁵See, Ellen Ray, William Schaap, Karl Van Meter and Louis Wolf, *Dirty Work: The CIA in Africa*, pp. 14–18.

¹¹⁶Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 143.

moderates in a commanding position. This process continued in 1965–66.”¹¹⁷ The journey to Limuru repeatedly demonstrated a very strong desire on the part of the conservatives “to inflict a severe defeat on Vice President Odinga and his progressive supporters.”¹¹⁸ But defeat was not enough. For this outcome to have the desired effect, it was important to publicly humiliate Odinga and the radicals.

As expected, the radicals strongly condemned the Limuru conference as “a thoroughly rigged affair.” They pointed out the many irregularities that were part of this conference. Against all hope, they hoped that Kenyatta would intervene and call for a properly constituted conference if only to restore the party’s reputation. Luke Obok, Member for Alego, also pointed out that, “the whole country knows that the idea of abolishing the post of Deputy President of Kanu was to get rid of Mr. Odinga.”¹¹⁹ This outcome was the result of “certain elements in the party” having engineered “coups in the branches in preparation for the annual convention.”

Throughout the preceding period of ideological struggle within the KANU, especially from 1964 until the Limuru conference, the radicals had given the impression of wanting to “fight from within the party” with no visible intention of launching an independent radical socialist party. This strategy could only work so long as the radicals gained control of the major organs of the party and edged out the conservatives, including Mboya. Yet by remaining within the KANU for so long, even when their differences with the conservatives were so evident, they had to submit to the wishes of the party. On some level, this compromised the radicals. This was particularly true with the publication of the *Sessional Paper No. 10*. This document defined “African Socialism in terms to which the Radicals could not logically take exception, although it explicitly rejected expropriation of property and full nationalization of the means of production.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁷FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹¹⁸MAC 71/8/50 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), KANU Party Conference, 1966.

¹¹⁹*Daily Nation* (March 15, 1966), p. 20.

¹²⁰Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963–8* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 69.

As members of the KANU, they had voted with the conservatives to give this document unanimous endorsement by the Parliament. Odinga and Oneko had, as part of the Cabinet, also endorsed the Sessional paper. This is a point that Kenyatta had emphasized when he officially presented the Sessional paper to the public. “Having achieved acquiescence in this definition, the Government was able subsequently to label those KANU members who continued to adopt a more radical stand on land and nationalization as dissenting from the party view.”¹²¹

During this period when the conservatives had taken the initiative, after the assassination of Pio Gama Pinto, the radicals’ agenda was clearly drowned out by very effective propaganda against Communism. To oppose the provisions of the Sessional paper and Kenyatta was to be a communist, and a purveyor of foreign unAfrican ideology.

By the time the Limuru conference was convened, there had been substantial changes in the political landscape. The conservatives had been largely successful in defining and then labeling the radicals. It is on this slippery yet hardening landscape that the radicals had to unfold their message even as they continued to deny any connection to Communism.

On March 15, 1966, some radical members of the KANU announced the formation of the Kenya Peoples Union (KPU). Its initial membership was “totally devoid of prominent figures in national politics ... President of the KPU was named as Mr. George Okuor Gari, a farmer from Kisii.”¹²² As part of this announcement, the KPU claimed that it had the backing of over 104 Members of Parliament. Mboya dismissed all those who had joined the KPU as “dissident elements whose record was well known for squabbles and personality conflicts.” In the meantime, Kenyatta issued a series of statements warning that “anyone now holding office in the party or the Government who ‘crossed the floor’ to join an Opposition party would be expelled.”¹²³

On April 14, 1966, Odinga resigned from the KANU and also from his position as Vice President in Kenyatta’s government. This was expected. For almost 2 years, Kenyatta and the conservatives had been working toward this outcome. From then until Odinga’s detention in 1969, the conservatives would repeatedly claim that “KANU had not

¹²¹Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963–8*, p. 69.

¹²²*Daily Nation* (March 16, 1966), p. 1.

¹²³*Daily Nation* (March 17, 1966), p. 1.

expelled him, he had rejected KANU.”¹²⁴ Yet, it was obvious that indeed this “resignation was forced upon him ... for little by little, all his power had been subtly taken from him.”¹²⁵

Odinga’s long letter of resignation had two aims: to appeal to the public for some understanding and maybe solidarity, and then offer a brief dissection of how policies being pursued by Kenyatta were a violation of both the spirit and intent of the original KANU Manifesto. That Kenyatta had, in essence, betrayed the original aims of the KANU Manifesto and that this had been done under the direction of Western imperialists eager to maintain their position of power and influence in the country. “With the achievement of our independence,” he wrote,

the enemy went underground, regrouped, and reinforced itself from external sources. We, the new leaders of the nation, were carefully studied and the weaknesses of each of us noted. There then followed a period of intense underground activity aimed at ensaring the new leaders by exploiting their weakest points ... one result of this was that many people in responsible positions acquired property wealth mysteriously and, before they could realize what was happening, they had become prisoners of the new underground masters. If this is allowed to continue, it will soon assume control over the country’s means of production, thereby creating a class similar to the colonial master.¹²⁶

This statement, eloquent and even pained, was nonetheless too general. It avoided making specific accusations of specific leaders and trusted that the readers would make the correct and obvious inference. Maybe at another time. But in 1966, charged and fluid, the conservatives were relentless in making specific accusations on Odinga and the radicals. In fact, “To many Kenyans,” as *Newsweek* was quick to relay this managed perception, “it was Odinga who was the representative of foreign ideologies and ... had accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars from Peking and other Communist capitals.”¹²⁷

Still, Odinga managed to convey to the public that Kenyatta’s government was now beholden to what he called the “invisible government.”

¹²⁴William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks*, p. 267.

¹²⁵*Newsweek* (April 25, 1966), p. 46.

¹²⁶Odinga’s Resignation Statement, contained in *Africa Report* (May 1966), p. 8.

¹²⁷*Newsweek* (April 25, 1966), p. 46.

Kenyatta's government having "reached a point of no return" could only "do for the people the little that the underground master allows it to do."¹²⁸ Not surprisingly, this accusation by Odinga was vehemently denied by the government. Odinga was accused of being a non-team player, having mistakenly appointed himself as the sole guardian "of the welfare of the people of Kenya."¹²⁹

On April 19, 1966, 30 KANU Members of Parliament resigned from the party and joined Odinga in Opposition. Among those who initially followed Odinga in Opposition were two Assistant Ministers: Dr. Munyua Waiyaki and Tom Okello Odongo. They were followed by prominent trade union leaders: including Ochola Mak'Anyengo and Dennis Akumu. Other than Odinga, the only other Cabinet Member who resigned to join the Opposition was Ramogi Achieng Oneko, described by the British intelligence services as "intelligent, clever, good organizer. Has a difficult personality, is embittered against Kenyatta and ... committed to the support of Odinga personally whom he advises on all matters of importance."¹³⁰ It is useful to mention here that Dr. Waiyaki, while a "moving spirit behind the KPU of which his brother Kimani Waiyaki was administrative secretary, bowed to pressure to remain in KANU."¹³¹

The reaction of the conservatives was swift and punitive. Within a matter of days, the constitution was amended to essentially nullify the election to the Parliament of all those Members who had crossed and joined Odinga in the Opposition. These Members would have to seek re-election. There was an exacting penalty to pay for acts of defiance against Kenyatta and the conservatives. Once again, Mboya argued the case for the conservatives in the Parliament on this matter. A summary of his points was thus:

If Parliament was to be a mouthpiece and the instrument of the people, the Member must reflect the views of his constituents. The Government was required constitutionally to have a majority in the House of

¹²⁸Odinga's Resignation Statement, *Africa Report* (May 1966), p. 9.

¹²⁹The Government's Reply to Odinga's Resignation Statement, *Africa Report* (May 1966), p. 11.

¹³⁰FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives), Leading Personalities in Kenya.

¹³¹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

Representatives, on the assumption that if they enjoyed such a majority they also enjoyed the confidence of a majority in the country. By the same token, the individual Member of Parliament must have the support of the people. Mboya argued that this support was given to the individual Member on the basis of his party affiliation. It therefore followed, in his opinion, that resignation from the party that elected him must be interpreted as a departure from a Member's original position and implied the withdrawal of constituency support. He was no longer representative.¹³²

This manipulation of the constitution and the parliamentary procedure was aimed at discouraging any further defection from the KANU to join the Opposition. Indeed, the 13 Members who had crossed to Opposition and then gone back to the KANU requesting full reinstatement had to also seek re-election. "Instead of welcoming the repentants back in the fold, KANU told them, in effect, that although it appreciated their admissions of error, the party could not overlook the fact that they had resigned, and that they must therefore stand in a special election" to be held in June 1966 under the new law.¹³³

Was Mboya's strategy deployed rapidly because there was fear that a majority of Members of Parliament would cross and join Odinga? Even after the Limuru conference, was Kenyatta's hold on power still contested, not really secure? Were the radicals still a viable force to be reckoned with, even in their reduced circumstances? *Africa Report* stated that, "The KPU strategy appears to have been this: the resignations of MPs and Senators were to have continued on a carefully timed schedule, snowballing in such a way that by May 24, the date Parliament was convened after Easter recess, the Opposition would be large enough to propose a vote of no confidence in the government. Kenyatta would fall and Odinga would triumphantly take his place."¹³⁴ This would be difficult to verify with certainty. Yet, the actions of the conservatives do provide evidence of fear and insecurity giving rise to over-reaction on many levels.

The profile of the KPU received an immediate boost when Odinga and Kaggia joined the party "and were elected interim President and Deputy President respectively," on April 26, 1966. The KPU was, however, not officially registered until May 21, a few days before the start

¹³² Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963-8*, p. 76.

¹³³ *Africa Report* (May, 1966), p. 12.

¹³⁴ *Africa Report* (May, 1966), p. 11.

of the Little General Election. This delay of 1 month was politically significant. It ensured that the party could not engage in any appreciable political activity. To do so would have been a violation of the law and potentially a legal justification to deny its registration. In the period before the KPU was registered, Odinga and other party leaders relied heavily on press conferences in Nairobi to “reply to KANU allegations” and also in the process introduce themselves to the country.

It was not until May 20, 1966 that “Odinga launched the first part of the new party’s manifesto.”¹³⁵ In retrospect, it is fair to conclude that the KPU was in fact “the first party of the left to have emerged in Kenya.”¹³⁶ Its formation and then demise provides a window to this historic period of intense ideological struggle about the country’s future played against the backdrop of the Cold war. Also, the party’s brief course demonstrates the political constraints under which it functioned, and how these constraints did influence the nature and tone of its message.

Overall, the KPU manifesto reflected its leaders’ painful disappointment in Kenyatta. In spite of all that had happened to Odinga and Kaggia at the hands of the conservatives, the radicals still had some hope that Kenyatta would, at the last minute, show “his true colors” as a resolute progressive. Until the Limuru conference,

the progressive nationalists had borne all the insults hurled at them. They had tolerated the most vicious and dirty manoeuvres in the interests of maintaining unity. They had believed that Kenyatta was a prisoner of the anti-nationalist forces. However, the Limuru conference proved the contrary. Kenyatta had clearly shown that he was on the side of the reactionary rightwingers.¹³⁷

It would appear that the radicals had committed a fatal strategic error in the crucial period between 1964 and 1966. They had waited, with agonizing patience and frustration, for the progressive Kenyatta to stand up, and in the end, he did not.

¹³⁵Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963–8*, p. 80.

¹³⁶Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963–8*, p. 88.

¹³⁷Kenya People’s Union (KPU), *Wananchi Declaration: The Programme of the Kenya People’s Union* (Nairobi: KPU, 1966), p. 4.

This bewilderment about Kenyatta's true ideological identity, as already noted in previous chapters, was not just limited to the radicals in post-independent Kenya. The British intelligence services had spent an inordinate amount of time and effort on this matter. These intelligence services later concluded that,

the apparently remarkable transformation of Kenyatta from Sir Patrick Renison's "leader to darkness and death" to the pro-British moderate he has appeared to be since independence was probably due to the imperfect picture we had of him. We created a demon in our eyes and a political martyr in African eyes when Kenyatta was really neither all along. Similarly, as our enemy Kenyatta appeared an ideally "revolutionary leader" to the Soviet Union. He had after all visited Moscow in 1929 and received Soviet training in Moscow in 1932-33.¹³⁸

It is therefore not surprising that the radicals were mistaken in imagining that Kenyatta was one of them.

Overseas, several radicals and progressives were equally disappointed in Kenyatta at this time. They had unceasingly agitated for his release from prison and then detention convinced that he was one of them. His past extensive and pioneering political activism in Europe had led them to this conclusion. And so, although

Odinga had been welcomed by anti-colonial and left-wing circles in London, he was but John the Baptist to the Christ that these groups assumed Kenyatta would be. To British Communists Kenyatta could be expected to turn against his former jailers on his release and to favor the Soviet Union more than Odinga who lacked Kenyatta's ideological background and was basically an African capitalist. Thus, the combination of the enmity of the Governor and the settlers and the attractions of his British Communist supporters should have propelled Kenyatta towards the Soviet Union.¹³⁹

But this never happened. The Kenyatta of radical political activism in Europe never stood up. On this key question of Kenyatta and his

¹³⁸FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹³⁹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

ideological affiliation, available evidence strongly suggests that “both the Governor and the communists were mistaken ... Kenyatta remained the same crafty old man that he had been since before his detention but his image in British and Soviet eyes changed.”¹⁴⁰ The fate of radicalism in Kenya in the initial years of *Uhuru*, was in the end sealed by MacDonald “picking out Kenyatta as a natural conservative and keeping close to him as Governor, Governor-General” and also as High Commissioner.¹⁴¹ Odinga and the radicals were therefore pushing against an almost immovable wall of Western protection around Kenyatta and the conservatives: “an active Western offensive against Soviet influence” and the radicals.

Other details in the KPU manifesto, demonstrated hesitation in embracing positions that could be construed as being communist. The Opposition wanted to embrace radicalism but steer away from any identification with Communism. This reflected the force of the anti-communist propaganda but also a practical political matter of wishing the party message to sail over this propaganda into the homes of the ordinary citizens, “the have-nots,” its target constituency. To the KPU, the KANU was hiding its true intentions of moving the country toward “More orthodox forms of capitalism” by adopting “something called ‘African Socialism.’”¹⁴²

The KPU’s major policy differences with the KANU were on the question of land. *Uhuru*, the party declared, “has no meaning until the land problem is solved.” The KANU was accused of betraying its party manifesto during the struggle for *Uhuru*. Now in power, and committed to capitalism, it had allowed “individual ownership of hundreds and even thousands of acres. Most Ministers and Assistant Ministers and other KANU leaders own big estates, some of them more than one.” As a result, KANU leaders had “ceased to be the representatives of the people. They were allies of European settlers and other capitalists.”¹⁴³

The solutions offered were both radical (compared to the KANU), but also contradictory. On ownership, “non-citizens will not be allowed

¹⁴⁰FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹⁴¹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹⁴²KPU, *Wananchi Declaration: The Programme of the Kenya People’s Union*, p. 5.

¹⁴³KPU, *Wananchi Declaration: The Programme of the Kenya People’s Union*, pp. 6–7.

to own farming land, except in limited cases where they will lease it in partnership with state or para-state organizations, on specific conditions and for specific purposes.” Thus, non-citizens could still own land, even if this would presumably be more restricted. More important, was the provision imposing a ceiling on the amount of land any one individual could own. But what was the exact figure in this ceiling? Also, this would only apply in “former European settled areas.” Why no limitation in areas outside the former White Highlands? The party would seek to: “reduce the indebtedness of the settlers by curtailing their debts on land and providing relief against other excessive burdens.” There would be support for land consolidation, but “only in a democratic manner according to the wishes of the people.” And finally, free land would be distributed to “the landless, including squatters and those who lost their land in the struggle for independence.”

In recognition of the sensitive nature of the land question in the country, then and now, the KPU manifesto provided reassurance that the party would “honour the rights of tribes and clans to their land, but the state will have the right to direct land use in such a way as to make such usage most advantageous to the country.”¹⁴⁴ What was not pointed out in the manifesto is the practical impact of this reassurance on the party’s ambitious land re-distribution agenda. On industrialization, the KPU, unlike the KANU, promised to “press for the setting up of heavy industries on an East Africa basis.” The KPU welcomed foreign investment, so long the country derived substantial profit and benefits from it. “The foreign investor will have to ensure that Kenya, and not only his profits, will benefit. This may mean less profit for the investor to take out, but it will mean a securer investment, because it will genuinely benefit the mass of the people.”

In the campaign for the Little General Election, no issue other than land gave rise to the KPU being labeled communist by the KANU, as nationalization. On this question, there were wide differences of intent and method between the two parties. Unlike the KANU which would embrace nationalization most reluctantly and with assurance of full compensation, the KPU announced that, “nationalisation is the main immediate method of putting economic power in the hands of people and bringing about a more equitable distribution of the fruits of their labour.”

¹⁴⁴KPU, *Wanacchi Declaration: The Programme of the Kenya People’s Union*, p. 7.

Any industry and firm deemed vital to the country's "economic independence will be nationalized," as will be banks and insurance companies.¹⁴⁵

As for education, the KPU pledged itself to give "free primary education to all children of school age." This would be accomplished by channeling a "sizeable proportion of government resources into primary education." The KPU noted that the government had introduced free health care (especially out-patient care) in the country. But without adequate prior planning, this effort had led to chaos in the country's health sector. Therefore, the KPU would expand on what the KANU government had initiated by proceeding in a more disciplined systematic way including expansion in the "training of doctors, nurses, health inspectors and other health workers."

The KPU promised democratic rights that would afford the citizens (*wananchi*) the "freedom to criticize the government policy and the way in which policy is carried out." There would be regular free elections and also a guarantee of basic human rights: "freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of the individual." But there would no guarantee of the freedom "of one individual to exploit others under the guise of unrestricted 'free enterprise.'"¹⁴⁶ The KPU was one of the first national political organizations in the country to insert gender equality in its party platform. Although women had full political rights after 1963, it was evident that they did not enjoy equal access to opportunities as men nor did they enjoy the same social status as men. The KPU endorsed "equal opportunities in education for all citizens." The party would also "institute special measures to encourage and enable women to play their rightful role in the affairs of the country." Lastly, the KPU would, as a matter of policy, "reserve special seats in the National Assembly for women."¹⁴⁷

On foreign policy, a matter of constant disagreement between the radicals and Kenyatta's government, the KPU promised a more activist role in world affairs. The party would seek to forge solidarity with all developing countries in order to "force through changes in the present world pattern of economic relations, which causes the rich countries to get richer while the poor nations get poorer, the most dangerous trend

¹⁴⁵KPU, *Wananchi Declaration: The Programme of the Kenya People's Union*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁶KPU, *Wananchi Declaration: The Programme of the Kenya People's Union*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁷KPU, *Wananchi Declaration: The Programme of the Kenya People's Union*, p. 14.

in world affairs today.” The KPU government would adhere to strict non-alignment unlike the KANU government, which had become “a satellite state of Britain, West Germany and the United States, unable to think out or to follow its own foreign policies.”¹⁴⁸ The KPU manifesto accused Kenyatta for having been a “willing partner in the machinations of the Western powers led by the United States of America in crushing nationalist forces” in the Congo. These forces, the KPU insisted, “were engaged in an armed struggle to free their country from the stranglehold of the imperialist powers.” Kenya’s record on Rhodesia had equally been disappointing. Kenyatta, the manifesto pointed out, “gave an undertaking to Britain to support its policy against use of arms to bring down the Smith rebellion.” This was not a proud record of service to the cherished goal of Pan African liberation. Indeed, the KANU government had assumed a rather “vague and ambiguous” position on the question of the liberation struggle against white rule in Africa. Further, this government afraid of “offending its British and American friends,” had “never offered active support to the liberation movements against the rule of white dictatorships in the South.” In power, the KPU would “rescue Kenya from this humiliating betrayal of our national duty and of our potential influence for the cause of freedom throughout the African continent.”¹⁴⁹

What is undeniable is that the KPU manifesto sought to address several “mini-constituencies,” all dissatisfied with Kenyatta’s government. All of the MPs who crossed to join Odinga in Opposition did not share an identical ideological thrust on all issues, nor were all of them committed to radical socialism. There were thus variations in details on the compelling reasons for opting to break with the KANU. Some of these MPs had been driven by “local and personal factors.” They “represented the economically backward areas and were strongly influenced by the slow development of their districts.” While this group of MPs readily joined the Opposition, they “had no personal loyalty to Odinga and, it appeared, no deep ideological convictions.”¹⁵⁰ There was a group of Luo MPs, from Central Nyanza, who had a personal connection to Odinga. It would, however, be wrong to characterize this connection

¹⁴⁸KPU, *Wananchi Declaration: The Programme of the Kenya People’s Union*, p. 15.

¹⁴⁹KPU, *Wananchi Declaration: The Programme of the Kenya People’s Union*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁰Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963–8*, p. 75.

as “tribal,” for it was far much more than an exercise in ethnic solidarity. Many of these MPs were politically radical and it is this radicalism that drew them close to Odinga, “a leader who voiced their radicalism.” Lastly, there were MPs who “had always identified with the more radical wing in KANU and who since independence consistently voted against the Government on issues of economic and foreign policy. This group included men of the older generation like Oneko, Kaggia, and Kali ... it also included some of the next generation of younger politicians, such as Anyieni, Gichoya and Okelo-Odongo, all of whom had studied abroad before entering politics in the early sixties.”¹⁵¹

It is conceivable that with time the KPU could have, with effort, arrived at a much more streamlined ideological position thereby resolving some of the contradictions in its platform. But in 1966, it was forced to participate in a general election with minimal preparation. The party provided a manifesto that hinted at radical socialism while still positioning itself as the heir to the populist sections of the original KANU manifesto abandoned by Kenyatta’s government with the publication of the Sessional paper.

In response, the KANU called the KPU manifesto a Communist document. The KPU was accused of seeking to “bring back the hated practice of compulsory communal labour.” Without specifying where the KPU had indicated this, the KANU proceeded to link this practice to Communism. “We know that in Communist countries people are herded into communes and Mr. Odinga and his supporters have referred from time to time to the need to establish such institutions in Kenya.”¹⁵² Throughout the campaign for the Little General Election, the KANU consistently employed the weapon of fear in its crude but fairly effective propaganda offensive against the KPU and Odinga.

Kenyatta’s attacks on the KPU also linked the party to compulsory labor and then to forcible expropriation of private property. These were identified as being part of the principal characteristics of Communism. Some of the more emotive propaganda tools against Communism long perfected in the West were brought into play in Kenya. “Those who speak about getting everything for nothing,” Kenyatta stated, “must mean that I should call out the army and the police to seize by force a

¹⁵¹ Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963–8*, p. 75.

¹⁵² *Daily Nation* (May 26, 1966), p. 32.

lot of land or buildings or livestock or equipment which belongs to some of you.”¹⁵³ The KPU’s promise of free education and land could only be achieved by “raising taxes to impossible levels and introducing the hated system of communal labour. I do not believe that our nation,” he continued, “can be built with the bulk of our people in prison for failing to pay some impossible taxes.” He was sure that Kenyans would oppose the introduction of compulsory labor in the country since it went “against all our instincts and traditions to have people herded like cattle into a forced labour system which we fought so hard to abolish in colonial times.”¹⁵⁴

The KPU’s ability to respond to these allegations was hampered by lack of an effective national organization. The party had to undertake several daunting tasks simultaneously: recruitment, establishment of branches and offices in as many parts of the country as possible, spread its message across the country, introduce its leaders and its manifesto, attempt to fend off spirited KANU propaganda offensive, and then launch a national campaign against a hostile and entrenched government. It is worth remembering that at this period agents and tools for the dissemination of information across the country were largely limited to the radio, then some television, plus national newspapers. In all of these venues, the KANU had a decided advantage over the KPU. The radio and television station, VOK (Voice of Kenya) were government-owned and controlled. As a result, the government exploited this advantage by over-reporting on any and all news linked to the KANU candidates during the campaign for the Little General Election, while ignoring any news (unless it was negative) about the KPU and its candidates. “KANU had the advantage of the Government controlled radio, which reported the KANU affairs in full but gave no information about KPU candidates, meetings or statements except in so far as KANU statements referred to them. KANU held the advantage so far as national publicity was concerned.”¹⁵⁵

The national newspapers were consistent in their support of Kenyatta’s government. They condemned the ideological implications of the KPU manifesto. The *Daily Nation* saw threats to intellectual freedom in the KPU’s manifesto. The paper feared the rise of a situation

¹⁵³ *Daily Nation* (June 2, 1966), p. 9.

¹⁵⁴ *Daily Nation* (June 2, 1966), p. 9.

¹⁵⁵ Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963–8*, p. 80.

whereby “our abstract painters” are “told they have been painting like ‘donkeys’ tails’—just because abstract painting proves the independence of ideas.” On the question of land, the paper echoed Kenyatta’s position (which was similar to the one held by the colonial governments and the settlers), that “the brutal truth is that everybody cannot have a farm. Some people will have to work as doctors, painters, writers.” The *Daily Nation* found fault in the KPU’s position on African traditions and culture. Unlike the KPU manifesto, the paper felt that values associated with “old traditions and ‘communal efforts’ ... lie in co-operation, peace and harmony among people; hardwork, independence and originality. We are sure,” the paper concluded, “the KPU will agree that tradition and culture do not just mean the wearing of monkey skins.”¹⁵⁶

In spite of the bluster that accompanied the KANU’s campaign during the Little General Election, there was evident apprehension. It was at once a hurried referendum on the conservative policies adopted by the government and implemented under the guidance (and even supervision) of the West. The election was also an indirect but still significant mini-referendum on the post *Uhuru* Kenyatta. To ensure victory, Kenyatta’s government exploited every single advantage that it had over the KPU. This included: use of Ministers to campaign while technically on official business¹⁵⁷; involvement of the provincial administration officials in the monitoring of the KPU, frequently cancelling the party’s campaign rallies on dubious rationale; monopoly of the mass media; threats of withholding of government development aid to areas suspected of supporting the KPU; official warnings about loss of employment to all public and civil employees (and even private sector employees) suspected of supporting the KPU; use of thuggery by some of the KANU supporters to intimidate the KPU supporters; solicitation and receipt of funding by the KANU leaders, especially from the British settlers and other business interests, to use in the campaign efforts; general and specific support by the West for Kenyatta and the conservatives in their efforts to vanquish Odinga and the radicals.

In those areas affected by the Little General Election, especially in Machakos, Central Nyanza, and Murang’a, Cabinet Ministers campaigned for the KANU candidates and issued warnings of consequences

¹⁵⁶ *Daily Nation* (May 20, 1966), p. 6.

¹⁵⁷ Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya*, p. 80.

for voting for the KPU. At the end of each rally, the Ministers made sure that a unanimous vote of confidence in Kenyatta and his government was passed and duly reported by the VOK. In Western Province, “Kanu Vice President, Mr. E.E. Khasakhala ... told the Marach and Bukhayo people of Elgon South-West constituency that their former MP, Mr. Makokha had ‘sold’ them. He urged them to vote for Kanu.” At the same rally, Ngala, now Minister for Co-operatives and Social Services, “alleged that the KPU was a ‘Chinese’ party and therefore was not suitable for Africans.”¹⁵⁸

In Central Nyanza, the message delivered by Ministers was direct: voting for the KPU would alienate the area from the KANU government. “At Kanu meetings at Alego, Ugenya and Asembo in Central Nyanza six Ministers and Assistant Ministers said the Government was alert to the incidents taking place in various parts of Africa and would not allow the introduction of foreign money and foreign ideologies in Kenya.” At these meetings, Mboya “appealed to the people to vote for Kanu candidates, co-operate with and support the Government and Kanu ... They should not follow blindly Mr. Odinga and his party because the people of Central Nyanza would be left behind if they supported a party which opposed the Government of the majority.”¹⁵⁹ A similar message was delivered by Jeremiah Nyagah, Minister for Education, who warned that “any teachers, pupils and civil servants found to be involved in politics, especially if they backed the KPU to undermine the popularly elected Kanu Government, would be dealt with according to the law.”¹⁶⁰

Regular visits by Ministers to Central Nyanza issuing warnings of dire consequences for voting for the KPU, were in the end unable to turn the area against Odinga and his allies. In his brilliant analysis of politics of Opposition in Central Nyanza at this time, John Joseph Okumu pointed out that,

there was fear and terror in Central Nyanza in 1966 caused partly by undisciplined youth wingers, and partly by uncertainties regarding the late granting of registration to KPU and rumours that surrounded Odinga’s resignation from KANU. These factors created a strong feeling of a common identity and created a resolve to defend the homeland by supporting

¹⁵⁸ *Daily Nation* (June 7, 1966), p. 10.

¹⁵⁹ *Daily Nation* (June 7, 1966), p. 10.

¹⁶⁰ *Daily Nation* (June 7, 1966), p. 9.

the leader whose life and activity had been associated with the identity of the Luo. Yet the main basis of support for him derived from his claims to national leadership and the policies he stood for.¹⁶¹

Odinga's direct involvement in the campaigns for the KPU candidates spread across the country, was hampered by the party's lack of ready infrastructure (except for Central Nyanza and Machakos where the KPU took over former KANU district offices), and funds. This limited the party's ability to launch and sustain a vigorous and coordinated national campaign. One of the implications of this limited involvement from the center was that the KANU was able to continually mischaracterize the KPU agenda confident that such messages would not be challenged in any systematic manner. "The men in the Central Office provided the press statements held a series of press conferences and addressed some meetings ... but they were only marginally involved in campaigning outside the capital."¹⁶²

In his first major speech at a mass rally in Nairobi as leader of the KPU, Odinga returned to the theme of disappointment in Kenyatta. The two of them had worked very well together until "imperialists ... told him that Odinga wanted to overthrow the government ... I was working in full co-operation with the President until he started listening to what foreign advisers told him about me."¹⁶³ It is these Western advisers, especially the British and US diplomats, Odinga stated, who had, with skill and tenacity, broken his political partnership with Kenyatta. According to the British intelligence services, Odinga met with Kenyatta as early as 1965, after the uproar over the rejection of Soviet arms, and reminded him that, "they had both taken communist money but that as Kenya was also receiving money from Britain and the United States this left the country in a balance." Kenyatta had, however, "contrived to outmanoeuvre Odinga who without Pinto's advice was not capable of making any effective reply."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ John Joseph Okumu, "The By-Election in Gem: An Assessment," *East Africa Journal* (June 1969), p. 9.

¹⁶² Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963-8*, p. 81.

¹⁶³ *Daily Nation* (June 7, 1966), p. 16.

¹⁶⁴ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

What especially worried Kenyatta and the conservatives in the period between 1964 and 1966, was the political alliance between Odinga and Kaggia. In December 1965, according to the British intelligence services, Kenyatta asked Odinga “to break with the ex Mau Mau leader Kaggia and with the communists, especially the Chinese and Odinga refused.”¹⁶⁵ The potential political potency of this alliance lay in the fact that it would redefine Kenya politics along class lines as opposed to the colonially imposed formula of “tribal politics.” And this would endanger Kenyatta’s hold on power and threaten the viability of the MacDonald formula now in full operation in the country. MacDonald himself acknowledged that

the potential danger arises from the inevitable fact that most of Kenya’s common people are no better off materially to-day than they were under British colonial rule—whereas they fully expected to be granted on the achievement of independence a substantial improvement in their standards of living. Let us remember [MacDonald condescendingly stated] that most of them are simple, ignorant and in some cases very primitive tribesmen without the experience or training necessary for a spontaneous understanding of complex modern economic and social problems. Therefore, when irresponsible yet supposedly knowledgeable politicians make speeches to them they are as gullible as Adam and Eve would have been if a sophisticated 20th-century parliamentary candidate had suddenly appeared before them soon after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and made extravagant election promises about what he would secure them if they returned him to represent them in a House of Representatives.¹⁶⁶

A large number of Kenyans, MacDonald noted, had “adjusted themselves with fatalistic good sense and patience” to the material poverty and even limited immediate prospects of change in their circumstances in post-independent Kenya. Many of them had responded positively to the “reasonable explanations from their wiser leaders like President Kenyatta himself.” Others like the Maasai, the “customarily poor,” felt no urgent need to change their “centuries-old simple, blood-and-milk drinking,

¹⁶⁵FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹⁶⁶MAC 71/8/52 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Prospect.

cattle thieving way of life.”¹⁶⁷ Still, there was evident rise in discontent toward Kenyatta’s government. This resentment and discontent was in some cases “aggravated by a certain amount of tribal frustration. The Luos in particular complain bitterly that they have not received their fare share of the spoils of office, whilst the Kikuyus have grabbed much more than their proper share.” If this discontent were just limited to the Luos, MacDonald and the British would not have been concerned since he had concluded that the “Luos by themselves have insufficient power to stage an effective revolt; and the other principal non-Kikuyu tribes (such as the Kalenjin, the Masai, and most of the Abaluhya and Kamba) feel they are being treated” fairly by Kenyatta’s government.¹⁶⁸

MacDonald’s chief concern was that even among the nationalities identified as co-operative toward the government, there were sections “with undercurrents of criticism” toward Kenyatta and his government. More gravely, this included the Kikuyu. There was therefore a worrisome potential for the forging of unity of the poor and discontented, including those in Kikuyuland. Further decline in living conditions could, as MacDonald saw it, “be whipped up into a typical emotional African political storm.” Also of concern were the beginning of rumblings of discontent among the country’s “Left-wing intellectual circles, where the thought is prevalent that the Ministers in the present Government have become too prosperous, that they have looked after themselves very well and forgotten the well-being of the masses, and that those once zealous radical reformers are now a conservative bourgeoisie out of harmony with proper modern democratic notions.”¹⁶⁹

Odinga’s political alliance with Kaggia would, MacDonald feared, exploit this “undercurrents of criticism” and discontent, thereby threatening the survival of pro-Western policies of the Kenyatta government. “If economic progress does not proceed steadily in Kenya, and if unemployment, landlessness and discontent therefore grow, then disillusionment with President Kenyatta’s Government may spread to a point

¹⁶⁷MAC 71/8/52 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Prospect.

¹⁶⁸MAC 71/8/52 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Prospect.

¹⁶⁹MAC 71/8/52-53 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: The Political Prospect.

where Odinga's sympathizers can exploit it."¹⁷⁰ The success of Odinga's political platform, clearly unacceptable to the British at this time, was to a large degree dependent on being able to recruit the poor and the dispossessed in Kikuyuland (and beyond), to radical nationalism. Due to this factor, MacDonald considered Kaggia to be "potentially ... more important and dangerous than Odinga."¹⁷¹ As a result, MacDonald was disconcerted by the fact that Kaggia was "fanatically working" to detach "considerable support from the Kikuyu" and direct it toward radical nationalism.

It is therefore not surprising that Kenyatta devoted the majority of his attention and energy on campaigning against Kaggia in the Little General Election. Peck wrote to London that Kenyatta had "applied pressure of his presence ... in the Fort Hall (Murang'a) district, in the heart of his own Kikuyuland, since he simply could not afford to lose out to Bildad Kaggia, the renegade Kikuyu follower of Odinga."¹⁷² On the eve of the election, Kenyatta addressed a mass rally in Kandara, Kaggia's constituency. He was scathing and unsparing in his attacks on Kaggia, ridiculing his claim that he identified with the poor. "Where did Kaggia, the man who claims to be poor and whom we know to have nothing because he cannot use his hands, get the money to build such a house?" The crowd, estimated to be more than 10,000, replied with shouts of "China."¹⁷³

The results of the Little General Election were, as expected, interpreted quite differently by the two political parties. The KPU retained only nine seats "of the thirty seats made vacant" when the 30 MPs crossed the floor to join the Opposition. The KANU won 21 of these seats. Clearly, this was a major victory for the KANU. But what did it signify? Mboya saw these results as evidence of utter rejection of the KPU by the electorate. "The KPU is dead. The voters buried it today." The conservatives were especially pleased with the defeat of Kaggia, and also of Oneko. As for the KPU triumph in Central Nyanza, Mboya saw

¹⁷⁰MAC 71/8/20 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Odinga.

¹⁷¹MAC 71/8/20 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: Odinga.

¹⁷²MAC 71/8/61 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: First Impressions.

¹⁷³*Daily Nation* (June 11, 1966), p. 1.

it “as expected from the home district of a person who previously had the prestige of being Vice President of Kenya.”¹⁷⁴ And in Machakos, the KPU victory could be attributed to recent instability in the district.

Mboya’s harshest comments were directed at Odinga. As a Luo, Mboya “warned that the worst thing that could happen to the tribe was anybody trying to isolate them. ‘Odinga may want to be a Kabaka of Central Nyanza, or try to make himself a Tsombe with his small kingdom in the district, but if he does he must realize that the same fate that befell the two gentlemen will fall on those who try to do this.’”¹⁷⁵ The *Daily Nation* looked at the outcome as a “well deserved victory.” In its editorial, the paper held that “the reasonable conclusion to be drawn from this fact is, therefore, that the majority of the electorate are prepared to go along with the Government. Their votes were cast on the record of performance of the Government, and not for some vague promises which they were in no position to prove.”¹⁷⁶

To the KPU, the results were in large part the result of widespread rigging of the elections. “We exposed gross irregularities,” Odinga stated, “committed by the Government in the election campaign and in the election process itself. The Government intimidated peaceful citizens and Ministers dished out famine relief on the eve of elections.” Further, Odinga noted, the elections had not been “between Kanu as a party and KPU, but rather between the Government machinery and KPU.”¹⁷⁷ As it happens, “the KPU polled a majority of the votes.”¹⁷⁸ This was a point that Odinga sought to draw attention to, in part to demonstrate the relative strength of support for his party and its platform even under the restrictions imposed on it by the government.

The British intelligence services noted that the KPU candidates had polled more than the KANU candidates “despite a monopoly of the media for KANU, the disruption of KPU election meetings by KANU thugs and the exaction of contributions from British firms by KANU officials in the cause of ‘stability.’”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ *Daily Nation* (June 28, 1966), p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ *Daily Nation* (June 28, 1966), p. 3.

¹⁷⁶ *Daily Nation* (June 28, 1966), p. 6.

¹⁷⁷ *Daily Nation* (June 29, 1966), p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963–8*, p. 83.

¹⁷⁹ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), *The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya*.

These election irregularities were unable to weaken the support of the British for Kenyatta and the conservatives. In his report to London, Peck observed that “the clash between the basic views” of Kenyatta and Odinga

was inevitable: on the one hand Kenyatta with his vision of African Socialism brought about by help which could only come from Western nations, and on the other, Odinga, whether a Communist or not but certainly in receipt of Russian and Chinese moneys, claiming to lead Kenya into a glorious revolution against the evils of neo-colonialism but in fact likely to do no more than to let the country sink back into the traditional lethargy of Africa.¹⁸⁰

The consistent strategy was to explain away any foibles by the Kenyatta government. In this case, Peck noted with satisfaction that “the challenge to Odinga came in proper constitutional form” and that therefore the political scheming that led to the Little General Election was justified. To be sure, “it would be unrealistic to assert that complete democratic fairness governed these elections or that the Voice of Kenya allotted time to both parties with the scrupulous objectivity of the BBC—in fact the KPU never got a look in.” But even here, actions taken by Kenyatta and the conservatives to ensure victory were seen as enlightened. “When compared to the farce of elections I have seen in certain Asian countries,” Peck wrote, “these were conducted with reasonable fairness and the results probably represent about the right proportion of KPU supporters.”¹⁸¹

The Little General Election alone failed to deliver political tranquility to the country. The government remained nervous about the political influence of radical nationalism, and especially its “underground unspoken” support. In the period between 1966 and 1969, “the government used its monopoly over the economy, the legal system and paramilitary agencies to frustrate KPU’s operations and especially its bid to enlarge its membership ... government sanctions made membership in

¹⁸⁰MAC 71/8/61 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: First Impressions.

¹⁸¹MAC 71/8/61 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Kenya: First Impressions.

an opposition party or forum too costly to bear.”¹⁸² This became painfully evident in Kaggia’s resignation from the KPU in August 1969. The British intelligence services concluded that Kaggia “eventually deserted” Odinga “after a threat to his life.”¹⁸³

Publicly, however, Kaggia justified his resignation from the KPU on the grounds that the party had become “less and less effective” and therefore not a suitable vehicle for accelerating the “fulfillment of the promises made to our people during the independence struggle.”¹⁸⁴ He was still determined to “advance the political fight to ensure that freedom fighters were assured their struggle had been worthwhile.” For these reasons, he had “decided that, in order to serve my people as I used to do before (if not better), it is necessary for me to join hands with my old friends in Kanu.”¹⁸⁵ He did not specify how the KANU would henceforth be more responsive to his perennial radical demands, especially on land.

This resignation however had significant political implications for the future of radical nationalism in the country. In practical ways, it reinforced the MacDonald formula and thereby “retribalized” Kenya politics once again at a particularly tense period in the country’s post-colonial history. The *Daily Nation* observed that Kaggia had, in his resignation, “swung almost the entire Central Province KPU dissidents to the fold of the ruling party.”¹⁸⁶ In spite of this apparent declaration of allegiance to the KANU (and therefore to Kenyatta), Kaggia was never able to reclaim his old Parliamentary seat or to be returned to the Parliament in any capacity. Kenyatta appointed him to serve as Chairman of Cotton Seed and Lint Marketing Board (1970–1971), Maize and Produce Board (1971–1974) and again after 1974. After 1966, he was denied a political platform from which he could have advocated for radical policies or

¹⁸²W.O. Maloba, “Decolonization: A Theoretical Perspective,” p. 18.

¹⁸³FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya. These intelligence services added that Kaggia was “in 1968 badly beaten up by Kenyatta’s bodyguard as a warning. He had ideological and personal differences with the less radical Odinga and rejoined KANU after Mboya’s murder, perhaps to avoid a similar fate.” See, FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives), Leading Personalities in Kenya.

¹⁸⁴*Daily Nation* (August 2, 1969), p. 1.

¹⁸⁵*Daily Nation* (August 2, 1969), p. 13.

¹⁸⁶*Daily Nation* (August 2, 1969), p. 1. Also see the editorial for the *Daily Nation* (August 2, 1966), p. 6.

continued to be seen as a symbol of radical nationalism in Kikuyuland and beyond.¹⁸⁷ His treatment, partly punitive, served for a while as an effective deterrent measure to would-be opponents of Kenyatta and the conservatives in Central Province.

Other radicals, especially in the trade unions, were dealt with swiftly through political detention as Kenyatta utilized the newly passed Public Security Act (1966) to quell political dissension.¹⁸⁸ In early August 1966, Ochola Mak'Anyengo, General Secretary of the Kenya Petroleum Workers Union and Patrick Ooko, General Secretary of the Common Services African Civil Servants' Union, were "arrested and detained ... under the new public security laws." Both belonged to the KPU and had apparently "been under security surveillance," for some time. It was alleged that they had "been involved in subversive dealings with certain foreign embassies and had handled plans for overseas cash to flow into trade unions. They had also been accused of using the trade union movement for political ends, and for disseminating foreign ideologies."¹⁸⁹ When the KPU raised this matter in the Parliament and requested that all the arrested and detained persons be brought before the courts, Moi, as Minister for Home Affairs, stated that, "there was misunderstanding on the Opposition Benches regarding the law in the case. The detainees were not being held because of any particular offence, but because they were a threat to public security."¹⁹⁰

Odinga's brief tenure as Leader of Opposition was characterized by constant confrontation with the security services. He was under constant rigorous surveillance that on occasion became too invasive. More often than not, his local movements were closely monitored and his engagements (even social) routinely scrutinized by the security services. One of the most memorable incidents occurred on the Kenya/Uganda border

¹⁸⁷The British intelligence services concluded that Kaggia, "the former Mau Mau leader" maintained "some very clandestine contacts with his supporters," even after 1974. See, FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), *The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya*.

¹⁸⁸In June 1966 at a public rally in Nakuru, Kenyatta announced that he had signed into law the Public Security Act and would use it to "deal firmly with all trouble makers and those bribed to undermine the integrity of this Government elected by the people themselves." See, *Daily Nation* (June 6, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁸⁹*Daily Nation* (August 5, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁹⁰*Daily Nation* (October 8, 1966), p. 1. Moi added that "the majority of the populace had received the news of the detentions with 'jubilation because they were necessary in the circumstances to deal with deliberately subversive elements.'"

post in Busia, in October 1966. Moi informed the Parliament that Odinga had travelled to Uganda by air having booked the ticket under “a false name—R. Rapinda.” The main objective of this trip, Moi stated, was to collect funds from Communist Missions in Uganda. Odinga “was informed that there would be funds for him provided he himself collected the money ... the money would not be paid to any other person.”¹⁹¹ He had apparently been allowed to proceed to travel even after the immigration officers ascertained that indeed he had booked the ticket under a false name. Odinga travelled back to Kenya by car. At Busia border post, Moi continued, “Odinga had refused to be searched and the provincial police officer from Kisumu had had to be summoned.” It was then, Moi informed the Parliament, “that the Leader of Opposition ‘undressed voluntarily in public, reducing his dressed state to the bare minimum.’” Also, “Police officers and other witnesses had mentioned that Mr. Odinga had consumed three quarters of a bottle of whisky.”¹⁹²

In his response, Odinga denied Moi’s allegations and challenged him “to repeat his charges outside the legal protection of parliamentary privilege.” His reasons for travelling to Kampala had been to “hire lawyers” since “the lawyers in Nairobi are being intimidated and they no longer come forward.”¹⁹³ When searched at the border, the police found only Ksh. 1,000/= on him as opposed to the large stash of cash that he was supposed to have retrieved from the Communist Embassies in Kampala. He denied ever being drunk and indeed Moi was unable to produce evidence to back this claim. On this issue of foreign money, Odinga stated that, “any intelligent person knows that Kanu receives large sums of foreign money and that the bogey of Communist money is just a gimmick to extort more money from their imperialist financiers.”¹⁹⁴ As for undressing, he had done so to avoid creating “an ugly scene with the police” who had informed him that if he did not submit to the personal search force would be applied.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ *Daily Nation* (October 12, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁹² *Daily Nation* (October 12, 1966), p. 20. Kenya security forces had apparently followed Odinga wherever he went in Uganda. See, *Daily Nation* (October 19, 1966), p. 24.

¹⁹³ *Daily Nation* (October 13, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁹⁴ *Daily Nation* (October 13, 1966), p. 20.

¹⁹⁵ *Daily Nation* (October 13, 1966), p. 20.

This action by Odinga, evidently dramatic, was meant to highlight his frustration with the government's invasive and constant surveillance of all his movements and activities. But it provided the conservatives with a sensational propaganda tool to both embarrass him and demonstrate his powerlessness vis-à-vis the government.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, the national press was quick to castigate Odinga for his actions. To the *Daily Nation*, "The Leader of Opposition is expected to maintain some decorum, especially in public places."¹⁹⁷ Still, the press avoided tackling or even making indirect comments on the question of the KANU and foreign funds. When the KANU issued a statement on the controversy surrounding Odinga's trip to Uganda, it focused on when Odinga had last drunk whisky, sidestepping the question of its political funding from foreign countries. The party statement did not challenge Odinga on his allegation that indeed the KANU received funding from "imperialist foreign financiers." A key objective of the KANU statement was to highlight the "the ruling party's oft-repeated question to the Kenya public: 'Can you trust Odinga?'"

In the Parliament, Okelo-Odongo informed Moi that, "if he had been a member of the party longer he would have known that KANU received funds 'not only from America, but also from China and Russia,'" Okelo-Odongo then "produced an American newspaper which, he said, suggested that Kanu had received \$1,200,000 (about £400,000) from the US Central Intelligence Agency."¹⁹⁸ Neither Moi, the KANU party, nor the press challenged Okelo-Odongo on this statement. Instead, the KANU urged the government, as a matter of urgency to, "look into the question of street names," especially in Kisumu where "it appeared that the only way to qualify for a street to be named after a person in Kisumu 'is to be defiant against the Government and to support KPU.'"¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶Okelo-Odongo, a KPU MP challenged Moi in the Parliament to provide evidence for his earlier charges against Odinga. Moi stood by his statement regarding Odinga having gone to collect funds from Communist Embassies although he produced no evidence. Okelo-Odongo also accused Moi of intentionally seeking to mislead the country. "He said Mr. Moi's charge that Mr. Odinga drank three quarters of a bottle of whisky and was in a 'hilarious state' showed a 'malicious intention of discrediting the leader of the Opposition.'" See, *Daily Nation* (October 19, 1966), p. 24.

¹⁹⁷*Daily Nation* (October 12, 1966), p. 6.

¹⁹⁸*Daily Nation* (October 19, 1966), p. 24.

¹⁹⁹*Daily Nation* (October 14, 1966), p. 1.

The unity of purpose forged by the conservatives in order to drive Odinga and the radicals from power quickly evaporated once this task was accomplished. After Odinga (and the radicals) as the common enemy had been vanquished, the pre-existing fissures within this group resurfaced with fury. The key division was between Mboya and what came to be known as the Gatundu clique or Kenyatta's inner circle, which at various times included: Mbiyu Koinange, Njonjo, Gichuru, McKenzie, Njoroge Mungai, and Moi. It is this division that would be the central driving force in Kenya politics until Mboya's assassination in 1969.

Throughout his memorable political career, Mboya was known for his brilliance and political acumen. He "made his mark in labour organization, industrial relations, party politics, mass mobilization, parliamentarism, administration, constitutional draftsmanship, international diplomacy, pan-Africanism, economic planning, authorship."²⁰⁰ He was, as his biographer notes, "an outstandingly modern man, cosmopolitan ... the extreme example of African secular man, individualistic, de-tribalized, de-mystified." In post-colonial Kenya, Mboya assumed the role of a facilitator of the agenda of the conservatives. Suave, naturally gifted as a speaker and with unrivalled capacity for political management, he became the public face of Kenyatta's conservative policies. Of course, he supported these policies and sought to rally public support for them. In the crucial period of 1964–1966 and even beyond, he worked tirelessly to demonstrate his loyalty to Kenyatta and to the policies endorsed in the Sessional Paper. Again, and again, Kenyatta depended on Mboya to provide much needed persuasive public explanation of government policies including those that did not fall under his Ministry.²⁰¹

Yet it was these intellectual abilities, political brilliance and capacity to organize and rally support to a cause, that gave rise to anxiety and even fury within Kenyatta's inner circle. The constant fear of this inner circle was that Mboya would end up succeeding Kenyatta as President. He was "dangerous more in terms of the support he could command among those Ministers and Members of the National Assembly who

²⁰⁰David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. ix.

²⁰¹For examples, see, David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, pp. 228–232.

respect his outstanding ability and who fear Kikuyu domination.”²⁰² It should be mentioned here that Mboya, in his career, had worked closely with all members of the inner circle. He had, for example, worked very closely with Njonjo (newly appointed as Attorney General) when he was Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. Both of them played a key role in Kenya’s transition from the *Majimbo* constitution to the more unitary and centralized constitution after 1964. Njonjo had also been Mboya’s best man at his wedding to “Pamela Odede, the beautiful daughter of Walter Odede, a comrade-in-arms of Kenyatta.”²⁰³

Mboya’s political enemies (and there were many at different stages of his career) never failed to mention his personal and intellectual arrogance. MacDonald mentioned that this was the main factor behind Mboya’s apparent loss of popularity after *Uhuru*. But what did this mean? In his book on the *Nation*, Gerard Loughran mentions that Mboya’s habit of looking at people “under lowered eyelids ... helped give him his reputation for arrogance.”²⁰⁴ Whatever may have been the physical manifestation of this habit there can be little doubt that there were several of his colleagues in the political arena whose personal feelings and even self-worth was injured in their interactions with him. His intellectual brilliance, which was clear to all who interacted with him, had been achieved in spite of his relatively modest formal education. There were many of his colleagues with more formal education who failed to match his acquired knowledge base, political skill, and of course his power of articulation. All of these factors, routinely exploited by the Gatundu clique in the past, now became worrisome threats to their eventual political intent: to keep Mboya from the Presidency and power.

On some very fundamental level, the MacDonald formula was destined to lead to this unsavory spot in the country’s political history. “Since self-government in June 1963 Mr. MacDonald had taken particular care to prevent Odinga having any security powers and acting with Kenyatta, Njonjo and Gichuru he arranged that when Odinga became Vice-President he should cease to be Home Minister with Moi replacing him in this post.” MacDonald also “tried to keep Mboya away from real

²⁰²MAC 71/8/85 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Tribalism in Kenya.

²⁰³Gerard Loughman, *Birth of a NATION: The Story of a Newspaper in Kenya*, pp. 66–67.

²⁰⁴Gerard Loughman, *Birth of a Nation: The Story of a Newspaper in Kenya*, p. 67.

power.”²⁰⁵ The outcome of this strategy was that Mboya remained very influential in the government but without access to real power.

Mboya was influential at the broadest policy levels, that is, in the formulation, articulation, and presentation of overarching policy; and [his Ministry] was in this respect an appropriate base for him, licensing him to think and speak on the broadest long-term questions and furnishing him with the requisite data and projections. But, it simply did not evolve into an operating Ministry. What he lacked in all this was anything much in the way of hard, substantial, on-going executive power.²⁰⁶

This scheming by the Gatundu clique to push Mboya from the political stage was well known to the British. MacDonald himself knew of such plots against Mboya as early as 1965 when he “received intelligence reports from Britain and from the Kenya Special Branch that Mboya was under threat because he ‘was getting all the headlines’”. MacDonald told Mboya, “‘your life is in danger unless you calm down.’”²⁰⁷

The central tragic irony in Mboya’s political alliance with the conservatives led by the Gatundu clique, is that the more he excelled on their behalf the more they resented him. And so Mboya, “regarded by some as the most-able man of his generation in Kenya,” became “the object of a campaign by President Kenyatta’s inner circle of Kikuyu advisers to push him into the political wilderness. His arrogance,” Peck wrote to London,

his capacity always to be right and his Luo origins, have made him an object of hatred by the Kikuyu establishment. As Minister of Economic Planning and Development and Secretary General of KANU, Mboya has a tremendous amount to contribute to Kenya. It is sad to see the efforts of both Mboya and his opponents (particularly Moi, Mungai, Kibaki and Njonjo) being diverted so much from their Ministerial responsibilities to political feuding and in-fighting. The evil of this conflict [Peck continued] is that it threatens to divide still further the Government, the Civil Service,

²⁰⁵FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives), The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁰⁶David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 256. The *New York Times* (January 25, 1965: p. 65), reported that as Minister of Economic Planning and Development, Mboya’s post ranked “fifth in the 18-man Cabinet,” in Kenyatta’s government.

²⁰⁷Gerard Loughman, *Birth of a Nation: The Story of a Newspaper in Kenya*, p. 98.

the armed forces and the trade unions along tribal lines in support of one faction or another. The driving of Odinga into extreme opposition has already cost the antagonism of many of the Luo who may regard similar action against Mboya as discrimination against the tribe itself. Mboya has become (I hope temporarily) [Peck concluded], the focus of the most self-destructive forces in African politics in Kenya.²⁰⁸

In spite of all these duties and services rendered to Kenyatta and the conservatives, Mboya was never secure in his position in the government. It is therefore fair to conclude that, “far from secure incumbency, his position was one of exposure, of vulnerability to the plottings of those who were securely incumbent. He was always, in Kenya politics, the man others were either for or against. By the late 1960s, he was having to count his friends more intently than before.”²⁰⁹

On July 4, 1969, Mboya returned to Nairobi from Addis Ababa after attending a meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. This meeting resolved that, “African countries must be completely responsible for the destiny of the continent and therefore should take over the formulation and execution of economic policies.”²¹⁰ The next day “in broad day light in the middle of Nairobi,” he was assassinated at a pharmacy in what was then Government Road. Newspapers carried stories of a stunned nation deep in sorrow. The *Daily Nation* observed that Mboya “was not a man to compromise or to suffer fools gladly, a trait that sent some of his associates to whisper behind his back that he was ‘arrogant’. Yet he pursued his objectives with energy and a single-minded determination that was the envy of lesser men. Perhaps,” the paper continued, “the fact that he scored success after success, even in the most adverse circumstances, may have driven his political enemies to such extremes that they failed to see no other means of extricating themselves except by the gun.”²¹¹ There were stories of ordinary citizens in shock and disbelief. Some of them were afraid of what this assassination meant for the future of Kenya. Then there were pictures of Mrs. Mboya and her children: stunned, sorrowful yet dignified.

²⁰⁸MAC 71/8/86 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers), Tribalism in Kenya.

²⁰⁹David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget*, p. 267.

²¹⁰*Daily Nation* (July 5, 1969), p. 13.

²¹¹*Daily Nation* (July 7, 1969), p. 6.

Tributes poured in from all over the world, from officials who had worked closely with Mboya or who admired his political outlook. There were messages, among others, from Nixon (President of the USA), Michael Stewart (British Foreign Secretary), Indira Gandhi (Prime Minister of India), Lord Brockway, Kenyatta's old friend, whose message said that he "regarded Tom as the ablest of the African leaders in Kenya ... he might have become a successor to President Kenyatta." Kaunda and Nyerere both described Mboya's death as "a great shock for East Africa" while Obote in his glowing tribute stated that "Mboya had lived and died for the ideals of social justice" and that "with the exception of Mzee Kenyatta, I doubt whether there is any living citizen of Kenya today who has done as much for or knew as much about the ideology of 'African Socialism' as the late and most lamented man we now mourn."²¹² British newspapers carried Mboya's death in great detail. Thus, "*The Observer's* Commonwealth Correspondent, Colin Legum, said in a front-page report Mr. Mboya was by far the most brilliant of Kenya's leaders and his international standing was equaled by few Africans. The *Sunday Telegraph's* obituary was headlined "Mboya, Kenya's Crown Prince." It said Mr. Mboya was regarded by many as the "Crown Prince to President Kenyatta." And the mass circulation *The People* said Mr. Mboya "was one of the most powerful leaders in Kenya and tipped by many to succeed President Kenyatta."²¹³

There were also tributes from Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King, who said that "the sorrow and grief is intensified by the knowledge of how much is yet to be done in the great cause of liberating Black people the world over."²¹⁴ In its tribute, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) stated that Mboya was "highly esteemed not only by people of his native Kenya and all of Black Africa but also by people of African descent in the US and elsewhere in the Western world."²¹⁵

Locally, Kenyatta praised Mboya as "undiluted African nationalist who always viewed issues on their national as well as international repercussions ... he was a mature political leader who never involved himself with

²¹² *Daily Nation* (July 9, 1969), p. 4.

²¹³ *Daily Nation* (July 7, 1969), p. 7.

²¹⁴ *Daily Nation* (July 8, 1969), p. 10.

²¹⁵ *Daily Nation* (July 9, 1969), p. 4.

petty and parochial matters. The part he played in welding the Kenya nation is invaluable and will remain an inspiration to all of us. Rarely," Kenyatta continued, "in my life have I come across a man who was prepared to devote so much of his time and energy to the service of his nation and to the welfare of mankind."²¹⁶ Moi praised Mboya for having been a "hardworking and efficient person ... he did not like tribalism, very rare in most politicians. Whatever he did, he made it a success, Kenya," had "lost one of its best sons." His Cabinet colleagues sent tributes. Mwai Kibaki pointed out that "Kenya and Africa will be the poorer without Mr. Tom Mboya ... I personally do not think," he added, that "there will be any body to do the jobs done by Tom. It is a great loss to us all."²¹⁷

Amidst all the tributes, was the intense sadness and then anger felt especially by the Luos. This had been evident at the Mboya's requiem mass in Nairobi when the General Service Unit (GSU) had to use tear gas "to disperse the crowds." The situation was so tense that "Kenyatta entered the cathedral with his eyes streaming tears as a result of the gas."²¹⁸ This tension, which came to assume an ethnic dimension, prompted the country's political leaders to appeal for calm and national unity. For the most part, at this tense moment, these appeals were rarely heeded. Odinga appealed for restraint and urged all Kenyans not to "resort to communal or sectional recrimination." Kaggia, on the eve of his resignation from the KPU, appealed directly to "the Luo community to remain calm in the present situation, and to do nothing which would bring about tribal antagonism. 'While we understand the rage and indignation expressed by the Luo community, to whom the loss is greater; while the assassin has robbed us all of the services of Tom,'" Kaggia continued, "we should not allow him to rob Kenya of the co-operation and unity among tribes that which was so essential in our struggle for political freedom."²¹⁹

But there were already menacing divisions even before this assassination. From as early as 1966 after the formation of the KPU,

²¹⁶*Daily Nation* (July 7, 1969), p. 7.

²¹⁷*Daily Nation* (July 7, 1969), p. 7.

²¹⁸*Daily Nation* (July 9, 1969), p. 1.

²¹⁹*Daily Nation* (July 12, 1969), p. 14.

Kenyatta and his key advisers initiated a massive oath taking campaign among the Kikuyu. They swore on the Kenya flag (at the President's home) ... to safeguard and maintain Kikuyu dominance in politics, economics, commerce, administration, and even land acquisitions. Among those who took the oath were former guerrillas and ex-detainees, the majority of whom had not benefited materially to any appreciable degree since Kenya's independence in 1963.²²⁰

This was definitely heavy-handed enforcement of "tribal unity."

The oathing campaign was accelerated after Mboya's assassination. And so "once again the ridges of Kikuyuland seethed with activity as lorry-load after lorry-load made its way to Gatundu to 'have tea with the President', the euphemism for the oathing ceremonies."²²¹ What was particularly disturbing was the active involvement of senior civil servants in the arrangement and facilitation of this oathing campaign.

As in the past during the Mau Mau peasant revolt, oathing for unity in Kikuyuland quickly "got out of hand ... threats produced stiffer resistance which in turn led to increased violence. Some church services were broken up, a few leading Christians were badly manhandled, many lost their jobs and one Presbyterian elder was beaten to death."²²²

Cabinet Ministers denied the existence of this widespread oathing campaign. Speaking in the Parliament, Mbiyu Koinange stated that the government was "not aware of any unlicensed meetings being held by Kikuyus or anybody else." How about convoys to Gatundu? These, as Kenyatta had told the KANU Parliamentary Group, "have been people visiting him recently to express their loyalty and devotion due to the false rumour which was spread, that his car had been stoned, during the Requiem Mass for our late brother and Minister for Economic Planning and Development, Mr. Tom Mboya."²²³ For his part, Moi, now Vice President and Minister for Home Affairs and thus in charge of internal security, told the Parliament that, "allegations that the Kikuyu tribe is

²²⁰W.O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 168.

²²¹Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 317. Also see, *Africa Digest* (London), Vol. XVI, No. 6 (December 1969) pp. 103–105.

²²²Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 318. Also see, *Daily Nation* (September 22, 1969), p. 1.

²²³*Daily Nation* (August 9, 1969), p. 1.

taking oaths to hate other tribes are nothing but malicious political allegations aimed at creating divisions within Kenya tribes.” But there was still the matter of convoys of trucks hauling people to Gatundu over a sustained period. Moi’s explanation was thus: “This thing started when Kenya was (facing) a big tragedy involving one of our Ministers. During this time, the Luos stoned my car and the Kalenjin people gathered at Nakuru and asked me what they should do.” He then said that this could have led to trouble had he incited them, but he did not do so. “The following day, stones were thrown at the President’s car and ever since that time, Kikuyus have been streaming to Mzee Kenyatta’s home to show their respect and loyalty. If this did not happen, then the foreign press would start saying that Kenyans have no confidence in their President.”²²⁴ But why were these convoys limited to the Kikuyus? Moi did not address this obvious and uncomfortable question.

Continuous uncomfortable questions raised in Parliament by the KPU MPs and even the KANU MPs that were then covered in the newspapers, plus resistance from prominent Christian leaders in Kikuyuland, including Obadiah Kariuki, forced Kenyatta and his advisers to reconsider this matter of oath-taking. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) wanted the “National Assembly ... convened as a matter of urgency to discuss allegations of secret oathings and beatings.” The Church denounced the oath-taking ceremonies whose object “was the entrenchment of sectional interests and the undermining of national unity.”²²⁵ In the middle of September 1969, “Kenyatta returned from the coast and abruptly the oath-taking stopped.”²²⁶ There followed a flurry of activity by senior civil servants, including provincial administrators, all now condemning oath-taking ceremonies.²²⁷ In early October, Moi told the Parliament that the government was “taking vigorous action to stop oath-taking ceremonies,”²²⁸ whose very existence he had denied less a month ago.

The political anxiety among many ethnic groups at this time, no doubt accentuated by reports of oath-taking among the Kikuyu, led

²²⁴ *Daily Nation* (August 13, 1969), p. 1.

²²⁵ *Daily Nation* (September 16, 1969), p. 3.

²²⁶ Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 319.

²²⁷ See, for example, *Daily Nation*, (September 22, 1969), p. 1.

²²⁸ *Daily Nation* (October 3, 1969), p. 1.

to a need for reassurance from the center. There followed yet another cycle of provincial delegations from around the country streaming to Nairobi or Gatundu seeking reassurance from Kenyatta. In light of recent history, one of the most significant of such delegations was of Luo elders from Nyanza Province, which met with Kenyatta in Nairobi, at the State House, on October 10, 1969. Led by the Provincial Commissioner, it included: “Minister for Economic Planning and Development. Mr. Odero Jowi; the Minister for Tourism and Wild Life, Mr. S.O. Ayodo; Kanu Members of Parliament, Government officers, elders, businessmen, and Kanu officials.”²²⁹ In his address to the delegation, Kenyatta “strongly disagreed with any person who alleged that there was discrimination in offering jobs and it was a well-known fact that Luos held responsible positions in the Government and statutory boards.” It was at this meeting that Kenyatta announced his forthcoming visit to Nyanza.

On this official trip to Western Kenya, Kenyatta addressed mass rallies in Nakuru and Kakamega. In Nakuru he said that in Kenya there was no “room for tribalism or racialism and let no man preach either. Any one who instigates rumours of tribalism will be ground like flour.”²³⁰ In Kakamega Kenyatta was assured by E.E. Khasakhala, the KANU Vice-President for Western Province, that the province “had no place for the Opposition party.” It was in Kisumu that this presidential trip turned deadly.

The tragedy in Kisumu is well known, certainly in Kenya. Any attempt to explain it, must pay heed to the details surrounding events in Kenya’s history in the tense period between 1966 and 1969. The origins of this tragedy are found far beyond this lakeside town in Nyanza. These details include the sustained and well-publicized campaign by the conservatives, led by Kenyatta, to oust Odinga from the government and power, and the corresponding belief that Kenyatta and the Kikuyu were especially determined to keep the Luo from gaining any access to positions of power and wealth; the death of Argwings-Kodhek, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in “what was reported to be a car crash in Nairobi” in January 1969; “Many Luo believed that he had been murdered by government insiders, reflecting the growing alienation and paranoia

²²⁹ *Daily Nation* (October 11, 1969), p. 24.

²³⁰ *Daily Nation* (October 25, 1969), p. 1.

amongst the community;”²³¹ and then the assassination of Mboya in July 1969. An added source of anger and political frustration was the issuing of a government decree, in early October, banning all “meetings of more than ten persons ... in all districts of Nyanza Province.” As Charles Murgor, the Provincial Commissioner (PC), explained it, “under the Chief’s Authority Act, no person shall organize, assist in organizing or attend a meeting of more than ten persons for any purpose, which includes any political purpose, anywhere in locations in Nyanza, unless he has obtained prior permission from the chief, in writing to hold such a meeting.”²³² The KPU officials in Nyanza Province met with the PC to voice their disappointment at this new constraint of their party. The officials “complained to the PC that the ban had placed Nyanza under indirect emergency rule. They said that KPU officials were being discriminated against and alleged that KANU officials enjoyed the right to address meetings in the province under the pretext that they were holding Government *barazas*.”²³³

As a result of all these factors, there had occurred a strong re-affirmation in the position and symbolism of Odinga among the Luo people in general. Throughout the course of his tumultuous political career, Odinga continually demonstrated a rare and deep knowledge of the Luo society and its traditional values and institutions. This society, “in its rural setting,” Okumu observed, “is still institutionally intact and evinces a strong sense of communal togetherness particularly when pressured by forces considered to be external and inimical to social stability.”²³⁴ A combination of his activities in the Luo Union and the Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation, enabled Odinga to “establish himself as the dominant political leader in Central Nyanza,” and also “enhanced his popularity in the rural areas” of Nyanza Province “and among the clan elders who played a major role in local matters.” Furthermore, “Odinga became known as the one and only individual in a position of leadership who shares his possessions with others.”²³⁵

²³¹ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012) p. 207.

²³² *Daily Nation*, (October 6, 1969), p. 1.

²³³ *Daily Nation* (October 14, 1969), p. 8.

²³⁴ John Joseph Okumu, “The By-Election in Gem: An Assessment, p. 10.

²³⁵ John Joseph Okumu, “The By-Election in Gem: An Assessment,” p. 10.

Now, more than before, Odinga's dual roles as the KPU leader and also as the "general of the Luo (tribal) army" became fused. "His role as the general of the 'tribal army' was invented by Wasonga Sijeyo," the successful KPU candidate in the Gem constituency elections held in May 1969.²³⁶ Sijeyo's characterization seemed to reflect a deeply held feeling among the Luo at this time that Odinga was "holding the fort against the advancing Kikuyu army" of domination.²³⁷ It is unclear if Kenyatta understood and appreciated this complex web of political loyalty, the centrality of Odinga to the Luo sense of identity at this time, and then the deeply held grievances that had produced visible anger toward him and his government. The *Daily Nation* while strongly condemnatory of the conduct of the people in Kisumu toward Kenyatta, nonetheless reluctantly acknowledged that "nobody in the world is satisfied with *status quo* ... and the Kisumu people would be the odd men out if they didn't harbour some deep-rooted feelings on some certain aspects of developments in their area, or in Nyanza Province as a whole."²³⁸

Unlike the practice that had become routine at this time in Kenya, Kenyatta was not received with due deference in Kisumu. There was heckling, throwing of stones at his car and then mass display and demonstration of disapproval of him and his government. Perhaps unaccustomed to such defiance since re-entering politics after detention, Kenyatta was "so ruffled that he lost his temper" and proceeded to give Odinga a harsh and humiliating dressing down. "It was possibly the roughest dressing-down he had ever delivered in public."²³⁹ But this outraged the crowd.²⁴⁰ Given his status within the larger Luo community at this time, this public humiliation of Odinga by Kenyatta riled the crowd. In the heat of the moment, the crowd felt that they too were being insulted and looked down upon in their own neighborhood. Were Kenyatta's actions deliberate and pre-meditated? Was this part of his strategy to "goad his opponents into action"?²⁴¹

²³⁶ *Daily Nation* (May 13, 1969), p. 1.

²³⁷ John Joseph Okumu, "The By-Election in Gem," p. 15.

²³⁸ *Daily Nation* (October 27, 1969), p. 6.

²³⁹ Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 319.

²⁴⁰ Daniel Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963-2011* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2011) p. 88.

²⁴¹ Daniel Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963-2011*, p. 88.

As Kenyatta's motorcade drove through Kisumu to Nakuru on Kakamega road, angry crowds threw stones at his car. In the aftermath of this tragedy, the police stated that the "the road was thickly lined with people who adopted a threatening attitude towards the President, accompanied by more shouting and stone throwing."²⁴² It is this "threatening attitude" of the crowds "pressing forward onto the road" the police stated, that prompted the Presidential Escort and the GSU to "open fire on the crowd."²⁴³ The exact figure of the dead and wounded has been difficult to ascertain over the years, especially because "virtually all film of the incident was seized and destroyed." In the end, "although many were killed ... the official death toll was reported as 11."²⁴⁴

Very shortly after the Kisumu tragedy the government arrested and detained all KPU MPs, plus Achieng Oneko. Odinga and J.M. Nthula, MP for Iveti South and KPU Deputy President, were initially placed under house arrest, and later detained. Why this severe action? Because the government had "made a firm decision to deal with the subversive elements who had been working with some foreign and unfriendly elements to destroy the peaceful running of the country; and that is the reason why the detentions and house arrests have been put into force."²⁴⁵ There was no indication given by the government as to when this plot had been discovered. Did Kenyatta know of this plot before going to Kisumu? If so, why did he go? No details of evidence were provided. Also, the government did not reveal when and how the whole of the KPU party had been involved.

The VOK commentary, as expected, supported the government action stating that,

the Kenya Cabinet is satisfied beyond any doubt that these men were behind the unruly demonstrations at Kisumu. A number of people lie dead in Kisumu at the altar of political impetuosity. The shooting was the result of wanton hot-headedness of a number of people who, careless of consequences, played with hot fire.²⁴⁶

²⁴² *Daily Nation* (October 27, 1969), p. 1.

²⁴³ *Daily Nation* (October 27, 1969), p. 1.

²⁴⁴ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 214.

²⁴⁵ *Daily Nation* (October 28, 1969), p. 1.

²⁴⁶ *Daily Nation* (October 28, 1969), p. 24.

The dead, acting at the behest of the KPU officials, were to be held responsible for their own death. The local press also supported the government action. In its editorial, the *Daily Nation* stated that,

if those ugly incidents which resulted in deaths and injuries in Kisumu last weekend showed that the Government could not be expected to take any chances in the face of threats to the life of the Head of State, the detentions announced yesterday will drive home the fact that the Government must be strong enough to govern. And it is strong.²⁴⁷

In the Parliament Moi called for the outlawing of the KPU since the “incident at Kisumu was a direct challenge to the Government and to the Head of State ... if his life is threatened, what can happen to the lives of ordinary people?” Kenyatta’s car, Moi stated, “was hit twice and its windows were missed by inches.”²⁴⁸ According to L.W. Oselu-Nyalick, MP and an Assistant Minister, “the purpose of the trouble-makers was to assassinate President Kenyatta.”²⁴⁹ How had this been determined? To all this, must be added Moi’s belief that “the KPU was not an ordinary political party but a subversive organisation supported by a foreign power.”²⁵⁰ Indeed, at the height of the tension resulting from Mboya’s assassination, Moi had briefly floated the idea that “this was not the assassination of Tom Mboya as a person. It was everything that Tom represented, and everything he stood for.” That it was the result of a foreign plot possibly in league with those in Kenya so “naïve as to listen to the practiced propaganda of a particular ideological bloc which has been antagonistic to Kenya, and has persistently sought to undermine our declared way of life.”²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ *Daily Nation* (October 28, 1969), p. 6.

²⁴⁸ *Daily Nation* (October 29, 1969), p. 4.

²⁴⁹ *Daily Nation* (October 29, 1969), p. 4. Oselu-Nyalick further contended that, “some KPU followers were living above their means of income. It was a clear indication that money was poured into the area to confuse the people.”

²⁵⁰ *Daily Nation* (October 29, 1969), p. 1.

²⁵¹ *Daily Nation* (July 14, 1969). p. 11. Moi ruled out Britain, the USA, and other Western powers for being in any way connected to this “foreign plot.” Kenyan and foreign political observers were however, “in no doubt about the identity of the ‘alien ideology’ that Mr. Moi alleged some were ‘selling themselves to foreign masters’ and fomenting tribalism and discord during the last few days. Communism and probably Maoism is the ideology and the politicians members of the KPU—this is the general reaction. Statements by the KPU after the assassination have consistently denounced tribalism and appealed

On October 30, Kenyatta's government banned the KPU and detained Odinga. Since the Kisumu tragedy, there had been a build-up to this eventual end for the KPU. "It has been established," the government bulletin stated, "that the KPU was seeking active assistance for its essential purpose to overthrow the lawful and constitutional Government of the Republic of Kenya." The KPU, the government contended, had since its inception been "more subversive both in its nature and its objectives."²⁵² The KPU's subversive nature now included having been largely responsible for "the deliberate fomenting of inter-tribal strife, and for employing propaganda rooted in lies, rumours and suspicions calculated to undermine national stability."²⁵³ The party was also accused of continuing to receive "substantial sums of foreign money" to be used in its subversive endeavors. In essence, this was a repetition of earlier charges leveled against Odinga.

After the Kisumu tragedy, the government sought to show that indeed the KPU posed a serious security risk to the Republic and therefore had to be stopped. This strategy was in keeping with Kenyatta's earlier discussion with MacDonald concerning the best way of edging Odinga from power without inadvertently "swinging sympathy to the other's side." A central point in this strategy, which clearly was in play as Kenyatta moved against the KPU, was that, "he must wait for an issue on which most men would see that Odinga, not he, was in the wrong."²⁵⁴ The government's narrative about the Kisumu tragedy consistently painted a picture of Odinga and the KPU as organizers and fomenters of trouble with the aim of embarrassing Kenyatta, challenging his authority, and then plunging the country into chaos. Were the KPU permitted to continue to operate as a rival party, its strategy for seizing power would destroy all the material and political gains since *Uhuru*:

all the endeavours and understandings that have cemented our nationhood and the realities of national unity, all the foundations and operational structures of Kenya's economic progress, all the elements of a whole new

Footnote 251 (continued)

for calm, but this evidently is not enough to divert the Government's attack." See, *Africa Digest* (London) Vol. XVI, No. 4 (August 1969) p. 71.

²⁵² *Daily Nation* (October 31, 1969), p. 1.

²⁵³ *Daily Nation* (October 31, 1969), p. 1.

²⁵⁴ *Malcolm MacDonald, Titans and Others*, p. 272.

fabric of unfolding social justice ... all these things could be brought to ruin in pursuit of an insane ambition.²⁵⁵

Kenyatta and the conservatives maintained that the KPU had been banned in order to save the country from chaos and then safeguard the gains of *Uhuru*. The government consistently depicted Odinga and the KPU to the country as the aggressors. Their actions in Kisumu were to be seen as “a probing of the President’s reactions and resolve, which developed, in fact, as an open challenge to the strength and status of the Kenya Government. To this there could be only one answer.”²⁵⁶ The press, as expected at this time, applauded the measures taken against the KPU. “Kenya” the *Daily Nation* wrote,

cannot be expected to stand and watch foreigners work through some of our nationals to create confusion to enable ideological take-overs. Foreign funds, vulgar training of all sorts and the creation of hate and bitterness among our people have been used to divide us ... If the ban on KPU inconveniences a few people in order to save thousands, if not millions of lives which might otherwise be lost later [the paper concluded], “then even on this ground alone, it can be seen to be justified.”²⁵⁷

The government’s position on this matter was that Kenyatta, while “annoyed at the criminal behaviour of a certain section in Kisumu,” had saved the country from plunging into possible civil war and chaos, since “to him tribalism in any form is anathema.”²⁵⁸ To this end, the objective of all the statements issued by the government and some by the KANU, was to offer justification for the outlawing of the KPU and therefore the forcible silencing of radical nationalism in the country at this time. From 1964 to 1969, Kenyatta and his conservative allies had been unable to defeat radical nationalism without resorting to the wanton use of the detention order and then force. “The KPU’s banning,” Charles Hornsby correctly concluded, “reflected Kenyatta’s fury at his inability to crush

²⁵⁵ *Daily Nation* (October 31, 1969), p. 8.

²⁵⁶ *Daily Nation* (October 31, 1969), p. 8.

²⁵⁷ *Daily Nation* (October 31, 1969), p. 6.

²⁵⁸ *Daily Nation* (October 28, 1969), p. 24.

his enemy politically. It also reflected his refusal to expose his rule to democratic contest.”²⁵⁹

By outlawing the KPU and detaining its leaders, Kenyatta let the word go out that his government had the appropriate instruments of power in place and was ready to use them to quell any dissent or challenge to his power. It is thus fair to state that radical nationalism had not lost the argument in the arena of national politics. What had happened was the forcible imposition of ideological homogeneity onto the country by Kenyatta and the conservatives. The elections of 1969, and other contests thereafter, even if sometimes hotly contested, remained true to the ideological script prescribed by the conservatives: repudiation and avoidance of radical nationalism; denunciation of socialism and especially communism; no challenge to Kenyatta’s authority in any form; forthright embrace of capitalism and the West and then the general adherence to the MacDonald formula. Kenyatta constituted the political center of the country. His political pronouncements and decisions would henceforth be unchallenged. This is as close as Kenya came to having what could be referred to as the “imperial presidency.” Peck informed London that “the picture of the patriarchal figure of Jomo Kenyatta serenely ruling his devoted people,” had been “a little disturbed of late by the defection of Odinga and the emergence of the KPU.” Still,

apart from this irritation, the President’s life continues its even way: he is securely guarded by his faithful Kikuyu, he breathes the wholesome air of Gatundu every night as well as from Friday to Tuesday, and his commands go forth and are obeyed. Assuming no sudden upheaval—and it seems doubtful if Odinga would bring this about in his present state of defeat—there seems no reason why the rule of Kenyatta should not continue for another five or six years, during which a successor might be trained up to take over the controls.²⁶⁰

Kenyatta’s successors would, with varying degrees of success, endeavor to emulate this style of leadership noted for its frequent use of presidential decrees to set policy, resort to force to silence opponents and the pursuit of unchallenged power.

²⁵⁹Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 215.

²⁶⁰MAC 71/8/63 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya: First Impressions.

Odinga and Kenyatta never reconciled. Part of the reason was because Odinga remained a formidable opponent. But there was also the role that Njonjo played in ensuring that the political rift between Odinga and Kenyatta remained solidly in place. Njonjo played a crucial role “in keeping Kenyatta’s attitude towards Odinga unyielding at times, particularly during 1966-68 when Kenyatta showed sure signs of relenting.”²⁶¹

Throughout the political struggle between the radicals and the conservatives, Njonjo patiently and astutely advanced two inter-linked objectives: “the maintenance of the British connexion and the candidacy of Moi as the successor to Kenyatta.”²⁶² Njonjo’s “ruthless pursuit of these and interpretation of Kenyatta’s own attitudes,” were in no small measure “responsible for Odinga’s downfall.”²⁶³ As part of this strategy, the British intelligence services pointed out, Njonjo was “assiduous in passing information against Odinga to the British High Commission” in Nairobi. He ensured that Odinga and the radicals were never allowed to challenge the conservatives in any fair contest on the national stage. These historically significant undertakings, also serve to draw attention to Njonjo’s varied considerable power and influence throughout Kenyatta’s reign.

²⁶¹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁶²FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁶³FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

Defending Kenya: Looking from Within

In March 1964, Duncan Sandys, Britain's Commonwealth Secretary, held high level talks in Nairobi with Kenyatta and some of his key Ministers on defense and financial issues of importance to both countries. The outcome of these talks was the Anglo-Kenyan Defence Agreement that was signed in June 1964. Kenyatta signed on behalf of Kenya while Sir Geoffrey de Freitas, High Commissioner to Kenya signed on behalf of Britain.¹ This Agreement, revisited many times afterwards, remained the center-piece of Kenya's very close post-colonial relations with Britain throughout Kenyatta's reign. What did it contain?

By the terms of this Agreement, Britain would, among other things, "supply, free of cost to Kenya until 31st March 1964, and thereafter on such terms and at such cost as may be agreed, British military personnel on secondment to the Kenya Army for so long as it is commanded by a British Officer." Britain would also "provide courses in the United Kingdom for Kenya service personnel." The training of officers and other specialized personnel of the Kenya Armed Forces would all be undertaken by Britain. Barracks and other army buildings previously owned by Britain in the country were to be relinquished "without charge to the Kenya Government."

¹FCO31/2326 (London: National Archives), Memorandum of Intention and Understanding Regarding Certain Financial and Defence Matters, 3 June 1964.

Also, included in this Agreement was Britain's obligation to "provide, free of cost, the services of a naval expert to advise the Kenya Government on the formation of a small naval force," and also to supply Royal Air Force (RAF) "personnel on such terms and at such cost as may be agreed to assist in the formation, training and manning of the Kenya Air Force." And indeed, in June 1964, "the Kenya Air Force was inaugurated." Kenyatta told the assembled crowd, "many of them civil servants given special time off to watch the parade," that the "Kenya navy would soon be formed."² In December 1964, soon after Kenya became a Republic, Kenyatta officially inaugurated the new Kenya Navy in Mombasa.³ The Agreement also covered technical and material aid by Britain to be used in the modernization of the Kenya Armed Forces, especially the Kenya Army. This arrangement was very instrumental in the expansion and then entrenchment of the close relationship between Britain and Kenyatta's Kenya.

A key component of this Agreement, rarely publicized or discussed was the provision by which Britain would "continue, subject to any prior commitment and to prior authorization, to make British troops stationed in Kenya to assist the Kenya Government in dealing with internal disturbances."⁴ Thus Britain would continue to provide protection, if needed, to uphold Kenyatta's government. Britain had been forced by political expedience to close its massive army base at Kahawa (outside Nairobi).⁵ It had done so in order "to remove one of the main African 'extremist' objections to the independence settlement: the diminution of

² *East African Standard* (June 2, 1964), p. 1.

³ *East African Standard* (December 16, 1964), p. 1 Also see, *Africa Digest*, Vol. XI, No. 5 (April 1964), p. 135. The British Ministry of Defence of course knew all the details of Kenya's political structure, its military organization, capacity and weaponry. See, DEFE 64/158(London: National Archives) Intelligence Briefing Memorandum—Kenya, 1965.

⁴FCO 31/2326 (London: National Archives) Memorandum of Intention and Understanding Regarding Certain Financial and Defence Matters, 3 June 1964.

⁵*Daily Nation* (September 18, 1965), p. 1. "The multi-million military barracks at Kahawa, near Nairobi, one time the pride of the British Army in pre-independence Kenya, were yesterday formally handed over to President Kenyatta by the British High Commissioner, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, as a gift to the nation. The ceremony also marked the conversion of what Mr. MacDonald termed as being until recently a 'fortress of colonialism' into Kenyatta College, one of the biggest educational institutions in the country."

sovereignty represented by a British military base in Kenya.”⁶ The base was an obvious and visible affront to national sovereignty and would also have provided an easy target of attack by the radical nationalists and in the process seriously undermined “Kenyatta’s legitimacy as a nationalist leader.” It is also useful to mention that this matter of foreign army bases in Third World countries had been strongly condemned by the Non-Aligned Movement, to which Kenya belonged after attaining *Uhuru*. A summit of the non-aligned nations held in Cairo in October 1964, “condemned colonialism and neo-colonialism” and “called for the withdrawal of all foreign military bases”⁷ from African countries and other member states.

On economic matters Britain agreed, alongside other provisions, to cancel some loans made to the colonial government from “September 1954 to March 1960.” Also, Britain was to “make assistance available to the Kenya Government towards its share of compensation for expatriate officers and commutation of pensions, to the extent of an interest free loan of £10.1 million for compensation and an interest free loan of 3.5 million pounds for commutation.” Britain also pledged to continue providing general economic and technical assistance to Kenya. More specifically, Britain agreed to “continue to give assistance to the Kenya Government in respect of the Million Acre Schemes, and to consider such adjustments as may prove necessary within the existing agreed total sums.”⁸ Also covered under this Agreement was Britain’s willingness to “consider urgently the revised proposals for Kenya Government for solving the land settlement problems in the Ol Kalou area.” Funds, in the form of loans, were also to be provided to the Land Bank and the Agricultural Finance Corporation. Lastly, Britain agreed to “give the Kenya Government the sum of £1.25 million for assistance in meeting the budgetary deficit expected in 1964/1965,” plus a further 3 million pounds as Development Aid in 1964/1965, of which “£1 million would be a gift.”⁹

⁶David A. Percox, *Britain, Kenya and the Cold War: Imperial Defence, Colonial Security and Decolonization* (London/New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2004), p. 208.

⁷*East African Standard* (October 12, 1964), p. 1.

⁸FCO 31/2326 (London: National Archives) Memorandum of Intention and Understanding Regarding Certain Financial and Defence Matters, 3 June 1964.

⁹FCO 31/2326 (London: National Archives) Memorandum of Intention and Understanding Regarding Certain Financial and Defence Matters, 3 June 1964.

A close look at this Agreement shows that Kenya made “considerable concessions” to Britain, especially in military matters. Kenya permitted “British military aircraft, including aircraft under the control of or chartered for the British armed services, to overfly Kenya and to stage in Kenya, normally at Eastleigh, but exceptionally at Embakasi airport.” The military aircraft would nonetheless be expected to ensure that “every flight is cleared through normal air traffic channels” and also that “special permission is sought from the Kenya Government if it is desired to carry armed troops or explosives.”¹⁰ As an extension of this portion of the Agreement, Kenya permitted Royal Air Force “personnel to be stationed at Eastleigh for duties in connection with staging such aircraft.”

By far the most extensive, and also politically sensitive, portion of this Agreement covered the use of Kenya by the Royal Navy and Army for training purposes. Kenya permitted “Her Majesty’s Ships and Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, subject to prior notification,” to use “the established naval moorings for recreation, replenishment or self-maintenance and, on the occasions of visits by aircraft carriers for self-maintenance.” Also, Kenya permitted “naval aircraft to use Embakasi and Port Reitz airports for the continuation of flying practice, and to facilitate these arrangements,” the Royal Navy was permitted “to maintain a minimum establishment ashore ... until the development of the Kenya navy renders this no longer necessary.”¹¹ Under the terms of this Agreement, British Forces, “including units not stationed in Kenya,” were allowed to “carry out training in Kenya, which, so far as concerns Battalion Group exercises, would initially be limited to twice a year.” Where possible, these military exercises could be, “arranged jointly with Kenya Forces if the Kenya Government so desires.” The British Armed Forces were also allowed to “continue to make use of the leave camp at Nyali, on the understanding that personnel using the camp will wear civilian clothes.” Kenya was also expected to “permit the British

¹⁰FCO 31/2326 (London: National Archives) Memorandum of Intention and Understanding Regarding Certain Financial and Defence Matters, 3 June 1964. Also see, David A. Percox, *Britain, Kenya and the Cold War* for more details on this Defence Agreement.

¹¹FCO 31/2326 (London: National Archives) Memorandum of Intention and Understanding Regarding Certain Financial and Defence Matters, 3 June 1964. The USA joined Britain in using facilities at Mombasa harbor after dredging “to ensure the berthing of aircraft carriers from the Sixth Fleet, at the cost of \$50 million,” from the late 1970s. See, David A. Percox, *Britain, Kenya and the Cold War*, p. 210.

Service authorities to exercise their option to renew their exiting lease when it expires in April, 1965.”¹²

A crucial top-secret detail that was technically part of this Agreement, though never discussed, was what came to be known as the Bamburi Understanding. During the discussions with Duncan Sandys in 1964, the Kenya team requested a gift of military aircraft from Britain to defend itself especially against Somalia. Duncan Sandys turned down this request, but instead made an oral statement to Kenyatta “that Britain would probably come to the aid of Kenya if she were attacked by Somalia. This statement, which was without commitment, accompanied the refusal by Mr. Sandys of a Kenyan request for a gift of a squadron of Hunter aircraft and other equipment.” In 1966, Kenyatta’s government feared that there might be an imminent attack from Somalia. As a result, Kenyatta dispatched Njonjo and Bruce McKenzie in November 1966 for urgent consultations with Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister, regarding the oral assurance of military support previously given by Duncan Sandys. The outcome of this secret visit was that Duncan Sandys’ oral reassurance was “formalized in a message from the Prime Minister delivered to President Kenyatta in his beach house at Bamburi on 25 January 1967.”¹³ Hence, the Bamburi Understanding. Now in written form, the key passage for the British government in this document was that,

The Kenya Government may be sure that if Kenya were the victim of outright aggression by Somalia, the British Government would give the situation most urgent consideration. While, therefore, the British Government cannot in advance give the Kenya Government any assurance of automatic assistance, the possibility of Britain going to Kenya’s assistance in the event of an organized and unprovoked attack by Somalia is not precluded.¹⁴

Throughout most of Kenyatta’s reign, Somalia remained his government’s main foreign threat. As early as March 1963, he had set the tone

¹²FCO 31/2326 (London: National Archives) Memorandum of Intention and Understanding Regarding Certain Financial and Defence Matters, 3 June 1964.

¹³PREM 16/981(London: National Archives) Prime Minister’s Meeting with Bruce McKenzie.

¹⁴PREM 16/981(London: National Archives) Prime Minister’s Meeting with Bruce McKenzie.

on this matter by insisting that Kenya would “not entertain the handing over of ‘even one inch’ of her territory to another country.”¹⁵ All political groups and parties in the country were united on defending what was seen as the sanctity of the country’s borders. In the immediate period before *Uhuru*, the British government conducted a series of talks with Somalia on the impending border dispute with Kenya over the Northern Frontier District (NFD). The British position, which was resented by the Somali government, was that it would be wrong “to take unilateral decision about Kenya’s frontiers without reference to the wishes of its Government,” and that may be “the dispute could be solved only by the two countries involved.”¹⁶ The Somali government insisted that, “the people of the NFD should be allowed to decide in a referendum whether they wanted to be part of Kenya or Somalia.”

The border dispute between Kenya and Somalia is of course linked to the colonial partition of Africa that in this case split the Somali speaking peoples in different colonies (then countries). When Somalia attained its independence on July 1, 1960, it was in essence “a union of British Somaliland and the Trust Territory, formerly the colony of Italian Somaliland.”¹⁷ Before and after this date, Somalia “claimed the reunification of the Somali-peopled areas of north-eastern Kenya with the Somali state.” Kenya, on the other hand was not only opposed to this idea but also to “any issue concerning the boundary alignment.”

Sporadic acts of violence were already apparent in the NFD by December 1963 when Kenya attained its *Uhuru*. As a result, Kenyatta’s government dispatched sections of its army to the area “to maintain law and order.” The acts of violence continued even after Kenya established diplomatic relations with Somalia. By September 1964, Kenyatta announced, “stringent security regulations, giving” the security forces “widespread powers of arrest, search and seizure without warrant in the whole of the North Eastern Region and parts of Eastern and Coast Regions.” This was in addition to prior security regulations which “related only to powers in a prohibited area—land in the North Eastern

¹⁵ *East African Standard* (March 15, 1963), p. 1.

¹⁶ *Africa Digest*, Vol. XI, No. 2(October 1963), pp. 45–46.

¹⁷ Ian Brownlie, *African Boundaries: A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopedia* (London: C. Hurst and Company; Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), p. 889.

Region lying within five miles of the Kenya–Somalia border.”¹⁸ The Somali guerrillas, known as *shiftras*, had since 1963, extended their activity and attack over a large area “from the Ethiopian border at Moyale down as far as Lamu on the Indian Ocean.” There were even “a few incidents ... in the Rift Valley region.” While the area directly affected in the NFD was sparsely populated, nonetheless the *shiftras*, “presented a potential threat to more than half of Kenya.” Kenyatta and his conservative allies saw worrisome political implications in this war against the *shiftras* occurring at a time when the struggle against the radical nationalists had yet to be won.

By 1964, attacks by *shiftra* guerillas had led to the suspension of “all road communications with Ethiopia ...” The only civilian traffic allowed to such centers as Marsabit and Moyale were “lorries carrying essential supplies and even they” could “only travel by day—escorted by Kenya police.”¹⁹ British troops also came to play a similar role, although on a larger scale. While not officially sanctioned to fight against the *shiftra* guerillas, British troops took over “escort and guard duties in the North Eastern Region ... from men of the Kenya Army.” These troops provided “escorts for supply convoys driving 400 miles from Nairobi to supply British sappers” who were “building a strategic road. The new road” eventually provided “a direct link between Garissa and Wajir township 160 miles farther north and only 60 miles from the Somali border.”²⁰ The strategic value of this new road, constructed with the help of British troops, is underscored by the fact that the township of Wajir became “the centre for operations against” the *shiftra* guerillas.

The British government continued to monitor and assess the Somali threat to Kenya and routinely held discussions with Kenyatta’s government on this matter.²¹ Of crucial importance to Kenya were the arms build-up of the Somali armed forces and the implication of this on the ever-present security threat in the NFD. Britain recognized that “the arms deliveries to Somalia and the continuation of operations by the *shiftra* in the northern parts of Kenya are increasing Kenya’s anxiety.” Still, Britain was glad that it had been “able to help with the

¹⁸ *Africa Digest*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (December 1964), p. 76.

¹⁹ *Africa Digest*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (December 1964), p. 76.

²⁰ *Africa Digest*, Vol. XI, No. 6 (June 1964), p. 174.

²¹ FCO 31/2326 (London: National Archives) Top Secret Telegram on Bamburi Understanding.

development of Kenya's defence organisation and forces," and further believed that "their continued development should greatly help to overcome the problems of internal security. The Kenya authorities," the statement concluded, had "recently been provided with a copy of the British assessment of the threat from Somalia."²²

In June 1969, Kenyatta wrote directly to Harold Wilson requesting fighter aircraft from Britain. He dispatched Dr. Njoroge Mungai and Bruce McKenzie to London to deliver his request in person to Wilson. This is one of the few times that Njonjo did not accompany McKenzie on these top-secret missions to London. "As you have been informed," Kenyatta wrote to Wilson, "my Minister for Defence, Dr. Njoroge Mungai, and my Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Bruce McKenzie, will be in London on 3rd and 4th July, 1969, to discuss Kenya's need for jet aircraft." Kenyatta then proceeded to offer the rationale for his urgent need for fighter aircraft from Britain. The background of this request was "the growing competition between the Soviet Union and China for influence in Eastern Africa." This competition constituted "a serious threat to the security and stability of the whole area." Here, once again, Kenyatta was raising the specter of communist threat in Eastern Africa for his political advantage. Kenya's neighboring countries, Kenyatta informed Wilson, "have or are about to acquire an effective jet fighter force supplied and trained from Communist sources, and I cannot," he continued, "allow the Kenya Air Force (KAF) to remain at a disadvantage in relation to our neighbours."²³ Kenyatta then played the Cold War card one more time, informing Wilson that the Soviet Union was ready to "provide aircraft and training facilities on generous terms" to Kenya. He was however "reluctant to take advantage of such an offer." On this matter, he was "sure that the right course is for both of us to maintain and strengthen the close connection we have had and enjoyed with British Armed Forces. If, as I hope," he concluded, "we can acquire British aircraft, it will demonstrate to our neighbours that we do not have to look to the Russians or Chinese for the supply of modern equipment."²⁴

²²FCO 31/2326 (London: National Archives) Top Secret Telegram on Bamburi Understanding.

²³PREM 13/2745 (London: National Archives) Kenyatta's letter to Harold Wilson, June 26, 1969.

²⁴PREM 13/2745 (London: National Archives) Kenyatta's letter to Harold Wilson, June 26, 1969.

In his response, Wilson informed Kenyatta that Britain would indeed be able to “make a substantial further contribution to the foreign exchange cost of equipping your air force with a jet squadron.” This was, in part, to be done by relieving Kenyatta’s government “of all, instead of part, of the foreign exchange expenditure arising out of the provisional additional members of the RAF training team who would be required in connection with the introduction of the BAC 167 aircraft.”²⁵

This high-level consultation continued with Edward Heath who in June 1970 had become the “least expected Prime Minister” of Britain. Ordinary and with no apparent magnetism, he had “a mind with a razor edge and something of harsh resolution.” As his political biographer states, Heath remained the “most unlikely Conservative Prime Minister since Disraeli, for working-class origins had taken still longer than Jewishness to win acceptance in his party.”²⁶ Kenyatta wanted some assurance from the new Conservative Prime Minister on many issues, but above all on the Bamburi Understanding. Once again, he dispatched Njonjo and Bruce McKenzie for a private audience with the Prime Minister. In his letter, Kenyatta informed the Prime Minister that he had asked his emissaries to “discuss with you what we now here call the ‘Bamburi Understanding’. I hope,” he continued, “that you will kindly discuss this matter with my Ministers who have my authority to do so. I am keen that this Understanding should be continued by your Government.”²⁷

The matter of Njonjo acting on behalf of Kenyatta at such high-level consultations in London was expected at this time. It was generally known to the British intelligence services that since 1963 Njonjo had accumulated immense power and authority in Kenya and that he acted on Kenyatta’s behalf on many issues. He was “Kenyatta’s right hand man

²⁵PREM 13/2745 (London: National Archives) Harold Wilson’s response to Kenyatta’s letter, September 29, 1969. Wilson further stated that, “in addition to free conversion courses in Britain for six pilots which we have already offered, we would ask for no contribution to the costs of the additional RAF element—except in respect of matters purely locally such as housing and transport on duty within Kenya.”

²⁶Margaret Laing, *Edward Heath: Prime Minister* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972), p. 1. Also see, Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life: Autobiography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998).

²⁷PREM 15/110(London: National Archives) Kenyatta’s letter to Edward Heath, August 30, 1970.

and the grey eminence of the Government.”²⁸ And so, “despite having no political base he has exercised as great a political influence as any in Kenya.” Within the government, for example, he was “a member of all Cabinet committees of importance.” Although he was “not a particularly successful parliamentarian,” he was most “likely to play a significant role when the President dies.” These intelligence services also knew that “in 1968 he organized the group of Kikuyu, Kamba and Kalenjin politicians who chose Moi as their candidate to succeed Kenyatta.”²⁹ It was known to these intelligence services that Europeans like Bruce McKenzie “have been his principal associates.” He was personally very close to the British High Commission in Nairobi, and was “sometimes suspected of being supported by the British in politics.” Alongside Bruce McKenzie, Njonjo was “one of the two Kenya Ministers closest and most friendly to the High Commission.”³⁰ His business dealings were “were more covert than those of most of his colleagues,” and he had “property in Britain.”³¹

Regarding his personal habits and inclinations, the British intelligence services noted that he spoke very fluent English. In addition, “his mode of dress and opinions have led him to be known as more English than the English.”³² This mode of dress prominently included “black jacket and striped trousers and a rose buttonhole daily.” Njonjo was very active “in charitable institutions such as St. John’s and Dr. Barnado’s” and other professional organizations. He was nonetheless, “fanatical about professional standards and openly distrustful of African lawyers, pilots and other skilled people.”³³ In the long run the British intelligence services saw these factors as “handicaps in Kenya politics” since Njonjo “too

²⁸PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Biographical Note, Charles Njonjo, Attorney General.

²⁹FCO 31/2578 (London: National Archives) The Honourable Mr. Charles Njonjo, Attorney General.

³⁰PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Biographical Note on Charles Njonjo, Attorney General.

³¹PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Confidential Brief on Charles Njonjo, Attorney General.

³²FCO 31/2578 (London: National Archives) The Honourable Mr. Charles Njonjo, Attorney General.

³³FCO 31/2578 (London: National Archives) The Honourable Mr. Charles Njonjo, Attorney General.

obviously presents a very Western image.” By 1970, he was “a bachelor and a practising Anglican.”

Njonjo’s visit to London in September 1970 was held in such secrecy that not even the Kenya Embassy was informed of his presence.³⁴ Arrangements were made for him to “come into No. 10 through the Cabinet Office.” In the event that the news of his visit leaked to the press, the British authorities were “willing to say ... that Mr. Njonjo had brought a personal message from President Kenyatta and that it was not the practice to disclose the contents of such messages.”³⁵ In his memo to the Prime Minister, the Minister of State for Defence also noted, with evident frustration, the importance of acceding to some of Njonjo’s specific dining preferences: he “liked to have tea with hot milk at mid-morning.” Bruce McKenzie had passed on this information to the Minister with the “advice that it would be well received.”

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office informed the Prime Minister’s Office that the Kenya government wished “to keep both the existence of the Agreement itself and also the presence of Mr. Njonjo in London secret.”³⁶ Before Njonjo’s arrival the British government had already been informed of the purpose for the visit by Bruce McKenzie who was already in London: he would be carrying a letter from Kenyatta asking “for a reaffirmation by the present Government of the ‘Bamburi Understanding.’” The Foreign and Commonwealth Office strongly urged the Prime Minister to receive Njonjo and Bruce McKenzie as Kenyatta’s emissaries. Kenyatta’s Kenya was a crucial British ally on many key questions in the Commonwealth, but especially in Africa. This included the controversial British policy to sell arms to South Africa. “The present importance of Kenya in the context of ‘Arms for South Africa’ discussions,” the memo pointed out, “is well known and it is most important that everything should be done to keep Kenyans

³⁴PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Memo from Minister for Defence to Prime Minister on Njonjo’s visit and Bamburi Understanding.

³⁵PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Memo from Minister for Defence to Prime Minister on Njonjo’s visit and Bamburi Understanding.

³⁶PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister’s Office. Bruce McKenzie had already informed the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that, “the Kenya High Commission in London have no knowledge whatsoever of the ‘Bamburi Understanding’ or of the visit of Mr. Njonjo to London.”

and President Kenyatta especially as happy as possible.” Further, it was vital to know that “The Kenyans attach very great importance to the ‘Bamburi Understanding’, and President Kenyatta greatly values the personal contact with the Prime Minister which he feels is available to him. As he cannot leave Kenya, he can only operate by sending one of his senior ministers with a personal message. Mr. Njonjo,” the memo emphasized, “is a lawyer with a retentive mind and will report back faithfully to President Kenyatta everything that is said to him.”³⁷ The Foreign and Commonwealth Office urged the Prime Minister to renew the Bamburi Understanding for after all, “the Kenya Government have been consistently helpful over the defence facilities (largely involving Army training, over-flying and use of Mombasa port) which we have enjoyed since independence. The renewal and reaffirmation therefore of the present Understanding in the same rather vague terms,” the memo to the Prime Minister concluded, “is a price worth paying for a friendly and timely gesture towards the Kenya Government.”³⁸

In the meeting with Heath, Bruce McKenzie “took the lead on this matter” of the Bamburi Understanding. He wanted the Conservative government to “reaffirm the Understanding” whose origin could be traced back to “arrangements between the Kenya Government and Duncan Sandys at the time of Kenya’s independence in 1964.” Beyond the military details contained in the existing Defence Agreement with Britain, Kenyatta’s emissaries were particularly interested, “in the maintenance of the work of the SAS team who provided training for anti-guerillas against the possibility of aggression from Somalia.” But even more important for Njonjo and Bruce McKenzie was the value of the SAS to the security of Kenyatta since the SAS also trained his personal escort. It was pointed out at this meeting that, “President Kenyatta personally attached the greatest importance to the help given by the SAS.”³⁹ It is not therefore surprising that Kenyatta pushed hard for the reaffirmation by Britain of the Bamburi Understanding. As Bruce McKenzie

³⁷PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister’s Office.

³⁸PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister’s Office.

³⁹PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Minutes of Meeting between Mr. Njonjo, Attorney General of Kenya, Bruce McKenzie the Kenya Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister, September 8, 1970.

and Njonjo explained to Heath, there was a crucial “link between the arrangements made under the Bamburi Understanding and the personal security” of Kenyatta.⁴⁰ Heath reaffirmed the Bamburi Understanding “in the terms in which it was drawn up,” with special attention given to the “position of the SAS team ... in the light of what the Kenyan Ministers had said.”

Under the rather shadowy terms of the Bamburi Understanding, there always existed some discrepancy between the formalized declarations and the informal spoken messages. Formally, the British government was careful to note that, “H.M.G. very rarely gives unilateral formal undertakings in advance to help repel aggression against other Commonwealth countries.” However, British Ministers were encouraged to offer this military reassurance “in conversation.”⁴¹ While it was true that the end of the empire had accelerated “the contraction of Britain’s power to sustain major military operations at great distances from the United Kingdom,” there nonetheless existed some military planning in case British troops were needed to enforce the Bamburi Understanding. This operational planning was “not for disclosure.” There existed “a concept of operations” which allowed “for the introduction of up to a brigade group with air support in order to support this Understanding.”⁴²

Why did Heath give immediate consideration to Kenyatta’s request to reaffirm the Bamburi Understanding? The reasons, to a large degree, lay in Heath’s political problems regarding the Simonstown Agreement signed between South Africa and Britain. Macmillan had signed this Agreement on behalf of Britain 1954 when he was Minister of Defence in Churchill’s last term as Prime Minister.⁴³ As Macmillan saw it, this agreement would enable Britain to use the Simonstown “base in time of war,” and also “sell a considerable quantity of major arms to South Africa.” This agreement was honored under Macmillan as Prime Minister. The operative rationale, repeated with deafening frequency throughout Heath’s administration, was that the agreement allowed

⁴⁰PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Minutes of Meeting between Mr. Njonjo, attorney General of Kenya, Bruce McKenzie the Kenya Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister, September 8, 1970.

⁴¹PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Speaking Notes to Prime Minister from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

⁴²PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Bamburi Understanding.

⁴³Margaret Laing, *Edward Heath: Prime Minister*, p. 111.

Britain and Apartheid South Africa to cooperate “in the defence of the sea routes around the Cape of Good Hope”⁴⁴ against possible hostile postures from the Soviet Union and its allies.

In the period since 1955, there had been noticeable changes in the response of the international community toward Apartheid. For one thing, a majority of African countries had attained their political independence by the mid-1960s. Many of these countries expressed their solidarity with the anti-Apartheid movement. Also, in August 1963, “the United Nations Security Council established a voluntary arms embargo against South Africa.” This matter had also been discussed by the Non-Aligned Movement, which sought more stringent measures against Apartheid. In the Commonwealth, especially among its African members, there was a marked majority opposition toward the sale of arms to South Africa and also toward the response of the British government to Ian Smith’s defiant Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Zimbabwe in 1965. Partly in response to this changed international political climate, the Labour government under Wilson had in December 1967, “announced that Britain would not supply arms to South Africa.”

Heath, “considered a genuine hardliner on this issue” sought to reverse the Labour government’s policy on arms sales to South Africa. One of the first major policy pronouncements by his administration concerned the resumption of “supplying arms to South Africa.” This was part of “his first speech to the Commons” as Prime Minister. As Heath saw it, Wilson’s administration had committed a policy blunder in enforcing an arms embargo against South Africa. “It was highly unlikely,” Heath would later write “that the South Africans would have been able to maintain” the Simonstown agreement, “unless the British government was prepared to resume some sales of maritime equipment.” South Africa was an area of “major importance to Britain and no Conservative government could have seriously considered renegeing on the Simonstown Agreement at that time. We needed assistance of the South African navy and had a legal obligation to complete the equipment of their frigates.”⁴⁵

This reversal of the Labour government policy on arms sales to South Africa by the Heath administration outraged the “anti-racialist and

⁴⁴Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life*, p. 447.

⁴⁵Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life*, p. 477.

liberal opinion” in Britain and in many of the Commonwealth countries. Predictably, this matter dominated the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference that was held in Singapore in January 1971.⁴⁶ Heath was confronted by many African members of the Commonwealth, especially Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia, that remained stridently opposed to the policy of resuming sale of arms to South Africa. His administration had earlier made a non-consequential qualification of its policy under which arms sold to South Africa “could be used for its external defence” only and not “internally against the civil population.” This qualification had failed to calm the strong opposition to this policy. And so, when Heath arrived in Singapore he was faced with a restive Commonwealth that urged him to reconsider this policy. He refused to do so. He was opposed to the position of the militant African Commonwealth countries that remained “convinced that change in South Africa could come about only by imposing full economic sanctions and, if necessary, by force.” Heath, like the rest of Western leaders at this time, held onto the self-serving position that, “a racial war would only bring suffering and misery throughout a large part of the continent, especially to those who were most directly affected by apartheid policies.”⁴⁷

The refusal to yield on this matter enraged several countries in the Commonwealth and was especially unpopular in Africa. Heath adamantly resisted the pressure exerted by Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia on what he considered a matter of “British policy.” He interpreted this radical and unflinching opposition as an attempt by these African countries to intimidate Britain. And this, he would not allow. In the end, “the threat to his own and to Britain’s authority fuelled him with precisely the anger he needed to carry him over.” Yet as his biographer aptly notes, “the amount of anger he showed was doubtless deliberate.”⁴⁸ Obote of Uganda was about the most outspoken critic of Heath’s administration policy on South Africa at the Singapore conference. As it happens, Obote was overthrown while at the conference by Idi Amin. When he was informed of this change in Uganda, Heath “indicated that” he “was not wholly displeased to hear it.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶Margaret Laing, *Edward Heath: Prime Minister*, p. 233.

⁴⁷Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life*, p. 478.

⁴⁸Margaret Laing, *Edward Heath: Prime Minister*, p. 234.

⁴⁹Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life*, p. 482.

Opposed by an increasingly vocal anti-apartheid movement in Britain, the Labour Party, some members of his own party and with no significant support in the Commonwealth, Heath was appreciative of Kenyatta's support on this matter of arms sales to South Africa.⁵⁰ In the meeting in London, Njonjo and Bruce McKenzie were assured of "British Government's willingness to co-operate over Kenya's defence problems" with the "hope that the Kenya Government will in turn continue to co-operate with" Britain "as far as possible over" its "own defence problems involving the sea route round the Cape."⁵¹ As a follow-up to the issues discussed at this meeting, the Heath administration concluded a comprehensive arms deal with Kenyatta's government in 1973 worth £13 million pounds. This included, "a £2 million pounds grant and some free training. The package included the provision of six Hawker Hunters." Why the grant to Kenya at this time? "The grant element in the package was regarded implicitly as being made in recognition of Kenya's agreement to co-operate in an orderly and phased programme of British Asian emigration to Britain."⁵²

When Wilson returned to power in 1974, Kenyatta sought for yet another meeting to reaffirm the terms of the Bamburi Understanding. In its communication to the Prime Minister's Office on this matter, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office explained that the use of trusted emissaries was "Kenyatta's chosen method of doing 'sensitive business.'" Njonjo had again informed the British High Commissioner in Nairobi that Kenyatta was "keen that this type of personal contact should be retained."⁵³ It was important for Wilson to be reminded that "President

⁵⁰PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister's Office. The memo added that, "President Kenyatta would be very unhappy if his present approach were rebuffed and if the present Government did not at least fully accept the limited commitment undertaken by our predecessors. The Kenyans are among the moderates on the 'Arms for South Africa' issue, and are playing a key role. It is important therefore at present that they should not think that the present British Government is less friendly towards them than their predecessors."

⁵¹PREM 15/110 (London; National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister's Office.

⁵²PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Prime Minister's Meeting with Bruce McKenzie, 5 August 1974.

⁵³PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister's Office. As to the possibility of the Bamburi Understanding being extended to "cover aggression by Kenya's other neighbours," the British Government held the position that, "The Bamburi Understanding was an assurance

Kenyatta clearly gives great weight to the Understanding as the touchstone in Kenya's relations⁵⁴ with Britain. It was thus in Britain's interest to send Kenyatta "a written confirmation" in the matter of the Bamburi Understanding. While it may be true that Kenyatta and his close advisers had "come to read more into the Understanding than it contains," the Foreign and Commonwealth Office saw "no advantage in spelling out its limited nature." Any suggestion that Wilson's government "intended to water down the 1967 commitment ... could have a seriously prejudicial effect on" Britain's "relations with Kenya."

Bruce McKenzie met with Wilson on August 5, 1974. Njonjo, who had "originally intended to accompany Mr. McKenzie," was unable to attend. He was held up in Nairobi attending to other assignments. Beyond the request to reaffirm the Bamburi Understanding, McKenzie sought arms from Britain. While Kenyatta's government had recently purchased arms from Britain in 1973, there still was an unsettling pervasive feeling in the Kenya Armed Forces that the country remained "dangerously under-armed." There was worry of a possible attack by Kenya's neighbors, specifically Somalia at this time. As a result, there was "a growing concern amongst army officers that their weaponry" was "inadequate for the job they may need to do." Some now even favored "turning to the Russians or Chinese for weapons." The British intelligence services knew, however, that Kenyatta seemed "very anxious to continue to do business with" Britain.⁵⁵ Also, it was the "political judgement" of these intelligence services that there was "little risk of an attack on Kenya by her neighbours. However, if such an attack were to be mounted, the Kenyan forces would be likely at a military disadvantage." To this end, Britain had determined that it was in its vital interests to preserve "both the internal stability of Kenya and her ability to defend herself." Other reasons for Britain to maintain "friendly relations with

Footnote 53 (continued)

that HMG would not stand idly by while a Commonwealth country was attacked by a non-Commonwealth country armed with Soviet weapons. It does not seem appropriate to extend it to provide blanket cover for the highly unlikely possibility of aggression by a Commonwealth country or by traditional friendly state."

⁵⁴PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister's Office.

⁵⁵PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister's Office.

Kenyatta's government," included "the continued presence in Kenya of some 25–30,000 Asian British passport holders." Kenyatta's government was co-operating with Britain in its "policies of admitting these people in a controlled and orderly manner." As a reward for this co-operation, the "previous administration agreed to make available to" Kenya "a £2 million grant towards the purchase ... of a £13 million arms package, and co-operation over the influx of Asians was linked by inference to this deal."⁵⁶

The details of the arms requested by Kenya included, "aircraft 'Hunters and perhaps BAC Strike masters and Bulldog trainers' mobile radar, surface-to-air missiles and anti-tank weaponry." Regarding the possibility of Kenya requesting weaponry from the Soviet Union (and its allies) or from China, McKenzie was reminded of the folly of turning

to Russians, who invariably demand a high political price for weapons. In this instance, the folly would be compounded by the fact that the Russians are already the major suppliers of arms to the two countries Kenya most fears. Kenya could not rely on receiving continued supplies, spares or assistance in any confrontation with these countries.⁵⁷

To be able to assess fully Kenya's military needs, the British High Commissioner to Kenya made a crucial recommendation that was then explored by the Prime Minister in his discussions with Bruce McKenzie. The recommendation advised the British government to "consider sending a senior military officer or officers to Kenya to discuss their military requirements and the arms and equipment the UK might be able to provide to meet them." The officer or officers dispatched on this mission would need "to be briefed on" Britain's "assessment of the Somali and Ugandan armed forces and the threat they pose to Kenya." This is however not how this technical detail would be described to the Kenyans.⁵⁸

By the end of August 1974, Njonjo and Bruce McKenzie were back in London for confidential talks with British officials in the Foreign and

⁵⁶PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister's Office.

⁵⁷PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister's Office.

⁵⁸PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Prime Minister's Office.

Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence on the matter of dispatching senior military officers to Kenya to assess its military needs. In the meeting with the Secretary of State for Defence (accompanied by among others, Sir Anthony Duff, British High Commissioner to Kenya), Bruce McKenzie outlined Kenya's case: Kenya was in support of a team of experts from Britain visiting the country to assess its military needs. However, he hoped that the team would "be briefed before they left the UK on Kenya's military capacity, her economic situation and the political situation in East Africa and the Indian Ocean sphere." Together with Njonjo, McKenzie wanted to meet with the team "before they left and to discuss their terms of reference."⁵⁹ He also wanted the team to work "from the Kenyan Ministry of Defence, under the direction of the Permanent Secretary, rather than be based with the Defence Adviser in the High Commission." Further, Bruce McKenzie stipulated that, "the head of the team should report to President Kenyatta." It was also vital, according to Bruce McKenzie, for this team of experts to know that "Kenya was very concerned at the build-up of Somalia's military forces and the increasing Soviet presence in Somalia and Yemen." Kenya's neighbors, "had expansionist aims and, surprisingly, Sudan was now her greatest friend." The sum total of all this was that Kenya "felt increasingly threatened and looked towards HMG for help."⁶⁰

Other details deemed relevant at this meeting included mention of Kenya's "balance of payments problems" the result of escalating oil prices and inflation. But Kenya, Bruce McKenzie reminded the Secretary of State for Defence, was "one of the last stable East African countries and was likely to remain so if Vice President Moi, who is growing in stature, replaced President Kenyatta in due course."⁶¹ Other countries had also offered some military and economic assistance to Kenya. Bruce McKenzie revealed, for example, that, "he had recently talked to

⁵⁹PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Record of a Meeting between the Secretary of State for Defence and the Kenyan Attorney General and Mr. McKenzie at 10:30 on Friday, 30 August 1974.

⁶⁰PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Record of a Meeting between the Secretary of State for Defence and the Kenyan Attorney General and Mr. McKenzie at 10:30 on Friday, 30 August 1974.

⁶¹PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Record of a Meeting between the Secretary of State for Defence and the Kenyan Attorney General and Mr. McKenzie at 10:30 on Friday, 30 August 1974.

the Shah who had offered to send a team to look at the Kenyan economy—Iran now provided 80% of Kenya’s oil—and to discuss the broader political situation.” West Germany and the USA had also provided some significant military and economic assistance. Still, “Kenya had traditionally looked to HMG to help her over her financial problems and wished to maintain this close relationship.”

The Secretary of State for Defence stated that Britain would provide a good team comprising “Major-General Mans, Air Commodore Howlett and a supporting officer ... The team were not part of Defence Sales and would consider other equipment as well as British, and could make an assessment of the effectiveness of British training.” Bruce McKenzie was assured by the Secretary of Defence that the team of experts, “would know of the Bamburi Understanding.”

Major General Mans’ team of experts “advised the Kenya Government on the military expansion it needed in order to present a credible deterrent to aggression by her neighbours.” The recommendation, in effect, called on Kenya to double “its armed forces and a capital expenditure of some £150 million pounds.”⁶² This was far beyond what Kenya could afford at the time even with British aid. By 1974, Kenya’s military expenditure was close to £20 million pounds per annum.⁶³ Due to this evident economic constraint, “a scaled down version of the package was produced ... of up to £25 million pounds,” with 90% of the package funded by Britain on credit terms “extending for seven years, from the date of each delivery.”⁶⁴

Kenyatta, like almost every other leader in the Commonwealth, was profoundly surprised by Wilson’s sudden and unexpected resignation as Britain’s Prime Minister on March 16, 1976. As it happens, Wilson’s “sudden retirement followed the departures from office—in unusual circumstances—of two other Western left-of centre-leaders—Willi Brandt of West Germany and Gough Whitlam, Prime Minister of Australia. Both

⁶²PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Brief C—Kenyan Military Purchases from the UK.

⁶³PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Brief C—Kenyan Military Purchases from the UK.

⁶⁴PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Brief C—Kenyan Military Purchases from the UK.

had fallen foul of the secret agencies of the West, although the true facts, were to take many years to emerge.”⁶⁵

In April 1976, James Callaghan aged 64 years, became the Prime Minister. And as expected, Kenyatta sought for an immediate meeting between his emissaries and the new Prime Minister over the Bamburi Understanding and other related defense and economic issues. In a memo to the Prime Minister’s Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office explained that the letter from Kenyatta “will seek Prime Minister’s assurance that we still adhere to the Bamburi Understanding whereby Britain undertakes to consult urgently with Kenya in the event of military aggression by Somalia. The President,” the memo emphasized, “has sought this assurance from every Prime Minister since the Understanding was first reached in 1967.” The memo also stated that Kenyatta’s letter was likely to “present a request for British assistance in Kenyan purchase of equipment (including Land Rovers, armoured cars) for the Kenya paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU).”⁶⁶

As part of the preparation for the meeting with Kenyatta’s emissaries, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office prepared for the Prime Minister “notes” on several issues likely to be raised. On the matter of external threats to Kenya, the political judgment of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) was that “the risk of attacks on Kenya by either Somalia or Uganda is low.” Still, the JIC concluded that, “in view of the considerable disparity between her own military equipment and that of her neighbours, Kenya’s concern is understandable.” Regarding Somalia’s intentions, the view of the JIC was that “the Somali Democratic Republic is more likely to pursue her Greater Somalia aims through political channels than to adopt subversive or military methods.” Besides, “should this situation change, they would be more

⁶⁵David Leigh, *The Wilson Plot: How Spycatchers and Their American Allies Tried to Overthrow the British Government* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), p. ix. David Leigh also states that some agents in MI5 alleged that, “Wilson had covered up Soviet connections among his friends and ministers. Furthermore, they said, the CIA regarded Wilson as a ‘security risk,’” p. x. And so, David Leigh writes, “the false rumours within the Intelligence Services about reasons for Wilson’s resignation proved to be the final act of an extraordinary and entirely unjustified effort to discredit him and his ministers, a campaign that had been waged for thirty years,” p. xi.

⁶⁶PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Memo from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Visit by Njonjo and MCKenzie.

likely to attack Ethiopia than Kenya.”⁶⁷ The JIC had also determined that Somalis “would be unable to sustain conventional military operations against Kenya, though they would probably be able to introduce a limited force into the North-Eastern Province.” There was, however, always the threat of the *shiftras*. Operations against the *shiftras* had, “fully stretched” the Kenya armed forces from 1963 to 1967. Since then, the Somalis had received effective “guerilla training.” As a result, were operations against the *shiftras* “to be revived, the Kenyan forces, which have been little strengthened, would be likely to be in serious trouble.” At the height of the war against the *shiftras*, Sir Edward Peck, British High Commissioner to Kenya, had written to London outlining some of the political benefits that accrued from keeping the Kenya army occupied in this war. “All in all,” he wrote, “there is no harm in keeping the security forces on their toes—given the mixed tribal composition of the army under a British commander and the police under a staunch Kikuyu, under present circumstances there seems little risk of an army *coup* taking place here.”⁶⁸

Although Uganda, under Amin, presented no immediate military threat to Kenya, the JIC still believed that “the Ugandans could mount some small-scale, though panic-inducing, air raids, which the Kenyans would be unable to prevent. Judging from the effects of such Ugandan air attacks against Tanzania,” the JIC concluded, “they could cause very considerable panic and political embarrassment if mounted against Kenya.”⁶⁹ The most tangible external threat, therefore, was the *shiftras*. And while, “a short-term incursion” from Somalia or “sporadic light bombing” from Uganda “would have no military significance, they could have a profound political impact in Kenya.”

Britain’s major objectives in the Anglo–Kenyan multilayered relations, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office informed the Prime Minister, were to ensure, “the continued co-operation of the Kenyan Government in” Britain’s “policy of admitting the remaining 25–30,000 British Asians in a phased and orderly manner, and to avoid another Uganda-type exodus.” Britain also wanted to “preserve and if possible increase”

⁶⁷ PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) The External Threats to Kenya.

⁶⁸ MAC 71/8/62 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya; First Impressions.

⁶⁹ PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) The External Threats to Kenya.

its “thirty-per-cent share in a steadily growing export market which currently yields an annual trade balance in,” Britain’s “favour of about £26.6 million pounds with invisible benefits of about a further £13 million pounds a year.” Other matters of crucial importance to Britain included, protecting its “investment in Kenya, totaling approximately £90 million pounds,” safeguarding “the interests of the thirty thousand British citizens resident in Kenya;” preserving its “defence facilities in Kenya, which include over-flying and staging rights, Army training facilities and the use of Mombasa by Royal Navy Ships.”⁷⁰ There were no “major outstanding problems between Kenya and the UK,” at this time. Kenya had very specific and finite needs at the moment, namely that Britain should “help them with their current economic difficulties; assist them over their defence and security problems; and stand by the Bamburi Understanding.” The British government already had the list of weaponry requested by Kenya at this time. It included fighter aircraft, radar systems, field artillery, anti-aircraft missiles, armored personnel carriers, fighting vehicles, helicopters, and transport aircraft.⁷¹

In the separate yet related matter of arming the GSU at this time, the British government was willing to supply the weapons requested but on commercial terms. The British intelligence services knew that the GSU was “a paramilitary organisation staffed almost entirely by members of President Kenyatta’s Kikuyu tribe, and used principally for riot control and border surveillance.” The GSU also had “a reputation for brutality. Members of it,” for example, “used excessive violence in quelling disturbances at Nairobi University in 1975.”⁷² The British intelligence services knew from “secret sources that the GSU” wished “urgently to obtain Land Rovers and other equipment from the UK as a gift.”

Njonjo and Bruce McKenzie met James Callaghan on May 14, 1976. Notes on Njonjo’s biography had been updated to reflect that he had been married in 1972 to Margaret Bryson, daughter of former European missionaries. “His father prevented the marriage for many years but finally allowed him to marry in view of his advanced age.” He was still, “a practising Anglican.”⁷³ At the meeting, the Prime Minister assured

⁷⁰PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Kenya–UK Relations.

⁷¹PREM 16/981 (London: National Archives) Kenya–UK Relations.

⁷²PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Supply of Military Equipment to the General Service Unit.

⁷³PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Charles Njonjo, Attorney General.

Kenyatta's emissaries that the Bamburi Understanding was "still applicable, at least so far as Somalia was concerned. Its application to Uganda" would be difficult for Britain, although it "would give as much advice as possible in any situation which arose." Relations with Uganda were so strained that "President Kenyatta and President Amin," Njonjo revealed, "had not spoken to each other ever since the latter made his rather silly threats" in February 1976. At that time, Amin issued a provocative statement alleging that "a sizeable portion of the Western province of Kenya historically belonged to Uganda." Still on Uganda, Bruce McKenzie was more concerned about the future: "who would take over from President Amin? One possibility was the present Minister of Internal Affairs, Oboth-Ofumbi, who was a moderate in comparison with President Amin. He was one of the few survivors from Obote's time, and knew Kenya well since all his children were at school there."⁷⁴

Other than the Bamburi Understanding, the main purpose for this call on the Prime Minister, Bruce McKenzie stated, was "to discuss the terrorist threat in Kenya." In his narration, Bruce McKenzie painted a picture of imminent danger to the life of Kenyatta and his family from determined Palestinians. "Several months ago," Kenyatta's inner circle, "had received information from Israeli intelligence about a group of terrorists on their way to Nairobi." In addition, the Israelis had "passed on a further warning, which had led to the arrest of a group of terrorists" at the beginning of May 1976. This information, Bruce McKenzie insisted, was so secret that "he did not think that it was even known to the British." As to their main objective, "it was clear that the terrorists were determined to have a go at President Kenyatta's family."⁷⁵

As a result of this threat, Kenyatta had formed "a small internal Security Committee." This committee included Njonjo and Bruce McKenzie, "under President Kenyatta's chairmanship." This evidently super-secret committee had decided to set up "a small elite 55-man anti-terrorist group." As part of its work, the committee had been in close liaison with Israeli intelligence and military. The outcome of these contacts was that the Israelis "were ready to supply anti-terrorist equipment

⁷⁴PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Call on Prime Minister by the Kenyan Attorney General.

⁷⁵PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Call on the Prime Minister by the Kenyan Attorney General.

and also to help with personnel training. The Israelis had already sent some people to Kenya for this purpose, and equipment was beginning to arrive.”⁷⁶ The Germans had agreed to supply “telecommunications and surveillance equipment” to the newly formed anti-terrorist military unit. What Kenya needed from Britain was, “eight special vehicles (including two Armoured Personnel Carriers and an ambulance) to provide mobility in anti-terrorist operations.”

Operationally, the new military unit would be “kept entirely separate from the Armed Services.” Also, although “the Unit would be drawn from the General Service Unit, and would operate out of the GSU base, it would be entirely separate from the GSU itself.”⁷⁷ The committee overseeing all of this new security arrangement had been “put under oath by President Kenyatta” and therefore “Mr. McKenzie emphasized the importance of dealing with this request with utmost discretion.”

The information from the Israeli intelligence, which Kenyatta and his inner circle believed to be true, stated that the “terrorists were connected with the Palestine Liberation Army, and that the reason for the terrorist threat related to President Kenyatta’s refusal to join his fellow Africans in excluding Israelis from his country.” Apparently, Kenyatta “had had a very close relationship with Mrs. Golda Meir, and had angered the Palestinians by his refusal to stop El Al transiting Nairobi on their way to Johannesburg. The PLA had also had to transfer their Air Force trainees from Uganda to South Yemen when Kenya had put her petroleum supplies to Uganda on a cash basis.”⁷⁸ McKenzie also told Callaghan that Kenyatta had decided, “against asking either the Americans or the French for assistance.” Kenyatta’s request for vehicles, McKenzie explained to Callaghan, “was logically directed at Britain since the Kenyan Armed Forces were already mainly equipped with British vehicles.” For further consultation, Kenyatta’s emissaries preferred for this confidential matter to be dealt with by the British High Commissioner to Kenya “personally ... rather than members of his staff, and it was left

⁷⁶PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Call on the Prime Minister by the Kenyan Attorney General.

⁷⁷PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Call on the Prime Minister by the Kenyan Attorney General.

⁷⁸PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Call on the Prime Minister by the Kenyan Attorney General.

that the next contact would be an approach by the High Commissioner to either Mr. Njonjo or Mr. McKenzie personally.”⁷⁹

The driving force behind all these many sensitive consultations in London (and beyond) on matters of Kenya’s national security was Bruce McKenzie. Other than Njonjo, he was “especially close to Kenyatta” and was “a member of the inner circle of the Government.”⁸⁰ In Nairobi and London, British intelligence services knew that McKenzie held “a covert brief from President Kenyatta to oversee Kenya Defence and Security matters.”⁸¹ McKenzie was not only “a close confidant of President Kenyatta,” but also “the dynamo of the Kenya Government machine” whose influence extended “far beyond his own Ministry.”⁸²

How did McKenzie end up very well positioned at the very sensitive center of power and influence in Kenyatta’s government? Bruce McKenzie was born in Durban, South Africa, in 1919. In 1939, he joined the South African Air Force and was later seconded to the British Royal Air Force (RAF) from 1939 to 1945.⁸³ He served in World War II as a fighter pilot in North Africa, Malta, Corsica, Italy, France, and Germany rising to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel at the age of 24.⁸⁴ McKenzie was one of the many British officers who came to Kenya after demobilization at the end of the war to start on a new career as settler farmers. He arrived in Kenya in 1946 and started farming around Nakuru. During the Mau Mau peasant revolt against British imperialism, McKenzie acquired the reputation of being a particularly ruthless settler who “used to rush around shooting any Kuke he believed involved in Mau Mau.”⁸⁵ It is worth pointing out that during the Emergency

⁷⁹PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Call on the Prime Minister by the Kenyan Attorney General.

⁸⁰PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Biographical Note, Bruce Roy McKenzie.

⁸¹FCO 31/228 (London: National Archives) Brief for the Defence Secretary and the Commonwealth Secretary on Meeting with The Hon. Bruce McKenzie.

⁸²PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Biographical Note, Bruce Roy McKenzie.

⁸³PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Biographical Note, Bruce Roy McKenzie.

⁸⁴PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Biographical Note, Bruce Roy McKenzie, Minister of Agriculture.

⁸⁵Charles Chenevix Trench, *Men Who Ruled Kenya: The Kenya Administration, 1892–1963* (London/New York: The Radcliffe Press, 1993), p. 255.

period, white settlers had several opportunities to express their deep-seated hatred of African nationalist activism, especially toward the Mau Mau. The colonial security forces included units composed largely of the white settlers: the Kenya Regiment (KR), and the Kenya Police Reserve (KPR). While it is evident that “all branches of the security forces were associated with brutality” against the Mau Mau guerillas and the civilian population, “the charge was particularly strong against the Kenya Regiment, the Kenya Police Reserve, the GSU and the Home Guards.”⁸⁶ It is fair to argue that both the KR and the KPR represented the “armed expression of settler outrage, fears, and hatred.” Further, since both of these units operated “in the closest proximity to African areas” this provided the settlers with an opportunity to torture, murder, and manhandle Africans,⁸⁷ with no fear for legal or political sanction at this time.

The Nakuru/Naivasha area, where McKenzie had a farm, was known to have “a number of very difficult farmers” who advocated, and in many cases implemented, excessive force toward all Africans suspected of belonging to the Mau Mau. This included Humphrey Slade, a lawyer and settler farmer “with a farm on the Kinangop ... He had the reputation of a fanatical white supremacist, but he became the first Speaker of the Parliament in independent Kenya.”⁸⁸

In 1957, toward the end of the military phase of the war against the Mau Mau, McKenzie was nominated to join the colonial Legislative Council. He was one of the white settlers who joined Michael Blundell’s New Kenya Group (NKG) party. This membership in the NKG and subsequent service in the Kenyatta government, would later lead many Western writers to label him as “a white liberal politician in Kenya.” During the colonial period, as already pointed out in this study, McKenzie was far from being liberal in his views on racial equality, let alone on the legitimacy of African nationalism. While serving as a member of the colonial cabinet, McKenzie was for a very long time utterly opposed to the release of Kenyatta from prison. He was also opposed

⁸⁶W.O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of A Peasant Revolt*, p. 93. Also see, Anthony Clayton, *Counter-Insurgency in Kenya* (Nairobi: Transafrica Publishers, 1976), p. 37.

⁸⁷W.O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of A Peasant Revolt*, p. 93.

⁸⁸Charles Chenevix Trench, *Men Who Ruled Kenya: The Kenya Administration, 1892–1963*, p. 255.

to any compromise toward majority rule in the country. He served as Blundell's "main political strategist" and subsequently "produced a plan to settle the problem of the white settlers' land after independence."⁸⁹

The formation of the KANU and the KADU in essence dealt a death-blow to the political agenda and intent of the NKG. Guided African nationalism under the tutelage of European settlers was no longer a viable alternative. It is at this point that McKenzie joined the KANU, thus becoming one of the first prominent former settler adversaries of African nationalism to join the party that was destined to win the majority vote in forthcoming elections and thereby forming the new *Uhuru* government. He met "Kenyatta in detention and outlined his support for him," and thus began a very close personal and professional relationship between these two men.

For McKenzie's apparent boldness in switching sides, at a time when most white settlers were watching KADU, he was rewarded with the portfolio of 'shadow Minister of Agriculture' where again he promoted his plan for white land settlement. Indeed, he is widely credited as the architect of its final execution.⁹⁰

In the immediate period after 1960, diehards in the settler community regarded McKenzie as a traitor. This changed after *Uhuru*. "The European community, by whom he was once regarded as a mountebank and ostracized, now generally respect him and realize that he has done a great deal to protect their interests."⁹¹

In March 1963, on the eve of *Uhuru*, McKenzie remained concerned about his political future in the country. What would happen to him? Would his past be an asset or a serious political liability? How would Britain protect him? For these and related questions, McKenzie held a lengthy discussion with Sir Eric Griffith-Jones, the Deputy Governor of Kenya. Kenyatta and Mboya had asked him to "continue as a Minister in the ensuing KANU Government, probably as Minister for Agriculture,

⁸⁹Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 153. Also see, Michael Blundell, *So Rough A Wind*, p. 307.

⁹⁰Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 153.

⁹¹PREM 15/110 (London: National Archives) Biographical Note: Bruce Roy McKenzie, Minister of Agriculture.

perhaps with Settlement included in the portfolio.” What was he to do? McKenzie also revealed that he had been “offered a post as the representative of Nestle’s in East and Central Africa at a basic salary of £4000 per annum, with the usual ‘perks’ attached to such agencies. He said he had other irons in the fire which would bring him in about £1500 per annum to start with.”⁹² This offer from Kenyatta and Mboya raised some anxiety in the McKenzie household. His wife was opposed to him joining the KANU-led government. She wanted him to “withdraw from the political arena and accept these commercial offers which, in addition to the income from their farm, would ensure financial security for them at a very comfortable level. By contrast,” the wife argued, and McKenzie seemed to momentarily agree, “if he stays in politics, his prognosis as a European Minister is uncertain and probably limited to a few years at best; and he could be out on his ear at any moment.”⁹³

Sir Eric Griffith-Jones advised McKenzie to take the appointment offered by Kenyatta and Mboya and thus remain in active politics in Kenya. This advice was based on several considerations crucial to the furtherance of British imperialism in post-colonial Kenya. According to Griffith-Jones, McKenzie’s “influence in an African Government would be rational and moderating, and would be very valuable to the new Government both initially in the Internal Self-Government stage, and subsequently in Independence.” McKenzie would also act as the protector of settler interests in the new government. “He would be able to watch over the interests of the Europeans who remain in Kenya; his very presence in the Cabinet would be a restraining influence on any more rabid anti-European elements that might be in it, and his counsel might avert or mitigate any anti-European measures that might be contemplated.”⁹⁴ And above all, however, McKenzie in Kenyatta’s cabinet “would be a link with H.M.G., available not ... on any day to day

⁹²CO 967/422 (London: National Archives) Secret letter to the Colonial Office on Bruce McKenzie from Sir Eric Griffith-Jones.

⁹³CO 967/422 (London: National Archives) Secret letter to the Colonial Office on Bruce McKenzie from Sir Eric Griffith-Jones. McKenzie later divorced his wife, Henrietta Edmonson, in “early 1967 and married the wealthy Miss Christina Bridgeman.” See, PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Bruce Roy McKenzie, Former Minister of Agriculture.

⁹⁴CO 967/422 (London: National Archives) Secret letter to the Colonial Office on Bruce McKenzie from Sir Eric Griffith-Jones.

‘stooge’ basis, but in the event of any emergency arising in regard to the safety of Europeans in the country.”

McKenzie agreed with this advice which “confirmed his own conclusions” on this matter. But he was still concerned about his future if he remained in Kenya politics. To allay his fears, Griffith-Jones assured McKenzie that he would write to the Colonial Office putting their “conversations on record with H.M.G.” While he was not fully authorized to make any unilateral guarantees, Griffith-Jones assured McKenzie that “H.M.G. would recognize an obligation to assist him if things went wrong and he found himself, as a result, in need of such assistance.” Although it was unlikely that he “would ever require such assistance ... unless he had a thoroughgoing bust-up with the politicians ... nevertheless” Griffith-Jones “recognized the possibility that” McKenzie “might be thrown out of politics, and even out of the country, if the worst came to the worst.”⁹⁵ Before forwarding this recommendation on McKenzie to the Colonial Office, Griffith-Jones discussed it further with Malcolm MacDonald, the Governor, who “expressed his agreement.”

At the Colonial Office, Griffith-Jones’ letter on McKenzie elicited spirited discussion. It was understood that in essence this meant finding “a livelihood for Mr. McKenzie, or at any rate giving him something in the nature of a resettlement grant.” As expected, the British government avoided providing an ironclad promise in this matter. “Whether HMG accepted an obligation of this sort would obviously depend entirely on circumstances and, in reaching a decision to carry on in politics, Mr. McKenzie ought not to assume that HMG would see him right if things went against him.”⁹⁶ Officials at the Colonial Office nonetheless recognized that “Mr. McKenzie’s influence for the good in Kenya seems ... to have increased over the last 12 months or so and to that extent” this had bolstered the arguments made by Griffith-Jones. The Colonial Office also realized that this recommendation from Nairobi seemed to contain a hint that “preparations have already been made” toward its implementation if the need arose. All the correspondence on this matter was kept on file in the office of Sir Hilton Poynton, the Permanent Undersecretary of

⁹⁵CO 967/422 (London: National Archives) Secret letter to the Colonial Office on Bruce McKenzie from Sir Eric Griffith-Jones.

⁹⁶CO 967/422 (London: National Archives) Record of secret discussions at the Colonial Office on Sir Eric Griffith-Jones’ letter on Bruce McKenzie.

State for Colonies (1959–1966). It was agreed that there was no need to consult the Treasury at that stage although all the relevant Ministers were informed.

In the official reply to Griffith-Jones, the Colonial Office granted the request on behalf of McKenzie, even if it was not clear as to what kind of specific assistance was being sought: “whether you were requesting that the British Government would have to find him other employment or, failing that, keep him in funds; or whether he should get a resettlement grant. I suppose,” Sir Hilton Poynton wrote from the Colonial Office, “that circumstances might conceivably arise in which it was thought right that McKenzie should be assisted (i.e. over and above what might turn out to be possible for the ordinary run of ‘compassionate’ cases); but I cannot, at this moment at any rate, think what those circumstances might be.” Still, Sir Hilton Poynton informed Griffith-Jones, and therefore McKenzie, that letters and correspondence on this matter were on record with the British government “and will be available for reference should the need arise.”⁹⁷ By the time that McKenzie embarked on his political career in independent Kenya, he had two critical assurances on his side: the political support and even endorsement of his activities from the British government and also a promise for financial support for him and his family in the event that “he had a thoroughgoing bust-up with the politicians.” Griffith-Jones thought that were McKenzie to retire peacefully from politics, his “market value would be very high,” thus making it unnecessary to call on the British government for direct financial assistance.

As McKenzie joined Kenyatta’s government, he also simultaneously embarked on his dual role as an agent of the MI6, the British intelligence service “which specializes in espionage overseas.” He was now a British spy. MacDonald later confirmed that, “McKenzie had been an MI6 agent since at least 1963.”⁹⁸ What is not clear is the nature of McKenzie’s relationship with MI6 prior to 1963, although “it is known that he worked with security forces during Mau Mau interrogating suspects so it may have been during this period that he came in contact

⁹⁷CO 967/422 (London: National Archives) Letter from Sir Hilton Poynton at the Colonial Office to Sir Eric Griffith Jones on Bruce McKenzie.

⁹⁸Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 153.

with the intelligence recruiters.”⁹⁹ In Britain, where he had property, McKenzie frequently socialized with top officials in the “MI6, SAVAK [the Shah of Iran’s Secret Service], South African Intelligence—Bruce knew everybody.”¹⁰⁰ In Kenya, he had been instrumental in the setting up of the country’s “intelligence service” with help from MI6.¹⁰¹ At the height of the “Wilson Plot,” McKenzie had confided to Harry “Chapman” Pincher, “A right-wing journalist on ... the *Daily Express*” that he “knew why Wilson resigned.”¹⁰²

McKenzie’s value to the British intelligence services, at least in Kenya, rested on two crucial factors: he was a vibrant and well-connected agent with unprecedented access to the center of power. Also, due to his varied assignments in the government, he had unique opportunities to shape policy and determine the country’s course; at least its economic, security, and even foreign policies. Thus, he both collected information for MI6 and also shaped national policy. On this matter of the value of intelligence agents, it is worth noting that, “while the role of individual collection is less in volume terms, it continues to be the only way of obtaining certain kinds of information beyond the reach of satellites and electronic monitoring devices. Changes in a government policy, say, or tensions within ruling circles can often only be determined with the use of agents.”¹⁰³

Within the government, McKenzie held the decisive voice in the matter of land transfer from white settlers to Africans. This was through the “Settlement Fund Trustees, the organ that was supposed to transfer land from Europeans to Africans. The Fund had a big hand in determining who took which land.”¹⁰⁴ In order to safeguard the economic interests of white settlers, McKenzie vigorously stood against radical nationalists and their programs of land redistribution. He saw these

⁹⁹Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 153. Also see, Mark Curtis, *Web of Deceit: Britain’s Real Role in the World* (London: Vintage Books, 2003), p. 330. “MI6 also recruited Bruce McKenzie, an influential white settler politician who had moved from KADU to KANU.”

¹⁰⁰David Leigh, *The Wilson Plot*, p. x.

¹⁰¹David Leigh, *The Wilson Plot*, p. x.

¹⁰²David Leigh, *The Wilson Plot*, p. x.

¹⁰³Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁴Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles: My Story*, p. 435.

radical nationalists as ideological foes to be fought and vanquished. He had extensive influence on general government policy, beyond national security and defense issues. Ndegwa, the first African Chief Secretary and Head of the Civil Service has written that McKenzie, “did not just work for his Ministry but was part and parcel of the wider government planning ... He was a man of great influence and energy.”¹⁰⁵

Together with Njonjo, McKenzie had direct influence in the appointment of senior civil servants in several ministries and other government agencies. Some of these civil servants were carry-overs from the colonial administration and they still held key positions in newly independent country. As Ndegwa states, some of these officials included:

Col. Harbage of the Department of Defence; J. H. Butler who served for sometime as Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and later assumed the position of administering loans and grants from Britain and making direct reports to London; Oloughin as Commissioner of Lands who had direct access to Kenyatta and did not go through the Minister and the Permanent Secretary even when policy options on land administration needed vertical consultation; R. R. Oswald, Police Commissioner, Nairobi Central Area who had hunted Gen. Kimathi and who was brought in by Police Commissioner, Catling; Mrs. Streets, Chief of Protocol and Miss Wilson, Personal Secretary to the President, retained from the days of Governor McDonald on Njonjo’s influence. She worked for British intelligence in broad daylight.¹⁰⁶

McKenzie’s influence was further bolstered by his close personal and professional relationship with Njonjo. As Njonjo became the central figure in Kenyatta’s government, McKenzie was able to rely on this linkage to push through policies that could have been resisted either in the Cabinet or among a few senior civil servants, especially on the question of land. “Individual Civil Servants,” Ndegwa has written, “would evade official networks, chains of command and procedures to seek direct protection or personal favours from Sir Charles ... Outside the government the Attorney General had already secured a place for the settler community through Bruce McKenzie.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles: My Story*, p. 435.

¹⁰⁶Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles: My Story*, p. 282.

¹⁰⁷Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles: My Story*, p. 278.

It is no secret that McKenzie was always aware of the vital role that he played as a direct link with the British government. In June 1963, soon after being appointed as Minister of Agriculture, he wrote to Duncan Sandys thanking him for all that he had done to enable the Ministry of Agriculture to obtain finance “to carry out not only the normal Settlement scheme but the accelerated scheme and the money for compassionate cases.” McKenzie then assured Sandys that so long as he was in the Cabinet, he “would keep a close eye on settlement and on the repayment of debts to HMG.”¹⁰⁸ In 1965, McKenzie negotiated for a British government loan to cover what came to be known as the compassionate farm purchase. Under this scheme, as MacDonald explained, a purchaser was provided “for those who have certain compelling reasons for wishing to leave their farms, but who have no resources to enable them to do so unless they sell their farms.”¹⁰⁹ Many of the white settlers affected under this scheme were those eager to leave but had been unable to sell their farms quickly at a profit. They were thus judged by the British government (and McKenzie’s Ministry of Agriculture) to be “economic prisoners.”

Throughout his tenure as Minister in Kenyatta’s government, McKenzie remained a source of great tension, resentment, and even outright opposition. This was especially true among the radical nationalists. Part of this opposition, beyond the radical nationalists, was fueled by frustrations over the land question. There were hundreds of thousands of Africans with no access to land even after the halting implementation of the several settlement schemes launched by Kenyatta’s government with the assistance of the British government and the World Bank. This issue of land ownership was further complicated at this time by widespread skepticism, especially among the white settlers, as to the economic value of the small African farms carved out of former large European farms. Sir Michael Blundell restated this position at the height of the Maize crisis in 1965 arguing that large scale farming was the only viable answer to the country’s food production. “I do not think it matters two pence who these farmers are. What really matters is that they should be efficient and

¹⁰⁸ CO 822/3291 (London: National Archives) Valedictory letters from Bruce McKenzie to Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for Colonies, 18 June 1963.

¹⁰⁹ MAC 44/6/1–32 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Letter to McKenzie on loan for Compassionate Farm Purchase, 14 October 1965.

have money to farm properly.” Further, he continued, “many of the large farms ... were in areas unsuitable for small scale farming and they made a tremendous contribution to solving food problems. The sooner this is realized,” Blundell stated, “and there is an agricultural policy based on the need for large scale farming, the less shortages we shall have.”¹¹⁰

British economic missions to the country echoed Blundell’s position that emphasized the seeming indispensability of the white settlers. Prof. Maxwell Stamp, at the head of another British mission to Kenya, warned that “a total departure of European mixed farmers from Kenya” would “jeopardise the economy of the country.” The majority of the farmers, Prof. Stamp pointed out,

would change their minds and stay if they were assured of their security and knew they would be able to sell their farms at a reasonable price when they wanted to leave at some future date ... Many European farmers were worried about the security of their stock, about medical services following the departure of British doctors from the country, and also about the education of their children.¹¹¹

Prof. Stamp was pleased with the fact that many “Kenya Government officials realized the value of European farming to the economy of the country and hoped that many of them would stay.”

Yet even some of the new African landed gentry found fault with the government land policy under McKenzie’s stewardship. This new class wanted government protection to limit if not prohibit Asians from buying large-scale farms. “The purchase of such farms would make the rich richer at the expense of aspiring Africans who were discriminated against in the past.” They were also “of the opinion that Europeans should no longer be taken on as settlement officers ‘because they do not understand the problems and mentality of the ordinary African.’”¹¹² The routine complaint at this time was that the “valuation of large farms and machinery was unreasonably high.” In the Parliament, this issue was repeatedly raised during McKenzie’s tenure as Minister. In October 1965, several Lower House Members recalled that one of the major issues during the struggle for independence was land. “Africans had

¹¹⁰*Daily Nation* (January 19, 1966), p. 3.

¹¹¹*Daily Nation* (February 23, 1965), p. 1.

¹¹²*Daily Nation* (March 30, 1965), p. 3.

waged the struggle so that they could re-occupy land that had been acquired by settlers of other races.” Many Members of Parliament also “noted that Africans were paying high prices per acre” for largely undeveloped land that European settlers had acquired either for free or for “as little as 10 cents an acre.”¹¹³ H. Wariithi, Member of Parliament from Othaya–South Tetu, reminded the government that the land question “was an important ingredient of the Mau Mau oath. Africans now felt that the land that they had fought for was still very very far away from them and the Government must find a solution that would satisfy the masses.”¹¹⁴ For his part, Masinde Muliro, a former deputy leader of the now defunct KADU, warned the government to be “more careful on the question of land or there was going to be a ‘volcano of a revolution in the country.’”¹¹⁵

Within Central Province, the land problem remained a source of tension, even among relatives. This was especially true over the results of land consolidation initiated and implemented by the colonial government during the Mau Mau peasant revolt. After *Uhuru*, there were loud and persistent calls for an official review of this process, which was rightly viewed to have been punitive in nature toward many supporters of the Mau Mau in the province. In the Parliament in 1965, “several Members called for a complete overhaul of the Land Registration (Special Areas) Act to open the door for new appeals by people whose land had been taken away from them during the Emergency period.”¹¹⁶ H. Wariithi drew attention to the “grave mistakes of colonial times”. At that time, many peasants “with rightful claims to land” had, in anger and frustration, “kept quiet for fear that they would get into trouble.” Now after *Uhuru*, “an opportunity should be given to have genuine complaints considered.”¹¹⁷ Wariithi was concerned that Kenyatta’s government had “not done much to sort out these problems of land rights.”

¹¹³ *Daily Nation* (October 23, 1965), p. 4.

¹¹⁴ *Daily Nation* (October 23, 1965), p. 4.

¹¹⁵ *Daily Nation* (October 23, 1965), p. 4.

¹¹⁶ *Daily Nation* (November 6, 1965), p. 4.

¹¹⁷ *Daily Nation* (November 6, 1965), p. 4. In its editorial, the *Daily Nation* (November 8, 1965), p. 6, observed that, “from a purely technical standpoint, it would be extremely difficult to ascertain and identify boundaries as they were before consolidation. And so much agricultural development has taken place, on such an unprecedented scale, that to reverse the whole process would retard, stifle and finally destroy all this progress ... opening up the whole question throughout the country would create friction between races and

Attacks on McKenzie, “a man ‘from the far end of Africa where we are discriminated against,’” continued in the Parliament over the land issue and also over the dispensation of services to African farmers by the Ministry of Agriculture. In the period between 1964 and 1966, and even beyond up to 1969, there were few Members who supported McKenzie in the Parliament. In September 1965, when the Ministry of Agriculture and McKenzie once again came under a blistering attack in the Parliament, only James Osogo, the Assistant Minister, rose to provide some spirited defense. Criticisms against the Ministry, Osogo stated, had failed to “appreciate Kenya’s high quality beef, pyrethrum, coffee, and tea.” Still, C.C. Makokha (Elgon South West) was not moved. He stated, during the debate in the Parliament that “the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Bruce McKenzie, instead of globe-trotting ought to go around provinces of Kenya to see what was needed.”¹¹⁸ As expected, Kenyatta saw things very differently. He saw immense progress in the area of land distribution to small farmers after *Uhuru* under the scheme largely formulated and then implemented by McKenzie. To Kenyatta, the limited land distribution after *Uhuru* had effectively “destroyed the pillars of racialism and inferiority complex established by our former masters.” His government was proud to showcase “the success of the settlement schemes and the small farmers’ contribution.” As a result, Kenyatta emphasized, what “used to be the kingdom of white settlers has been effectively integrated into our national economic and social system.”¹¹⁹

Many Members of Parliament nonetheless remained troubled by both the pace of land distribution and the government’s general commitment to alleviating poverty in the country through agriculture and settlement schemes. Heated discussions in the Parliament faulted not only McKenzie but also the government’s general land policy at this time. Some Members of Parliament were convinced that the whole undertaking had been a failure. Okuto Bala (KPU, Nyando) argued that “the present system of allocating land enabled only rich people to acquire plots, some of whom had acquired a number of plots in the names

Footnote 117 (continued)

tribes. It would mean civil war between tribes and within tribes. It would open up old wounds.”

¹¹⁸ *Daily Nation* (September 17, 1965), p. 4.

¹¹⁹ *Daily Nation* (March 12, 1966), p. 3.

of their wives and children.”¹²⁰ And then there was the matter of the quality of the land and the equipment left behind by the white settlers. Shikuku (Butere) pointed out that indeed “the former white settlers had destroyed almost everything on the farms prior to their departure and yet they charged fantastic amounts for ‘that rotten land and rotten houses.’” The hardships endured by many African small farmers led Shikuku to assert that “If there is any Hell we talk of, then that Hell must be in the settlement schemes.”¹²¹

In November 1965, J.K.K. Tanui (Baringo South) raised this matter of land in the Parliament. He “was shocked that in the Presidential address to the National Assembly” Kenyatta had failed to mention anything that “was being done for the landless.” Tanui touched on the sensitive linkage between landlessness and poverty in the country at this time. In his constituency, there many people “who appeared sick: this was because they were poor and landless...they did not have enough to eat or enough money to send their children to school. These people,” he concluded, “were not considered to be important in the task of nation building.”¹²²

In the middle of this politically charged period, McKenzie shot and killed an African, “a 30 -year old Mdingo tribesman, Mukungu Hassan” on August 21, 1965, at his house in Mombasa. The country only learned of some of the major details of this murder during the official inquest presided over by A. Hancox, a white Senior Resident Magistrate. According to the proceedings at the inquest, “McKenzie, who described himself as an, ‘extremely light sleeper’ had been awakened by agitated growls of a puppy” in the house. He then saw “a glint of metal in the half moon shining onto the verandah.” He took this “glint of metal,” seen through a bedroom window, to be a firearm. And so, fearing that he “was about to be shot at,” he jumped out of bed “grabbed the revolver firing it as I landed onto my feet.” McKenzie then stated that, “the

¹²⁰ *Daily Nation* (October 14, 1966), p. 4.

¹²¹ *Daily Nation* (October 14, 1966), p. 4. Shikuku also later accused McKenzie of fostering tribalism, especially Kikuyu domination of key positions in the Ministry of Agriculture. “The Ministry of Agriculture was riddled with tribalism.” McKenzie disputed Shikuku’s “list of names of Kikuyu in the Ministry,” while Shikuku insisted that “if the Minister could prove him wrong he would apologise but he was sure of his facts. But if what he said was true, the Minister should resign.” See, *Daily Nation* (July 20, 1966), p. 4.

¹²² *Daily Nation* (November 11, 1965), p. 4.

bedroom window panes shattered like snow obscuring everything. I had fired in the direction of the silhouetted figure, which was indistinguishable as to whether it was on the verandah near the window or inside the bedroom.”¹²³ In the pandemonium that was now afoot in the house, his wife had kept shouting, “Oh my God, they have got Bruce.” Lying on the verandah outside was the dead body of the man shot by McKenzie. Mukungu Hassan was not known to McKenzie or to any member of the household. And as it happens, he was not masked.

McKenzie then revealed that he had, since February 1965, received several letters threatening his life. In June 1965, he received some more letters “which were obviously not from cranks. They were well written and typed.” There had also been threatening telephone calls whose general theme was “you have had our letters, do not think we are not taking action.”¹²⁴ Due to these letters and telephone calls threatening his life, McKenzie had been provided with a body-guard and “a more effective firearm,” the one that he used to shoot Mukungu Hassan. At the inquest, McKenzie also revealed that “the head of the silhouetted figure he had seen by his window looked as if it had been masked ... However, I think he must have had his cap well down near his eyes,” although when the body was found on the verandah, the cap was nearby the dead body but not on him.¹²⁵ Mukungu Hassan had no firearm on him, and so “seeing only a handkerchief and torch nearby, it had struck” McKenzie that “the deceased might have been making an attempt to break in. This thought had not occurred to him on first seeing the intruder” and had fired out of fear for his life. To bolster his case, McKenzie sought to provide some linkage between his case with threatening letters and the fate of Pia Gama Pinto who had been recently assassinated. He had “had discussions with Ministry of Defence and Security about the threatening letters after the ‘Pinto affair,’” which was “very upsetting indeed.” McKenzie had been “led to believe” that Pinto had “also been the subject of threats against his life.”¹²⁶

This inquest was officially called off less than one week after it opened. A. Hancox, formally cleared McKenzie “of any criminal

¹²³ *Daily Nation* (October 7, 1965), p. 16.

¹²⁴ *Daily Nation* (October 7, 1965), p. 16.

¹²⁵ *Daily Nation* (October 7, 1965), p. 16.

¹²⁶ *Daily Nation* (October 7, 1965), p. 16.

responsibility in the fatal shooting of Mukungu Hassan—a suspected thief—at the McKenzie’s family’s beach house at Diani in the early hours of August 21.” The magistrate “found that Mr. McKenzie had shot Hassan in self defence.”¹²⁷ The magistrate elaborated that “at the time he fired, Mr. McKenzie honestly believed he was going to be shot at and his life was in danger.” Due to this fact, the magistrate ruled that it was not necessary for him to “consider the question of whether” McKenzie “would have been entitled to shoot at a person he thought was a burglar—since I think that the facts point to his having acted in defence of his own person.”¹²⁸ Accordingly, the magistrate concluded, he found “that no offence has been committed.”

As expected, the magistrate’s verdict fueled more anger and resentment toward McKenzie in the Parliament. Senator A.R. Tsalwa (Kakamega) “urged the Africanisation of the post of the Minister for Agriculture,” since McKenzie was “a ‘Boer’ who should be replaced by an African immediately.”¹²⁹ The government was also strongly urged by Senator D.O. Makasembo (Central Nyanza) to set up an independent Board of Inquiry to investigate the shooting to death of Mukungu Hassan by McKenzie. Makasembo pointed to what he called widespread “apparent public dissatisfaction” over the inquest carried out by Hancox in Mombasa.¹³⁰ Njonjo rose to defend McKenzie and the legal procedure that had, in quick order, cleared him of any criminal responsibility. He “rejected outright” this request for an independent inquiry into this matter. “Any suggestion that the verdict of the magistrate in question was perverse,” Njonjo submitted, was, “a foul and wicked slander with no scrap of evidence to support it.”¹³¹ According to Njonjo, Hancox “had considered all the evidence in detail.” This had led him to conclude that the “killing of Mukungu Hassan by the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Bruce McKenzie was justifiable homicide.” As the Attorney General,

¹²⁷ *Daily Nation* (October 12, 1965), p. 1. It is useful to mention that in this very brief and hurried inquest, the government relied on witnesses who corroborated McKenzie’s version of events. They included: Mrs McKenzie, Mr. Parfet and Dr. Y.M. Godbole, assistant surgeon, Coast General Hospital.

¹²⁸ *Daily Nation* (October 12, 1965), p. 1.

¹²⁹ *Daily Nation* (October 13, 1965), p. 4. In his contribution to the debate, Senator Sijeyo (Nakuru) interjected that McKenzie could “have a Ministry in South Africa.”

¹³⁰ *Daily Nation* (October 15, 1965), p. 1.

¹³¹ *Daily Nation* (October 15, 1965), p. 1.

Njonjo was “personally satisfied that all the relevant evidence was obtained and that it was heard by an independent judicial tribunal. He felt the magistrate’s decision was entirely proper.”¹³²

McKenzie continued to serve in Kenyatta’s cabinet until 1970 when he resigned, “ostensibly through ill-health, although attacks on him in the Kenya Parliament had increased in frequency and ferocity.”¹³³ Partly due to his “forceful personality” he had “made many enemies” in the country.¹³⁴ Still, it is important to note that McKenzie’s power and influence in Kenyatta’s inner circle did not diminish as a result of leaving the Cabinet as Minister of Agriculture. Policies on the crucial matter of land ownership designed and implemented under his stewardship in the initial period of *Uhuru* remained the cornerstone of the country’s economic foundation long after his resignation from the government. On other issues, Kenyatta continued to rely on McKenzie for guidance on security matters and also as his most trusted emissary, especially in handling confidential and delicate matters with the British government and other governments.

Upon leaving the government, McKenzie embarked on a lucrative if controversial career as a businessman and political operative writ large. Locally, he “became a director of East African Airways, and later (after East African Airways’ collapse) of Kenya Airways.” He also “held several company directorships including Grindlays Bank.” One of his most significant business engagements was his chairmanship of Cooper Motors, “a firm selling VWs and British Leyland vehicles in Kenya and Uganda.” In this position, he was able to garner a lucrative market supplying “landrovers and other equipment—possibly armored cars—to the Kenya security forces. These units were trained by the British in exchange for military facilities; notably the use of Indian Ocean ports and jungle training areas near Nyeri.”¹³⁵

In the arena of high-stakes international politics and intelligence, beyond being an agent of MI6, McKenzie’s efforts and intervention

¹³² *Daily Nation* (October 15, 1965), p. 1.

¹³³ Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 156.

¹³⁴ PREM 16/1733 (London: National Archives) Biographical Note: Bruce Roy McKenzie, Former Minister of Agriculture.

¹³⁵ Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 156.

were critical to the success of the now famous “Entebbe Raid” by Israeli commandos in July 1976. McKenzie’s role “in the Israeli raid on Entebbe is now well-publicised.”¹³⁶ The brief background to this story is that in late June 1976, Air France Flight 139, a plane carrying mostly Israelis, was hijacked by Palestinian guerillas (affiliated with Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—Special Operations Group—PFLP-SOG) after a stop-over at Athens Airport.¹³⁷ This plane eventually ended up at Entebbe Airport in Uganda. At that time, Idi Amin was the President of Uganda.

After the plane landed in Entebbe, several Israeli security and military services embarked on a coordinated mapping out of strategies for a commando-style rescue of the hostages. As it happens, Israeli military planners had several structural advantages owing to the previous close relationship between Israel and Uganda during the initial period of Amin’s rule. Israel had “initially supported the President and increased its military presence in Uganda with the provision of Fouga Magister aircraft and surplus Sherman tanks. Idi Amin was even given the honorific Hebrew title of *Hagai Ne’eman (Reliable Helmsman)*.”¹³⁸ There had also been extensive economic cooperation. Part of this economic cooperation involved construction at Entebbe airport by an “Israeli engineering company, Solel Boneh.” This company now provided “blue prints for the Old Terminal” of the Entebbe Airport to the Israeli military and intelligence services working on the rescue operation. Muki Betsler, a key military officer in the planning for the rescue of the hostages, had formerly worked with the Ugandan Army. Drawing on this knowledge, he was now “able to deliver his assessment of the Ugandan troops, highlighting their lack of motivation and reluctance to fight at night.”¹³⁹

¹³⁶Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 156.

¹³⁷Simon Dunstan, *Israel’s Lightning Strike; The Raid on Entebbe 1976* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009), p. 11.

¹³⁸Simon Dunstan, *Israel’s Lightning Strike*, p. 15. For more details on Israel’s initial celebratory support of Idi Amin see, David Martin, *General Amin* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974). “Two countries more than any other stood to gain by the overthrow of Obote and initially by the advent of power of Amin: Britain and Israel. Whether or not, as Obote implied they were actively involved in organizing the coup is questionable, but certainly once it had occurred, they celebrated with abandon” p. 158.

¹³⁹Simon Dunstan, *Israel’s Lightning Strike*, p. 17.

The key obstacle faced by the Israeli military planners was the refueling of rescue planes after the raid. Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel, “felt some unease regarding a few aspects, especially the proposal to refuel at Entebbe Airport. He preferred the aircraft should fly to Nairobi to refuel, even if they were unable to obtain permission from the Kenyan authorities.” This was clearly a matter that demanded urgent diplomatic and intelligence consultation at the highest levels with the Kenya government. And it is here that Bruce McKenzie proved an invaluable asset to Israel. To facilitate progress on this sensitive matter, Ehud Barak, former commander of Sayeret Matkal, and now

the assistant to the Chief of Military Intelligence and responsible for research and Special Forces operations ... was immediately dispatched to Kenya where he met secretly with senior government figures including the Kenyan Chief of Police, Bryn Davies, the Chief of the GSU, Geoffrey Karithi, the former SAS officer Bruce McKenzie (who acted as a security advisor to President Jomo Kenyatta, with whom the final decision regarding landing rights rested.)¹⁴⁰

The legal aspects of this top-secret cooperation between Israel and Kenya on this matter of the “Entebbe Raid” were covered by the ruling of “the Attorney General Charles Njonjo as to his interpretation of Kenyan aviation laws.”

Soon after Ehud Barak’s successful visit, a sizable number of Israel secret agents with varied assignments arrived in Kenya. “Two days before the raid,” *Newsweek* later wrote,

a collection of tanned and tough looking young Israelis—several with private pilots’ licenses—arrived in Kenya. They hired two small planes and took off on a ‘sight-seeing’ flight around Lake Victoria. They made the same trip the day of the raid, and foreign intelligence officers acknowledged that the Israelis had been reconnoitering Entebbe, which sits on the Uganda shore of the lake.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰Simon Dunstan, *Israel’s Lightning Strike*, p. 29. “Ndegwa would later write that, Bruce McKenzie ... was suspected to be an agent of the Mossad, the Israeli Intelligence Service.” See, Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles: My Story*, p. 406.

¹⁴¹*Newsweek* (July 26, 1976), p. 51.

Other agents, using Kenya as a staging base, had

driven in cars, or concealed in battered African trucks, across the border into Uganda ... On the night of the operation these men would occupy two positions. One group would be in the terminal building, ready to destroy the telephone cables connecting the airport to the outside world. The other was to take position up on the road between the Ugandan Army and the airfield, setting explosives so that vehicles or large bodies of men could be ambushed. These agents would be joined by a small detachment of Israelis from the landing force.¹⁴²

In addition, the Israeli aircraft carrying the Special Forces flew through Kenya as they descended on Entebbe.

After the raid, the Israeli planes stopped in Nairobi for refueling with ground protection provided by “armed Kenyan soldiers and members of the GSU.”¹⁴³ Wounded Israelis were also treated at Nairobi Airport. In subsequent period, this raid would be hailed as “one of the most daring, spectacular rescues of modern times.” Yet, its success was heavily dependent on the role that Kenya played. McKenzie facilitated this military and intelligence liaison between Kenya and Israel. Unlike in the past when “it had long been agreed that Israel dare not take any other country into its confidence,”¹⁴⁴ this time it relied heavily on Kenya’s cooperation. McKenzie’s intervention at the highest levels of the Kenya government had made this possible.

For Israel, this raid quickly became an integral part of its national military mythology celebrated for both its immediate success and then its symbolism. The raid on Entebbe “was a defining moment in Israel history. After the traumas of the Yom Kippur war, the Israel Defense Forces once more basked in the limelight of public approval.”¹⁴⁵ And this event would be forever hailed as “one of the great achievements

¹⁴²Tony Williamson, *Counter-Strike Entebbe* (London: William Collins and Co. Ltd., 1976), p. 70.

¹⁴³Simon Dunstan, *Israel’s Lightning Strike*, p. 55.

¹⁴⁴Tony Williamson, *Counter-Strike Entebbe*, p. 113. Williamson adds that, “The Israeli Secret Service had been building up its agents in Kenya throughout the week.”

¹⁴⁵Simon Dunstan, *Israel’s Lightning Strike*, p. 61.

of the Israel Defense Forces, almost biblical in its scale and success in saving the hostages.”¹⁴⁶

Amin was greatly humiliated by this raid now widely publicized across the world. For over one year, he bade his time as he planned his revenge on McKenzie. Amin was partly able to accomplish this objective by continuing to do business with British firms through their Kenya subsidiaries. One of these firms, as already mentioned, was “Cooper Motors, which acted as an agent for Contact Radio Telephones of UK. The company’s principal Nairobi director was Bruce McKenzie.” Contact Radio Telephones together with Wilkin’s Communication, another “Kenya based company”, supplied Amin’s regime with “sensitive telecommunications and spying and torture equipment.”¹⁴⁷

On May 24, 1978,

almost certainly because of his assistance in the Entebbe operation, Bruce McKenzie was killed when a bomb exploded on the plane carrying him and two business associates from the Ugandan capital Kampala to Nairobi. He had long conducted business deals with President Amin, and on this occasion was selling military or semi-military equipment. He was accompanied by a former employee of Lonrho who had since worked independently. The third passenger, Keith Savage, was selling communications equipment to Amin.¹⁴⁸

The bomb was apparently hidden in “the mounted head of an antelope” which Amin had given to McKenzie “as a parting gift.”¹⁴⁹

Soon after this bomb explosion, the British government, through the Ministry of Defence, launched an exhaustive investigation to determine

¹⁴⁶Simon Dunstan, *Israel’s Lightning Strike*, p. 62. Reporting on this raid, *Time* magazine noted that, “no longer did Israelis feel that their country was to be humiliated by a pack of terrorists. Many Israelis confidently expressed the hope that the trauma of the 1973 war—in which the Arabs scored impressive, if short lived, triumphs—would finally fade” (July 12, 1976), p. 22.

¹⁴⁷Mahmood Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1984), p. 98.

¹⁴⁸Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 157. The authors add that “in the *Sunday Times* report, responsibility for the explosion was accredited to two ex-CIA agents, Edwin Wilson and Frank Terpil, employed by Amin.” p. 157.

¹⁴⁹Simon Dunstan, *Israel’s Lightning Strike*, p. 59.

its cause.¹⁵⁰ The investigating team from the Royal Armament Research and Development Establishment (RARDE) arrived at several conclusions. First, McKenzie's plane,

a privately owned 6-passenger Piper Aztec aircraft ... whilst flying over the Ngong forest, Kenya at an altitude of about 7500 feet and approximately six minutes flying time from Nairobi, an event occurred which caused the aircraft to crash, killing the pilot and his three passengers. No fire occurred in any part of the aircraft as a result of the incident.¹⁵¹

All of the dead were of British nationality. Second, the "various forensic identification" left "no doubt that the destruction of Piper Aztec aircraft 5YACS resulted from detonation within it of an explosive device." Lastly, the team determined that "the involvement of a nitroglycerine-based explosive and the complete absence of the effects of metallic fragmentation are clear proof that no military weapon (for instance a ground-to-air or air-to-air missile) was involved in this incident."¹⁵²

In a detailed memo to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Sir S.J.G. Fingland, the British High Commissioner to Kenya, provided some assessment of McKenzie's life and his legacy, specifically in Kenya. His funeral in Nairobi was attended by several Cabinet Ministers and senior civil servants: "Njonjo, Attorney General, Osogo, Minister of Health, Kiereini, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence, and Ben Gethi, Commander, GSU were among the pall bearers and the address was given by Geoffrey Kariithi (Permanent Secretary in the President's Office), who had been McKenzie's Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture." Kenyatta had very much wanted to attend the "funeral service at All Saints Cathedral, Nairobi, but was dissuaded from doing so." Fingland added that the significant turn out of Ministers, senior civil servants was part of the "large congregation which was drawn from all races and sections of the Kenyan Community." In all, Fingland observed,

¹⁵⁰FCO 31/ 2555 (London: National Archives) Ministry of Defence: An Investigation into the loss of the Piper Aztec aircraft 5YACS, which occurred over NGONG, KENYA on 24 May 1978.

¹⁵¹FCO 31/2555 (London: National Archives) Ministry of Defence: An Investigation into the loss of the Piper Aztec aircraft 5YACS, p. 1.

¹⁵²FCO 31/2555 (London: National Archives) Ministry of Defence: An Investigation into the loss of the Piper Aztec aircraft 5YACS, p. 8.

it was “an impressive tribute to a man who, whatever his faults and controversial activities in recent years, had made a considerable impact on the Kenyan scene.”¹⁵³ Also attending McKenzie’s funeral was “the MI6 officer in Nairobi from 1968 to 1971, Frank Fenwick Steel and a representative of the Queen.” To show its gratitude the “Israeli government named a forest in Galilee after him as a mark of respect.”¹⁵⁴

McKenzie’s death, Finland informed London, would “leave a vacuum which it will take some time to fill.” For one thing, his business and political interests were several with complex linkages. He was, for example,

a Director of over 20 Kenyan registered companies and unknown number of foreign companies ... he had substantial interests in Canada, Saudi Arabia, US and some in the Far East and Brazil. In a largely personal capacity, but representing various African and international groupings, he was involved in a network of financial deals, and in so far as he had a base it was his office in the Cooper Motor Corporation of which he was the Chairman.¹⁵⁵

On the local political scene, Finland affirmed once again McKenzie’s sprawling influence in many areas, and especially on Njonjo, and increasingly on Moi.

In his business and financial activities McKenzie acted invariably as the representative of some or all of the Kenyan faction headed by Moi and Njonjo. He was, moreover, a key man in this group in other ways, and exercised great influence on and through them. Outside Kenya he served as a high level interlocutory, and his contacts with a wide range of Ministers, senior officials and powerful financial and industrial interests in Europe and elsewhere were remarkable if not always desirable. He contrived for instance, at the same time to keep up a relationship with both Israelis and the Saudis. Given the general weakness [of] Kenyan diplomatic representation, McKenzie’s role was important and he will be difficult to replace.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³FCO 31/2555 (London: National Archives) Bruce McKenzie, 31 May 1978.

¹⁵⁴Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 157.

¹⁵⁵FCO 31/2555 (London: National Archives) Bruce McKenzie, 31 May 1978.

¹⁵⁶FCO 31/2555 (London: National Archives) Bruce McKenzie, 31 May 1978.

Within Kenyatta's inner circle, this death had an immediate and considerable impact. While it may be true that "McKenzie's direct access to and influence with Kenyatta had waned," in the last few years, he still had access to Njonjo, who in effect ruled in Kenyatta's name. And as Fingland noted, "Njonjo, in particular, relied heavily on" McKenzie's advice.¹⁵⁷ Also, McKenzie had emerged as one "of the key men in the hard core of the political grouping behind Vice President Moi."

McKenzie's wide-ranging influence on the country's institutions and some of its key politicians, Fingland pointed out, was in part due to the fact that, he was a European and thus "in no way a rival or potential threat to those Africans with whom he was associated." These Africans "valued his advice and trusted him to act on their behalf. No other person," Fingland concluded, "exists in Kenya who can fully take his place and it will take his associates some time to adjust to the removal of his influence from the Kenya political scene."¹⁵⁸

For Kenyatta, the period after 1964 saw him quickly settle in his role as "not merely the father figure of the Africans but the man most trusted by whites of all the leaders in independent Africa."¹⁵⁹ He was actively courted by the West to provide considerable counterweight to radical or revolutionary policies pursued by other African leaders, especially in Eastern and Central Africa. And this in turn increased his prestige and level of favorable consideration by Western governments and the Western media. Western and African leaders visited Kenya in considerable numbers to consult with Kenyatta and then be photographed with him. He had become the grand old man of African politics whose opinions were most valued by Western leaders and conservative African leaders. Among the many who came calling was King Moshoeshe II of Lesotho, who visited Kenyatta at his home in Gatundu in October 1966 "and discussed

¹⁵⁷FCO 31/2555 (London: National Archives) Bruce McKenzie, 31 May 1978.

¹⁵⁸FCO 31/255 (London: National Archives) Bruce McKenzie, 31 May 1978. Fingland noted in conclusion that someone had commented to him, "a few months ago that McKenzie had discharged his main and outstanding contributions to Kenya in the past and that he was becoming an anachronism, and perhaps a dangerous one, in the present and future Kenya. This may, when the dust has settled, prove to be a fair and objective judgment."

¹⁵⁹Brian Lapping, *The End of Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 444.

matters of mutual interest.”¹⁶⁰ On many of these visits, Kenyatta took the opportunity to demonstrate his newly minted image as a calm, wise, settled, and cultured leader very friendly to the West and its objectives in Africa. When Princess Marina visited Kenya in October 1966, Kenyatta was photographed cutting a rose flower for her from his treasured rose garden at the State House.¹⁶¹ The crisis over Rhodesia led to numerous consultations between the British government led by Harold Wilson and Kenyatta. In October 1965, Wilson and Kenyatta “held private talks lasting more than an hour at Nairobi Airport.” Even at this late hour Wilson was still trying to “avert a unilateral declaration of independence by the white minority regime.”¹⁶² Wilson returned to Nairobi in January 1966 for further consultations. In subsequent periods, Kenyatta’s opinions on the crisis in Rhodesia would be eagerly sought by the British government.

Kenyatta’s opinions on several African and international issues were equally sought by the USA. As already discussed, much groundwork had already been laid through the activities of William Attwood, the USA’s first ambassador to Kenya. In January 1966, G. Mennen “Soapy” Williams, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, “spent two hours with President Kenyatta in a surprise visit to Mombasa ... to explain his country’s hopes for a peaceful settlement to the Vietnam war.”¹⁶³ In January 1968, Vice President Hubert Humphrey was warmly received by Kenyatta after a brief safari tour of Nairobi national park.¹⁶⁴ These consultations continued under the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations. In February 1970, William Rogers, USA Secretary of State, met with Kenyatta “and gave him a letter from President Nixon on Washington–Nairobi relations that praised Mr. Kenyatta’s leadership and the direction

¹⁶⁰ *Daily Nation* (October 22, 1966), p. 3. In July 1966, King Moshoeshoe II was involved in a struggle for power with Chief Leabua Jonathan, the Prime Minister of Lesotho. See, *Daily Nation* (July 5, 1966), p. 2. Kenyatta also hosted Prince Makhosini Dlamini, the Prime Minister of Swaziland. See, *Daily Nation* (June 5, 1969), p. 1.

¹⁶¹ *Daily Nation* (October 14, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁶² *Daily Nation* (October 26, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁶³ *Daily Nation* (January 4, 1966), p. 1. His mission, Williams said, “was to explain our position to President Kenyatta on Vietnam and to explain our desire for a peaceful and honorable solution in Vietnam.”

¹⁶⁴ *New York Times* (January 9, 1968), p. 6.

of his country's foreign policy."¹⁶⁵ This was followed by Vice President Spiro Agnew's visit in July 1971. "With no serious issues between the two countries" and thus "no substantive discussions ... planned," Agnew spend some time on safari "observing local game from a lounge at Treetops, a hotel built among trees and on wooden pilings about two hours' drive" from Nairobi. He later had discussions with Kenyatta and exchanged gifts.¹⁶⁶ Agnew's tour of Africa had taken him to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Mobutu's Zaire. He was full of praise for the three leaders he had met for being "dedicated, enlightened, dynamic and extremely apt for the task that faces them." There was no criticism for these specific leaders for maintaining repressive "authoritarian regimes" that also facilitated widespread corruption. Agnew praised Mobutu, Kenyatta, and Selassie for providing quality leadership that was in "distinct contrast with many of those in the United States who have arrogated unto themselves the position of black leaders, those who spent their time in querulous complaint and constant recrimination against the rest of society." Here were African leaders Agnew wished would be emulated by the black leaders in the USA. "The Vice President said that American black leaders 'could learn much by observing the work that has been done' in Ethiopia, Kenya and the Congo, whose leaders he described as 'grateful' for American foreign aid."¹⁶⁷ Kenyatta was now held as the model leader of cooperation with the West and the power and economic structure that held it together. Agnew hoped that black leaders in the USA, would endeavor to follow Kenyatta's example and desist from criticizing the country's social, political, and economic structure.

In April 1976, Henry Kissinger, the USA Secretary of State called on Kenyatta as part of his Africa tour. To be sure, Kissinger's prestige and dominance in USA foreign policy was not the same as it had been during the Nixon administration. He was now criticized by some senators for running, "a one-man authoritarianism" and for "putting himself above the law." His critics had also "characterized his diplomacy as a blend of 'bribes' false promises and gesticulations upon the stage of world opinion."¹⁶⁸ Although Kissinger had clearly "fallen from political grace and

¹⁶⁵ *New York Times* (February 15, 1970), p. 29.

¹⁶⁶ *New York Times* (July 14, 1971), p. 11.

¹⁶⁷ *New York Times* (July 18, 1971), p. 1.

¹⁶⁸ *The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 22.

untouchability on Capitol Hill,” he was still a powerful Secretary of State whose opinions still mattered in the Ford administration. Kissinger’s positions on Southern Africa, initially formulated in 1969, were eventually published as *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa: National Security Memorandum 39*.¹⁶⁹ In this study the National Security Council under Kissinger, showed no particular “concern over the aspirations and fate of the African people.” The USA, the document affirmed, “had no genuine interest in solving racial and colonial conflicts in Southern Africa.”¹⁷⁰ Further, Kissinger’s study “dismissed the possibility of change in the power structure in Southern Africa” thus concluding that “whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come is through them” and also that there was “no hope for the blacks to gain political rights they seek through violence.” This would only lead to the expansion of communist influence in the region at the expense of crucial USA and Western interests. Deeply distrustful of revolutionary movements, Kissinger and the Nixon and Ford administrations were willing “to accept political arrangements short of guaranteed progress toward majority rule.”

The pursuit of these objectives led Kissinger to undertake his customary realpolitik position on Southern Africa. “Here we see realpolitik at work in the nude, unclothed with diplomatic rhetoric and unadorned by obfuscation.”¹⁷¹ This policy sought to maintain the white repressive regimes in power, relax contacts with these racist regimes, isolate and thwart the nationalist revolutionary movements while providing some minimal economic aid to independent African countries in the region with the hope that such aid would encourage these countries “to modify their policies”¹⁷² to be in accord with US positions. Criticism of US policy toward Southern Africa by Africans was routinely dismissed or ignored by Kissinger and the Nixon and Ford administrations. “That

¹⁶⁹Mohamed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen (editors) *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa: National Security Memorandum 39* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1976).

¹⁷⁰Mohamed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen (eds), *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa*, p. 26.

¹⁷¹Edgar Lockwood, “Preface” in *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa*, p. 13.

¹⁷²Mohamed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen (eds), *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa*, p. 29.

President Nixon paid little attention to the criticism of his South Africa policy was partly due to the important role South Africa played in the Kissinger scheme to counter the Soviet threat in the Indian Ocean and to enhance the security of the Cape area.¹⁷³

After a private meeting with Kenyatta in Nakuru, Kissinger reiterated that the USA did “not plan to give military aid in any form to the nationalist movements in Africa,” although the USA “does support majority rule and is willing to use political and economic pressures to bring it about.”¹⁷⁴ These policy positions by Kissinger were later criticized by Tanzania’s Foreign Minister Ibrahim Kaduma, at a state banquet in Dar-es-Salaam. “Sometimes” Kaduma told Kissinger,

we feel that you do understand about our struggle and why we struggle but you lack the will to help. It is thus our hope that your brief visit among other things will afford you a better perspective so that the United States of America, which at its founding fought hard for independence, shall not turn a blind eye to the situation in southern Africa until it is too late and even then be on the wrong side.¹⁷⁵

Kenyatta’s unwavering thrust in foreign relations was to avoid controversy. Special efforts were made to avoid taking on any controversial positions that might hurt the country’s close relationship with the West, specifically Britain. “Seen from Nairobi,” Sir Edward Peck wrote to London,

the non-African outside world divides into outer circle of (a) helpful Powers, Britain, the United States and the aiding Europeans; (b) unhelpful Powers, Russia, China, and Czechoslovakia and (C) the rest, most of which are invisible over the horizon, except perhaps for India and Aden. In the African world proper, [he continued] outside the adjacent neighbours, only the Anglophone Commonwealth countries begin to count; Francophone countries, with the possible exception of the Congo and the Malagasy Republic, where some Kenyans are studying French, are (as the French man said of his wife) both inconceivable and impregnable.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³Mohamed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen (eds), *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa*, p. 39.

¹⁷⁴*New York Times* (April 26, 1976), p. 1.

¹⁷⁵*New York Times* (April 26, 1976), p. 1.

¹⁷⁶MAC 71/8/62 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya: First Impressions.

Kenya maintained a carefully orchestrated position of self-isolation from the dramatic events in international affairs, “ready perhaps to make some gesture in favour of extremist views, if these are in a majority, but never venturing to put any of her own real interests at risk.” Part of this isolation “from the mainstream of African opinion” was the result of Kenyatta himself not travelling to international conferences due to “his great reluctance to travel by air.”¹⁷⁷

These deliberate conservative positions, especially on the question of African liberation were, as already mentioned, in marked contrast to Kenyatta’s previous embrace of radical Pan African activism. A version of this radicalism, clearly watered down, was still visible in the initial years of KANU in power when radicals still had some voice in the affairs of the party and even the government. In a message to the founding conference of the Organization of African Unity, delivered on his behalf by Oginga Odinga, Kenyatta recalled his “days in Europe working for African freedom and Pan Africanism with such close friends as Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, His Excellency Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and other freedom fighters.” The convening of the 1963 conference in Addis Ababa was a realization of the dreams of these pioneer freedom fighters. Yet, there was more work to be done.

We cannot rest, we shall not rest until every corner and every soul of this continent of ours is free. Complete liberation of Mother Africa should be viewed not as the end of our struggle, but the beginning of a new and challenging task, which is the removal of territorial, political and economic balkanization. The well-known policy of “divide and rule” was put into full operation during the so-called scramble for Africa, breaking our continent into numerous small territorial units. The imperialist powers, [Kenyatta continued] are still playing this game. Our one and only weapon to beat them in the game is African solidarity through dynamic pan Africanism.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷MAC 71/8/62 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya: First Impressions.

¹⁷⁸*East African Standard* (May 25, 1963), p. 4. “African Summit Message by Mr. Kenyatta.”

In this message, Kenyatta hinted at a parting of ways with Nkrumah's call for immediate African unity. He was opposed to "territorial expansionist aims which some Pan-African brothers wish to pursue." If such radical reorganization of African territorial boundaries were pursued "in the Africa of today, we shall succeed only in starting a chain of reactions that would break up African solidarity and the shedding of blood." To Kenyatta, soon to be Prime Minister of Kenya, pan Africanism meant, "bringing together into closer unions our various countries, so that the artificial boundaries created by imperialist powers between African brothers are declared contrary to the spirit of pan Africanism." Lastly, Kenyatta supported the efforts of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (with Headquarters in Addis Ababa). He advanced the position that this Economic Commission (and related agencies) "could be greatly utilized to interpret pan Africanism into its concrete form." Thus, he was a great "supporter of the steps being taken to create a united African Common Market, the harmonization of monetary zones in Africa, the co-ordination of economic development plans, so that Africa may move forward hand in hand in unity and in a spirit of brotherly fellowship."¹⁷⁹

Kenyatta's hesitant position on, and later abandonment of, radical positions in international affairs was clearly evident in how his government handled the question of the liberation struggles against the racist regimes in southern Africa. In June 1964, Kenyatta delivered a long impassioned speech to a large charged crowd in Nairobi angry with the Boers in South Africa for jailing Nelson Mandela for his efforts to overthrow the apartheid regime. "In front of 25,000 cheering people ... Mr. Kenyatta helped bury symbolic coffins of the South African Cabinet at a protest rally in Shauri Moyo, Nairobi." Accompanied by some members of his new cabinet and diplomats from France, India, Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Ghana, China, and other countries, Kenyatta "urged the Governments of France, Britain, America and Germany to stop aiding South Africa." Kenyans, he said, "must be prepared to shed blood to help their 'brothers' in South Africa, Southern Rhodesia and the Spanish and Portuguese colonies."¹⁸⁰ During this rally, Kenyatta also talked

¹⁷⁹ *East African Standard* (May 25, 1963), p. 4 "African Summit Message by Mr. Kenyatta."

¹⁸⁰ *East African Standard* (June 22, 1964), p. 1. Kenyatta added that, "Kenya's will and resources could now be used to help the South Africans, as under the present regime South Africa was a threat to peace in Africa and the stability of the world."

of Britain's post-*Uhuru* aid to Kenya. Grants from Britain of about £60,000,000 "had been made in return 'for sucking our blood' ... I talked to the British people who used to suck our blood and they have given us £60,000,000, I told the British people that they were sucking our blood and never given us anything in return. I am now telling them to give us something in return."¹⁸¹ Kenyatta later retracted this statement. It was unsettling to the British. A few days after the rally, he issued a statement in which he "denied that he had referred to the British as 'blood suckers' in his speech at the anti-apartheid rally ... The Prime Minister," the statement continued, "wishes to make it clear that this is a distorted translation of a remark he made in Swahili which taken out of context is a gross misrepresentation and is misleading to the public ... There was no question of the Prime Minister calling the British nation 'blood suckers.'"¹⁸²

At the height of the Rhodesian crisis in 1965/1966, Kenya seemed momentarily to assume a radical pan African position on the matter of national liberation struggles in Africa. A principal formulator and articulator of this position was Joseph Murumbi, the veteran nationalist who held the position of Foreign Minister from 1964 to 1966 and also served very briefly as the Vice President in 1966 after Odinga's resignation from the government. In 1964 during the Congo crisis in which Kenyatta was involved on behalf of the OAU, Murumbi told the UNO General Assembly that "hostages killed by rebels in Stanleyville would probably still have been alive had it not been for the American-Belgian paratroop drop." He doubted American motives adding that, "it almost seemed as if the United States was not as much concerned with the lives of the hostages as with the fall of Stanleyville."¹⁸³ This radical posture was also apparent in his speech to the Non-Aligned States in Cairo in 1964. Murumbi, speaking as Kenyatta's personal representative, pointed out the dangers of colonialism and neo-colonialism and condemned apartheid and its Western supporters.¹⁸⁴ Further, "it was wrong to expect peace when 700,000,000 Chinese people were ignored."

¹⁸¹ *East African Standard* (June 22, 1964), p. 1.

¹⁸² *East African Standard* (June 2, 1964), p. 1.

¹⁸³ *East African Standard* (December 9, 1964), p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ *East African Standard* (October 10, 1964), p. 10.

As Wilson's administration scrambled to find a solution to the Rhodesian crisis, Murumbi, speaking at the UNO General Assembly, observed that, "the consequences of any compromise solution between the British and Rhodesian governments would be disastrous." Murumbi wanted Britain to reassert its imperial authority in Rhodesia, "as she had done in the past. A state of emergency was declared in Kenya, and the Constitution had been suspended in British Guiana and Aden ... Britain had also flown out troops in these areas." Why then was the British government now "reluctant to send troops to Rhodesia to prevent Ian Smith from plunging into unilateral declaration of independence (UDI)?"¹⁸⁵

What was unsettling to Kenyatta and his inner circle was that this radical posture on Rhodesia strengthened the hand of radical nationalists within the KANU party and even the government. When Hendrik Verwoerd, the South African Prime Minister, was murdered in 1966, the KANU headquarters issued a statement urging the use of force to eliminate apartheid. There was also the real danger that such radical posture would be unacceptable to Britain as it struggled to explain itself to various forums on the thorny and vexing problem of Rhodesia. In March 1966, on the eve of the crucial KANU conference at Limuru, Murumbi, attending the OAU meeting in Addis Ababa, had taken the radical position of protesting "against the seating of delegates representing Ghana's new military regime." He condemned "military coups which are a serious menace to the peace and stability of Africa," adding for emphasis that, "My Government is against military coups and disregard of constitutional authority."¹⁸⁶ Kenyatta and his conservative inner circle did not share Murumbi's interpretation of the Kenya position on this matter. Very soon after delivering his speech at the OAU meeting, Kenyatta directed Murumbi to return to Nairobi.¹⁸⁷ He later denied that he had in fact "resigned his Cabinet post" over this and related incidents. The *Daily Nation*, however, wrote an editorial highlighting the apparent confusion in the country's foreign policy. "Why is our foreign policy

¹⁸⁵ *Daily Nation* (October 8, 1965), p. 19.

¹⁸⁶ *Daily Nation* (March 5, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ *Daily Nation* (March 5, 1966), p. 1.

becoming increasingly confused, inconsistent and out of line with our domestic policies?”¹⁸⁸

Kenyatta’s dramatic action was a strong signal to indicate that he wanted some consistency in the domestic and foreign policies of his government: conservative and strongly supportive of the West. It was clear that Murumbi had not always toed the line on this matter. He was a veteran nationalist who had quickly “become one of the most widely travelled and most cultured politician in Africa,” with radical views, especially on the question of African liberation. Yet as Kenyatta sought to oust the radicals from the KANU and the government, he was uncomfortable with a foreign minister whose positions on international issues seemed to strengthen the radicals while also angering Britain and the West. “As Minister for Foreign Affairs,” Tony Hall wrote, “he has sometimes been in a controversial position ... There have been times when his speeches at international forums have resounded in tones of uncompromising all out African nationalism—and struck a note which echoed a little discordantly back home.”¹⁸⁹ It was therefore not surprising when Murumbi was removed from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to become the new Vice President in May 1966. Like Odinga before him, this was a case of promotion through subtraction; he was made Vice President but with no specific portfolio thus limiting his influence on government policy. In the new arrangement, Kenyatta chose to “handle foreign policy matters personally.”¹⁹⁰ In September 1966, Murumbi resigned from the post of Vice President on grounds of poor health, which made it, “difficult for him to perform to the satisfaction of his own high standards the onerous official and social duties attached to his office.” In a lengthy editorial on this matter, the *Daily Nation* noted that Murumbi had not stated his

¹⁸⁸ *Daily Nation* (March 7, 1966), p. 6.

¹⁸⁹ *Daily Nation* (May 5, 1966), p. 6. Murumbi had, for example, “firmly criticized Prince Philip, husband of Queen Elizabeth, for his ‘apparent support for the dangerous strategy of Prime Minister Ian Smith of Rhodesia.’” See, *Daily Nation* (July 6, 1965), p. 1. On the other hand, Kamuzu Banda supported Prince Philip. See, *Daily Nation* (July 6, 1965), p. 7. At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference in London in June 1965, Murumbi, “spoke out strongly against the British Government on Rhodesia, accusing it of lack of courage in the handling of the situation there.” He insisted that, “the principle of universal franchise, meaning one man one vote, be introduced in order to establish an African majority rule.” See, *Daily Nation* (June 22, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ *Daily Nation* (May 4, 1966), p. 1.

reasons for retiring from politics and he had made no mention of poor health.¹⁹¹

Murumbi's departure from Foreign Affairs was indeed a watershed moment in the country's politics. It severed any lingering connection to radical Pan Africanism. There would be no more radical positions taken by the country in international forums. The country would systematically avoid aligning with radical African regimes on questions likely to anger or embarrass Britain or the West. As a result, Kenya under Kenyatta remained a staunch supporter of Wilson on the Rhodesia question even as it became abundantly clear that his choices of strategy were unlikely to lead to majority rule in the foreseeable future. Wilson had given Ian Smith "a commitment in advance of UDI (November 11, 1965) that Britain would not impose a constitutional settlement by force. Wilson then appeared willing to negotiate with Smith a constitutional basis for independence which in effect left the whites in command."¹⁹² Wilson was hampered by strong public opinion in Britain that strongly resisted the very idea of using British troops to subdue "their kith and kin" in Rhodesia in order to hand over power to the majority; the Africans. Whites fighting and killing other whites on behalf of Africans was not an acceptable proposition to the British people and their leaders, even if the rebellion was technically against the Crown.

Kamuzu Banda, a blunt and forthright supporter of the British position stated that, "it would be unrealistic to expect Britain to use force against their own kith and kin in a country where 90% of the white population are British people ... The British Parliament would not authorize Mr. Harold Wilson, the Prime Minister, or any other Prime Minister to use force in Rhodesia."¹⁹³ It is worth mentioning here that one of the most unexpected advocates of using force to quell Smith's rebellion was Dr. Michael Ramsey, The Archbishop of Canterbury. In October and November 1965, Dr. Ramsey, the Primate of the Church of England, gave speeches and interviews, "approving the principle of using force to protect majority rights in Rhodesia." In further clarification of his position, Dr. Ramsey stated that, "by force he was thinking of the 'British Government perhaps

¹⁹¹ *Daily Nation* (September 21, 1966), p. 6.

¹⁹² Brian Lapping, "The Commonwealth and Rhodesia," *Africa Report*, Vol. 11, No. 7 (October 1966), p. 10.

¹⁹³ *Daily Nation* (November 4, 1965), p. 5.

having to take over the Government of Rhodesia and then possibly having to use force to defend its authority.”¹⁹⁴ Dr. Ramsey was heavily criticized in Britain, especially by Conservative Party MPs, and also in Rhodesia. A few Labour and Liberal Party MPs praised him for his “excellent and courageous stand.” Wilson and his cabinet did not endorse Dr. Ramsey’s stand on this matter. For some time, Dr. Ramsey was “given police protection after several incidents.”

Wilson’s political strategy on Rhodesia was guided by a belief that MI6 and other British intelligence services had the capacity to cripple the rebellion. But as it happens, this was a mistaken strategy since Wilson had no reason to believe that this would actually happen. For one thing, “Wilson’s intelligence was so bad ... there was no machine to do the job. ‘Rhodesian Intelligence’ meant the anti-Communist organisation set up during the colonial days by MI5, with the support from IRD, in co-operation with the Portuguese and South Africans.”¹⁹⁵ There was no mechanism in place to undertake such large-scale sabotage without the involvement of South Africa and the Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique. Further, British intelligence services were poorly represented within Rhodesia. On this crisis, there would be no “James Bond” solution.

Even as the Rhodesian crisis became the central issue in Anglo–African relations in the mid-1960s, Britain took some comfort in Kenyatta’s unwavering support. “It is in keeping with Kenyatta’s temperament,” Sir Edward Peck wrote to London, “that he has been prepared to accept our policy of gradually wearing down the Rhodesian rebels ... and that he is much concerned that if African blood needs to be shed to gain Zimbabwe independence, it shall not lead to a general African holocaust.”¹⁹⁶ The British were however keenly aware of the force of this question on the African leaders, including Kenyatta. This awareness resulted in the employment of a flexible yet consistent diplomatic approach that expected some occasional radical utterances on this matter provided this posturing did not endanger the underlying support of British policy toward Rhodesia by the Kenyatta government. The fear

¹⁹⁴ *Daily Nation* (November 1, 1965), p. 2.

¹⁹⁵ David Leigh, *The Wilson Plot*, p. 106.

¹⁹⁶ MAC 71/8/62 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya: First Impressions.

was that many African countries would quickly become disillusioned over “the failure of Her Majesty’s Government to find a solution in Rhodesia.” Were this to happen, Peck wrote, “Kenyatta will feel obliged to show solidarity—perhaps by no more than a gesture of disapproval towards Her Majesty’s Government—perhaps by some drastic measure against the British.” Peck was however keen to point out that in engaging in such acts of solidarity, Kenyatta would be “careful not to go so far as to endanger his vital interests.” On this question, Peck’s recommendation was that the best approach was for the British to strike a balance between “on one hand, allowing him his gesture, which will be as much a bow towards KPU and the radicals in Kenya as to the rest of Africa, and on the other attempting to block any more drastic action by the threat—which cannot afford to be a bluff—or suggesting that British aid is at risk.”¹⁹⁷

An added value of Kenyatta to the British on the Rhodesia question was that post *Uhuru* Kenya served as example that could be emulated in solving the crisis. Kenya had also been a settler colony with a complex and even bloody nationalist history with well-organized white settlers, resistant to the notion of majority rule. Kenyatta was a previously loathed nationalist leader who had emerged as a great friend of Britain and the West and a steadfast defender of white settlers. “Whatever the personal sympathies and views of British settlers and others in Kenya,” Peck observed, “their experience under majority African rule has been by no means an unhappy one, and though it may be too late for Rhodesia to learn this lesson without great agony, the example is there to be followed.”¹⁹⁸

To emphasize this point, a group of prominent white settlers in Kenya wrote an open letter to fellow settlers in Rhodesia urging them not to rebel against the Crown and also pointing out that the concept of African majority rule can in fact protect their economic interests, culture, and even social status. These white settlers included, Lord Delamere, Sir Michael Blundell, and Humphrey Slade. They were shocked and dismayed “at the declared intention of the Rhodesian Government to seize

¹⁹⁷MAC 71/8/63 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) First Impressions.

¹⁹⁸MAC 71/8/62 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya: First Impressions.

independence in the name of a White minority and in defiance of the British Government's persistent efforts to secure legally enforceable safeguards leading to African majority rule."¹⁹⁹ These settlers supported the efforts of the British government to secure majority rule in Rhodesia and regretted that "more Rhodesian leaders did not visit East Africa to learn at first hand what independence had achieved." To be sure, most of them initially had "sincere reservations about the speed with which independence was granted to Kenya." Post-*Uhuru* social, economic, and political arrangements had effectively put to rest all of their fears and initial hostility toward African majority rule. "Today, however," the Kenya settlers wrote to their kith and kin in Rhodesia, "we must readily admit that a great many of our fears have so far proved totally unfounded."²⁰⁰ It had been hoped that Rhodesian settlers would be persuaded to reconsider the rebellion by looking at the attractive example of Kenya where settlers continued to prosper and flourish protected by Kenyatta, formerly about the most hated nationalist in Africa.²⁰¹ He had changed, and as the white settlers now freely attested, he was the protector of their property and guarantor of their social and cultural lifestyle. For the white settlers, "the good times were rolling again" in Kenya.

Kenyatta's old friends from the now-receding period of Pan African activism were quick to notice these changes in his character and commitment to the old ideals. Since assuming power, he had distanced himself from many of his friends who had been so vital in sustaining him in Britain at a time when an independent Kenya was nothing but a frustrating dream on the distant horizon. Kenyatta's actions once in power indicated a deliberate attempt to disavow his past association with radical Pan African activism. He had come to embrace a conservatism that worked in concert with imperial powers and was distinctly hostile to

¹⁹⁹ *Daily Nation* (October 22, 1965), p. 1.

²⁰⁰ *Daily Nation* (October 22, 1965), p. 1. Michael Blundell still held onto this position more than ten years after Rhodesia's UDI. "What the Europeans in Rhodesia can't understand is that the end is inevitable ... the best thing they could do is to start making an integrated system work. All this constant manoeuvring is only delaying the inevitable and wasting time that they should be using to train people to do the million things that have to be done." See, *The Guardian* (August 9, 1977), p. 11.

²⁰¹ Kenyatta certainly hoped that his rule, and especially his close and warm relationships with the white settlers, would serve as a positive example to the Rhodesia settlers intent on rebelling against the Crown. See, MAC 71/8/62 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya: First Impressions.

radical politics, “uncompromising all out African nationalism,” socialism let alone Marxism. “Although Kenyatta’s thinking had been influenced by people like Marcus Garvey and Kwame Nkrumah during the Pan Africanism days in Manchester,” Ndegwa observed many years after Kenyatta’s death, “he did not see himself as having led a peasant revolution in the socialist sense. Neither did he visualize Kenya’s struggle for independence in the stages enunciated by Marxists and thus did not envision a take-over by peasants in Kenya. At no time did he try to play a peasant himself. His image was that of a patriarchal African leader and shepherd.”²⁰²

Peter Abrahams came to a similar conclusion when he visited Kenya in 1965. He had not been back to Kenya since 1952 when he had spent memorable days with Kenyatta on the eve of the Emergency. Now he was back in East Africa to write articles “for the American magazine, *Holiday*.” Peter Abrahams found it necessary to clarify in a newspaper interview that the character Lanwood in his novel *A Wreath for Udomo*, the “ageing politician out of touch with Africa,” did not in any way represent Kenyatta. “It becomes my duty,” Abrahams emphasized, “to make it publicly clear that Mr. Kenyatta was not the model for the character” Lanwood in the novel. While the novel had been inspired by “the Pan African movement and the personalities in that movement, it is a work of fiction, an exercise in the creative act of imagination.”²⁰³ Even after this clarification, Abrahams was not able to see Kenyatta. He had wanted to pay his “respects to an old friend” and in spite of promises to arrange for a meeting, he “did not see Kenyatta.”

Reflecting on this trip many years later, Abrahams concluded that, “the President had ceased to be my friend,” now he was hidden behind the frightening trappings of power: “whenever the President had to travel from his official residence to Parliament or to some other official function, the streets were cleared. Traffic came to a halt. Police motor-cycles patrolled the Presidential route. The Presidential limousine, led by an armed police car, flanked by motor-cycles, and followed by two or three more police cars, had to pass before traffic could move again.”²⁰⁴

²⁰²Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 341.

²⁰³*Daily Nation* (September 23, 1965), p. 5.

²⁰⁴Peter Abrahams, *The Black Experience in the 20th Century: An Autobiography and Meditation* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 123.

The former freedom fighter had become the new “big man,” the new boss. In Kenya, Abrahams noticed that there was already in place a disturbing “gulf between the leaders and the led.” This trend, by no means limited to Kenya, showed that, “somewhere along the road to freedom, the leaders of our struggles had become like those they had fought against. We had become like our enemies, cloaked in the trappings of our enemies—only, more glaringly so.”²⁰⁵

Although the British had been the architects of the policies that guided the Kenyatta government, they nonetheless remained concerned about some aspects of the local political consequences of these policies. Unemployment, landlessness, and general poverty were still major economic and political problems. Critics of the Kenyatta administration pointed to these glaring problems and then to the opulent lifestyle of the new governing elite. In one of his last dispatches from Nairobi before assuming his new position as the British Special Representative in East and Central Africa, MacDonald addressed some of these concerns. “In Left-Wing intellectual circles,” he observed, “the thought is prevalent that the Ministers in the present Government have become too prosperous, that they have looked after themselves very well and forgotten the well-being of the masses, and that those once zealous radical reformers are now a conservative bourgeoisie out of harmony with proper modern democratic notions.”²⁰⁶ MacDonald also informed London that many local critics of the administration, “think that President Kenyatta and his Ministerial confidantes are no longer so scrupulously non-aligned in international affairs as they should be from a truly African point of view.” These critics insisted that the Kenyatta government had quickly become “rather pro-Western, and that this is because” of what McDonald called “their sense of friendly gratitude towards Britain.” This made Kenyatta, the critics argued, “unquestioningly pro-British.”

McDonald was very concerned about the public image of the new elite in the government (and even business). The country’s “most influential Ministers and Civil Servants” had “grown not so much African-bourgeoisie as British bourgeoisie in their outlooks.” As examples,

²⁰⁵Peter Abrahams, *The Black Experience in the 20th Century: An Autobiography and Meditation*, p. 124.

²⁰⁶MAC 71/8/53 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya: The Political Prospect.

he pointed to “Gichuru’s polished Oxfordish accent, Mr. Njonjo’s immaculate Savile Row suits and faultless English manners, and Mr. Bruce McKenzie’s unashamedly white face framed in brown whiskers.” McDonald thought that that the public image of such individuals was “not convincingly racey of the African soil.”²⁰⁷ Still on this question, MacDonald was critical of Kenyatta for abandoning the “tribal African beaded cap which he used invariably to wear, and its replacement by a European trilby hat.” Whereas some of the reasons for rejecting the tribal hat were understandable since “it was a Luo style head gear,” still the trilby hat made him “look less like an African chief and more like an English squire—which opens him to another even more damaging slant of criticism.” To MacDonald, the abandonment of the “Luo style tribal hat” had been “one of the unfortunate psychological mistakes made by President Kenyatta.” McDonald was unable to see that these contradictions, which were worrisome to him, were in fact inevitable by-products of the political and economic system that he had been instrumental in setting up.

As he set out on yet another assignment in the service of a now dwindling Empire,²⁰⁸ McDonald remained pleased with what he had helped to establish in Kenya. The country, which was, “peaceful, united and self-proud,” had been able to achieve “a great deal—far much more than outside observers thought possible by a new African Government in the complicated circumstances of Kenya.” As expected, McDonald attributed this outcome to Kenyatta who remained “the Government’s greatest asset” with his “pleasing, earthy African character combined with his genius for leadership.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷MAC 71/8/53 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya: The Political Prospect.

²⁰⁸Harold Wilson appointed Malcolm MacDonald as the British Special Envoy to East and Central Africa in October 1965 with the specific responsibility of coordinating “British policies concerning the five independent countries in the region: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi and Zambia. Inevitably, however, his main task was to reassure the leaders of these countries that Britain was doing its utmost to end the Rhodesian rebellion.” See, Clyde Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald: Bringing an End to Empire* (Montreal & Kingston/London/Buffalo: McGill University Press, 1995), p. 405. According to Sanger, MacDonald disagreed with Wilson’s strategy but stayed on, “hoping for the day he would have some influence.” And so, MacDonald undertook years of endless talks with officials in Rhodesia and surrounding countries hoping for a breakthrough. None was forthcoming.

²⁰⁹MAC 71/8/54 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Kenya: The Political Prospect.

Still, Kenya was faced with serious economic problems that had the definite potential to destabilize the country and thus endanger British (and Western) interests. Without any substantial mineral resources, the economy was dependent on foreign aid, agriculture, tourism, and then regional trade with Tanzania and Uganda. Yet, cooperation “in trading, financial and related economic affairs between” Kenya and Tanzania and Uganda was at this period faced with troubling uncertainties, “especially between Kenya and Tanzania, who for various reasons are in frayed tempers with each other.” McDonald concluded that it was “difficult to feel any firm confidence that there is a genuine will among the three countries to co-operate, except on their own respective, mutually conflicting terms.” But Kenya needed the “retention and further strengthening of the East African common market” for “assured wider sales if its secondary industries are to expand” and also in order to be able to “offset the large deficit in its overseas trade by a substantial surplus in its trade with Uganda and Tanzania.”²¹⁰

There was also the matter of “population expansion,” increasing at the rate of 3.5% that was higher “than that at which the national economy is expanding.” MacDonald attributed this rapid increase in population to polygamy and then “improved medical services which stimulate births and postpone deaths.” Many of these young people left elementary schools, at the rate of 100,000 per year, “with no prospect of either paid employment or further education.” Here was a potential explosive social and political problem for Kenyatta’s government to address. For unless this multitude of young people “can be absorbed into more gainful occupations than subsistence farming—and the chances for that are not encouraging—they will pose for the Government a growing, restless problem of human dissatisfaction.”²¹¹ To be able to help Kenyatta’s government to respond to these economic uncertainties “in the present difficult African world,” McDonald urged for continued Western foreign aid, specifically, “the essential generous and prudently constructive help” from Britain “and other overseas friends.”

²¹⁰MAC 71/8/53 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonal Papers) Kenya: The Political Prospect.

²¹¹MAC 71/8/53 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonal Papers) Kenya: The Political Prospect.

Toward the End: Corruption, the Family, and Struggles for Succession

As early as 1965, there was already evidence of the new ruling elite “becoming such a conspicuously privileged class,” in the country. The wealth acquired by this class and their relatives was generally attributed to corruption. In subsequent analysis of post-*Uhuru* Kenya, many scholars and journalists (local and foreign) would argue that Kenyatta’s “regime was clouded by corruption.”¹ The British intelligence services spent a lot of time collecting evidence of instances of corruption in the country and conveying this information to London. In 1966, J.L. Pumphrey, the Acting British High Commissioner, submitted a confidential report to London on corruption in Kenya. “It is obvious,” he wrote, “that at the lower levels of the Administration, particularly in the provinces, there are possibilities of getting what you want, or of getting it more quickly, by greasing the appropriate palm. There are also,” he added, “deficiencies in financial discipline, which make such practices easier.”² Pumphrey noted that these widespread incidents of corruption had not yet reached the alarming levels of corruption in West Africa. Why so? “The difference is no doubt largely due to the very recent departure of the British Colonial Administration, which imposed high standards and did not tolerate much deviation from them.”

¹ Colin Legum, *Africa Since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 27.

² MAC 71/8/57 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Corruption in Kenya.

There was also the matter of British expatriate officers who continued to serve in various capacities in the Kenya government. Such officers, Pumphrey believed, contributed “a restraining influence.” Lastly, there was the “mission” influence, especially in education in East Africa which seemed “generally to be a more priggish and austere character than the West African.” Still, Pumphrey concluded that, “whatever the reason for their comparative integrity, there are signs that this low-level corruption is increasing; and that it may well be that within a year or two East Africa will catch up West Africa in this respect.”³

Corruption at the higher levels of the civil service, in the business community and even at the Cabinet level was, it turned out, very widespread with a lasting impact on the country’s social values and also on its political and economic institutions. There was what Pumphrey called, “some feathering of nests” by the ruling elite. This took

two separate though overlapping forms: receipt of consideration for services rendered, and straight malversation of public funds. Kenya boasts few African entrepreneurs as yet. But it is not difficult to name Ministers in Kenyatta’s Government who live at a higher standard, or acquire more property, than their salary, plus likely legitimate investment income, would seem to warrant. In addition, most Ministers have to subscribe fairly heavily to the maintenance of their “extended families”, to constituency projects, and probably to party funds. They could hardly manage this range of expenditure if they were not in receipt of some extra-curricular payments.⁴

Pumphrey then made the wrong inference that this corruption had not yet aroused discontent or anger among the general public. “It would be wrong to say,” he wrote,

that this situation is productive of widespread indignation. Outside the intelligentsia, who do comment increasingly, it seems to be accepted that Ministers, chairmen of corporations, &c., are important people drawing important salaries, who are able and entitled to live well: a correlation between their salaries and the probable cost of their establishments is not generally made.

³MAC 71/8/57(Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Corruption in Kenya.

⁴MAC 71/8/57(Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Corruption in Kenya.

He failed to see that indeed the struggle between the radical nationalists and the conservatives led by Kenyatta was a struggle over corruption and the system that facilitated it. It was, at the practical level, a struggle over how the ruling elite were “feathering their nests” at the expense of the vast majority of the population.

In the mid-1960s, the country was gripped by tales of two incidents that seemed to exemplify the existence of corruption at the higher levels of society. These were the scandals surrounding the purchase and distribution of maize during the drought and hunger in 1965 and then the intent to buy a Rolls Royce car for the Mayor of Nairobi.

The availability of imported American maize was hotly debated and discussed not only in the Parliament but also in several informal meetings across the country. The matter at hand was that the imported maize “was not reaching the parts of the country where it was really needed.” Linked to this, were persistent allegations of corruption including selling of the imported maize on the black market. In the Parliament, C.C. Makokha (Elgon, S.W.) called on the government to establish a Commission of Inquiry “immediately and backdated to June 1963” to look into “allegations of corruption in connection with the distribution of maize.” Most of the criticism for this national pain was leveled at Paul Ngei, Minister for Cooperatives and Marketing and also at the Maize Marketing Board. “Numerous complaints,” Makokha pointed out, “had been made about the small quantities of maize supplied to areas on permanent famine relief. Workers on farms in the Rift Valley had been unable to do work because they had no posho.”⁵ Provincial and District Commissioners “from outlying districts” had been forced to travel to Nairobi in search of maize “only to be told there was no maize available.” Makokha then accused Ngei of issuing misleading and incorrect statements on the maize situation in the country and also of personally benefiting from this national disaster by selling maize on the black market in a shop, Emma Stores, established by his wife in Machakos.⁶ These explosive charges were being made at a time of heightened political tensions in the country still in the grip of drought, widespread hunger, and escalating food prices. Most of the ordinary citizens depended on maize posho for their daily meal and so allegations about corruption in the handling of imported maize had political implications.

⁵ *Daily Nation* (November 10, 1965), p. 1.

⁶ *Daily Nation* (November 10, 1965), p. 1.

In yet another stormy session devoted to the maize issue, G.F. Oduya (Elgon West) strongly urged the government to establish a Commission of Inquiry “into the maize shortage ... because the House was convinced that allegations of bribery regarding maize are well founded.”⁷ Allegations were made of large sums of money having been deposited in the “bank accounts of some Ministers ... up to 90,000/= daily.” Again, there was pointed criticism of Ngei for failing to rectify the situation and also for personally benefitting from this difficult moment facing the country.

In November 1965, Kenyatta appointed a Commission of Inquiry to look into “the present methods of maize marketing and distribution, allegations of unfairness, inefficiency, corruption and black marketing and possible methods of improving distribution and marketing.”⁸ Pumphrey concluded that Kenyatta had been obliged to appoint this commission after the unrelenting outcry in the Parliament, but more importantly after “an outburst by Jack Block ... the Vice President of the Kenya National Farmers Union ... against the maldistribution of maize.” Jack Block, “a rich and able man” was politically well connected and Pumphrey inferred, knowingly, that he could not have moved forward without having taken “soundings in advance.”⁹ Jack Block was “furious at not being able to buy maize to feed his farm labour when he knew that the maize should have been there.” Kenyatta reshuffled his cabinet in December 1965 even before the Commission issued its report. Ngei was moved to the Ministry of Housing and Social Services away from the maize portfolio. In February 1966, Kenyatta issued a terse directive suspending Ngei from the Cabinet. There was no official explanation although it was “assumed that the reasons behind the move centered around the recent controversy on the maize shortage.”¹⁰

The report, issued in July 1966, was particularly condemnatory of the conduct of Ngei as a member of the Cabinet entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the maize matters in the country. Ngei was faulted in the report for gross irresponsibility and acting unwisely in, “accepting his wife as his own full time secretary paid by the Maize

⁷ *Daily Nation* (November 11, 1965), p. 1.

⁸ *Daily Nation* (November 18, 1965), p. 1.

⁹ MAC 71/8/57 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Corruption in Kenya.

¹⁰ *Daily Nation* (February 24, 1966), p. 1.

Marketing Board.” He had also “allowed his interests in his wife’s business to conflict with his duty.” As a result, the report noted, “Mr. Ngei could not now escape criticism for the results of his close connections with the business of Uhuru Millers, owned by his wife.”¹¹ Although the Commission “found no evidence of corruption in the legal sense,” there was nonetheless a lot of evidence of political interference in the functioning of the Maize Marketing Board and then “instances of unfairness and politicians taking advantage of their positions.”

Suspension from the Cabinet did not mark the end of Ngei’s long and complicated political career. He would re-emerge and get reappointed again by Kenyatta to the Cabinet. In December 1975 Kenyatta, through Njonjo, asked the Parliament to “change the law to allow Paul Ngei, his colleague in detention, to contest an up-coming by-election after he had been found by a court of law to have committed an election offence.”¹² Ndegwa’s explanation for this seeming endless preferential treatment accorded to Ngei was because he had saved Kenyatta from being “strangled by a fellow detainee Kariuki Chotatra in detention.” This could have been the case. The British, however, found a very practical political reason behind this rather complex linkage between Ngei and Kenyatta.

Throughout his eventful post-*Uhuru* political career, Ngei was seen by the British intelligence services as “notoriously corrupt and a complete opportunist.” These intelligence services also concluded that he was “inefficient as a Minister and as a businessman.” He was “ill-tempered and unbalanced,” violent and had numerous girl-friends.¹³ Ngei was also portrayed as “notoriously unreliable” and would easily “take money from any quarter” even from the Soviet Union “if this would solve his political and financial problems.”¹⁴ In spite of all of his “many corruptions and scandals” and other transgressions, Ngei had been kept in the Cabinet by Kenyatta in order to secure the loyalty of the many Akamba soldiers in the army. He owed “his Cabinet position to his leadership of the Kamba.” By 1965/1966, the Akamba still comprised “21% of the total force” in spite of concerted effort by Kenyatta to lower their overall dominance in the army. “While as a tribe their sympathies are

¹¹ *Daily Nation* (July 1, 1966), p. 1.

¹² Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 447.

¹³ FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

¹⁴ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

doubtful,” Edward Peck informed London, “their co-operation is deliberately ensured by Ngei’s inclusion in the Cabinet.”¹⁵ Ngei would not only remain in the Cabinet but would eventually assume the position of Deputy Leader of Government Business in the Parliament.

The decision by the City Council to buy an expensive and luxurious Rolls Royce car for Charles Rubia, the first African Mayor of Nairobi, generated a lot of coverage in the press. This decision was portrayed as wasteful and extravagant at a time when the country was struggling with effects of drought and resultant hunger. The *Daily Nation* under Githii, “launched a virulent campaign, including page-one editorials that demanded to know why he couldn’t use his recently bought Humber Super Snipe” car? The extensive coverage was good for business; “the *Nation’s* sales soared.”¹⁶ This matter was also debated with fury in the Parliament. The Minister for Local Government was asked, “to explain to the tax payers the reasons which had prompted” him to “allow the council to buy the car.” In response, Lawrence Sagini, the Minister for Local Government, said that, “he had sanctioned the City Council’s request after much pressure and a tug-of-war between him and the council.” This matter was now “in the hands of the President.”¹⁷ Soon after this debate in the Parliament, Kenyatta issued a directive stopping the City Council from buying the Rolls Royce car for Charles Rubia. “In consideration of the circumstances connected with this matter,” the brief Presidential directive stated, “His Excellency the President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta has stopped the delivery of the car to Kenya.”¹⁸

According to Pumphrey, the decision to buy the Rolls Royce as the official car for the Mayor of Nairobi was above all, “an error in judgment by an able and energetic but swollen-headed individual.” Charles Rubia, Pumphrey submitted to London, regarded “his office (at least while he occupies it) as a very close second in importance to that of the President,” and thus was eager not only to have the Rolls Royce car but

¹⁵MAC 71/8/84 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Tribalism in Kenya.

¹⁶Gerard Loughran, *Birth of a NATION: The Story of a Newspaper in Kenya*, p. 85.

¹⁷*Daily Nation* (February 4, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁸*Daily Nation* (February 10, 1966), p. 1.

also motor-cycle outriders too.¹⁹ Only Kenyatta's security detail had motor-cycle outriders in the country at this time. There were, therefore, political overtones in both the press coverage of this affair and then Kenyatta's subsequent intervention. "It is not inconceivable that in the case of the Rolls-Royce a campaign against the 'Council's decision' was planned or agreed in the State House as a way to cut Mr. Rubia down to size."²⁰ In its editorial, the *Daily Nation* thanked Kenyatta for his wise and opportune intervention in the matter. The decision to buy the Rolls Royce was seen by the *Daily Nation* as going counter to the stated intent of African Socialism by which the country was "determined to build by its labour, sweat and self-sacrifice, a society where every individual shall share the benefits of freedom." The meaning of all this, the *Daily Nation* insisted, is that, "all of us should acknowledge the principle of mutual social responsibility. Which means that each of us must pursue the values of our people, and those other values which they have imbibed." Most of its readers, the *Daily Nation* claimed, "think that it is wrong to pursue foreign values to the point of crudity."²¹

But which were these foreign values that the paper was so incensed about in regard to the Rolls Royce car? Was this an isolated incident of ostentation or was this in fact going on in several departments of the government under the direction of the new ruling elite? Subsequent debates in the Parliament on corruption easily showed that ostentation, conspicuous consumption, and misuse of public office for individual gain accelerated and remained unchecked throughout the remainder of Kenyatta's reign.

In May 1969, Martin Shikuku (Butere) and the Government Chief Whip introduced a critical motion in the Parliament by which he wanted the government "to enact a law requiring all Ministers, MPs and civil servants to declare their properties before and after Kenya became independent."²² Beyond this, Shikuku wanted all the affected people to "explain how they obtained such properties." This motion, Shikuku

¹⁹MAC 71/8/57 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Corruption in Kenya.

²⁰MAC 71/8/57 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Corruption in Kenya. Pumphrey added that in the case of the Rolls-Royce car, "the implicit charge was ostentation, not corruption."

²¹*Daily Nation* (February 10, 1966), p. 6.

²²*Daily Nation* (May 29, 1969), p. 1.

insisted, was in reality a response to public interest and discontent on this question of corruption. He wanted the country's leadership to come clean on this matter of national importance. "Is it a known fact," Shikuku asked, "that most of us (leaders) had very little in terms of wealth before we became leaders and, above all, before Kenya attained independence? What do we now see after this short period of Kenya becoming independent?" While acknowledging that the Constitution allowed for freedom of ownership of property, Shikuku thought that it "would be fair for people in high positions to tell the country how they acquired the wealth they had 'within this short period.'"²³ This was an unprecedented challenge to the ruling elite to prove to the Parliament and an increasingly restive public how they had quickly acquired their enormous wealth so soon after *Uhuru*. The ruling elite were being called upon "to open the books" on their wealth. Very few, if any, were interested in doing so.

Partly in response to Shikuku's motion and challenge, Njonjo rose to state that he did not think that the formation of a Commission of Inquiry into corruption was warranted. He dismissed calls for such a commission as unnecessary and instead "cautioned Members of the National Assembly to 'restrain themselves' in their speeches ... I am myself satisfied," Njonjo said, "that these matters are being dealt with satisfactorily. I do not think that a Commission of Inquiry is the best answer."²⁴ It was clear that the government would not endorse the formation of such a commission. Shikuku's motion, while thwarted, was seen as threatening to the ruling elite eager to conceal the untidy secrets behind their phenomenal wealth and privilege.

The British intelligence services regarded Shikuku as "a natural back-bencher, vocal and aggressive." He was seen as "a leading opponent of Government policies even while a member of the Government," (1969–1974). These intelligence services also noted that he "favoured Uganda's expulsion of the Asians and attacked foreign influences in Kenya." He could also be "very critical of Britain."²⁵ In 1972, when Amin decided to expel Asians from Uganda, Shikuku was "the only member of

²³ *Daily Nation* (May 29, 1969), p. 1.

²⁴ *Daily Nation* (May 29, 1969), p. 4.

²⁵ FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

the Kenya Government who came out openly in support” of Amin’s decision.²⁶ Shikuku believed that “Amin’s action was ‘not only timely but logical and practical.’” He would later be “heavily reprimanded” for these remarks, especially because they had caused so much anxiety in London. Still, the British intelligence services noted that Shikuku had, through most of his time in the Parliament, “attacked corruption, wealth and privilege and sought publicity as a spokesman of the poor.” In part because of premature greying of his hair, he looked “rather older than his age.” He had three wives and one of the wives, “Dolly worked for VOK” (Voice of Kenya). He had fifteen children “plus others by girlfriends,” and was a Roman Catholic.²⁷

Shikuku had been consistent in drawing attention to the expansion of corruption in the country even when his colleagues in the Parliament were reluctant to join him in this crusade against misuse of public office for personal gain. Audacious and persistent, he came to regard himself over time as “president of the poor” in the country. As a result, he was “a nuisance to most senior members of the Government in which he served as an Assistant Minister in the Office of the Vice President.” He was seen as “a demagogue and rabble rouser to most Asians and expatriates” and as “irresponsibly irreverent to senior members of the Civil Service, especially to the administrators.”²⁸

Undeterred by previous setbacks, Shikuku tried, and succeeded, in May 1975, in moving in the Parliament a motion “to set up a Select Committee to probe corruption in Kenya.” This was a major victory for him personally but also for many political activists in the country who had watched in frustration, the escalation in the level of corruption and also the vast amount of wealth amassed by the ruling elite. It should be mentioned that this victory in setting up the Select Committee was part of the effort by the Parliament to reassert itself and its authority after many years of routinely acceding to directives from Kenyatta’s government. As it happened, this “declaration of independence” on the part of the Parliament would be short lived for by the end of 1976 and beyond, Kenyatta’s government moved quickly to brutally reassert its authority over the Parliament.

²⁶ *The Weekly Review* (May 12, 1975), p. 9.

²⁷ FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

²⁸ *The Weekly Review* (May 12, 1975), p. 8.

The Committee faced enormous hurdles. First, there was the matter of its charge. Was its charge general or specific? Was it to look into specific accounts of individuals or merely focus onto general trends on corruption in the country? “A good many people in the Civil Service and in private business would be disturbed, and justifiably so,” wrote *The Weekly Review*, “if the Committee were to spend all its time delving into personal accounts of individuals to determine what they own and how they acquired it.”²⁹ But hadn’t this been one of the compelling reasons behind the establishment of the Select Committee? What then was to be the main focus of the Select Committee? According to *The Weekly Review*, “the work of the Committee is not to find out what individuals own or how they came to own it; the task is more general; to determine the general causes of the malaise of corruption which afflicts Kenya today and to try and prescribe a reasonable cure.”³⁰ Severe limitations on its scope rendered the Committee ineffective even before it embarked on its daunting task. At the heart of corruption lay the question of how the elite had acquired their immense wealth, usually by exploiting their public offices for personal gain. It was difficult to see how the work of this Committee could be regarded as serious without delving into this aspect of the problem at hand.

Then there was the question of membership of the Committee. There were some Members of Parliament unhappy with the fact that Shikuku, a Luyia from Kakamega District, was the Chair of the Committee, especially given his past well-publicized positions on this matter. There was a call for an expanded Committee with “greater tribal representation ... a stipulation which would require an unwieldy Committee in order to satisfy every tribal group in the country.” Other Members wanted to “rescind the original motion setting up the Corruption, a move which would effectively kill the Committee for the foreseeable future.”³¹ In his editorial comment, Ng’weno suggested that it would be best for the Parliament to set up

²⁹ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 5.

³⁰ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 5.

³¹ Hilary Ng’weno, “Cold Feet Over Corruption,” *The Weekly Review*, (June 9, 1975), p. 3.

a permanent-machinery aimed at curbing corruption. It could be a permanent commission of enquiry, an ombudsman or special unit within the Criminal Investigations Department or any other kind of machinery provided that it should command nationwide support and should be independent of all governmental structures and/or personalities which or may themselves be the subject of investigations.

More importantly, such machinery, “should have the necessary powers to punish or cause to be punished all those proved to be involved in corruption. There can be no doubt,” Ng’weno concluded, “that something along these lines is overdue in Kenya.”³²

The unity that had propelled the Parliament into setting up the Select Committee soon evaporated, the result of ethnic considerations. There was also a perceived need to defend the class interests of many Members of the Parliament who feared that they too, would be adversely affected by the work of the Committee. Corruption could be talked about in general terms. This was politically most tolerable, even desirable. It became a most problematic issue when it involved mentioning names, cash transactions, probing into the nature of property acquisition and then layers of untidy deals struck in order to secure business, farms, buildings, loans, cars, and shares in companies.

Though publicly every MP says it is time Kenya got rid of corruption, privately there is concern that a free-wheeling probe into corruption could unearth too many skeletons. Fear has been expressed by Ngei that a Committee of inquiry into corruption composed of politicians could turn into a weapon with which Committee members could hound their political enemies.³³

The Select Committee was in the end not able to function. Almost one month after its formation, the Committee was killed by the Parliament through “a motion tabled by Mr. Jacob Mwongo (Nyambene South). The Committee, Mwongo insisted, was “not nationally representative enough,” this was the old question of ethnic representation on the Committee. The main reason however was, “his view that a Select Committee to probe corruption should be given specific terms of

³²Hilary Ng’weno, “Cold Feet Over Corruption,” p. 3.

³³*The Weekly Review* (June 2, 1975), p. 17.

reference and not be allowed to conduct a free-wheeling investigation that might unearth awkward skeletons in various places.”³⁴

Members of Parliament were now worried about skeletons in their own closets, for it must be remembered that they too, had taken advantage of their positions to acquire property. Further, like Fanon said, “there exists inside the regime, however, an inequality in the acquisition of wealth and monopolization. Some have a double source of income and demonstrate that they are specialized in opportunism.”³⁵ By 1975, there were clear distinctions in wealth acquired among Members of the Parliament. The rich Members now worried that the Committee would, through its findings, expose these hidden details to the country. The fear was that “the Committee could turn into a witch hunt by the less wealthy Members of Parliament against their wealthier colleagues.”³⁶

A majority of Members of the Select Committee willingly submitted to *The Weekly Review* details of their property and how they had acquired such property, since they felt they had nothing to hide. A close look at these details shows how the inherited economic system was rigged in favor of the ruling elite. This was true even when technically it did not involve corruption. Thus, for example, Taita Arap Towett, Minister for Housing and Social Services had “7 acres of land at Kericho,” “60 acres of land at Sotik,” and then “25 acres of land in Langata, Nairobi.” He had acquired most of these properties through loans extended to him by the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC). The AFC, for example, “put up 60,000/= while Towett’s bankers provided an overdraft to cover the necessary 20% deposit on the property.” He had bought the land in Langata “through the Housing Finance Corporation (HFC).”³⁷ For recurrent family expenses, Towett depended “entirely on his parliamentary salary and Ministry allowances.” Shariff Nassir, another Committee Member, owned very little property. He owned no house. Still, he was a rich man. As *The Weekly Review* reported, “Nassir may own nothing himself, but his father, Sharif Abdulla Taib, owns a great deal at the coast and sometimes it is difficult when talking to Nassir to decide whether he himself does not consider part of his father’s wealth as

³⁴ *The Weekly Review* (June 30, 1975,) p. 11.

³⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 171.

³⁶ *The Weekly Review* (May 19, 1975), p. 13.

³⁷ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 6.

his own.” The family property included “land holdings which the family has at the coast. In Mombasa, Nassir’s father owns more than 60 houses. He also owns two coconut farms in Mombasa district. In Malindi he owns a plot of land and four separate houses and in his home town, Lamu, he owns three houses, a beach plot and two coconut farms.”³⁸

Omolo Okero, the other Cabinet Minister on the Committee, had been “able to acquire a few properties with the help of financing institutions.” Thus, he had bought a house in Karen, Nairobi, “for £4,000 through a bank loan and some of his own savings.” And then through a Kisumu Municipality “loan scheme, Okero acquired a house in 1972 and in 1973 was assisted by his bank and the Housing Finance Company of Kenya to acquire two houses in Nairobi (one of them he now lives in) at a cost of £12,900 and £15,000 respectively.” Although he owned no farms, he had a co-owner of an import/export business now specializing in scientific equipment.³⁹ He also owned two plots of land in Kisumu and Yala. Martin Shikuku, Chair of the Committee, owned a house in Mombasa, acquired at “a cost of Shs.165,000/= with financing coming from the Housing Finance Company of Kenya. Shikuku put down Shs.15,000/= as deposit. Later he transferred the mortgage to his bank to which he currently pays Shs.3,000/= per month all of which comes from rental on the house.”⁴⁰ Shikuku also owned 100 acres of land “in Kiminini settlement scheme near Kitale,” which he bought in 1968. For this land, he paid a deposit of 3,000/= and then “borrowed 80,000/= from his bank to pay off the government and to initiate developments on the farm on which he grows maize and raises cattle.” Shikuku was also a co-owner of printing firm in Nairobi. This business was, however, “not at a stage where we are reaping any benefits yet.” His other major asset was “1,000 shares in East African Breweries.”⁴¹

Isaac Wachira also a member of the Committee, and a self-confessed businessman, was the Chairman of City Security Guards Ltd.; “the first African owned security organisation in the country.” By 1975, City Security Guards, Ltd. had become “the biggest African owned security guard organisation in Kenya” employing “over 400 guards.” He owned

³⁸ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 7.

³⁹ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 8.

⁴⁰ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 10.

⁴¹ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 10.

a house in Nairobi, “which he bought a few months ago for £10,000, with financing from the East African Building Society. To put down the necessary 20,000/= deposit, Wachira obtained a loan from his company and took a two months’ advance on his salary from Parliament.” He also owned a car financed through “arrangements made possible by the National Assembly.”⁴² Wafula Wabuge, another member of the Committee, was a rich large-scale farmer. He owned two farms in the Kitale area “with a total acreage of about 2,200. The first of the farms he bought in 1965 with a loan from the Agricultural Finance Corporation, while the second was purchased through a loan from his bank in 1968. Both farms together cost Wabuge just over 413,000/=. On the first one he put down a deposit of 20% and on the latter a deposit of 25% and currently pays the financing agents approximately Shs.7,750 per month in loan payments on the two farms.” His average monthly expenditure on the two farms was Shs.12,000/=: “and in a good year clears a net income of about Shs.100,000/=”⁴³

J.K. Muregi owned 40 acres in the Nyandarua settlement scheme. He had been able to build a house “from savings from the farm” at the cost of Shs.7,000/=. He paid a monthly installment of Shs. 365 to the government for the farm purchase. He also owned a Volvo 144S “purchased on becoming an MP.” Besides this, Muregi was a co-owner of “a petrol station on Latema road in Nairobi ... he and his partners were allocated the petrol station following a quit order being served on previous non-citizen owner.”⁴⁴ Danson Mbole, on the other hand, owned Homecraft (K) Ltd. He had invested about Shs. 60,000/= in the company which dealt “in tourist curios and trophies as well as in import and export business.” He also owned a house in Machakos “which he financed and built years ago, and another at Ngei Estate in Nairobi which he purchased through the Housing Finance Company of Kenya by putting down a deposit of 10,000/=” His monthly mortgage payments were about 1,000/=. Mbole also owned two undeveloped plots of land in Machakos “worth approximately 15,000/=” For his recurrent expenditures, he relied on his salary as an MP together with his wife’s salary of

⁴² *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 9.

⁴³ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 11.

⁴⁴ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 6.

Shs.1,200/= as a teacher.⁴⁵ Kassim Mwamzandi from Kwale East, Coast Province, owned a sizeable amount of land and three houses which he said he acquired through savings from his Parliamentary salary.⁴⁶ Each of the houses had cost him about Shs.15,000/=. Mwamzandi also owned “three farms of approximately 30 acres each on traditional clan land in Kwale,” and then a 2-year-old “Datsun 1600 which he acquired through the National Assembly car loan.” This loan scheme for MPs was “operated through the National Bank of Kenya.” Ahmed Fayo from Isiolo North was in 1975, “one of the youngest MPs in the National Assembly.” His property holding included a house, which, “he built while still working for the government. It cost about 10,000/= to put up, most of the money coming from the sale of his father’s cattle.” Fayo was also involved in a fairly lucrative family run livestock business which brought in “‘quite a good sum’ annually, but like most people in the North-Eastern Region he owns no great tracts of land or farms.”⁴⁷

The two members of the Committee with the least amount of property were Chelagat Mutai and Sheikh Aden. Mutai was the only woman on this Committee. Her only property was “a car, a Peugeot 504 which she bought after her election victory ... through the National Assembly car loan.”⁴⁸ She paid “a monthly installment of Shs.600/= plus 400/= insurance.” Mutai had been a student leader at the University of Nairobi. Sheikh Aden from Mandera East owned “no land or house anywhere.” His major property was a Land Rover purchased “through finance from the National Bank of Kenya and which helps him commute between Parliament and Nairobi and the vast arid areas of his constituency in the North-Eastern region.” Aden’s explanation for lack of ownership of property was that it was due to the nomadic lifestyle of his people in the North-Eastern Province. As a result, “loans from such financing agencies as the Agricultural Finance Corporation, or the Agricultural Development Corporation are hard to come by in the area because there has been little surveying done and thus the process of issuing title deeds is not easy.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 10.

⁴⁶ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975,) p. 11.

⁴⁷ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 12.

⁴⁸ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 9.

⁴⁹ *The Weekly Review* (May 26, 1975), p. 12.

Shikuku's committee on corruption was based on the premise that indeed social justice could be attained within the inherited system if it were made to function fairly without favoritism of any kind, including ethnic favoritism. By 1975, the Parliament had few members still holding onto ideological positions once espoused by Odinga and the radical nationalists. Thus, there was no discussion in the Parliament about fundamentally restructuring the inherited system as part of the drive against corruption. What was needed was to make it function efficiently and fairly and if this occurred there would be social justice and prosperity for all. But was this possible? What was the basis of this optimism in the ability of the inherited system being able to deliver social justice and national prosperity for the majority of the Kenyans? Post-*Uhuru* experience across Africa did not provide much reassurance on the ability of inherited institutions being able to usher in economic independence, social justice, and national prosperity. Instead what was painfully apparent was that, "inherited economic institutions in many countries do not have the capacity to lead to sustained growth and development. They were established to exploit and not develop these countries."⁵⁰

In Kenya, the government's economic policy was based entirely on defending the critical value of the inherited economic and social system, and especially the indispensability of European mixed farms. The ruling elite, who included Members of Parliament, fervently believed that these farms and the settler farmers were indispensable to the country's economic welfare and prosperity. They had been, as Colin Leys put it, "conditioned to believe it."⁵¹ Beyond this, however, was the fact that most of the ruling elite "had learned to aspire" to the lifestyle represented by the settler farmers. They wanted to lead that life-style: gentleman farmers surveying their expansive estates as laborers worked in the hot sun. The ruling elite had, therefore, a vested interest in maintaining the status quo intact. The aspiration was to attain the life-style of the departing white colonial masters and the settler farmers. There was hence a congruity of interests between the settler farmers and the ruling elite. "Acceptance of the myth of the importance of large scale mixed farming entailed acceptance of the entire system of monopoly, of which it was the pin-

⁵⁰W.O. Maloba, "Decolonization: A Theoretical Perspective," p. 13.

⁵¹Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism 1964-1971* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 37.

nacle. Virtually all Europeans and most educated Africans looked on it as natural.”⁵²

The entire thrust of Kenya’s post-*Uhuru* political economy was to make it possible for the ruling elite to attain as much property as possible while leaving the inherited system undisturbed. “With government assistance,” Robert Maxon pointed out,

it was possible, for example, to buy large farms and to obtain exclusive wholesale licenses and extensive credit. African businessmen would, from the middle of the 1960s, receive preference in trade and transport licensing, including the opportunity to operate shops in the main districts of the largest cities. This resulted in many petty bourgeoisie being able to significantly enhance their class position through the accumulation of greater resources.⁵³

This was evident in the allocation of land in the settlement schemes. In 1964, at the height of the ideological struggle within the KANU, the government shifted its policy in the allocation of land in the settlement schemes. This change in policy significantly increased advantages for the ruling elite. J.H. Angaine, Minister of Settlement, announced “the Government decision to reserve the former European houses along with 100 acres for a single settlement plot. The ‘Z’ plots as they were known were used not only to prevent the destruction of the houses and to reward high level party faithful, but also as a means of providing leadership in the schemes. Quite consciously the plots were reserved for the political leadership. Besides the clear “political gravy” involved in distributing the land, planners hoped the Z “plots would secure a commitment by influential people to the settlement schemes.”⁵⁴ The beneficiaries of this official manipulation of the allocation of land in the settlement schemes included Members of Parliament, senior civil servants and even Cabinet Ministers. These actions, Wasserman correctly noted, were “motivated by a desire to preserve the large-scale economy and

⁵² Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, p. 38.

⁵³ Robert Maxon, “Social and Cultural Changes,” in B.A. Ogot, and Ochieng W.R., eds., *Decolonization & Independence in Kenya, 1940–1993* (London: James Currey Ltd.; Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995), p. 120.

⁵⁴ Gary Wasserman, *Politics of Decolonization: Kenya Europeans and the Land Issue 1960–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 155.

to reward politically important elements in the government.” The loud political intention was to lure as many political leaders and senior civil servants as possible from the sphere of radical nationalists and their advocacy of nationalization of land. Acquisition of the ‘Z’ plots made one a member of the landed gentry and thus unlikely to endorse any radical solutions to the land question in the country.

This rapid accumulation of property was not due to personal effort or savings over a period in a bank account. Status, the consequence of holding an elevated elected or appointed position, opened doors to wealth and power. Status and then power enabled the ruling elite to accumulate property with government assistance at a rate and volume that was utterly unavailable to the majority of the Kenyans. Individual effort alone, however dogged, was not enough to ensure access to wealth and power.

There was hence a critical confluence of interests between the ruling elite and international imperialism whose business interests remained in the country. The “blending of government and commerce” in the country was expanded through the several Africanization programs in the civil service and industry. The Africanization programs, which were an inevitable consequence of *Uhuru*, had been officially conceived as part of a slew of “measures for controlling the power of foreign capital.” Yet as events later demonstrated, these measures only “worked primarily to identify the government and the higher civil service more closely with operations, interests and values of foreign capital. The results were monopoly profits, high rates of surplus transfer, low wages in national income backed by tight control over the trade unions.”⁵⁵

This identification with interests of foreign capital, which had commenced after 1963, was infinitely expanded as a result of the recommendations emanating from the Ndegwa Commission of 1971. Ndegwa was a “former head of the civil service and for many years Governor of the Central bank.” In 1971, he chaired a year-long commission (task force) that looked into Public Service Structure and Remuneration. The Commission

concluded that to maintain civil servants’ living standards and motivation at a time when many bright Kenyans were going into the better-paid private sector, they should be permitted to engage in business, provided their

⁵⁵Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, p. 147.

business was not similar to their work responsibilities—thus an official in the housing department should not be involved with a house-building company. This precaution was widely ignored.⁵⁶

How did the Ndegwa Commission lead to a phenomenal expansion in corruption? First, the senior civil servants came to pay more attention to their business interests than their official duties. Some were rarely in their offices. And so “personal business soon took precedence over public duty and the ‘coat on the chair’ made its appearance as a signal to colleagues: the bureaucrat would hang his coat over the back of his office chair and go off to attend to private business.”⁵⁷ Rarely, if ever, were such senior civil servants reprimanded for such misuse of public office for personal business. Second, senior civil servants eagerly exploited their offices to secure lucrative deals with local and international businesses. “Overnight,” Gatabaki observed in 1975, “Government offices became ‘official’ quarters for commercial transactions and heavy private deals. Government vehicles became means of private interests. Government ‘stamps’ and licenses became commercialized. A Government job,” Gatabaki lamented, “became one of numerous private engagements. Overnight, the Civil Service became the most lucrative employer. Massive corruption had finally crept with devastating impact into one of the most prestigious of Civil Services in Africa.”⁵⁸

As Kenya became an “aggressively capitalist society,” multinational corporations courted senior civil servants and politicians to facilitate their business dealings in the country. Senior civil servants had “better access to strategic information and” were “likely to get important documents with least delay, costs or fuss.” They “made things happen.” As an increasing number of multinational corporations arrived in Kenya to do business, “many Kenyans, including ministers and senior civil servants were offered directorships by companies under pressure from Africanisation.” The net result was an entrenchment of corruption in the country.⁵⁹

Effectively, the ruling elite had become the new collaborators, the modern facilitators of imperialism and its multiple demands. The constant

⁵⁶Gerard Loughran, *Birth of a NATION: The Story of a Newspaper in Kenya*, p. 88.

⁵⁷Gerard Loughran, *Birth of a NATION: The Story of a Newspaper in Kenya*, p. 88.

⁵⁸N. Gatabaki, “Civil Service Corruption,” *The Weekly Review* (May 5, 1975), p. 9.

⁵⁹Gerard Loughran, *Birth of a NATION: The Story of a Newspaper in Kenya*, p. 88.

objective of these multinational corporations was of course extraction of profit, the result of exploitative arrangements made possible through commercial deals negotiated with the ruling elite. At no point did these multinational corporations intend to be the engines of Kenya's national economic development. "Poor countries," Jenny Rebecca Kehl has recently observed, "cannot rely on the altruistic intentions of foreign investment. Most multinational corporations are more highly organized and have more money than the countries in which they invest. This gives them leverage to negotiate lucrative, and often exploitative, deals with fledgling governments in poor countries."⁶⁰

The institutionalization of massive corruption in the country was, without doubt, aided by the willingness and ability of Western multinational corporations to engage in bribery and other payoffs to the ruling elite on a regular basis. Bribery of the ruling elite was accounted for in the expenditure of many corporations in their overseas business operations. In 1975, the *New York Times* reported that, "American companies doing business abroad" were "spending hundreds of millions of dollars each year for agents' fees, commissions and outright payoffs to foreign officials." The payments ranged "from \$5 bribes for customs agents and other minor officials to multi-million-dollar rake-offs on defense contracts. Sometimes even heads of state are involved."⁶¹ Indeed, bribery, the "practice of funneling cash into the hands of government officials," had a long history. US corporations had long employed it in their operations overseas, and "some such payments are officially sanctioned by the United States Government." It was difficult for these corporations to be dissuaded from engaging in massive bribery for after all, it "got things done" and further "it was not a violation of the United States law for an American corporation to bribe foreign officials. Such action may be illegal in the host country, but bribery laws are seldom enforced in many parts of the world."⁶²

A combination of proceeds from bribery from multinational corporations and local business, and then exploiting their offices to gain access to lucrative business deals made many senior civil servants and prominent politicians very wealthy in a relatively short period of time. "The speed

⁶⁰Jenny Rebecca Kehl, *Foreign Investment and Domestic Development*, p. 2.

⁶¹*New York Times* (May 5, 1975), p. 65.

⁶²*New York Times* (May 5, 1975), p. 65.

with which civil servants have penetrated into the commercial, industrial, and the agricultural aspects of the country's economy within the last four years," Gatabaki wrote, "can be compared only to that of lightning. Today, the bulk of the retail and wholesale trade, minuscule as well as giant distribution networks, hotel and real estate ownership, industrial and transportation control, in the hands of Kenya Africans, is substantially owned and manned by civil servants."⁶³

What was rarely considered were the effects of all this corruption and bribery on the country's efforts toward sustained development and then the quest for social justice even as promulgated in *Session Paper, No. 10: African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*. It is worth remembering that by the mid-1970s, there were few official references to this document in public discourse. And so,

by the end of the Kenyatta presidency, it was not uncommon to find high-ranking civil servants, as well as government ministers, owning commercial and industrial enterprises, serving [on] company boards of directors and owning urban and rural property. Without doubt, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, running the government and playing an influential economic role, emerged as one of the most influential fractions of the African middle class during the first decade and half after independence.⁶⁴

Yet by engaging in this insatiable avarice, "scandalous enrichment, speedy and pitiless," to the detriment of the country's development and social justice, did the ruling elite in fact commit what Fanon identified as "the unutterable treason" of the leaders?⁶⁵ Amilcar Cabral dismissed the value of the majority of the ruling elite in post-*Uhuru* Africa. They wanted to rule "so that they can exploit their own people." They wanted access to wealth and had no desire to lead "a people's struggle ... based on the aspirations, dreams, the desire for justice and progress of the people themselves and not ... the aspirations, dreams or ambitions of half a dozen persons, or a group of persons who are in contradiction with the

⁶³N. Gatabaki, "Civil Service Corruption," p. 9.

⁶⁴Robert Maxon, "Social and Cultural Changes," p. 120.

⁶⁵Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 167.

actual interests of their people.”⁶⁶ The ruling elite were not only vain and selfish, but they were also absolutely beholden to the dictates of international imperialism. They wanted

to have all the diamonds, all the gold, all those things in one’s hand, to do as one pleases, to live well, to have all the women one wants in Africa or in Europe. It is for the sake of touring Europe being received as presidents, wearing expensive clothes—a morning coat or even great bubus to pretend that they are Africans. All lies, they are not Africans at all. They are, [Cabral insisted], lackeys or lapdogs of the whites.⁶⁷

Any credible discussion on the issue of massive corruption in post-*Uhuru* Kenya, must consider the role played by Kenyatta and his family. This undertaking has the added value of enriching, and even complicating, the analysis of what quickly became one of Kenya’s most intractable problems. Under Moi’s presidency, corruption reached such unprecedented levels that Kenya became known as “*nchi ya kitu ndogo*”: land of the ‘little something,’ homeland of the bribe.”⁶⁸ The roots of this problem, as already indicated, were firmly planted in Kenyatta’s presidency.

There was hardly any large-scale local public attention drawn to the wealth acquired by Kenyatta and his multi-layered family, during his presidency. The Press, which remained very close and partial to the ruling elite, and specifically to Kenyatta rarely, if ever, publicized property acquisition by Kenyatta and his family. This lack of information on particular details spawned vibrant rumor-mongering on these issues. These rumors peddled bits of information gleaned from local and international sources that, inevitably, got distorted as they were relayed from one individual to another. It was nonetheless undeniable that Kenyatta and his family had, since 1963, acquired a substantial amount of property, making them very wealthy. “This enormous wealth of the Kenyatta family ... remained 30 years after his death.”⁶⁹ What was never studied locally during Kenyatta’s presidency,

⁶⁶Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), p. 75.

⁶⁷Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p. 62.

⁶⁸Michela Wrong, *It’s Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle-Blower* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), p. 2.

⁶⁹Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 108. For more details on this issue and its linkage to Uhuru Kenyatta, see, “In the Kenyan Cauldron,” by Joshua Hammer, *New York Review of Books* (May 9, 2013), pp. 24–26.

let alone publicized, was how he and his family came to acquire so much property in a relatively short period of time. As subsequent studies came to show, much of that wealth derived from Kenyatta's exercise of his power as President, to acquire

cars, land and property, much of it by unclear means ... By 1965, the Kenyatta family was buying numerous settler farms as they came on the market and using Kenyatta's position to excise and allocate government forest in Kiambu to themselves. His fourth and final wife, "Mama" Ngina, the daughter of Kikuyu chief Muhoho, was a particular beneficiary of this largesse.⁷⁰

The involvement of Kenyatta and his family in corruption in the country was well known to the British intelligence services. The prevailing conclusion was that Kenyatta had used the powers of his office to facilitate the hurried acquisition of wealth by his family, relatives, and very close friends. "The use of his Presidential powers and aura, by him and others, to assist and protect his greedy relations and cronies," the British High Commissioner informed London, "contributed to the growth of corruption and decline of administrative standards."⁷¹ These intelligence services further noted that Kenyatta had "helped his family and associates to acquire wealth by corruption and the abuse of power." This fact was, by 1977, "increasingly resented." A few of the properties acquired by Kenyatta included "large estates in the Rift Valley which he" farmed "for the most part at public expense."⁷² In October 1975, the *New York Times* published an article pointing out that Kenyatta's political image had been tarnished in recent years as a result of "abuses of power, by piling up a growing fortune and by moving to stifle the development of a freer society in this East African nation." Many Kenyans had also been disturbed by the fact that Kenyatta had "neither restrained nor disciplined his family and his closest associates in their amassing of wealth, much of it through evasions of law and the exploitation of such national resources as wildlife and forests."⁷³ After Kenyatta's death, several publications commented on his involvement in massive corruption in the

⁷⁰Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 108.

⁷¹FCO 2556 (London: National Archives) Annual Review for Kenya, 1978.

⁷²FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

⁷³*New York Times* (October 17, 1975), p. 73.

country and how this would be part of his legacy. In September 1978, *Newsweek* concluded that, “a major part of Kenyatta’s legacy is ‘The Family,’ headed by Mama Ngina, one of his three surviving wives.” Other prominent members of “The Family” included Margaret Kenyatta and Peter Kenyatta. Collectively, the *Newsweek* stated, “The Family” was “widely unpopular for the wealth and power it has acquired through unabashed nepotism. Reputedly the wealthiest woman in Kenya, Mama Ngina owns vast estates, and members of her family sit on boards of most big companies.”⁷⁴

In August 1975, *The Sunday Times* of London published a series of searing articles on the Kenyatta family’s involvement in corruption in the country. These articles also provided hitherto unknown details on how in fact the family had relied on Kenyatta’s presidential powers to circumvent, when necessary, any legal or administrative obstacles in its drive to acquire property. These unwelcome explosive charges exposed the unsavory details behind the fortune amassed with singular determination since 1963. In his articles in *The Sunday Times*, John Barry mentioned that, “the foundation of” Mama Ngina’s extensive fortune “was laid on May 12, 1967, with a partnership with a wealthy Greek land owner called Criticos.” Her interests would “later range over coffee and sisal plantations, ranches, office blocks, gem stones and ivory.”⁷⁵

The critical starting point of the family’s aggressive pursuit of wealth came in 1967. Why now, why this period? Part of the explanation lies in the delicate matter of Kenyatta’s health. He had always had health problems even while he was in prison and detention. This factor together with his advanced age became a pressing family issue after he suffered his “first stroke or thrombosis in mid-1966.”⁷⁶ Yet as Ndegwa tells us, this serious health matter was “hidden to the public ... of the ministers only Koinange, Njonjo and Gichuru visited him” while he recuperated in Mombasa under the care of Dr. Njoroge Mungai, his cousin, cabinet minister, and personal physician.⁷⁷

Kenyatta was never the same after this initial stroke. The family knew and noticed immediately that after this initial stroke he “never

⁷⁴ *Newsweek* (September 4th, 1978) p. 39.

⁷⁵ *The Sunday Times* (August 17, 1975) p. 5.

⁷⁶ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 164.

⁷⁷ Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 280.

wholly recovered the energy and stamina of his robust past.” There was the added fact that Kenyatta became very sensitive about his health, there was to be no adverse publicity about his “ailing heart” nor constant “bouts of gout,” not even his failing eye sight as he resisted “to heed advice to wear reading glasses in public,”⁷⁸ until it became inevitable. After his recovery from the stroke Kenyatta returned to Nairobi from Mombasa and mocked any reports that he was ill and therefore unfit to rule. He appeared robust and joked about fighting any-one who doubted his physical strength. “If any of you doubt my strength and fitness, come up here now,” Kenyatta thundered from the platform, “and fight me ... then you can all see who will be knocked down.”⁷⁹ On several occasions after this, he continued to joke about his age and health, urging those “who were bothered by his age to confirm his good health with the First Lady Mama Ngina.” In spite of such bravado, it was clear to the family and the senior aides who surrounded and protected him from public scrutiny that the “Head of State was weak, frail and faint ... it was a struggle through and through. He perpetually walked on the edge of a hazard from which he would emerge—once after a long while—with a thunderous roar only to fall sick after some public event.”⁸⁰ The British intelligence services were aware of Kenyatta’s weakened state after the 1966 stroke. These intelligence services also knew that Kenyatta had “a number of strokes or heart attacks” in 1977 and “his health has noticeably deteriorated.”⁸¹

These details about Kenyatta’s decline in health after 1966 provide a crucial backdrop to the family’s apparent aggressive drive to accumulate as much wealth as possible in a relatively short period of time. The family, more than most, was aware of the limited window of opportunity ahead of them for amassing wealth under the powerful protection of Kenyatta. There was a practical motivation for acting when they did, when they could still count on Kenyatta’s Presidential powers to open doors and also make it possible to gain access to top choice properties and negotiate favorable deals. Even in his weakened state, there was hardly anyone in the country able or willing to deny Kenyatta access to

⁷⁸Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 424.

⁷⁹*New York Times* (September 14, 1966), p. 11.

⁸⁰Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles: My Story*, p. 414.

⁸¹FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

any property that he or his family wished to possess. It is the incessant use of “his Presidential powers and aura, by him and others,” especially in the period after 1967, that facilitated (and fueled) the family’s unwavering focus on accumulating as much property as possible in a short period of time. John Barry determined that “any ruling family will amass wealth. It is one of the perks of the job.” In Kenya, however, Mama Ngina had “used such drive and ruthlessness to exploit her position to become very rich very quickly that, in doing so, she” had “endangered the stability of her husband’s regime.”⁸²

John Barry divided Kenyatta’s family into three parts: the off-spring of his aunt (Nge’the Njoroge, Jemima Gecaga, Njoroge Mungai, and Nyoike Njoroge plus Udi Gecaga, by marriage to Jane, Kenyatta’s daughter). The second branch were siblings of his brother James Muigai (Ngengi Muigai and Beth Mugo). The third and main branch was Kenyatta’s nuclear family. He had three wives (still living): Grace Wahu, Grace Edna Clarke, and Mama Ngina. His children were: Peter Muigai Kenyatta, Margaret Kenyatta, Peter Magana Kenyatta, Jane Kenyatta, Wambui Kenyatta, Uhuru Kenyatta, Nyokabi Kenyatta, and Muhoho Kenyatta. To this large family must be added relatives of close aides and long-standing friends and political allies, all who flourished under Kenyatta’s powerful cover.

Some of the most prominent assets acquired by the family included the local and lucrative subsidiary of the London-based Inchcape group, which was “one of the two biggest trading concerns in East Africa, the lineal descendant of the company that opened in Kenya at the turn of the” twentieth century. Members of the family who “bought 60% of the core of this operation—including such lucrative properties as the Ford franchise—comprised Udi Gecaga, Ngengi Muigai, and Peter Muigai Kenyatta, the President’s son in law, his nephew and son.”⁸³ Udi Gecaga, educated at Princeton University, Cambridge, and the Sorbonne had been appointed at a very early age as Managing Director Lornho(EA) Ltd, and later to “Lornho main board by ‘Tiny’ Rowland following the upheaval in that company.”⁸⁴ His father, Bethwell Mareka Gecaga, was at the time the Chairman of BAT Kenya, Ltd., the principal tobacco

⁸² *The Sunday Times* (August 17, 1975), p. 5.

⁸³ *The Sunday Times* (August 17, 1975), p. 5.

⁸⁴ FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

manufacturing company in the country.⁸⁵ The British intelligence services noted that Mareka Gecaga was “a sophisticated and intelligent man with a good presence, and an excellent Chairman of a meeting.”

In a subsequent period, it was the family’s acquisition of extensive land in Central, Rift Valley, and Coast Provinces that aroused tremendous anger among the majority of the landless Kenyans. Most of this land, according to John Barry, had been acquired as a result of Presidential intervention in the purchases. The Land Control Act of 1967 stipulated that, “all land purchases must be scrutinized by a control board. The President, naturally, can waive this requirement for reasons of state. These exemptions have to be listed in the Official Gazette.”⁸⁶ Under this provision, Kenyatta had exempted the purchase of several thousands of acres by members of the family, including the “purchase of 1,336 acres in the Nairobi area by Continental Developers, Ltd.” The directors of this company were “an Israeli, Margaret Kenyatta, and Njeri Mungai, wife of Kenyatta’s cousin and former foreign minister.” Another Presidential exemption was granted in 1974 to the purchase of “26,047 acres in the Kiambu district north of Nairobi. Kiambu,” John Barry points out, “is the heartland of Kenyatta’s branch of the Kikuyu tribe,” and that “most of the land there is owned by small holders with no more than two acres.” The buyer of this enormous piece of land was Mama Ngina. It was registered as a ranch by the name of “Waunyomu Ngeke Ranch ... an acronym of the names of Mama Ngina and her four children: WAmbui, Uhuru, NYOkabi, MUhoho, NGina(E) Kenyatta.” As it happens, “part of the land belonged to the Government: the President therefore exercised his powers to grant Mama Ngina direct freehold.”⁸⁷ In an article published in the *Daily Nation* in 2009, John Kamau provided additional details on the scope of land transactions by the Kenyatta family. “By December 1966,” Kamau wrote, “Mr. Kenyatta bought more than 3895 acres in Nairobi and Ruiru at a total cost of Shs.472,740. The land was registered in either Mr. Kenyatta’s or his wife’s names, or his two eldest sons Peter Magana and Peter Muigai ... the Government also gave Mr. Kenyatta some 178 acres in Nairobi and he got a further 509 acres leading the pack of big land owners in the

⁸⁵FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

⁸⁶*The Sunday Times* (August 17, 1975), p. 5.

⁸⁷*The Sunday Times* (August 17, 1975), p. 5.

country.”⁸⁸ On top of this, Mama Ngina also bought “1,066 acres in Dandora from Messrs Hendrik Rensburg for Shs.200,000,” although another “government document puts the figure at Shs.2,000,000—an astronomical sum at the time ... In the same area,” Kamau adds, “Peter Muigai Kenyatta bought for Shs.5,000 some 700 acres and a further 1,266 acres North East of Nairobi for Shs.87,000.”⁸⁹ After several business setbacks, Beth Mugo, in alliance with Greek partners, eventually acquired one of the largest sisal estates in the country, Teita Estate, in 1972 for £310,000. She also owned Hobby hotel together with John Michuki, Chairman of the Kenya Commercial Bank and German hotel groups. Michuki arranged for the £300,000 loan.

The family was also heavily invested in the hotel industry at the Coast—catering to tourists. Mama Ngina had several plots on which expensive hotels were built and run in collaboration with European hotel groups, mostly Swiss and German. Several of Kenyatta’s Ministers plus key Provincial Commissioners also had hotels in the Mombasa area. Kenyatta himself owned the Leopard Beach hotel. Also, Eliud Wamae, Chairman of the “government investment agency, the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation,” had “a large stake in the Kenya Beach hotel and, inland, wholly,” owned “the Ngong Hills hotel in Nairobi.” Other perks enjoyed by the family included a declaration by the Mombasa City Council in 1972 that it had “decided to waive rates on all local properties owned by the President and his family during his lifetime.”⁹⁰

Without doubt the most troublesome aspect of the family business involved participation in the ivory trade and then charcoal trade, resulting in de-forestation. Regrettably, “with the support of senior government figures, Kenya’s wildlife was slaughtered for the export of ivory and skins to the Middle East and Far East.” This continued even after several official pronouncements were issued banning the export of ivory and “declaring war on poaching.” A crucial factor that negated the effectiveness of these efforts “was that the Kenyatta family itself was implicated in both poaching and ivory exports. Margaret Kenyatta, Kenyatta’s

⁸⁸ *Daily Nation* (November 10, 2009) “How Independence Era Leaders Laid their Hands on Lands of Quitting Whites.”

⁸⁹ *Daily Nation* (November 10, 2009) “How Independence Era Leaders Laid their Hands on Lands of Quitting Whites.”

⁹⁰ *The Sunday Times* (August 17, 1975), p. 5.

daughter, was chairman of the United African Company.”⁹¹ This company shipped ivory to China. John Barry wrote of an express permit for the export of ivory having been given to a cargo of tusks from more than 260 elephants. The cargo of tusks belonged to United African Corporation, whose chairman was, of course, Margaret Kenyatta.⁹² It is useful to mention here that Margaret Kenyatta also owned “a farm in the Rift Valley.”

The sale of charcoal, mainly to the Middle East, left an incurable damage to the country’s forest cover, leading to de-forestation, especially in parts of the Mau Narok, and Kakamega forests. John Barry reported of a large consignment of charcoal owned by a Provincial Commissioner that was cleared for export by the Office of the President at State House in Mombasa; about 5,000 tons of charcoal “worth almost £5 million pounds.”⁹³ There was a deliberate cynicism born out of greed that propelled the ruling elite in their calculations for immediate profit, a cold and selfish estimation of their own value.

The matter of widespread poaching was known to the British intelligence services. In April 1971, Patricia Reynolds of the British High Commission in Nairobi wrote to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about the frustrations of a local white game warden’s inability to control poaching in the Malindi area. The game warden, who planned to migrate, maybe to New Zealand, was so frustrated that he was unable to curtail evident endless corruption “since it starts at the very top.” The result was “poaching of game, smuggling of skins out of the country, trophies including ivory for markets in the Far East, bribery of high officials involving large sums of money.”⁹⁴ Patricia Reynolds also reported that Asians were “heavily involved in illicit financial transactions in an effort to avoid exchange control.”

Peter Muigai Kenyatta was later involved in the casino business in Nairobi. He was a minority shareholder in a casino established by

⁹¹ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 312.

⁹² *The Sunday Times* (August 17, 1975), p. 5.

⁹³ The government was only roused into qualified action on this matter after “a threatened strike by Mombasa dockworkers angry at those making fortunes from continuing destruction of Kenya forests.” See, *The Sunday Times* (August 17, 1975), p. 5.

⁹⁴ FCO 95/1163 (London: National Archives) Letter from Patricia Reynolds to DM Biggin, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, April 27, 1971.

“Italian investors linked to the Mafia.”⁹⁵ Fred Kubai and James Gichuru were other key figures involved in this casino venture. Kenyatta also personally got involved in the casino business. A Casino was built on a site that he owned in Dandora outside Nairobi. The casino was built by a company called Paradise Investment and Development (Kenya) Ltd. Although Kenyatta’s name did “not appear in the company’s file,” he owned the “Dandora site and the casino building” and further, he got “a substantial rent and a third of the casino’s profits.”⁹⁶

Another business venture that generated tremendous notoriety for the family at this time was the matter of ruby mines in the Tsavo National Park. The American John Saul “and another American geologist discovered ... perhaps the richest ruby mine in the world,”⁹⁷ in 1973. These Americans initially sought for political protection from prominent figures in the government, including Moi, by offering them a substantial percentage of the profits from the mines. But once the profitability of the mines was established, the family got very interested in the project. Mama Ngina, through George Criticos, sought for majority ownership. John Saul initially rejected this proposal and was subsequently expelled “from the country within 24 h.” It is this expulsion, covered in the international press that brought to light the murky dealings surrounding the ruby mines in Tsavo National Park. In the Parliament, Stanley Oloitipiti, Minister for Natural Resources, announced that the government had “taken over the ruby mines in the Tsavo National Park. The only trouble with the announcement,” *The Weekly Review* correctly observed was “that the public in Kenya did not know, or were not supposed to have known, of the existence of the ruby mines at all in the national park. The only people who knew of the existence of the mines,” *The Weekly Review* continued, “besides the Department of Mines and Geology in the Ministry of Natural Resources, were the few privileged mostly expatriate readers of the foreign press. And even they did not get much more than was originally published in the British *Sunday Times*,” and other publications like *International Herald Tribune*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* magazines.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 314.

⁹⁶ *The Sunday Times* (August 17, 1975), p. 5.

⁹⁷ *The Sunday Times* (August 17, 1975), p. 5.

⁹⁸ *The Weekly Review* (March 10, 1975), p. 6.

The Minister's announcement appeared rushed since he was unable to provide any adequate answers on several elementary points: Which government enterprise would run the mines? Would the enterprise "be a company fully or majority owned by the Government and whether the Government shares in the enterprise will be held directly or through such a body as Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation?" The Minister also seemed unaware of the fact that "before the Government took over the mines a lot of rubies worth much money had been smuggled out of the country."⁹⁹ This story of the ruby mines would remain for a long time shrouded in mystery. Inevitably, it generated a lot of rumors. It is also useful to mention that Kenyatta's government was only moved into finding some resolution after persistent adverse publicity in the international press, especially in Britain and the USA. Part of the resolution to this matter at the time, included compensation "paid to the Americans when Kenya needed US military assistance in 1976,"¹⁰⁰ and then Mama Ngina giving up only one of the mines. It is evident that the family's involvement made it difficult to arrive at an adequate, transparent, and verifiable resolution to this matter of rubies in the Tsavo National Park.

This partial list of land and business transactions undertaken by Kenyatta and his family vividly illustrates the crucial value of status and power in the creation of the enormous wealth now enjoyed by the modern ruling elite in Kenya. It was the intention of this initial wave of the ruling elite that the wealth that they had amassed, through a variety of means, would outlive them to benefit their children and relatives. And in many cases, it did. This outcome demonstrated once again that "money doesn't die"; that advantages, especially inherited advantages, beget other advantages and multiply. In subsequent periods, especially after Moi's rule, this inherited wealth would become the basis for a claim to power by some of the off spring of the initial wave of the ruling elite. A basic error would be to look at such efforts, at various levels, as a mere defense and honor of their heritage: vain and self-indulgent. While not discounting this impulse, a more powerful motive is located in the drive to safeguard the inherited economic and social system that is responsible for their social status and economic power. It is the inherited system with

⁹⁹ *The Weekly Review* (March 10, 1975), p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 264.

all its skeletons and burdens that the off spring seek to secure and safeguard, for it is the basis of their economic and political power and social status.

Although, as indicated, the British intelligence services and their superiors in London were fully aware of Kenyatta's participation in corruption in the country, they refrained from condemning him. There were no communiqués issued from the Prime Minister's Office or even from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office deploring the entrenchment of corruption in the country and especially the prominent role played by Kenyatta and his family. There were no threats of withholding financial aid to the country unless Kenyatta instituted mandatory reforms and then promised to disband the "corrupt machine." Certainly, no travel restrictions were imposed on ministers and senior civil servants who had all participated and continued to participate in massive corruption in the country. No economic sanctions were imposed on the country during Kenyatta's presidency. Lastly, none of the key members of the ruling elite had their assets frozen in Europe or the USA at this time.

Indeed, it is during this period that Kenyatta reached a historic reconciliation with Sir Evelyn Baring (now Lord Howick), the governor who had dispatched him "to detention nearly twenty years before." He was now the Chairman of the Commonwealth Development Corporation, a significant source of foreign aid to Kenya. Baring had taken a keen interest in Kenya's post-*Uhuru* economic and political developments. He had, for example, approached "businesses in the UK" for financial contributions to the KANU in its struggle against the KPU.¹⁰¹ He had been to Kenya several times since his first trip as Chairman of the Commonwealth Development Corporation in 1965. And in 1972, he finally met with Kenyatta at the State House in Nairobi. "The meeting was arranged by Charles Njonjo, Kenya's Attorney General, and Bruce McKenzie, the white South African born farmer whom Evelyn had made Minister of Agriculture, and who became the only white Minister in President Kenyatta's cabinet."¹⁰² It was a cordial meeting. Baring told Kenyatta that "by the way, I was sitting at that actual desk when I signed your detention order twenty years ago." Kenyatta replied that he knew

¹⁰¹ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 213.

¹⁰² Charles Douglas-Home, *Evelyn Baring: The Last Proconsul* (London: Collins, 1978), p. 311.

that to be so, adding that “If I had been in your shoes at the time I would have done exactly the same.” There was laughter and then posing for several photos in the gardens at the State House, and admiring the Naivasha thorn trees planted by Molly, Baring’s wife. Kenyatta invited Baring to come “and stay at Government House—now State House—whenever he was in Nairobi.” On this matter, Jeremy Murray-Brown wrote that, “in keeping with his lack of ill-feeling towards those who, as he used to say, were only doing their job, Kenyatta always made the former Governor welcome in his old home, now the State House.”¹⁰³

Baring was full of praise for Kenyatta who had emerged as “a first class leader.” The reasons for this triumph were because he had pursued a policy of reconciliation “within the Kikuyu tribe and within Kenya as a whole.” He had also kept intact the system of the provincial administration and like the colonial governor, he ruled through the District Commissioner. Lastly, Kenyatta had “consolidated and built on the Agricultural revolution initiated by Evelyn—so much so that Kenya was chosen by the World Bank as the most suitable base in Africa for its main agricultural investment.”¹⁰⁴ For Baring, “there could be no higher praise” than this continuation by Kenyatta of agricultural policies that he had initiated during colonial rule. But there was no mention of corruption in general or more specifically as it touched on Kenyatta and his family. He was still convinced that Kenyatta had been the leader of Mau Mau: “he was the leader and he had control,” in 1952. This was in the past. In the present Baring was very pleased with what Kenyatta had done. “With Kenyatta at its head Kenya was stable, prosperous, and well administered as he could ever have hoped for—much better to rejoice in that fact and give Kenyatta due credit than to indulge in a fruitless post mortem on how and why it could be squared with his actual position in the Mau Mau movement.”¹⁰⁵

As expected, Malcolm MacDonald avoided any direct condemnation of Kenyatta for his involvement in corruption and the “scandalous enrichment” of himself and his family. “One of Kenyatta’s most serious errors,” MacDonald would later write, was

¹⁰³Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, p. 314.

¹⁰⁴Charles Douglas-Home, *Evelyn Baring: The Last Proconsul*, p. 312.

¹⁰⁵Charles Douglas-Home, *Evelyn Baring: The Last Proconsul*, p. 313.

his assent to the acquisitiveness of some of his Ministers and civil servants. Soon after attaining power some of his Ministers began to buy (sometimes with money gained by dubious means) large houses, farms, motor-cars and other possessions. This development not only tainted his administration with a reputation for corruption, but also produced a wide economic division between governors and governed ... large sections of the humbler citizens in Kenya did gain materially from Uhuru in Kenya enjoying a higher or more secure standard of living than they had known hitherto; but others received no such benefit.¹⁰⁶

McDonald condemned the conduct of ministers and senior civil servants for their acquisitiveness, but not Kenyatta. He could not bring himself to condemn Kenyatta for widespread corruption even when the evidence was obvious and overwhelming. He wanted “to remember things as they were.”¹⁰⁷ Besides, there was always the question of the practical implications of such condemnation. The formula for the administration of Kenya, which MacDonal had devised, depended in these initial years, on the presence of a strong Kenyatta. To condemn him was to undermine him. The new Kenyatta projected to the world through MacDonal’s efforts and those of subsequent British High Commissioners (and the British government), was a wise, generous, kind, shrewd, and pro-Western African nationalist. McDonald and successive British governments continued to look at him as the indispensable savior of Kenya. This image had to be maintained in order to justify continued British support for Kenyatta even as his regime descended into “notorious corruption.” Besides, this corruption did not initially seriously endanger British economic and political interests.

Fenner Brockway was another friend who found it very difficult to believe that Kenyatta was now presiding over a fairly corrupt regime. It shall be recalled that Brockway had been Kenyatta’s friend for a long time, from the London days. He had also been very instrumental in securing the legal team that defended Kenyatta during his trial in 1952. After the publication of John Barry’s articles in the *Sunday Times*, Brockway (now Lord Brockway) still found it “hard to believe that,” Kenyatta “was to blame.” In a short piece that was published in the *Sunday Times*, Brockway admired the “extraordinary accumulation of

¹⁰⁶ Malcolm MacDonal, *Titans and Others*, p. 279.

¹⁰⁷ Clyde Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonal: Bringing an End to Empire*, p. 440.

information and fact” that was evident in John Barry’s articles. He was, however, saddened by these articles. “I have been associated with Jomo Kenyatta for over 50 years,” Brockway wrote, “ever since he came to Britain to campaign on the land hunger of the Kikuyu. In the Parliament and the country, I participated in the struggle for Kenya’s independence. I applauded what Kenyatta did for racial harmony between whites and Africans when he became President. But John Barry’s article,” Brockway lamented, “indicate that developments in Kenya have gone cruelly wrong. Despite his evidence, I find it difficult to believe that Kenyatta himself has been aware of—still less participated in—the exploitation of man and nature, which Barry describes. Nevertheless, the evidence against Kenya’s elite appears to be damning.”¹⁰⁸ Brockway then offered what he thought was a way out for Kenyatta: appoint a commission of inquiry. Such a commission, “composed of persons of recognized integrity,” would have as its charge, an investigation of “allegations and the whole system of aggrandizement which lies behind them, and to advise how it be ended.” If this was not done, “with recommendations of such a commission ... boldly applied,” Brockway would be forced to revise his “estimations of Kenya.”¹⁰⁹

This same trend of avoiding to blame Kenyatta can be seen in one of Sir Stanley Fingland’s last dispatches from Nairobi to London as the British High Commissioner to Kenya, in which he discussed the nature and implications of corruption on the future of the country. Although in his view Kenya was “by no means the most corrupt of countries,” there was still “a long way to go before graft is reduced to proportions here which do not positively damage the economy and constitute a latent political bomb.”¹¹⁰ Fingland then proceeded to draw “some distinction between aspects of illicit transactions.” First, was direct corruption for personal benefit: “the receiving by people in authority of bribes for contracts placed, services given and influence used, of which the benefits line personal pockets or go into Swiss bank accounts.” Such practices, Fingland said, “cannot be justified or defended.”¹¹¹ Second, was the Harambee system, which had, since 1963, been “lauded as a principle

¹⁰⁸ *Sunday Times* (August 31, 1975), p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ *Sunday Times* (August 31, 1975), p. 6.

¹¹⁰ FCO 31/2557 (London: National Archives) Farewell to Kenya.

¹¹¹ FCO 31/2557 (London: National Archives) Farewell to Kenya.

of Kenyan life.” Fingland found it to have “some obvious attractions,” specifically, it “had the effect of an informal taxation on the rich, who for popular influence organize collections and contribute large sums to self-help projects, schools, hospitals, Institutes of Technology, etc. in their areas.” In this way, some “of the disparate gains of the urban rich are thus spread down into the poorer rural communities.”¹¹² This laudable system had by 1977/1978 “got out of hand.” Politicians were increasingly under pressure to make excessive contributions to Harambee projects if they wanted to get elected to the Parliament or increase their prestige in their communities. This pressure to contribute large sums to Harambee projects had fueled the spread of corruption “from the top downwards.” Fingland concluded that, “a few voices are starting to be heard asking how Ministers and others on relatively modest salaries can continually make lavish donations, or who their friends are who help them.” He hoped that the system would be quickly reformed or “brought under control and restraint before the questions start to become more open and pointed.”¹¹³

The apparent reticence on part of the British and most of the Western press and governments to vigorously and consistently publicize the magnitude of corruption in the country, only served to embolden the ruling elite in their unrestrained acquisitiveness. From time to time an article appeared in the press, especially the British press, critical of Kenyatta’s government. Whenever this happened, there would be some tension between Britain and Kenya. Still, it was generally known that Kenyatta would “turn instinctively to” Britain “for help in any awkward situation.”¹¹⁴

There were however some thorny internal problems that Kenyatta had to deal with in the last ten years of his life that exposed his administration to negative scrutiny, however limited, in the international press. Coverage in the local press, while varied, also drew attention to the fissures that still existed in Kenyatta’s regime, even after the ousting of the radical nationalists from the party and the government. These problems included: the ever-explosive matter of ownership of land in the

¹¹²FCO 31/2557 (London: National Archives) Farewell to Kenya.

¹¹³FCO 31/2557 (London: National Archives) Farewell to Kenya.

¹¹⁴FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

Rift Valley; the murder of J.M. Kariuki; and then the noisy and lengthy debate over the succession issue.

In September 1969, John Marie Seroney, Member of Parliament (Tinderet) and J.K. Mitei (KANU's organizing secretary for Nandi Hills), published a document that came to be known as the "Nandi Hills Declaration." Seroney later stated that he was largely responsible for drawing up this document. Seroney and Mitei were arrested and charged with treason. Why was the government so nervous about this document and about Seroney? The "declaration" demanded that, "Nandi Hills should be part of the Nandi Land Unit and accorded equal treatment as other parts of the Nandi area. It also," demanded that "other communities living in the area should identify themselves with the wishes and customs of the Nandi."¹¹⁵ The document also accused the Kenya Tea Growers Association, which "has tea plantations in the area, of racism and continued colonial mentality." The press and the government looked at Seroney as having a more sinister intent: that he was essentially declaring "Nandi Hills for Nandis" and thus calling into question the settlement of non-Nandis on Nandi land. This raised once again the ever-delicate matter of ownership and occupation of land in the country. Whose land is it?

This case was closely watched in the country and especially in the Nandi area, and among the Kalenjin people in general. Large crowds attended the trial in Nakuru. Leading the state's case was O.P. Nagpal, senior state counsel while Seroney and Mitei were represented by P.J. Wilkinson, former Attorney-General of Uganda, and J. Sibi-Okumu. Wilkinson acknowledged that, "most of the matters featuring in the 'Nandi Hills Declaration' dealt with land ownership. This question of land ownership," Wilson continued, "has for many years been one of controversy. Most tribes in East Africa regard the lands as their ancestral homes." This was still the case even as the Government policy aimed at doing away "with what is called tribalism. Nevertheless, people are allowed to express disagreement with Government policies."¹¹⁶

The government was not able to show that Seroney and Mitei had committed an act of treason. There was a lot of emphasis on innuendos and then implications of phrases used in the "declaration." Nonetheless,

¹¹⁵*Daily Nation* (September 3, 1969), p. 3.

¹¹⁶*Daily Nation* (October 7, 1969), p. 12.

R.P. Maini, the senior resident magistrate, found Seroney and Mitei guilty of treason. The extent of the government's nervousness was evident in the magistrate's ruling. In his opinion, the "words saying expatriates and foreigners residing in the Nandi Location tended to think they were 'living in a fool's paradise' were plainly seditious." Why? Because the "remarks were 'calculated to promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between Nandi and non-Nandi.'" Even more serious was the phrase "legal fiction" contained in the document, especially "where it referred to land ownership." According to the magistrate, "the document implied the non-Nandi had 'no right to the land they farm except at the will of the Nandi.'"¹¹⁷ The inference from the document, the magistrate ruled, was that "the Nandi 'will or should deprive the non-Nandi of any lands acquired by them.'" The magistrate found this to be openly seditious. The "declaration," the magistrate concluded, was "apt to incite disaffection against the administration of justice in Kenya."

The sentence was "fines totaling £350." The accused would serve no prison term. "I do not consider that in all the circumstances in this case," the magistrate ruled, "the offences committed are such that must attract sentences of imprisonment. Such sentences could ruin the lives of the two accused persons and their families."¹¹⁸ Inside and outside the court, Seroney was cheered by crowds of supporters who included Eric Bomett, an Assistant Minister for Works, and a prominent Kalenjin politician.

Seroney had emerged as a strong defender of Kalenjin land interests and therefore a political rival of Moi, whose political base at this time "as a member of the loose Kalenjin tribal grouping," was seen by the British intelligence services as being weak. This was because he was "thought to have sold out to Kikuyu interests in the Rift valley where he has a large personal land holding."¹¹⁹ This rivalry between Moi and Seroney would escalate in years ahead. In the 1974 general elections, Moi openly attacked Seroney. "His re-election to Parliament," the British intelligence services noted, "was resisted by the Vice President and all his election meetings were banned."¹²⁰ The British intelligence services summarized that Seroney was "a skilled parliamentarian" and also "a striking figure

¹¹⁷*Daily Nation* (October 7, 1969), p. 12.

¹¹⁸*Daily Nation* (October 7, 1969), p. 1.

¹¹⁹FCO 312314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

¹²⁰FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

with an enormous head but bad teeth ... During the 1960s his career was being ruined by drink, but eventually he overcame this problem.” He spoke “rather poor Swahili and was once well-disposed towards Britain, although his friends,” blamed his detention in October 1975, “on Moi, who they believe is too close to the British.” Also, he was a bachelor.

In November 1974, Seroney’s colleagues in the Parliament overwhelmingly supported his candidacy for the post of Deputy Speaker, much “to the government’s horror.” Kenyatta, Moi, and other prominent members of the ruling elite sought to block and then nullify Seroney’s candidacy. “Kenyatta summoned a secret session of Parliament to try to delay the election; he failed, and immediately prorogued Parliament.”¹²¹ Kenyatta’s action failed to endear him to the members of the Parliament who were increasingly resentful of executive over-reach in decision-making and also what many saw as usurpation of their authority and diminution of the role of Parliament in national governance. It was not until February 1975 that the Parliament convened and promptly elected Seroney as the Deputy Speaker. This would not be the end of the friction between Seroney and the powerful members of the ruling elite represented in this case by Moi and Kenyatta. The open resistance by the Parliament to Kenyatta over the matter of Seroney’s candidacy was in many ways unprecedented, at least since the turbulent ideological struggles of the mid-1960s. This was happening at a time when Kenyatta was visibly winding down. This made him feel very vulnerable and therefore quick to resort to force to reassert his authority.

There was also the matter extreme disparity in income and wealth in the country. This disparity had, as is routine, given rise to extreme forms of conspicuous consumption on part of the ruling elite and their families and friends. Conspicuous consumption of course “refers to things that are visible to others and that are taken as markers of a person’s relative success. These goods are subject to a kind of arms race, where their value comes not so much from their objective properties as from the statement they make about their owner.”¹²² No rationale given could heal the pain felt by the majority who were poor and increasingly desperate.

¹²¹ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 281.

¹²² Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), p. 99.

The country was quickly dividing into two nations: one rich and callous and the other poor and desperate. In such circumstances, it was difficult to talk of a common national purpose. Commenting on the social and economic circumstances obtaining in post-Thatcher Britain with “the extremely rich getting even richer,” Lisa Jardine astutely observed that, “confined within the CCTV monitored walls of their palatial mansions, the rich stand apart from those ordinary kinds of social bond which bind communities together, so that they have absolutely no idea what it means—let alone what it feels like—to be poor.”¹²³

After the defeat of the radicals and then the banning of the KPU and detention of its leaders in 1969, J.M. Kariuki emerged as the most vocal, consistent, outspoken, and flamboyant politician in the country opposed to the economic, social, and political policies of the Kenyatta government. He led the unofficial resistance/opposition to the conservative policies of the Kenyatta regime. It had not always been this way between Kenyatta and J.M. Kariuki (fondly referred to by his friends and colleagues as JM). Kariuki was a Mau Mau veteran. He was detained during the Emergency, suffering torture and other forms of indignities that unfortunately became widespread during this time. Later the Mau Mau veterans sued the British government for torture, mistreatment, and other war crimes during their detention. In June 2013, “in a remarkable admission that imperial forces tortured Kenyans fighting against British rule in the 1950s, Foreign Secretary William Hague announced that the British government would pay about £30 million pounds in compensation to more than 5,000 victims of abuse in its former East African colony.”¹²⁴ Long before this, Kariuki had drawn the world’s attention to the inhumanity of the detention camps in his remarkable book, *‘Mau Mau’ Detainee*.¹²⁵ Written with the help of Margery Perham while resident at Oxford University, this book became an instant sensation, on the eve of *Uhuru*, due to the subject matter that it covered. It made Kariuki an immediate national figure, catapulting “him into stardom and

¹²³Lisa Jardine, *Another Point of View: A Little Book of Big Ideas* (London: Preface Publishing, 2009), p. 98.

¹²⁴*New York Times* (June 7, 2013), p. A8.

¹²⁵Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, *‘Mau Mau’ Detainee: The Account by A Kenya African of his Experiences in Detention Camps, 1953–1960* (London/Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1963).

the lecture circuit.”¹²⁶ Kariuki also served as Kenyatta’s private secretary (1961–1963), before entering politics. Indeed, it would be fair to say that at this time Kariuki held Kenyatta in very high regard. Kenyatta was one of the people to whom he dedicated his book, *‘Mau Mau’ Detainee*. He also served as the founding chairman of the National Youth Service that was “billed as an opportunity for unemployed young men to learn self-reliance by engaging in military training and development projects.”¹²⁷

There was a noticeable change in this once-close relationship, the moment Kariuki began consistently to criticize policies adopted by the Kenyatta government, especially on land distribution. “In 1972,” for example, “he called for measures to end the policy that allowed privileged people to own thousands of acres of land while there are people without even an acre. He accused people in high positions of having plenty of land and of still buying more.” It should be noted that Kariuki owned “800 acres in Nyandarua District.” However, he had “pledged to sell it at the price he paid for it in 1973 because ‘it was unrealistic to own such an enormous piece of land’ when others had none.”¹²⁸

Kariuki was also unpopular to Kenyatta’s inner circle for pointing out the destructive impact of neo-colonialism that he felt had a strangle hold on African leaders, including the Kenya ruling elite. “Neo-colonialism,” he said,

still hangs over Africa. African leaders should create viable unity instead of wasting funds attending conferences on non-alignment. The OAU and developing countries had failed to create an operational framework for the concept of non-alignment and the extent to which Africans states applied neutrality principles of non-alignment was negligible ... Colonial masters, [he continued], are to be found in Government ministries “dressed in a new cloak labeled Economic Adviser to such and such a ministry or to so and so” ... they advise us in their interests and we follow like sheep.¹²⁹

On the KANU, Kariuki felt that the political party had not only become moribund, but had tragically been unable to become an effective

¹²⁶ *The Weekly Review* (March 17, 1975), p. 5.

¹²⁷ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 141.

¹²⁸ *The Weekly Review* (March 17, 1975), p. 6.

¹²⁹ *The Weekly Review* (March 17, 1975), p. 6.

instrument of unity in the country. “KANU, according to Kariuki, had failed to meet the challenge given by the people when they rallied behind it. Its greatest failure was inability to ‘forge several tribes into one nation since independence.’”

His most pointed criticism, other than on land matters, concerned the distribution of wealth in the country. The vast majority of Kenya citizens had not benefited from the attainment of *Uhuru*. “A small but powerful group of greedy, self-seeking elite in the form of politicians, civil servants and businessmen has steadily but very surely monopolized the fruits of Independence to the exclusion of the majority of the people. We do not want,” he emphasized, “a Kenya of ten millionaires and ten million beggars.”¹³⁰ And what did he think of himself and his quest for social justice? “I stand only for justice and the equality of man. I am not an intellectual. The only Universities I went to were Lodwar and Manyani somewhere in the arid former Northern Frontier District of Kenya, which did not offer courses in economics.”¹³¹ Lodwar and Manyani were, of course, former detention camps.

Kariuki was well known to the British intelligence services. These intelligence services knew, in detail, all of his political problems in the country and his escalating confrontation with the Kenyatta government. In March 1971, Patricia Reynolds forwarded to London a summary of a talk that Kariuki had with Tim Bellers from the British High Commission in Nairobi. The talk had taken place at a dinner party that Kariuki attended. Patricia Reynolds was keen to point out that Kariuki was known to

members of this office ... and Edward Clay who met him through Richard Edis (who started the association) says that Kariuki is friendly and frank to talk to. He (Kariuki) knows that he is unpopular with the Kikuyu establishment, he thinks this is partly due to the fact that he has a trans-tribal following, also that he is openly critical of the Government, particularly on the subject of land, which as you know is a sore point! He has been described as a “star on the wane.” The possibility of an eventual Army coup is widely and openly discussed by most people here.¹³²

¹³⁰ *The Weekly Review* (March 17, 1975), p. 6.

¹³¹ *The Weekly Review* (March 17, 1975), p. 6.

¹³² FCO 95/1163 (London: National Archives) Confidential memo from the British High Commission, Nairobi.

In the summary of the discussion forwarded to London, Kariuki indicated that, “he thought the government would shortly seek to bring in a Constitutional Amendment to provide for the election of future Presidents by popular vote.” This may have been wishful thinking on his part since he obviously considered that he stood “to gain from any such amendment; but he seemed confident that the Government was considering such a move.”¹³³ Kariuki also offered his “evaluation of the chances of the various contenders” for the office of President. “He disparaged Dr. Mungai, whom he thought” the British were supporting. Mungai had “little support in the country and was a bad orator.” As for Vice President Moi, Kariuki thought that, “he was just too inept.” Mwai Kibaki on the other hand was “able and very intelligent but not a ‘political minister,’ but Mr. Kariuki thought he would figure in any administration because of his abilities. Mr. Kariuki said he was a friend.”¹³⁴ Njonjo was ruled out due to the fact that “he had no political following” in addition to the fact that “he had never stood in an election.” Then there was Charles Rubia, “ambitious and efficient and had some powerful support.” But he faced enormous hurdles. He “would probably be unacceptable to the Luo because of their belief that he was implicated in Mr. Mboya’s death.” And among the Kikuyu, Rubia would face problems due to his “loyalist past as a member of the Home Guard during the Emergency.” Kariuki then hinted that he had widespread support among many Ministers and MPs, including: Mr. Wanjigi; Mr. Shako (who owed him a debt of gratitude for the canvassing that he had done on his behalf in the past elections); Mr. Seroney, Mr. Murgor and even Mr. Omamo. Many of the MPs and Ministers supported him “because of the way he had helped them in the past.”¹³⁵ Lastly, Kariuki thought that although the army might have contemplated staging a coup as a result of the coup in Uganda, this was very difficult because “power was effectively balanced by the existence of the GSU. Both Mr. Hinga and Mr. Gethi were friends of his and he thought that the intelligence organisation, together with the GSU, were an effective deterrent to a military takeover.”

¹³³FCO 95/1163 (London: National Archives) Confidential memo from the British High Commission, Nairobi.

¹³⁴FCO 95/1163 (London: National Archives) Confidential memo from the British High Commission, Nairobi.

¹³⁵FCO 95/1163 (London: National Archives) Confidential memo from the British High Commission, Nairobi.

What Kariuki called for in his criticisms of government policies was the complete overhaul of the country's economic and social policies. In doing so, he drew attention to one of the key ideological and structural weaknesses of the Kenyatta government: the resolute unwillingness to restructure the inherited system. The belief that the inherited system could lead to development for all was deeply held by the ruling elite. Indeed, this belief had defined the ideological struggles within the KANU and the government in the first six years of *Uhuru*. The KPU and other radicals had consistently challenged the credibility of this belief, which was producing, in quick order, the hardening of class distinctions in the country.

In 1972, the International Labor Organization (ILO) Mission to Kenya arrived at similar conclusions. Its report, entitled, *Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Kenya*, remains one of the most detailed (and debated) insightful documents ever produced on the limitations of the country's inherited economic structure. The starting point of the ILO Mission was that "the poverty of the country at large, and its productive structure, inevitably was still influenced by the colonial era." On the question of poverty and unemployment in the country, the ILO report concluded that, "for most of the rural population (9/10 of Kenya's total), the crucial question is not the availability of jobs, in the sense of paid work for others, but the availability of land, together with the knowledge and supporting services to farm it well and obtain reasonable income. For those with land, there is usually no lack of things to do, and thus, in general, no involuntary 'unemployment.'"¹³⁶ The ILO report recognized that indeed there were problems of unemployment in the country and that peasants with "small plots of land of inferior quality or in areas of inadequate or unreliable rainfall" were "usually engaged in a continual struggle to keep above the margin of poverty, and even to get enough to eat." Those with larger plots of land still faced problems of lack of cash "for taxes, school fees, for a mass of minor purchases" including "hybrid seed, the fertilizer and other things needed to raise their levels of output."

In order to minimize the gap between the lower and upper level income groups, the ILO report recommended that the government

¹³⁶ILO. *Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Kenya* (Geneva: ILO, 1972). p. 3.

should adopt a policy that advocated for “more rapid increases among the lower income groups with tapering of rates as incomes increase, and the calculation of real wages by reference to cost of living index of the bottom income groups.” Also, the graduated personal tax should be abolished “in the rural areas,” with “a progressive tax introduced on luxury and semi-luxury consumer goods, both imported and locally produced, as well as sales tax on selected capital goods that have labour-displacing effect.”¹³⁷ This recommendation in essence, contradicted the rationale and implications of the recommendations of the Ndegwa Commission previously discussed. With regard to public expenditure, the ILO report called for a new start: a re-structuring “in favour of the poorer sections of the population in urban and rural areas, including the least developed regions of the country.” To facilitate this process, the ILO report urged the government to institute a rural works programme, “e.g. road construction, bush clearing and soil conservation from the district to the village level” to, “directly benefit the local population.” Even more radical at the time was a call by the ILO report to decentralize planning at the “district and local levels.” Such decentralization in planning and implementation had to “go together with increased powers to make financial decisions at the district and local levels.” This approach was urgently needed in Kenya in order to respond to the potentially explosive political and economic problem of glaring “disparity between Nairobi (and perhaps a few adjoining areas) at the centre, and the rest of the country as a peripheral zone where jobs, services, and economic opportunities are markedly inferior.”¹³⁸

The key recommendations by the ILO report revisited what the radical nationalists had advocated for before being vanquished, and what current critics like Kariuki were now fervently espousing.

The basic thrust of all the recommendations was that if income were distributed more equally the “working poor” would not only be richer (by hypothesis) but would also constitute a mass market for the expansion of domestic manufacturing and services on labour intensive lines; an expansion which the mission saw as [an] essential alternative to unrealistic as well

¹³⁷ILO. *Employment, Incomes and Inequality*, p. 24.

¹³⁸ILO. *Employment, Incomes and Inequality*, p. 11.

as undesirable dependence, under existing plans, on further massive inflows of foreign capital.¹³⁹

Colin Leys was very critical of the ILO report for assuming that indeed these radical recommendations could be realized “within a capitalist framework. They imagined the rapid expansion of an autonomous local capitalism, reformed and free from contradictions.”¹⁴⁰ This was unlikely. Further, Colin Leys believed that the ILO mission had in fact “brought to its work a broadly ‘social democratic’ outlook according to which governments should govern in the interests of the majority. The mission, however, had to address itself to a situation in which the regime actually rested on the support of foreign and domestic capital. The mission hoped to influence it in an egalitarian direction.”¹⁴¹

Implementation of the recommendations contained in the ILO report would have drastically changed the economic and even political landscape in the country. It called on the ruling elite to surrender their advantages, acquired through a variety of means, since *Uhuru*. The ruling elite would have been required to “start paying income tax, or start paying more tax,” and then those “with large farms who were seriously in arrears with payments to AFC or ADC would have their farms taken away and redistributed in smallholdings to the landless.”¹⁴² This would be accompanied with an effective freeze in salaries of the senior civil servants, company executives, MPs and Ministers. Kenyatta’s government was unlikely to accede to these recommendations. The economic, social, and political consequences of these recommendations were simply too dire to even contemplate. As a result, the government quietly received the ILO report and made no publicized commitment to implementing its radical recommendations. The ILO report was effectively shelved. Instead, what was issued was “a new government statement, Session Paper no. 1973, on Employment which stated that ‘in most cases, proposals in the ILO report reflect, or are consistent with current government policies.’”¹⁴³ It was thus possible for the government to ignore what it considered to be undesirable external advice calling for radical

¹³⁹ Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, p. 260.

¹⁴⁰ Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, p. 265.

¹⁴¹ Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, p. 270.

¹⁴² Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, p. 261.

¹⁴³ Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya*, p. 270.

reforms. Kenyatta was assured of Western, especially British, support on such a course that resisted fundamentally altering the shape, and purpose of the inherited system.

Like the colonial government, the Kenyatta government was willing to talk about the current economic and social system in order to praise it. The government was willing to talk about the system so long as it was understood, in advance, that no substantial changes would result from such discussions. Again, like the colonial government, Kenyatta's government was even willing, when under duress, to allow for minor tinkering on the edges of the system so long as such activities did not threaten the integrity of the inherited system. This is why Kariuki became such an intolerable and formidable foe. It was evident that what he wanted was far more than occasional minor tinkering on the edges of the system.

Kariuki was also a formidable opponent of the ruling elite because he was one of them: he was an insider who rebelled. He was a very wealthy man with substantial land holdings. As *The Weekly Review* observed,

Kariuki was a contradiction in Kenya politics. He was fabulously wealthy, yet repudiated the very system which spawned that wealth. He lived like a member of the jet set—he owned a Mercedes Benz—yet criticised those who had the wealth to do so. Though he opposed many key government policies, he would not of his own accord quit the government which he criticised so relevantly. Of late he had been a falling rather than a rising star, but his grassroots rapport remained unshakeable.¹⁴⁴

He was also a Kikuyu and a Mau Mau veteran, a former detainee who had written a respected book on an aspect of the peasant revolt. He was thus expected to support the ruling elite under Kenyatta's undisputed leadership in Kikuyuland. An essential component of the MacDonald formula was that Kenyatta's leadership would remain undisputed in Kikuyuland. It was premised on absolute unity of the Kikuyu behind Kenyatta. There would be no tolerance of a rival political center and focus in Kikuyuland. The fear of MacDonald and the British

¹⁴⁴ *The Weekly Review* (March 17, 1975), p. 6. Also see, *The Sunday Times* (August 10, 1975), p. 11 "What made him dangerous was that he was an insider. Kenyan politics are run by the Kikuyu tribe: Kariuki was a Kikuyu and an ex-minister. He knew what was going on beneath the placid surface of Kenya today. The threat was that he would reveal it. He may even have been taking steps to do so."

government, then Kenyatta and his inner circle, was that the rise of multiple political leaders among the Kikuyu would open the country to the possibility of a radical political movement. There was the political risk of the poor among the Kikuyu joining hands with other poor people from different ethnic groups from around the country to form a nationwide radical political movement. If this were to occur, as was feared during the time of Kaggia and the KPU, it would not only endanger the sustainability of the MacDonald formula, but it would also set the country on a radical course that would endanger British and Western economic and political interests in the country.

Kariuki was a rich Kikuyu who rebelled and wanted to forge a nationwide movement of the dispossessed including the majority of the inhabitants in Kikuyuland. Such a movement would have been centered on a modified class analysis of Kenyan politics, something that had never really taken root in the country since the colonial days. “Since the British founded Kenya in the 19th century,” Makau Mutua observed with remarkable insight,

it has been a grave yard for radical, progressive, leftist, or transformative politics. Virtually every revolutionary political, economic, or social cause has been either rejected or crushed. Only gradualist or accommodationist political projects have achieved any measure of success. By the same token, opposition political actors who sought fundamental change have either been marginalized or have met with grief. Both the colonial and the post-colonial states have been pitiless in meting out grim fates to radical visionaries and change agents.¹⁴⁵

There had been absolute intolerance toward radical politics aimed at re-orienting the inherited system. This inherited system “was established as an instrument to facilitate economic exploitation of the majority by the minority,” and as a result, “the Kenyan state has remained distrustful of individuals and causes that have sought to fundamentally alter its mission.”¹⁴⁶

To forestall the possibility of Kariuki spearheading radical opposition to the regime, the Kenyatta government sought and succeeded in frustrating his political agenda and operations. There was the routine official

¹⁴⁵ Makau Mutua, *Kenya's Quest for Democracy: Taming the Leviathan*, p. 75.

¹⁴⁶ Makau Mutua, *Kenya's Quest for Democracy: Taming the Leviathan*, p. 75.

harassment: police raids, monitoring of his political activities around the country and then when necessary intervention in his personal matters.

The most celebrated example of this restriction on his movements and association was the cancellation of his forty-second birthday party at his Gilgil house on March 21, 1971, to which many MPs and friends had been invited. That Sunday morning the police cordoned off his house at 7:45am and did not, according to Kariuki, leave until 6:30 pm. Another meeting in his constituency on January 8, 1972, to which he had invited two senior Cabinet Ministers, Jackson Angaine and Jeremiah Nyaga, and Nyeri MP Waruru Kanja, was stopped by the police “on security grounds” just before it was about to begin.¹⁴⁷

This campaign to silence Kariuki also involved cancelling scheduled fundraising meetings to which he was invited across the country. After the cancellation of his birthday party, Kariuki “complained that he had been barred from speaking at fundraising meetings in various parts. He had been barred twice in Nyeri, once in Ugenya, and once in Kwale. He claimed that the Voice of Kenya and Kenya TV and radio had also been ordered not to report anything he said or did, unless it was an authorised Government function or a report on Parliamentary proceedings.”¹⁴⁸

On March 1, 1975, a bomb exploded at a major bus terminal in Nairobi, killing about 30 people and wounding several others. No one was arrested and held responsible for what was clearly the first such terror attack in the country since *Uhuru*. This fatal bomb blast, plus other smaller ones around Nairobi at this time, created widespread panic in the city and the country. Panic turned quickly to fear when unsubstantiated rumors spread indicating that “the bombings were the work of a group known as Maskini (‘the poor’) Liberation Front which was linked to disaffected Kikuyu from Nyeri district, a constituency commonly associated with Kariuki.”¹⁴⁹ There was also the matter of stepped up police surveillance on Kariuki, who “revealed in Parliament that his car had been hit ‘by what seemed like bullets.’” Even more ominous, were crude attempts made by the government, (through its various intelligence agencies), “to

¹⁴⁷ *The Weekly Review* (March 17 1975), p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ *Daily Nation* (March 23, 1971) contained in FCO 95/1163 (London: National Archives).

¹⁴⁹ Daniel Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963–2011*, p. 112.

link Kariuki to the bus bombing.” These seemingly disparate acts of violence, intimidation, and fear had set the stage for the tragedy that was to befall the country: they all converged on the disappearance and then murder of Kariuki. “It was in this whole confusion that the killers of JM Kariuki decided to strike.”¹⁵⁰

It all started in the evening of March 2, 1975 at the Hilton Hotel in the city center, where “Kariuki was a well known figure.” On this fateful evening, Kariuki was seen leaving the hotel in the company of Ben Gethi, the Commander of the GSU. Prior to this, he had been shadowed for most of the day by Patrick Shaw, a white senior officer of the Kenya Police Reserve. As the *Weekly Review* reported, Kariuki most obviously knew the people that took him out of the Hilton hotel, for had he

suspected any danger when he left the Hilton with the men said to be dressed in GSU uniforms he would not have voluntarily left the hotel. The least he would have done is to let the standers-by know what was going on, and it would not have been past him to struggle with his abductors thus causing a public scene which would have drawn the attention of people in the Hilton or taxi-drivers who normally park their cabs around the hotel and to whom Kariuki was well known.¹⁵¹

Some of the details of this abduction and then murder would be revealed in the report filed by the Select Committee set up by the Parliament to “investigate the murder of the late MP for Nyandarua North, Mr. JM Kariuki.”

There have been conflicting reports on where and how Kariuki was brutally murdered. The Select Committee concluded that “from the moment when JM left with Mr. Ben Gethi no evidence has been obtained as to where he went, except that he was murdered in Ngong Hills an hour or two later. The post mortem disclosed that five shots had been fired into the body of Mr. Kariuki, causing his death.”¹⁵² More recent revelations have pointed to Kariuki having been tortured in the HQs of the Kenya Special Branch in Nairobi, before being shot and then “bleeding, was packed into a meat van and taken to his death.”¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ *The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 4.

¹⁵¹ *The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 4.

¹⁵² *The Weekly Review* (June 9, 1975); p. 11.

¹⁵³ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 285.

Among those who were either present and/or participated in this torture were: Ben Gethi, Iganatius Nderi (Director of the CID), Patrick Shaw, Itote, Thungu (Kenya's bodyguard) and a host of police informers. All of these, later implicated in Kariuki's murder, "were police, police informers or senior Kikuyu intimates of Kenya."¹⁵⁴

Kariuki's body was dumped in Ngong hills and strategically placed on a pathway frequented by hyenas. But he "he was not eaten by hyenas." His killers, wrote *The Weekly Review*, had "erred in thinking that hyenas would get rid of all the evidence of Kariuki's body. They also made the mistake of leaving two cartridges from the murder gun at the scene of their crime."¹⁵⁵ Local Maasai men found the body and reported the matter to the local police station. After some inexplicable delay, the body was eventually transported to the Nairobi City Mortuary where it would lie unidentified for close to one week. Kariuki's "fingers had been cut off and his eyes gouged out before he was shot dead. The killers had burnt his face with acid to prevent identification of the body."¹⁵⁶ It is this acid however that "deterred the scavengers, and his body was still identifiable." The killing of Kariuki has to be seen as being particularly cruel and sadistic, death after sustained vengeful torture.

His funeral at his home in Gilgil revealed the depth of emotions of loyalty to him and what he stood for but also equally the extent to which Kenya and his inner circle were no longer respected, even in parts of Kikuyuland. Among the "whole backbench membership of Parliament" who attended the funeral were: John Marie Seroney, Martin Shikuku, Mark Mwithaga, Charles Rubia, Alphonse Okuku Ndege (Mboya's brother, MP for Mbita) . Mwai Kibaki was the only Cabinet Minister who attended and spoke at the funeral. When Nyachae (PC, Central Province) "tried to read a message from President Kenya to the funeral and was booed and shouted down," he instead "chose to speak of the solidarity of the people of Central Province. He spoke as one with the people at the burial scene, not as an administrator 'we in the Central Province, and his constituents would have given any amount of money

¹⁵⁴ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 285.

¹⁵⁵ *The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 282.

rather than lose Mr. Kariuki, he was not a politician in Nyandarua alone but the whole of Kenya’.”¹⁵⁷

Speeches by his colleagues at the funeral displayed defiance against the government that had rarely been seen in public. There was anger, frustration, and bitterness. Waruru Kanja, for example, “spoke bitterly of a plan to eliminate certain political leaders in Kenya,” while Charles Rubia “repeated Kanja’s claim about the existence of an elimination list that he himself and Martin Shikuku were on the list.” For his part, Shikuku said, “‘to be able to live in Kenya today, one is expected to be stupid, a boot-licker or corrupt’ and condemned those who were behind Kariuki’s death yet had the effrontery to send his family ‘senseless and meaningless messages of condolence.’”¹⁵⁸ Alphonse Okuku Ndege pointed out that Kariuki’s murder was the third time that prominent politicians had been eliminated in Kenya since 1963. “First there was Pio Gama Pinto, then Tom Mboya and now it is JM. This time, there cannot be any cover-up.” Over the years, Okuku had become a close personal and political ally of Kariuki. It shall be recalled that Kariuki was “one of the few politicians from Central Province who had travelled to Nyanza Province to lay a wreath at Mboya’s grave soon after the murder of Mboya.” He had since then “returned to Nyanza on several occasions to support development projects which had been established as a memorial to the slain KANU secretary-general.”¹⁵⁹

In its long-awaited report, the Select Committee provided a summary of Kariuki’s ideas and convictions centering on: economic and social justice, land, national unity, and what was termed as miscellaneous, which included improvement of rural life to “halt population drift to the urban areas, then expansion of education opportunities and his legendary condemnation of neo-colonialism.” The Committee identified police cover-up to have been a major obstacle in the fulfillment of its task. Several officers had either refused to co-operate or had done so very reluctantly while giving no useful testimony. The Committee concluded that Ben Gethi should be “regarded as a person who took an active part in the murder himself, or as accomplice in the actual murder or murderers.” And as a result, “Mr. Ben Gethi should forthwith be suspended

¹⁵⁷ *The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 15.

¹⁵⁸ *The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 17.

¹⁵⁹ *The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 17.

from duty pending fresh investigation.”¹⁶⁰ The Committee then noted its frustration at not being able to receive any cooperation whatsoever from Hinga (Commissioner of Police); Nderi (Director of CID), Sokhi (Senior Superintendent of Police), and Mungai (Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police, Rift Valley Province). This lack of cooperation from the police leadership had “made it impossible for the Committee to complete the work entrusted to it to its own satisfaction.” The Committee named several officials and individuals who required further investigation. They included the DC for Nyandarua District, Waruhiu Itote, and P. Karanja (Mbiu Koinange’s bodyguard).

Elijah Mwangale (Chair of the Select Committee) and the rest of the Committee had, before presenting their report to the Parliament, met with Kenyatta at the State House in Nairobi. At this meeting, Kenyatta “ordered that Koinange’s name and that of the presidential bodyguard, Arthur Wanyoike Thungu, be removed from the list of individuals who deserved more investigation ... reluctantly, the MPs did as they were told, and the final draft of the report appeared without mention of Koinange or Thungu.”¹⁶¹ It is useful to mention here that the British intelligence services concluded that, Kariuki’s murder like that of Pio Gama Pinto, had probably resulted from of a plot arranged and organized by the President’s bodyguard.¹⁶² As for Mbiu Koinange, the British intelligence services concluded that “at heart,” Mbiu Koinange was “a Kikuyu tribalist and now with right wing views after earlier radicalism.” He was a very close friend of Kenyatta as well as being “his principal advisor and boon companion.” Mbiu Koinange, according to these intelligence services, was “disliked by many Kenyans as an arch reactionary and intriguer who has excessive influence with Kenyatta.” While he was “quite friendly to Britain,” Mbiu Koinange nonetheless had “a bad reputation for violence against political opponents.”¹⁶³ It was also known to these intelligence services that the “Parliamentary Select Committee in 1975 implied that he may have been involved in

¹⁶⁰ *The Weekly Review* (June 9, 1975), p. 15.

¹⁶¹ Daniel Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963–2011*, pp. 116–117.

¹⁶² FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

¹⁶³ FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

the murder of JM Kariuki, but on order of the President his name was deleted from the Report.”¹⁶⁴

Kariuki’s murder, and especially the manner he had been killed and his body disposed of, had several wide-ranging effects on the country. Politically, the message was clear: the inner circle around Kenyatta had resolved to use every means necessary to hold onto power. To oppose was to risk one’s life. “Kariuki’s death,” wrote Ng’weno in *The Weekly Review*, had instilled

in the minds of the public the fear of dissent, the fear to criticize, the fear to stand out and take an unconventional public stance. For Kariuki was a dissident, the most celebrated of all dissidents in Kenya since independence. Kariuki was a critic of officialdom, and he was remarkably unconventional ... the general impression which his murder has left with the public is that it is dangerous to dissent or criticize Kenya’s way of doing things.¹⁶⁵

The murder had left Kenyans afraid of their government, afraid to talk freely and express a contrary opinion. The government had deliberately planted this massive fear in order to intimidate and subdue the opposition. “The fear to express one’s own convictions,” Ng’weno wrote, threatened, “the very democratic system of government upon which Kenya’s society is supposedly based. Without room for dissent there can be no democracy; without democracy, nothing else in a society is really worth anything.”¹⁶⁶ In a very real and disturbing way, the government had turned into a predator of its own people.

Among many students at the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University College, the murder of Kariuki marked an important point in their now fast-paced march toward radicalization. Throughout most of his political career, Kariuki “was popular among University students, not merely for the dissident views he expressed, but probably because, like University students he often fell foul of the powers that be. He was charismatic and he was fearless ... in East Africa, Kariuki was idolized by non-Kenyan students as well,” including students at the University of Dar-es-Salaam.¹⁶⁷ For many years after 1975, students at the University

¹⁶⁴FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

¹⁶⁵*The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 3.

¹⁶⁶*The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 3.

¹⁶⁷*The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 12.

of Nairobi and Kenyatta University College marked the anniversary of Kariuki's death with spirited demonstrations against Kenyatta's government.

In the debates that followed the formal presentation of the Select Committee's report to the Parliament, the government's aim was simple and unyielding: to deny the report being officially accepted by the Parliament. Part of the impetus for this unfortunate objective was the clear realization that the Select Committee's report was a source of profound embarrassment to the government. The report charged that, "certain individuals within the police may have been party to the murder of the former MP for Nyandarua North. Worse", the report accused

the police machinery of having mounted a cover-up campaign after the murder, and what must be the most disturbing of all, the report suggests strongly that no faith should be placed in any investigations the police (and by implication, the Government) claims are still being conducted into the murder with a view to bringing the murderers to book.¹⁶⁸

Fearing that the government would mount a concerted effort to undermine the Select Committee's report, many MPs reacted angrily when James Osogo (Minister for Health) "urged Parliament to 'note and understand' the report but not accept it." Osogo argued that the report was skeletal in nature and that it lacked crucial details. This had made him "read between the lines because the report does not contain enough meat." It was however left to Njonjo to mount the government offensive. "According to Njonjo, the Committee had tabled 'a biased and prejudicial document couched in hyperbole, largely conjectured and which admits in effect that the investigation got nowhere very far, and seeks therefore to hand the blame and by innuendo to the Executive and the Government for its shortcomings.'"¹⁶⁹

Njonjo's amendment to the Select Committee's report sought to deny it being accepted by the Parliament. Instead, he wanted the report to be "turned over to a court for the purposes of conducting a judicial inquiry." This amendment was, as expected, supported by Moi and Ngei. When it was put to the vote, Njonjo's amendment, which was the

¹⁶⁸ *The Weekly Review* (June 16, 1975), p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ *The Weekly Review* (June 16, 1975), p. 6.

official government position on this matter, was very narrowly defeated, “by only three votes,” with 50 MPs absent. It is only after the defeat of Njonjo’s motion that the Select Committee’s report was officially accepted by the Parliament unanimously. Three members of the government had voted against Njonjo’s motion. They were Masinde Muliro (the only Cabinet Minister who voted against Njonjo’s motion), and Peter Kibisu (Assistant Minister for Labour) plus John Keen (Assistant Minister for Works). All three were immediately sacked from their positions by Kenyatta. It would be Muliro’s last time to hold a Cabinet position. What Kenyatta demanded now was absolute loyalty and compliance.

There was still the fear within Kenyatta’s inner circle that the MPs, probably buoyed along by the defeat of the government motion during the debate in the Parliament, might seek to challenge Kenyatta even more in the immediate future. To ensure that did not happen, he moved quickly to demonstrate the reach of his power and also to show the MPs that the Parliament offered them no safe sanctuary. On October 15, 1975,

plainclothes police men entered the Parliament building ... and took into custody the Deputy Speaker and a rank-and-file member, one of President Kenyatta’s persistent critics. The officers waited near the building for several hours until Parliament adjourned for the day before they led away the Deputy Speaker, John Seroney, and the other legislator, Martin Shikuku.¹⁷⁰

This was complete and unprecedented violation of their immunity as MPs. Their speeches in the Parliament were protected and they could not be prosecuted for utterances in the Parliament. The pretext for this exercise of “presidential hammer” was a speech recently made by Shikuku in the Parliament in which he argued that those intent on lowering the dignity and integrity of the Parliament were in essence “trying to kill Parliament the way KANU has been killed.” The front bench led by Moi then challenged Shikuku to “substantiate that KANU was dead.” Seroney, in the Chair, intervened and stated that a Member of Parliament does not have to substantiate the obvious: “Mr. Shikuku

¹⁷⁰ *The New York Times* (October 16, 1975), p. 7.

has stated the obvious and what is obvious does not require substantiation.”¹⁷¹ This was immediately followed by a noisy “walkout by the front bench, led by Moi singing the party song, ‘KANU Builds the Nation.’”¹⁷² The arrest and detention of Seroney and Shikuku within the grounds of the Parliament achieved the intended effect of substantially making the MPs afraid of Kenyatta and his government. This government was now determined to use every means at its disposal to silence opposition.

The quick resort to this kind of brutal force was in itself an indication of weakness rather than strength on part of Kenyatta’s inner circle at this time. What had become painfully obvious to the inner circle was that one of the dire unintended outcomes of Kariuki’s murder was the fast erosion of Kenyatta’s prestige and power. In the anger and frustration that followed Kariuki’s death, Kenyatta could not rely on his unique status or prestige to order and receive political obedience, even in many parts of Kikuyuland.

Kenyatta’s heavy-handed action ordering the detention of Seroney and Shikuku had another unintended outcome of drawing attention to the KANU party. Had Shikuku stated the obvious or had he in fact besmirched the reputation of an otherwise vibrant and effective political party? All evidence showed that what Shikuku stated on that fateful day was obvious and well known to all. “KANU, if truth be told,” Ndegwa observed in retrospect, “did not develop to maturity. It failed to sustain a policy for cohesive social integration neither did it offer a forum where the majority could voice their concerns freely.”¹⁷³ Ndegwa therefore believed that Shikuku “spoke the truth” when he declared that KANU was dead. But why had KANU been allowed to die without any spirited intervention from the center? The death of the KANU was the result of a deliberate political and tactical decision by Kenyatta and the inner circle. Ndegwa’s explanation is that Kenyatta had regrettably watched the KANU atrophy and then die because of “the heavy burden of work spewed by demands of transition into a state had not allowed him time to organize the party.” This could conceivably be true. Yet it is obvious that the death of the party allowed Kenyatta to rely on the

¹⁷¹ *The New York Times* (October 16, 1975), p. 7.

¹⁷² Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A History Since Independence*, p. 288.

¹⁷³ Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 308.

provincial administration for the governance and control of the country. He had absolute control over the provincial administration. All provincial administrators served at his pleasure and were thus fiercely loyal to him. Kenyatta could not guarantee absolute control over the party and its factions and multiple demands on the government.

A strong vibrant party was bound to raise uncomfortable questions concerning: the country's administration; national division of resources and development; appointments to senior positions; acquisition of property by senior members of the civil service, the Cabinet, many MPs and of course Kenyatta's family and his many close associates. Such uncomfortable questions could hasten the erosion of national support for Kenyatta personally, then his government. In other words, he would be faced with another political battle in the KANU in which it would be difficult to appeal, yet again, to the fear of communism as a deciding factor in his favor. So much had happened in the country since the last ideological battles in the KANU. The party provided a structure to be routinely exploited by Kenyatta and the inner circle. At no point was the party allowed to speak unless it was in praise of Kenyatta and the government. Also, the KANU did not have Mboya anymore. There was no one with Mboya's charisma, and abilities that Kenyatta could rely on to mount an effective and persuasive defense of policies and actions undertaken by the government. Further, Mboya's death had in itself created unbridgeable schisms within the party and even the country.

Since the fractious and bruising ideological battles of the mid-1960s with Odinga, Kenyatta resolved to by-pass the party in the ruling of the country. The party was allowed no voice in the setting up of national agenda or in the determination of policy to be followed by the government. Kenyatta's excuse for not holding party elections, according to Ndegwa, was that these were of no value since "the players in the game will be the same, so why elections."¹⁷⁴ This surely is not an adequate explanation for deliberately letting the ruling party die a slow death even as the country's rulers publicly swore loyalty to it and affirmed its centrality in the country's governance. What is clear, as Ndegwa has clarified, is that "in the years that followed, the dismemberment of KANU was to continue with the tacit knowledge of Kenyatta."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta's Struggles: My Story*, p. 308.

¹⁷⁵Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta's Struggles: My Story*, p. 309.

Fanon astutely identified the existence of this phenomenon of the death of the party in the post-*Uhuru* period. It was a deliberate development endorsed by the national bourgeoisie under the leadership of a leader who once embodied the country's aspirations for progress and development.

During the period of the struggle for independence there was ... a party led by the present leader. But since then this party has sadly disintegrated; nothing is left but the shell of a party, the name, the emblem, and the motto. The living party, which ought to make possible the free exchange of ideas which have been elaborated according to the real needs of the mass of the people, has been transformed into a trade union of individual interests. Today, [Fanon concluded], the party's mission is to deliver to the people the instructions which issue from the summit.¹⁷⁶

The death of the KANU inevitably exalted the centrality of Kenyatta to the country's political and administrative structure. He became the nerve center of the country's vital institutions. In this regard, it would be fair to argue that indeed all roads led to Gatundu. Yet, Kenyatta was careful not to abandon the façade of ruling in the name of the KANU. During national political holidays, he invoked the name of the KANU and the sacrifices of the Mau Mau in the country's liberation. "The leader," wrote Fanon

pacifies the people. For years on end after independence has been won, we see him, incapable of urging the people to a concrete task, unable really to open the future to them into the path of national reconstruction; we see him reassessing the history of independence and recalling the sacred unity of the struggle for liberation. The leader, because he refuses to break up the national bourgeoisie, asks the people to fall back into the past and become drunk on the remembrance of the epoch which led to independence. During the struggle for liberation the leader awakened the people and promised them forward march, heroic and unmitigated. Today, he uses every means to put them to sleep, and three or four times a year asks them to remember the colonial period and look on the long way they have come since then.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 170.

¹⁷⁷Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 168–169.

It is useful to mention here that what Kenyatta invoked was an edited past that avoided uncomfortable questions about the complex nature of the freedom struggle, the heroes of that struggle and their demands, and then the crimes of settler colonialism and its local allies. It was a past from which inconvenient facts had been carefully pruned in order to justify Kenyatta's presidency and its policies.

Political rallies by Kenyatta on national holidays became the only forum in which the leaders and the led "met." He talked of the past, condemned all of his critics, and urged the people to continue in their steadfast support of his government. Problems were brushed aside or sidestepped. Fanon observed that, "the leader, who has behind him a lifetime of political action and devoted patriotism, constitutes a screen between the people and the rapacious bourgeoisie since he stands surety for the ventures of that caste and closes his eyes to their insolence, their mediocrity and their fundamental immorality ... every time he speaks to the people," Fanon continued, "he recalls to mind his often heroic life, the struggles he has led in the name of the people and the victories that in their name he has achieved, thereby intimating clearly to the masses that they ought to go on putting their confidence in him."¹⁷⁸

The inner circle depended on Kenyatta's ability to rally the masses to his side after every national political setback that threatened the status quo. And indeed, Kenyatta had always done this almost effortlessly in the past. This was however not the case after the murder of Kariuki. There was a noticeable erosion of support for Kenyatta and his government. This was a particularly potent political crisis, one of the most severe that Kenyatta had ever faced during his presidency. Long suppressed frustrations over the country's development, corruption, and then the enrichment of the elite, found an outlet in the anger and grief that now gripped the country. Kenyatta had to deal with multi-pronged problems at a time when his person was no longer as revered as in the past, and also when he could no longer count on automatic support even in several sections of Kikuyuland. It would be fair to say that Kenyatta had not fully solved all the problems emanating from this crisis at the time of his death in 1978.

It was evident to local and international observers that Kenyatta's connection to the public, hitherto his strongest political asset, had

¹⁷⁸Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 167–168.

eroded in the period after the murder of Kariuki. At a May Day Rally in 1975 in Mombasa, Kenyatta failed to sway the crowd to his side. “For the first time in the history of independent Kenya, President Kenyatta failed to ... capture and carry with him a mass crowd, an event that seemed to confirm a shift in political sentiment here.”¹⁷⁹ Kenyatta was astounded, if not shocked, that the crowd had failed to applaud his speech. “‘Why are you not applauding?’ asked the aged President after he had announced at a May Rally an increase in the national minimum wage. ‘Kidogo! Kidogo!’ shouted the crowd, using a word in the Kiswahili language that means small or tiny. Other members of the crowd in the port of Mombasa, Kenya’s second largest city, shouted a word meaning hunger.”¹⁸⁰ After briefly conferring with his top aides on the podium, Kenyatta revised the previously announced minimum wage, which he now stated would be close “to \$50 in the urban areas.” The crowd, pleased at this new figure, now applauded. But this impromptu new announcement was followed by a quick correction from the government, for indeed “there appeared to have been an error. In a clarification issued later by the national news agency, it was said that the new minimum monthly wage would be only 300 Kenya shillings, or about \$43 a month. This was only \$1.43 more than the prevailing minimum urban wage announced recently by the government.”¹⁸¹ As further evidence of the erosion of support for Kenyatta at this time, “the crowd was continually quiet as the President spoke.”

A few weeks later, Kenyatta staged an impromptu military parade through the streets of Nairobi. This was a deliberate show of force, “show of the flag.” During this parade, “jet fighters roared low and hundreds of troops paraded through the city ... in an unannounced display of might.” This was Kenyatta’s reaction to “tensions aroused by recent terrorist bombings and the murder of a dissident legislator. The display was accompanied by precautionary movements of riot police through the capital. Mr. Kenyatta saluted the parading soldiers and drove in an open car past silent crowds.”¹⁸² The intensity of the political tension in the country had reached a point that threatened the very survival

¹⁷⁹ *New York Times* (May 2, 1975), p. 4.

¹⁸⁰ *New York Times* (May 2, 1975), p. 4.

¹⁸¹ *New York Times* (May 2, 1975), p. 4.

¹⁸² *New York Times* (May 22, 1975), p. 10. Also see, Daniel Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963–2011*, p. 118.

of Kenyatta's presidency. Not surprisingly, there were "unconfirmed reports" at this time, which suggested "that a SAS unit was flown in during disturbances in March 1975 following the assassination of MP Josiah Kariuki, an often outspoken opponent of the government."¹⁸³

Lacking effective support from a largely moribund KANU, and his hold on the government threatened by events surrounding the murder of Kariuki, Kenyatta found ready aggressive support in the GEMA (Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association). The initial aims of this organization, formed in early 1970s, were: "to preserve the traditional customs of the three tribes among members who had gone to the big towns and forgotten culture." Thus, GEMA billed itself in the initial years as a "cultural organization whose aim is to bring about greater unity among its members, promote greater understanding and boost ... cultural and sports activities."¹⁸⁴ The initial leadership of this organization was dominated by politicians, including GEMA members of the Cabinet. This gave way to business tycoons who were technically not politicians. These included Njenga Karume (Chairman), Duncan Ndegwa (Vice Chairman), Kihika Kimani (Organizing Secretary), Mwangi Mathai (Nairobi Chairman). Almost as soon as it was founded, GEMA's main objectives switched from cultural to political. There were no mammoth campaigns to advance the Kikuyu culture or bemoan its loss among the urban dwellers. By 1975, one of its key political objectives, as elaborated by its leaders, was to forge political unity among its members and thus avert the dreaded rise of opposition to Kenyatta within Kikuyuland. In rallies in GEMA strongholds, Njenga Karume "warned his audiences against forces out to divide the Kikuyu people, and that other Kenya tribes were looking forward to the moment the Kikuyu people disintegrated and split up and were only too anxious for this to happen." GEMA was thus intent on holding onto the post-*Uhuru* gains by its members. Further, the organization was seen by "non-GEMA observers" as driven by a strong desire to "preserve the political leadership which Gema people have acquired within Kenya."¹⁸⁵ At the time of Kariuki's murder, GEMA was without doubt, "the only well organized mass movement in Kenya," and also the "most influential single organisation within KANU."

¹⁸³Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, p. 156.

¹⁸⁴*The Weekly Review* (May 19, 1975), p. 4.

¹⁸⁵*The Weekly Review* (May 19, 1975), p. 6.

Its leaders were elected to positions of leadership in many of the KANU's branches in Central and Rift Valley provinces. Some of these leaders, like Kihika Kimani, in turn ended up in the Parliament.

As the political tensions rose in the country over Kariuki's murder, GEMA mounted a counter-offensive against all those suspected of disloyalty to Kenyatta and his government. Led by Kihika Kimani, GEMA-affiliated politicians held rallies in the Rift Valley to denounce what they saw as plotters against Kenyatta's government. Kihika Kimani "singled out four districts in Kenya as the targets of the rumors—Nyeri, Kiambu, Muranga, and Nyandarua." He also "accused University students, among others, of going 'as far as boasting that they can overthrow the present government for a better one.'" This infuriated Kihika Kimani since there was no better government "than the one which is now under Mzee Kenyatta."¹⁸⁶ Even before the Select Committee presented its report to the Parliament, GEMA furiously denounced what it saw as malicious rumors linking Kenyatta and Mbiu Koinange to Kariuki's murder.

The rumours according to Kimani, are that President Kenyatta, Mr. Mbiyu Koinange, the Minister of State in the President's Office, and the Kenya Government were behind Kariuki's murder. "Who other than insane persons can go around bars telling people that Kenyatta and Mbiyu are responsible for the brutal murder of JM?"¹⁸⁷

The Select Committee was condemned at these meetings. Its members were "referred to by one of the speakers as 'a bunch of rogues.'"

Three themes emerged as central to GEMA initiatives at this time: to drum up general support for Kenyatta; denounce any opposition to Kenyatta as being from disgruntled and failed politicians supported by communists; and to seek to maintain the unity of the Kikuyu (and by extension, Embu and Meru) behind Kenyatta. "For Gema and its members the rumours about Kariuki's death which have been circulating around the country are particularly pernicious, for they are, according to Gema, aimed at dividing the Kikuyu by pitting Muranga, Nyeri and Nyandarua people against Kiambu people."¹⁸⁸ To be able to achieve the

¹⁸⁶ *The Weekly Review* (May 5, 1975), p. 4.

¹⁸⁷ *The Weekly Review* (May 5, 1975), p. 4.

¹⁸⁸ *The Weekly Review* (May 19, 1975), p. 6.

desired iron clad Kikuyu unity, it was vital to avoid discussing questions related to class or the accumulation of wealth by the elite in Kikuyuland. To do so, was seen as a divisive strategy fomented by communists and envious politicians from other ethnic groups in the country. Thus, to be a good Kikuyu, as seen by GEMA, was to support without question, the prevailing social and economic status quo in the country and especially in Kikuyuland.

By the end of 1975, many of the office holders in GEMA, “did not hide their ethnic nationalism” in their speeches and pronouncements on the national political stage. Contained in their actions and utterances at this time, was an unbearable swagger of “tribal triumphalism” that led them into believing that they had a “natural right” to rule and run the country. This posture did much to alienate the rest of the country from GEMA and what it was seen to represent.

The avowed aim of GEMA, after 1975, was to ensure that Kenyatta was succeeded by another Kikuyu as President of Kenya. “The GEMA group wanted a Gikuyu to succeed Kenyatta and at one point did not hide its ethnic nationalism.” To be able to rally support within Kikuyuland for this venture, GEMA officials tapped into “memories of Mau Mau.”¹⁸⁹ These memories were deliberately invoked in order to provide a veritable rationale for permanently holding on to the political power in the country by the GEMA group. On this question of invoking the memory of Mau Mau, it is worth pointing out that,

the Right has reinvented Mau Mau both to maintain the Kikuyu’s compliance and also to justify its dominance on the national stage. Since the Kikuyu elite is involved in its own struggle on the national level, it needs a weapon of prestige to justify its dominance. That weapon is Mau Mau. It need hardly be emphasized that no registry of former key loyalists has been kept nor has there been any backlash against loyalists. As a result, any Kikuyu elite can, on a general level, identify himself with Mau Mau to justify his or her claim to dominance. This general and strategic identification with the revolt does not mean that the elite has embraced former guerillas and their movement.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 528.

¹⁹⁰W.O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of A Peasant Revolt*, pp. 172–173.

Regarding the future, leaders of GEMA spearheaded what came to be known as the “Change the Constitution Movement.” What did this entail? The principal aim of this movement, Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng would later write, was “to make assurance double sure that the Presidency would not slip out of the hands of the Family after Kenyatta’s demise. The organizers of the Change the Constitution ... were all members of the Family. They included Mungai, Karume, Kihika Kimani, Gichuru, Angaine, and Ngei.”¹⁹¹ The Family, as Karimi and Ochieng explained, referred to “the group around the President” and not just his blood relatives. There were also “members by virtue of financial or other interests.”

In order to safeguard their wealth and advantages gained during Kenyatta’s presidency, the Family had, by 1976, worked on a secret plan that would have required Kenyatta “to retire in early 1977, following the (abortive) party elections planned for March. A prominent politician, Dr. Njoroge Mungai, was tipped ... to take over as Kenya’s second President.”¹⁹² This top-secret plan failed to materialize in part because of Mungai’s defeat in the elections of 1974. He would later be nominated to the Parliament after his sister, Mrs. Jemimah Gecaga, “stepped down as a nominated MP so that Mungai could be nominated in her seat.” Mungai’s defeat by Dr. Muthiora, effectively weakened his claim to national leadership, especially through the KANU at that time. Against this background, GEMA nonetheless launched a determined and noisy effort to change the constitution to deny Moi ascending to the presidency in the event of Kenyatta’s death. As Kihika Kimani saw it, the prevailing provisions in the constitution were “all wrong” in allowing the Vice President to automatically “assume the Presidency ... in the event of the reigning President retiring, becoming physically or mentally incapacitated or in the case of his death.”¹⁹³ In GEMA’s projection, there would be a constitutional amendment denying the Vice President an automatic ascend to power. Instead, interim power would be shared among several ministers. GEMA was aware that its constituency would

¹⁹¹Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession* (Nairobi: Transafrica, 1980), p. 18.

¹⁹²Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*, p. 17.

¹⁹³Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*, p. 20.

be assured of holding on to power were this amendment to pass since its members were dominant in the Cabinet.

Political rallies organized by Kihika Kimani in GEMA's name, were held in the Rift Valley and beyond, to publicize this matter of the necessity of changing the constitution. On September 26, 1976, a huge rally was held in Nakuru. The rally was attended by, "more than 20 MPS and well known political personages. They included Mungai, Gichuru, Angaine, Paul Ngei, Njenga Karume, John Konchellah, George Anyona, S. Mageto, Mark Bosire, E. Kariuki, A. Rosana, and Dr. Joseph Masinde. Also present was Ramogi Achieng Oneko who rejoined KANU on that occasion but did not offer an opinion on the Change-the-Constitution proposal."¹⁹⁴ At another rally held in Limuru on October 3, 1976, Kihika Kimani denied that this movement to change the constitution was "tantamount to an attack on anybody."

This political scheming, while openly favorable to the Kikuyu, went counter to Njonjo's own formulation for the future leadership of the country. Together with Kenyatta, Njonjo had long settled on Moi to be the next President of Kenya. It was therefore not surprising when Njonjo reacted angrily by issuing a dire warning to GEMA that it was "a criminal offence for any person to encompass, imagine, devise or intend the death of the President." Njonjo added, for emphasis, that, "the sentence for such an offence was death and it was mandatory sentence to boot."¹⁹⁵ Njonjo had hoped that this severe warning would serve to deter GEMA from any further pronouncements on this matter. He was wrong for GEMA "did not seem to take Njonjo's warning seriously, at least initially." Instead, they sought and were granted an audience with Kenyatta. At the meeting, held at State House in Nakuru, "Kenyatta reportedly gave them a scolding." Still, they went ahead and held another meeting pushing the same issue in Meru on October 10, 1976. Here, Kihika Kimani stated how valuable GEMA had been to the government in the recent past. GEMA had stood up and supported Kenyatta and the government "during the JM Kariuki affair when the nation faced a crisis." Also, for the first time, it was hinted openly that this whole endeavor was "in reality after the person who was at that time occupying

¹⁹⁴ Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*, p. 20.

¹⁹⁵ Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*, p. 22.

the Vice President's office, namely, Daniel arap Moi."¹⁹⁶ Thus, this movement to change the constitution was guided by the fear "of the Presidency slipping out of the hands of 'certain' leaders of GEMA."

On October 11, 1976, Kenyatta convened a Cabinet meeting at the State House in Nakuru to once again deal with this matter. "He is reported to have rebuked members who had taken part in meetings demanding the constitutional amendment. The President went out of his way to impress it upon his Ministers that Njonjo's ruling was final and if anybody repeated the Change-the-Constitution demand he faced a serious risk."¹⁹⁷ Kenyatta's warning was later carried by the government controlled Kenya News Agency. This admonition by Kenyatta effectively marked "the end of the Change-the-Constitution movement." To be sure, "below the surface" several leaders of GEMA continued in their bid to change Kenyatta's mind on this matter to no avail.

Kihika Kimani who was without doubt the "spearhead of the Change-the-Constitution movement," was a rich and influential farmer and businessman from Nakuru. Although a Kikuyu, he had "lived all his life in the Rift Valley. Born in South Baringo, he was educated up to Form II standard mainly through correspondence." He was also "the founder and chairman of the highly successful Ngwataniro Company Ltd. which owns more than shs.27 million worth of properties and nearly 100,000 acres of farm land in Njoro, Laikipia, Solai, Mau Narok, Nakuru and Elmentaita areas."¹⁹⁸ Kihika Kimani was also well known to the British intelligence services at this time. These intelligence services identified him as "a tribalist who was long known as a staunch supporter of Kenyatta." He was also "chairman of Ngwataniro Land Company from which he milked considerable funds."¹⁹⁹ His election as the "KANU district chairman in Nakuru had been ... brutally rigged." These intelligence services also noted that Kihika Kimani, "later developed differences with Njoroge Mungai, leader" of the Change-the-Constitution movement. These differences had "developed over what Kimani felt to be Mungai's cowardice in avoiding a direct confrontation with the group's political enemies (Mungai had opted out of putting up a

¹⁹⁶Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*, p. 27.

¹⁹⁷Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*, p. 35.

¹⁹⁸*The Weekly Review* (May 5, 1975), p. 6.

¹⁹⁹FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

candidate against Moi for the KANU Vice Presidency in the proposed KANU elections).²⁰⁰

This jostling for position, assumed an air of urgency on part of Moi's detractors because of what was rightly perceived as serious deterioration in Kenyatta's physical and mental health. GEMA and its supporters (open and hidden), sought to put in place a mechanism for ensuring that their economic interests would be forever protected through control of political power in the country. Like in the past, political power would be used to secure, advance, and then protect economic interests. In the period after 1975, the inner circle sought and succeeded in controlling access to Kenyatta. There were very few people allowed access to Kenyatta. At this period, several MPs complained of their inability to get an appointment to see Kenyatta. Also, Kenyatta now curtailed even further his visits to the Parliament. When he showed up, he resorted to lecturing the MPs "like a headmaster about policy," even about their sex lives.²⁰¹ At such forums, MPs rarely, if ever, opposed him. They were expected to agree to what he had said. Thus, even when the MPs met the President there was no real dialogue at this time. The same was true of all those multitudes of groups who journeyed to Gatundu to pay homage to Kenyatta under a variety of pretexts. "Hundreds of people," wrote *The Guardian*, "do see the President every month, but the meetings are formalized. A delegation of say, cotton growers will visit the President at one of his homes, thank him for what he has done and give him a cheque for one of his charities. The President makes a short speech exhorting them to work hard and foster unity, and they end with some traditional dancing."²⁰²

As "Kenyatta's health was starting to fail him," Ndegwa remembered, "some people took advantage" of his "old age and crowded him." It became impossible "for others to see Mzee. They started to own him."²⁰³ Perhaps more crucial for the country was the fact that Kenyatta in effect ceased to actively govern. Overseas publications were quick to publicize this turn of events. "The ageing Kenyatta," observed *The Sunday Times*, "is losing his grip. His ministers still attend Cabinet

²⁰⁰FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

²⁰¹*The Guardian* (April 4, 1977), p. 3. In April 1977, Kenyatta did not show up for the "ceremonial State opening" of the Parliament. See, *The Guardian* (April 6, 1977), p. 9.

²⁰²*The Guardian* (April 4, 1977), p. 3.

²⁰³Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta's Struggles: My Story*, p. 524.

meetings in pinstripe suits, but now they are no more than formal occasions. A few senior civil servants and a couple of able ministers centred on the Attorney General,” *The Sunday Times* concluded, “constitute the Government of Kenya. Day-to-day administration rests with a handful of barons, the provincial commissioners—all Kenyatta’s men.”²⁰⁴

The British intelligence services were, as expected, quite aware of these changes in Kenyatta’s physical and mental health and also in the shifting centers of effective power in the country’s administration. It was clear to these intelligence services that in spite of Kenyatta’s

occasional decisive intervention on some major issues, the impression grows that he is progressively losing his grip on the reins. He now tends to take major decisions without warning and without proper consultation. His mind appears affected by occasional spells of religious aberration and irrationality. He devotes much of his time to his private affairs and his age is making him increasingly reluctant to tackle difficult problems.²⁰⁵

Further, Kenyatta was “more easily tired than formerly and can no longer concentrate on a long meeting.” These intelligence services also noted that Kenyatta’s speech had “become slower, particularly in English,” and that he sometimes had “difficulty forming his words.” He was also “very shortsighted and” thus unable “to read normal sized type.”

After 1975, the British High Commission in Nairobi routinely forwarded to London reports on Kenyatta’s capacity to govern and provide effective leadership. Stanley Fingland, the last British High Commissioner to serve in Kenya during Kenyatta’s presidency, found him to be “a burly, well-tailored, dignified figure still with a remarkable physical robustness for his advanced age, but nonetheless in his decline. The passing of years,” Fingland wrote to London, “had brought about the sad circumstance that his declining mental powers—still fortunately not fully obvious to the bulk of the population—had become the main obstacle to the proper government of Kenya. He ruled, but did not govern; and while he was there—not withstanding the efforts of a group of Ministers and senior officials to keep day-to-day government running—no-one else could be seen to take over and give the effective leadership

²⁰⁴ *The Sunday Times* (August 10, 1975), p. 11.

²⁰⁵ FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

of government which Kenya needs.”²⁰⁶ As Fingland saw it, Kenyatta had “fortunately died suddenly before the personal respect in which he was held could be eroded by any further serious and open decline in the standards of government or naked struggle for the succession.”²⁰⁷

In the wake of Kariuki’s death, Kenyatta became pre-occupied with political and economic areas of possible dissent within Kikuyuland. Fingland observed that Kenyatta’s behavior “in his last years became increasingly that of an old-fashioned Kikuyu tribal chief.”²⁰⁸ He was called upon to settle disputes and provide channels of opportunities for development to multiple contending groups and individuals. Calls to ethnic unity negotiated through vast oath-taking ceremonies, some held at Kenyatta’s home in Gatundu, had been unable to fully resolve the economic divide that still hung menacingly over the ridges of Kikuyuland. The principal divide was, as always, between the descendants of loyalists and the Mau Mau guerillas and activists.

Counter-insurgency tactics by the British during the Emergency had left a divide that was not easy to erase within Kikuyuland. Post-*Uhuru* economic and political policies adopted by the Kenyatta government had, if anything, exacerbated this sensitive divide. During the Emergency, Kinutha Macharia and Muigai Kanyua have written,

loyalists were able to acquire more land and to humiliate those who were not loyal to the colonial administration ... they obtained favorable decisions during land consolidation by their participation in coffee societies and by obtaining loans for agricultural development. The loyalists ironically had a head start on economic and social participation at the expense of their peasantry counterparts. The latter were either still in the forest or in detention until the early 1960s. This explains why the gap between loyalists in Central Province and the peasantry in terms of social economic status has never narrowed to date.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

²⁰⁷FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

²⁰⁸FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

²⁰⁹Kinuthia Macharia and Muigai Kanyua, *The Social Context of the Mau Mau Movement in Kenya, 1952–1960* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), p. 4.

It is the sons (and occasionally daughters) of loyalists and all those associated with them through marriage, who “were able to fill key government positions after independence.” Although there have been some changes “in the last ten years, the trend has been that the descendants of the former loyalists tend to have more inherited land property, generally and more educated and, as such, are in most of the key leadership positions locally and nationally.”²¹⁰

There was a state of “officially imposed” silence on matters of class divide within Kikuyuland during Kenyatta’s presidency. The same was true of the divide between the descendants of loyalists and those of former Mau Mau guerillas and activists. The “gospel of forgiveness,” which became “the official policy after independence,” Kinuthia Macharia and Muigai Kanyua pointed out, enabled Kenyatta to become “more comfortable with the loyalists and the landed Kikuyu reinforcing the socio-economic positions even after independence.” Under this policy of “forgiveness, which Kinuthia Macharia and Muigai Kanyua contend amounted to ‘prescribed amnesia,’” the affected people “were supposed to forget all atrocities that had taken place in the lost decade, forgive those who killed one’s relatives or those who took one’s family land and move on as if nothing had happened that put one in a disadvantaged social position.”²¹¹ The ultimate impact of Kenyatta’s policies was the occupation of key senior positions in the civil service and even private companies by children of the loyalists. “The entrenchment of these elites (most of them descendants of loyalists), dominated the Kenyatta regime (1963–1978). Through social class reproduction this continued,” into the Moi regime as well as the Kibaki regime.²¹²

This policy of “prescribed amnesia,” was never fully endorsed throughout Kikuyuland even during Kenyatta’s presidency. While it is true that many Kikuyu did not “openly raise these issues, quietly they knew what was happening and whenever an occasion arose, subtle references were usually brought up. People did not totally forget but they played along for the sake of their own peace and that of their children

²¹⁰Kinuthia Macharia and Muigai Kanyua, *The Social Context of the Mau Mau Movement in Kenya, 1952–1960*, p. 5.

²¹¹Kinuthia Macharia and Muigai Kanyua, *The Social Context of the Mau Mau Movement in Kenya, 1952–1960*, p. 135.

²¹²Kinuthia Macharia and Muigai Kanyua, *The Social Context of the Mau Mau Movement in Kenya, 1952–1960*, p. 136.

as well as their neighbors.”²¹³ The anguish caused by the persistence of social and economic inequalities within Kikuyuland, festered below the surface amidst all the calls for unity in face of alleged threats from other ethnic groups. Tensions arising from these inequalities, and then the determined push of GEMA supporters to hold onto power in the country, occupied Kenyatta’s attention in the last few years of his presidency.

The rise in political tensions within the country, and more specifically in Kikuyuland after Kariuki’s murder, became a matter of grave concern for Britain given the scale and texture of its economic and political investment in the country. It is the future implications of these tensions that concerned Britain in light of Kenyatta’s physical and mental deterioration. Pointedly, what would Kenya’s political structure and orientation look like after Kenyatta’s death? This specific question preoccupied the efforts of the British intelligence services in the last years of Kenyatta’s presidency.

An overriding objective of the British intelligence services was to attempt to determine how these long-simmering political tensions would be expressed after Kenyatta’s death. Was it possible to see a re-emergence of political radicalism in the country after Kenyatta? Would such radicalism be allied to the Soviet Union or People’s Republic of China? Who would be the possible leaders of such radicalism in the country? In other words, did Britain have much to be afraid of about the Kenya that was likely to emerge after Kenyatta?

Starting with Moi, the British intelligence services noted, with satisfaction, that there was no possibility of him being allied to any pro-socialist movement. Since entering politics in 1955, as the Rift Valley African representative, he had been consistently anti-Soviet and anti-socialist. There was nonetheless some worry expressed by these intelligence services about his temperament. “Cunning rather than clever,” he was also “impatient and impulsive.” Further, he was “somewhat inarticulate, particularly as leader of government business in the National Assembly,” and had often been “outmanouevred in debates ... his English is only fair, as is his Swahili” In spite of this draw back, these intelligence services concluded that, he was “a tall and rather imposing man who at least looks like a national leader.” He was also “much more industrious

²¹³Kinuthia Macharia and Muigai Kanyua, *The Social Context of the Mau Mau Movement in Kenya, 1952–1960*, p. 137.

than most ministers.”²¹⁴ And then there was the matter of personal corruption. Although in the past Moi had been viewed as incorrupt, he had “now become deeply involved in large business ventures.” Moi’s political base was still among the “loose Kalenjin tribal grouping” mostly in the Rift Valley province. His leadership of the Kalenjin “had been disputed by Toweett and Seroney.” The “Change the Constitution Movement” had been his most serious political challenge since it nearly closed the door on his ambitions to be President of Kenya. These intelligence services concluded that, “Moi probably commands more support in the country as a whole.” Also, “although many are critical of his capability, most support him as a non-Kikuyu figurehead.”²¹⁵

This matter of Moi’s abilities occupied the attention of British intelligence services and High Commissioners in Kenya toward the end of Kenyatta’s presidency. All submissions to London did not fail to mention his legendary impatience and impulsiveness. As a result, “there must be some doubts as to how he would react to supreme power, particularly if he broke loose of his Kikuyu advisers and surrounded himself with a Kalenjin entourage.”²¹⁶ While Moi seemed “to respect the British,” he had recently “been fiercely resentful of British press criticism” of Kenyatta’s government. He did not respond well to such criticism. In his submission to London, Edward Peck noted that although Moi was “lacking intellectually,” and was “impetuous and stubborn,” he was nonetheless “a man of comparative integrity,” who stomped “the country conscientiously and keeps in touch with the people.”²¹⁷ Peck reminded London that the Rift Valley, the base of Moi’s political support, was “one third in area of all Kenya and still largely the region of the great European farms.” This province formed “a buffer between the Kikuyu and the Wa-Kamba of central Kenya to the east, and the Luo and the Abaluhya and the Kisii in the west. Moi,” Peck concluded, “could be a man to be reckoned with in a period of transition, but the Kikuyu will be determined ultimately to keep levers of power in their own hands.”²¹⁸

²¹⁴FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

²¹⁵FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

²¹⁶FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²¹⁷MAC 71/8/86 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Tribalism in Kenya.

²¹⁸MAC 71/8/86 (Durham, UK: Durham University Archives/Malcolm MacDonald Papers) Tribalism in Kenya.

Throughout Kenyatta's presidency, Britain looked at Njonjo as a key asset at the very center of power. It was generally known that Njonjo, among other things, was very helpful to the British High Commission in Nairobi "in cases involving British subjects." He was resolutely anti-socialist in every conceivable way and "a staunch Kikuyu nationalist and a member of an old influential family."²¹⁹ Here was a "tribalist who was also very British." Njonjo remained sensitive "about his presumed links with Britain" and tended to react with dismay and even anger at "any failure on" the part of Britain "which might injure his position such as the delay in sending emergency supplies of arms in 1976."²²⁰ The British intelligence services concluded that within Kenya, Njonjo's enemies expected "him to flee to Britain if his position is threatened." If this were to occur, "Moi might feel his absence keenly." Indeed, Njonjo's influence in the first two years of Moi's presidency remained enormous and seemingly unchallenged. By 1979, Njonjo was "widely respected and somewhat feared." Still, these intelligence services pointed out that for all of his power and influence, Njonjo remained "without political base of his own" and also had "no electoral appeal."²²¹

Mwai Kibaki on the other hand was seen by the British intelligence services as being "perhaps alone of the present Government" with the "capacity to appeal to ordinary Kenyans as a trans-tribal leader although his will power is sometimes questioned."²²² Although he "used to drink heavily," he had "adopted more temperate habits after he underwent a serious operation in London in July 1976, from which he seems to have made a complete recovery."²²³ Kibaki was seen by these intelligence services as "probably the cleverest man in the Cabinet and an excellent speaker." One of his major political liabilities was what could be loosely referred to as "lack of necessary drive, courage and ambition to reach the very top." He was nonetheless an outstanding Minister of Finance and thus "responsible as much as anyone for Kenya's continued economic success." If he continued to perform with distinction as Minister of Finance, these intelligence services concluded, "he may yet become

²¹⁹FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

²²⁰FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²²¹FCO 31/2578 (London: National Archives) Memo from British High Commissioner in Nairobi.

²²²FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²²³FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

President, or failing that, a Kikuyu Prime Minister under a non-Kikuyu President.”²²⁴

The British intelligence services believed that if and when Mwai Kibaki became the President, he was most likely to favor “a loosening of ties with Britain and stronger links with the rest of EEC and the Nordic countries.” More crucial was the observation by these intelligence services that Mwai Kibaki might also extend this diversification “to an expansion of economic relationship with the Soviet Union, which he has advocated.” Also for purely economic reasons, he “might favour acceptance of Soviet arms if this enabled Kenya to acquire sufficient arms without excessive economic burden.”²²⁵ Further, Mwai Kibaki might “also be a leader willing to experiment in the Soviet direction in the confidence that he knew how to handle the relationship. He might respond to popular pressures from Nyeri District to move leftward to attract more support as a future President.” Lastly, these intelligence services noted that Mwai Kibaki had “some links with left-wing Asian opinion and also with at least one of the ex-KPU leaders.” He was also “closer to Tanzanian views than most of his colleagues.”²²⁶

There was a lot of attention paid to Munyua Waiyaki, the Foreign Minister in Kenyatta’s government. He came from “a leading Kiambu Kikuyu family,” he was the grandson of “a famous chief who was killed fighting the British.” He had been educated in South Africa at Adam’s College and then at Fort Hare University (1947–1950), attaining a BSc in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. Later he went to St. Andrews University to study medicine (1952–1957). Subsequently, he established a Private Practice as a medical doctor in colonial Kenya in 1959.²²⁷ According to the British intelligence services, Munyua Waiyaki had “been a better though more radical Foreign Minister” than his predecessor, Njoroge Mungai. He was “industrious, outward looking and determined to see Kenya play a more active part in African affairs.” Also, he was “intelligent and open minded, well-disposed towards Britain but ready to argue his case where his views differ from,” those of Britain. Of particular

²²⁴FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

²²⁵FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²²⁶FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²²⁷FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

importance was the fact that he remained “very popular in the slum areas of his constituency where the poorest people in Nairobi live.”

What worried Britain about Munyua Waiyaki was his radical disposition. He had “both a radical background and” was “now enjoying a favourable treatment in Soviet comment on Kenya.” As Foreign Minister, he “came into contact with leaders in other African states more than his colleagues.” On some occasions, according to these intelligence services, Tanzanians had “described him as ‘microphone revolutionary’ ... as a result of his attempts to appear more radical than they over southern Africa.”²²⁸ His radical views were well known even in Kenya at the time. He had been consistent in pressing for “isolation of and confrontation with South Africa as the answer to the question of apartheid and liberation in southern Africa. So hawkish” were his views on this matter that he was “the only Kenyan cabinet minister to come close to endorsing the use of Russian and Cuban armed forces in the southern African arena as a weapon for liberation.”²²⁹ On the other hand, Njonjo had, as late as 1978, called on African countries, including Kenya, to establish diplomatic relations with South Africa still under apartheid rule. Njonjo had invited Dr. Christian Barnard, the renowned heart transplant specialist from South Africa, to visit Kenya as his guest. Barnard later gave media interviews in which he defended South Africa pointing out, for example, “that South Africa was being criticised for many sins of which many other African countries were guilty.” Speaking in defense of his friend, Njonjo called on African countries “to send ambassadors to South Africa.” This pronouncement by Njonjo, while regrettable, was actually expected.

Munyua Waiyaki, as Foreign Minister, responded to Njonjo’s statements with disgust and anger. He was opposed to any dialogue with South Africa: dialogue with South Africa would take place over his “dead body.” He threatened to resign as Foreign Minister were Kenya to engage in dialogue with South Africa, let alone establish diplomatic relations. His reaction, observed *The Weekly Review*, “though surprising in its forcefulness, was in some respects predictable.” As Foreign Minister, he had “held to a very strong position on southern Africa for a number of years.”

²²⁸FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²²⁹*The Weekly Review* (August 18, 1978), p. 3.

In July 1978, on the eve of Kenyatta's death, the British intelligence services concluded that, "the main hopes of the Soviet Union however probably lie with Dr. Munyua Waiyaki, the Foreign Minister."²³⁰ The basis for this conclusion was what these intelligence services saw as Munyua Waiyaki's radical disposition and his history of supporting radical positions in the country. This included his earlier close political alliance with Oginga Odinga. His family was seen to have had "considerable connections with the Soviet Union. Some of his brothers and their friends had Soviet or East German medical training although they attended West German and American colleges also." At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Munyua Waiyaki was alleged to have surrounded himself with radicals. "Lower down in the Ministry there are officials who have served in Moscow, one of whom at least has retained dubious connections."²³¹

Other members of the Cabinet did not seem to worry Britain. They were mostly "an unscrupulous lot," corrupt and unlikely to be attracted to radical politics in the country. This included Ngei considered by these intelligence services to be about the most corrupt member of Kenyatta's Cabinet. "The other Kamba, Daniel Mutinda," was largely unknown and was "more than likely to lose his seat at the next election." From Nyanza Province, there were the "'Hippo Point' Luos, Ogutu and Omolo-Okero." They retained their positions due to "Njonjo's protection and could not easily survive fair elections against Odinga's men." Only Ouko from Nyanza Province "might be expected to follow Kibaki's more radical line." Toweett's interest was limited to wresting "the Kalenjin leadership from Moi," while Koinange was only "concerned with Kiambu interests."²³²

Julius Gikonyo Kiano, from Murang'a District was another Minister who was unlikely to be attracted to radical politics. Since entering national politics in 1958, after a brief stint as Lecturer in Economics and Constitutional Law at the Royal College (later University of Nairobi), he had consistently supported the conservative wing of the KANU.

²³⁰FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²³¹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya. The British intelligence services added that, "Peter Muigai Kenyatta, one of his Assistant Ministers, is motivated by personal gain but the other Minister Kassim Mwamzandi has given the impression of being well disposed toward the Soviet Union."

²³²FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

To this end, he had been an unyielding political adversary of Bildad Kaggia and his radical politics in Murang'a (and beyond). According to the British intelligence services, Kiano was "rather insignificant looking and somewhat lacking in self-confidence but affable." As Minister of Commerce and Industry, he had "been sensible on the Asian issue" and was "friendly to Britain." In June 1966, "he had his first wife, an American negress who used to browbeat him, deported,"²³³ after being deprived of her "Kenya citizenship by an order made by the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Daniel arap Moi." The order, published in the Kenya Gazette, gave "the reasons for deprivation to be that Mrs. Kiano, who was born in the United States, had 'shown herself by act and speech to be disloyal and disaffected towards Kenya.'"²³⁴ In July 1966, Kiano married Jane Mumbi "at her home in Tumutumumu ... in accordance with African customary law." This was followed by a huge reception for over one thousand people held at the Murang'a Country Club.²³⁵ Jane was seen by the British intelligence services to have emerged in quick order as Kiano's strongest and most durable political asset. Although Jane "was less educated than some other women's leaders," she rose to be "the most accomplished and ambitious of the Ministerial wives."

Assistant Ministers were not a source of great concern for Britain. The majority of them, according to British intelligence services, were "selected from a list of suggestions by the Provincial Commissioners to provide a well distributed political base for the government in the National Assembly." Only three Assistant Ministers, Kamwithi Munyi, John Keen and Burudi Nabwera, merited some attention. By July 1978, John Keen was no longer in the government, having been sacked by Kenyatta over the Parliamentary Select Committee's report on the murder of Kariuki. Still, he was seen as a "a truly radical politician strongly opposed to the regime and has considerable intelligence and ability." Burudi Nabwera, former Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, "was equally radical and more intelligent but much more calculating than the somewhat impulsive and passionate Keen."²³⁶ Both Keen and

²³³FCO31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

²³⁴*Daily Nation* (July 4, 1966), p. 5. The name of Kiano's African-American wife was Earnestine Hammond.

²³⁵*Daily Nation* (July 4, 1966), p. 5. British intelligence services reported that these festivities were followed by a "Christian wedding in 1970."

²³⁶FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

Nabwera did not have any coherent and formidable political framework to use in the advancement of their radical policies. They lacked structural resources and political organization on the ground to push their agenda. Thus, they were not seen by Britain as a political threat to the status quo. Kamwithi Munyi was, in July 1978, still serving in the government as an Assistant Minister for Power and Communications. He was from Embu and continued to play a prominent role in GEMA “which organizes political activity within the Kikuyu and their Embu and Meru associates.” In the estimation of the British intelligence services, Kamwithi Munyi was unlikely to embrace, let alone advocate radical policies. To be sure, he had, in his past, travelled widely in Socialist countries. “He went to the Soviet Union in January 1958 from the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Cairo the previous month and broadcast from time to time on Moscow Radio before returning to the ‘Kenya Office’ in Cairo. He later visited Czechoslovakia, North Vietnam, China, Bulgaria, East Germany, Cuba and Hungary and attended numerous conferences.” Still, these intelligence services concluded, rather uncharitably, that Kamwithi Munyi was “a woolly-minded buffoon and not clever enough to be the threat his long communist association might suggest.”²³⁷

Among the MPs, there were a few with either a worrisome radical past or currently engaged in political activities that made them susceptible to Soviet influence. At the top of the list was Dr. Frederick Masinde (Bungoma South). He was highly educated with “an M.Sc and Ph.D in economics obtained in the Soviet Union.” He also spoke fluent Russian. What was worrisome to these intelligence services was Dr. Masinde’s continued close association with the Soviet Union through their embassy in Nairobi. He was “the usual point of contact between MPs and Soviet officials and delegations.”²³⁸ Peter Oloo-Aringo (Alego), Dr. Kitonga (Kitui North), Dr. James Muriuki (Bahati, Nairobi), and Joseph Kamotho (Kangema), had what these intelligence services described as “radical connections or sympathies, some of whose views have been noted with approval by Radio Moscow recently.” While it was evident that Oloo-Aringo was “probably the most able of these,” he had “the disadvantage of being Luo.” Dr. Muriuki on the other hand was “very wild and woolly and his West German connection tend to counter

²³⁷FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²³⁸FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

his communist associations.” The threat posed by these radical MPs could not be easily dismissed. The danger here was that their opinions could start to sway the country toward radical and anti-Western policies. “This group’s role in questioning Kenya’s western alignment could begin to change public opinion and with the influence of the media thus change the climate in which a future government might operate.”²³⁹

How about the media? Was it a danger to the status quo? One of the major handicaps that the media faced in Kenya at this time was that journalism was “not a highly regarded profession in Kenya and most of the African journalists, as best of them is wont to lament, are not very influential personally.” There were no widely respected and dominant African journalists capable of swaying public opinion on an issue. The government had been careful not to allow the rise and growth of such unchecked and powerful African journalists. The Africanization process was steadily increasing the number of senior African journalists in the major newspapers. It was therefore important to pay close attention to their views and ideological inclinations. One such journalist was Henry Gathigira, editor of *The Standard*. In the past, the British intelligence services stated, he “had considerable communist connections. These included the presentation of Prague Radio’s Swahili programme, ‘Africa and the World’ in 1966.” Subsequently, he had become very “critical of Czechoslovakia in the Kenyan press.” Now, it seemed “unlikely that Gathigira” was “much influenced by his past.”²⁴⁰ The Soviet embassy in Nairobi, according to these intelligence services, was still interested in “cultivating” several Kenyan journalists, including James Kangwana, Director of the Voice of Kenya, who “in 1975-6 was being cultivated by a Soviet intelligence officer and paid a visit to the Soviet Union.” Currently, there was “Soviet interest also being shown in the Luo staff of the *Daily Nation* and in free lance writers such as Chege Mbiteru and Charles Kalundu.”²⁴¹

As expected, there was an assessment made by the British intelligence services on the universities in Kenya as possible centers of opposition to the status quo. At this time, the two main institutions were the University of Nairobi and its constituent college, Kenyatta

²³⁹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁴⁰FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁴¹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

University College. While “both were centres of militancy,” all of it was “not wholly political and” was “dislocated by tribal divisions and fear of police informers.” The department with most radical professors was “Geography ... with several Luo teachers led by Professor Simeon Ominde.” These Luo professors held “regular meetings with Odinga on his visits to Nairobi. They are probably more sympathetic to China than to the Soviet Union however.” The single most individual radical professor was Ngugi wa Thiong’o. He had been officially held in detention since January 1978.²⁴² Ngugi’s novel, *Petals of Blood*, “written in part in the Soviet Union, may become,” according to these intelligence services, “the inspiration of a future Kenyan revolution. It describes Kenya’s history in Marxist terms and ends with a revolution against the present system. But its Kikuyu setting may limit its effect on other tribes.”²⁴³ Micere Mugo, Ngugi’s colleague in the Department of Literature, was “perhaps the most intellectually distinguished of the radical women” and appeared to share his views. Another woman to watch, although not connected with the university at the time, was Chelagat Mutai. She was in July 1978 “at prison on a ‘political’ sentence.” It was speculated that she might “re-emerge either in education or the media if not further detained or intimidated by the regime.” Past experience, at least in the 1974 election of the “late Dr. Muthiora and Oloo-Aringo,” had provided “evidence of the influence of students in national politics.” Nonetheless, militancy emanating from the universities, while ever present, did not pose an imminent danger to the system. It remained amorphous, and indeed some of it was not aimed at advancing a radical agenda. There was lack of cohesion and focus partly due to “tribal divisions,” some deliberately cultivated by the regime. The detention of Ngugi had shaken his colleagues. Subsequently, many of them sought to distance themselves from radical activism.

There was no evidence of radical activism within the KANU by 1978. The party was moribund: “its headquarters have been run by only 3 staff plus a typist and a caretaker for several years.” This state of affairs, as already discussed, suited the political operations of the inner circle

²⁴² *The Weekly Review* (January 16, 1978), p. 5. The detention order was “dated January 6” and signed by the Permanent Secretary in the Vice President’s Office and Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr. N.S. Kungu.”

²⁴³ FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

around Kenyatta. Still, the British intelligence services were concerned about what they saw an infiltration of the KGB in the KANU HQ in Nairobi. "A Soviet KGB intelligence officer, A.N. Glashchenkov," apparently had, until recently, made "regular visits to the KANU HQ." Glashchenkov "spoke fluent Swahili and not only covered KANU HQ but also travelled up-country to cover Party Branch affairs for instance the Murang'a branch in December 1975 when Dr. Kiano's chairmanship was at risk. Glashchenkov's main contact at KANU HQ," these intelligence services continued, "was Peter Gicumbi, a Kikuyu from Kajiado who had first established a link with the Soviet Union through Odinga as an administrator for Soviet scholarships. Gicumbi made several visits to the Soviet Union including some after 1970."²⁴⁴ The British intelligence services were astounded to learn that the Director of Kenya Special Branch, was not aware of these activities by the KGB and Gicumbi at the KANU HQ, "however on further investigation they were found to be true and measures were eventually taken against Gicumbi and Glashchenkov." Gicumbi later provided some details of his activities at the KANU HQ. According to him, "many of the party's contacts with the Soviet Bloc parties were made directly through correspondence rather than via the Nairobi Embassies. A large volume of communist propaganda material was being received as late as 1976."²⁴⁵

It was disconcerting to the British intelligence services that none of the major Western powers had any on-going contact with the KANU HQ. By 1975, corrective actions were taken and "British and American contacts were made and welcomed as a defence against KANU HQs apparent alignment with communist states." What now worried these intelligence services was that "this blind spot in Kenya Special Branch coverage," suggested "that there may be other areas of Soviet subversion which are as yet unknown" to them. Beyond this, the only other official within the KANU hierarchy who might cause some trouble was Sammy Maina, "a long standing and unscrupulous official of the important Nairobi District Branch ... he attended a Soviet intelligence course in 1962 when he was associated with Kamwithi Munyi and Dr. Waiyaki." These intelligence services were gratified by the fact that Sammy Maina

²⁴⁴FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁴⁵FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

had “never been able to rise above his early level although he has remained notorious as an agitator.” Now, he supported Mungai.

By 1978, the political situation in the country was at once calm, yet potentially explosive. There had been no organized opposition party or group in the country since 1969 when the KPU was banned. Yet beneath the veneer of orderliness and political tranquility, there was widespread resentment toward the government. What worried Britain was the existence of seemingly strident political factions within Kikuyuland, some of them strongly resentful of Kenyatta’s government. “The succession question,” had “overlaid the rift among the Kikuyu which appeared in 1974–75,” but, there remained, “an underlying tension between the ruling group and those below and between Kiambu and Northern Kikuyu. This rift,” extended “to the Army and the Police.”²⁴⁶

The British intelligence services believed that the “expansion of the armed forces” was “likely to dilute professional attitudes and an increase in the proportion of Kikuyu could also make the soldiers politically minded. In such circumstances, another major political murder (Kibaki being the obvious target if he shows too much ambition) would provoke a coup.” While such a coup “might initially be controlled by the senior officers,” these intelligence services feared that “the Ethiopian and Uganda experience” showed “that the lower ranks might soon gain control.” This was a matter of strategic concern because “unlike the British-trained Kikuyu” that Britain dealt with regularly, “these lower Kikuyu are likely to remain anti-British for they showed such attitudes during the 1975 crisis.”²⁴⁷

Why this increase in hostility toward Britain in the country and even within Kikuyuland? The primary reason for this development lay in the intimate linkage between Britain and the government’s “repressive measures.” The implementation of most of this repression appears to have been “conducted by the pro-British Njonjo.” By the mid-1970s, in the uncertain period before the death of Kenyatta, this intimate linkage now carried with it some uncomfortable political risks for Britain. “The impression that such” repressive “measures are supported by the British Government and that we are ready to put down an uprising by

²⁴⁶FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁴⁷FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

military force, coupled with the conspicuous presence of British security assistance, have fostered a considerable resentment against Britain, particularly among Kikuyu opponents of the regime.”²⁴⁸

Within the Parliament, Charles Rubia had emerged by 1978 as a prominent Kikuyu opponent of the government. Also, he was generally seen as the “the leader of opposition in Parliament.” This opposition was hardly viable, especially after the arrest and detention of Shikuku and Seroney within the compound of the Parliament in 1975. The British intelligence services of course knew that Rubia had been a “Home Guard member during the Emergency,” and that this was held against him in some political circles in the country. He had, however, been “an efficient Mayor of Nairobi who resisted unreasonable Africanisation.” Subsequently, he had entered national politics and elected MP for Starehe in Nairobi “and appointed Assistant Minister for Education in 1969.” Although he was reelected as MP in 1974, he was dropped from the government.²⁴⁹ The overall assessment on Rubia was that he was “an effective urban-based politician who does not depend on the patronage of others.” He was also a “good organizer.” Surrounding him were some unsettling rumors, which alleged that he “had inspired the murder of Mboya in 1969.”

Since the mid-1970s, Rubia had been singled out by Kenyatta’s inner circle as a credible and formidable foe of the regime. In the elections of 1969 and 1974, his “opponent received Kiambu Kikuyu support ... but Rubia’s majority was the largest in the last election.” The inner circle feared Rubia because they “suspected him of trying to organize a coup.” This suspicion partly explained Rubia’s exclusion from the government. Yet, this exclusion, the British intelligence services noted, was in itself a “backhanded compliment to his ability. Since the murder of J.M. Kariuki,” Rubia had “become an acknowledged leader of opposition in Parliament and must remain an outside contender for the Presidency, especially if things get rough, though he has many enemies.” The possibility of Rubia becoming President was not alarming to Britain. While he was opposed to many of the policies of the inner circle around Kenyatta, he had not by any means embraced or advocated socialist policies. An important detail here was that he “was well disposed to Britain.” As a

²⁴⁸FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁴⁹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

result, Rubia was “atypical of his supporters in that he is a strongly pro-British loyalist with attitudes similar to several of Moi’s supporters.”²⁵⁰ In the immediate period before Kenyatta’s death, Rubia was seen by these intelligence services as “devoting more time to tending his financial base than to vocal opposition.” These business interests, that he took “very seriously,” included being “director of ICL East Africa, chairman ICDC Investment Co., Rubia Enterprises and numerous other concerns.” He was also the “Governor of Kenya Red Cross.”

The British intelligence services noted that the frustrated and resentful opposition in the Parliament, let alone in the country, was not “necessarily pro-Soviet.” Thus, it would be wrong to equate opposition to the regime with embrace of socialism and a tilt toward the Soviet Union at this time. Much of this opposition was “apparently anti-British because of apparent British support for the present regime.” Hence, if there was any successful revolution in the country following the death of Kenyatta, it was possible that “such new regime would favour the Soviet Union although retaining a strong nationalist character.”²⁵¹ But was such a revolution possible at all in Kenya? On this question, the British intelligence services were careful not to completely discount its possibility, however remote. They outlined the conditions that would provoke such a revolution. “If the economy deteriorates again as coffee prices and production fall and defence expenditures increase so that population pressures begin to eat away living standards then popular dissatisfaction seems likely to rise to 1974–75 levels if not further.” There was also the fear that Kenyatta’s successor would have to work “harder to exercise the same authority, particularly over his opponents.” And in so doing, “may provoke rather than suppress unrest unless he reverses Kenyatta’s divisive policies.”²⁵²

Even at this late hour toward the end of Kenyatta’s reign, Oginga Odinga was still regarded as a credible threat to the regime. The inner circle, under Njonjo’s direction, remained resolute in its hostility toward Odinga, and especially the power of his symbolism. Added to this was the fact that it was not, as the British High Commissioner put it, “in Njonjo’s character to be forgiving.” Odinga had been detained for

²⁵⁰FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁵¹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁵²FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

two years following the summary banning of the KPU party in 1969. Since then, he had been prevented from participating in national politics. In 1974, the government banned Odinga from “running for a seat in Parliament” in the scheduled national elections.²⁵³ In 1974, he was banned from contesting for the office of Vice President of the KANU against Moi. The party’s acting Secretary-General stated, by way of explanation, that, “ex-KPU members like Mr. Odinga ‘would never be allowed to contest any seat, unless they have been exempted by the party headquarters.’” Odinga was quick to point out correctly that, “there was nothing in the present KANU constitution to prevent” him from “running for office.” These were deliberate tactics to frustrate him politically and deny him an opportunity to re-enter national politics. This strategy continued even after Kenyatta’s death. Fingland wrote to London that the immovable resistance toward Odinga, even under Moi, was because the regime still regarded him as “a potential threat to national unity and security or at least to the present government’s interests.” Specifically, fear of Odinga derived “less from the suspicions” the regime may have had

that Oginga Odinga continues to have communist contacts than from a belief that he is politically close to President Nyerere and might, if restored to Parliament, become a focus of dissent about Kenya’s economic system, or of Luo tribalism at a time when Western Kenya could be affected by the instability in neighbouring Uganda. The methods by which KANU hierarchy have blocked in every possible way Oginga Odinga’s party membership—and therefore his chance of standing for Parliament [Fingland concluded] have been very clumsy and risk alienating a substantial section of the Luo.²⁵⁴

Bildad Kaggia, Odinga’s former political associate, apparently still maintained “some very clandestine contacts with his supporters.” These contacts, while worth watching carefully, were seen as having minimal impact on national politics. Certainly, these contacts had failed to facilitate the reentry of Kaggia in national politics espousing radical policies, as had been the case before resigning from the KPU.

²⁵³ *New York Times* (August 22, 1974), p. 9.

²⁵⁴ FCO 31/2557 (London: National Archives) Farewell to Kenya.

There were also odd cases known to the British intelligence services, in which even the Special Branch officers assisted “opponents of the government at times.” There was however no evidence at all that such help extended to facilitating the planning for a change of government. Nor was there any evidence of members of the Special Branch aligning themselves with opponents of the regime who espoused radical policies.

After a detailed analysis of the political scene in Kenya on the eve of Kenyatta’s death, the British intelligence services concluded that it seemed very likely “that the pro-British group backing the Vice President, Moi, will retain power.” This group included, “several senior civil servants whose background was loyalist during the Emergency and they are thus opposed to some of their tribesmen below them.”²⁵⁵

It is true that Mungai had long been “considered, with Moi, one of the 2 leading contenders for the Presidency.” The British intelligence services were also aware that Mungai had been “backed by the Kenyatta clan in the last elections.” Still, the assessment on Mungai in 1978 was that he presented, “a serious, but by no means unbeatable challenge to Moi.” There did not appear to be any possibility of Mungai ascending to the Presidency following the death of Kenyatta. Mungai had been “the prime casualty of the 1974 elections. His defeat in Dagoretti was due to neglect of his constituency and his aloofness from the poorer voters though his opponent, the late Dr. Muthiora, received strong press and financial backing from his enemies. Mungai was also a poor departmental minister who allowed his Ministry to become disorganized and demoralized.”²⁵⁶

Mungai’s character was a matter of concern to Britain. He was “somewhat unstable for when drunk he is prone to outbursts and incidents, though he can be charming when sober.” He seemed “well disposed to Britain except when drunk when he tends to be very critical.” Mungai was also “perhaps too sophisticated to be in sympathy with the ordinary Kenyan.” He had, over time, amassed “extensive financial interests build up with help of others.” Thus, he was very wealthy and was “using his fortune to further his political career.” He was also a “potential demagogue.”²⁵⁷ In the unlikely event that Mungai became

²⁵⁵FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁵⁶FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

²⁵⁷FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

President, the group surrounding him by 1978, appeared “much less pro-British and it is mistaken to regard the Kenyatta family as pro-British because the President himself is surrounded by pro-British advisers. Thus, if against the present odds Dr. Mungai defeated Moi,” the British intelligence services noted, “it is likely that his relations would be initially more distant. He might, in order consolidate his position, have to take steps against British interests and against his political opponents which would widen the gap although much might depend on” Britain’s reaction to this.²⁵⁸ These intelligence services expressed some apprehension regarding the political alignment of the country were Mungai, against all odds, able to succeed Kenyatta. “What initially might be no more than a change of style could develop into a change of alignment, particularly under the influence of Dr. Waiyaki.” Added to this was the fear that through Waiyaki, Odinga, “and his associate Oneko who is clearly still much more radical than Odinga himself,” might be able to exercise undesirable influence over the government. Clearly, the British were determined to keep any Soviet influence out of Kenya politics and society.

Looking to the future, the British intelligence services pointed out that the “prospects for Kenyan stability,” would probably depend “upon whether President Kenyatta’s successor adopts a policy of national conciliation, releasing the detainees, giving Parliament more power, restricting corruption and redistributing wealth and land. There is no reason why this should not happen except that bad habits are difficult to break.”²⁵⁹ It was in Britain’s interest for Kenyatta’s successor, clearly Moi, to start his reign by adopting a populist image in order to achieve national stability and legitimize his authority across the country.

The conclusion of the British intelligence services in July 1978 was that “concern about Soviet subversion” in Kenya at that time was “largely misplaced.”²⁶⁰ Indeed, one year after Moi became President, Finland reported to London that there was no immediate organized

²⁵⁸FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

²⁵⁹FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya. The worry was that the regime would try to clutch on Britain, “even more closely ... as it adopts more repressive policies, eventually dragging” Britain down with it. “This can be seen in Njonjo’s current attitudes on human rights issues and in the Kenyan concern that British press features on Kenya should remain eulogistic.”

²⁶⁰FCO 31/2330 (London: National Archives) The Extent of Soviet Influence in Kenya.

challenge to his authority. The future, however, was likely to pose serious problems. “I do not see challenges” Fingland observed in 1979, “from either the Kiambu group or Oginga Odinga as any present threat to Mr. Moi’s position. In the longer term, perhaps in the period before the next election is due in 5 years time,” he continued, “Mr. Moi may well have to face a greater challenge from a younger generation of politicians, perhaps with more radical aims and deliberately populist appeal. In due course some of these will, I believe, try to break out of the KANU mould of an enforced national political unity under a single party without any real ideological or policy base.”²⁶¹

²⁶¹FCO 31/2557 (London: National Archives) Farewell to Kenya.

At the End: Opening the Question of Legacy

Kenyatta died at 3:30 a.m. on Tuesday, August 22, 1978, at the State House in Mombasa. He died of an apparent massive heart attack.¹ While it is true that Kenyatta “had been getting on in age,” his sudden death was still a shock to most Kenyans who “had come to think” of him as “a permanent feature of the country’s political landscape.”² There had been no immediate visible signs of imminent death. To the public, Kenyatta seemed to be in relatively good health for a man of his age. “Indeed, Tuesday’s newspapers had carried reports of the President’s lively discussions and luncheon only the previous day with Kenya’s Heads of Diplomatic Missions overseas who were here for a routine conference.”³ He had also been attentive to family matters hosting a well-publicized family reunion, “a week before his death.” It would later be argued that this family reunion was “seemingly the result of chance rather than any premonition or medical warning.”⁴ At this family reunion, Kenyatta called on other families to organize “frequent get-togethers so as to cement the ties that bind them together.” Present at this family

¹FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

²Hilary Ng’weno, *The Day Kenyatta Died* (Nairobi: Longman, Kenya Ltd, 1978), p. 10.

³FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

⁴FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

reunion were Kenyatta's two oldest sons, "his nephews, nieces, sons and daughters-in-law and grand-children." They all gathered for "a family photograph, the last, as it turned out."⁵

The first senior government official to be notified of Kenyatta's death was Eliud Mahihu, Provincial Commissioner (PC), Coast Province, and a close aide to the President. Mahihu had a rather checkered past, having served the colonial government as a prominent loyalist during the Mau Mau revolt. Ndegwa pointed out that during the Emergency, Mahihu was "on record for overflying Mount Kenya and the Aberdares forests apparently telling the Mau Mau war veterans that the war was over when it actually was not. The aim was to blackmail the fighters to come out of the forest to face the bullet or be detained. It is said that during market days in the colonial era Mahihu would parade dead bodies for all to see ostensibly to display fear and wonder of the mighty empire."⁶ After *Uhuru*, Kenyatta instructed Ndegwa to appoint Mahihu as a District Commissioner. By 1964, he had risen to be a Provincial Commissioner (Eastern Province), and in 1971 he was transferred to the Coast Province as PC. Ndegwa has argued that Mahihu later sanitized "his profile by becoming one of the most outstanding provincial administrators of his time." What was evident is that Mahihu emerged as an effective PC intensely loyal to Kenyatta. Linked to this was the fact that "he ruled Eastern Province like a private empire until 1971" and later did "the same in Coast Province." All these details about Mahihu's life were, of course, well known to the British intelligence services who regarded him to be "basically a shy man, but can also be very domineering." He was "publicity conscious and sensitive to slight." This was "probably because he has not had the opportunities for education and travel enjoyed by most other Kenyans of his level." He could, nonetheless, be "very affable if treated with the consideration which his position and influence deserve."⁷ He had good access to Kenyatta and also "some influence with him."

Mahihu in turn relayed the information of Kenyatta's death to the Head of the Civil Service, Vice President Moi, and some Cabinet Ministers, including Mwai Kibaki who was in Mombasa. Through the

⁵ *The Weekly Review* (August 25, 1978), p. 9.

⁶ Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta's Struggles: My Story*, p. 329.

⁷ FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

Head of the Civil Service, this information was relayed to commanders of the armed forces and the police, and the rest of the Cabinet. Ndegwa would later observe that after Mahihu, “the next person to know was Njonjo.”⁸ Coordination among several government institutions with some direct or indirect responsibility for arranging for Kenyatta’s funeral now proceeded with remarkable precision and focus. There was no evidence of confusion as to what needed to be done. It was clear that there had been some prior thinking and planning for this day. According to Ndegwa, Njonjo did not want to “leave anything to chance.” And so, “in collaboration with Bruce McKenzie, Kiereini and the Chief Secretary, a transitional committee to cater for the eventuality of—as well as after—Mzee’s demise began work almost a year before Kenyatta’s death. The committee was to take care of funeral arrangements, and at the same time, who and how to confront counter emergency.”⁹

The rest of the country and most of the world was informed of Kenyatta’s death through an official announcement made on Voice of Kenya (VOK) at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, August 22, 1978. This announcement was “in a series of frequent but brief statements interspersed with solemn music.” While it is true that the Voice of Kenya had, in the past, “come in for a lot of criticism” it nonetheless, “rose to the occasion with incredible performance. Every five or so minutes, the radio bulletin about the President’s death was broadcast, with the same appeal for calm and dignified response by Kenyans in their hour of sorrow. In between the news bulletins the VOK played somber music and hymns by choirs previously recorded from all over the country.”¹⁰ There was an overwhelming desire by the government to project competence, order and unity of purpose. Factionalism or alternative political centers could not be tolerated, let alone acknowledged.

In the period after 1975, “one of the main topics of political speculation in Kenya” had been

what would happen on the President’s death. This speculation ranged from what type of regime, and group of Ministers, would succeed President Kenyatta to more lurid rumours of a likely inter-tribal struggle for power immediately on Kenyatta’s death, with the death itself possibly

⁸Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 416.

⁹Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 416.

¹⁰*The Weekly Review* (August 25, 1978), p. 5.

being concealed by the President's family and those close to them whilst they made their own dispositions or possibly fled the country.¹¹

It later transpired that in the last years of Kenyatta's rule a private army, centered in Nakuru, had "been formed to assassinate certain Kenya leaders on the day of the Old Man's death." This private army nicknamed "Ngoroko," "would have assassinated Moi, Kibaki and Njonjo," and about 300 senior government officials and MPs. This enterprise seems to have been confined to some elements in the police force and did not include the army or even the GSU. This rogue outfit had, on one occasion "invaded Moi's farmhouse at Kabarak, Nakuru, and searched it for arms. They did not find any." But clearly this had been a major humiliation to Moi. "A man more conscious of his status and less endowed with fortitude would have resigned on the spot, especially since the marauders are said to have inspected the house for any secret passages, presumably for the day of the crunch."¹² Activities of the "Ngoroko" militia have to be seen as a reckless continuation of the Change the Constitution Movement. Indeed, almost one week after Kenyatta's death, "a meeting was held at the Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi, attended by a number of politicians whose names are connected to the 'Ngoroko' team ... According to an informer who attended the Norfolk Hotel meeting, the meeting's aim was 'to look for a Kikuyu to lead Kenya now that Kenyatta was dead.'"¹³ In the end, the "Ngoroko" plot failed and Moi was sworn in as acting President. By the end of 1979, Moi and his senior aides decided not to prosecute any of the individuals who had been behind this plot to engage in massive assassination of the country's leaders. The avowed intentions of the "Ngoroko" amounted to planning a coup against the government. "We regard the 'Ngoroko' affair," Njonjo stated, "as a closed chapter in our country's history. God was good to us. Some of us are still alive and those with that guilty conscience will carry it to their graves. I want to assure my countrymen that the 'Ngoroko' file will now be closed."¹⁴

¹¹FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

¹²Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*, p. 147.

¹³Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*, p. 172.

¹⁴Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*, p. 174.

These rumors and fears partly shaped the government's response as it sought to convey to the country that Kenyatta's death would not lead to civil strife and also that there was no power vacuum at the center. To this end, a decision was made "that the news of the President's death must be released without delay." Further, this announcement was followed by constant appeals for calm; that any action other than remaining calm would be seen as gross disrespect to the memory of Kenyatta.

At a Cabinet meeting held at the State House in Nairobi, Moi was sworn in at 3 p.m. on August 22, "as acting President, taking the oath from the chief justice, Sir James Wicks." This was in conformity with the constitutional provision "by which on the death of the President, the Vice President exercises the functions of the Presidency, with restrictions on his exercise of certain powers except in accordance with a resolution by the Cabinet, for a period of 90 days during which the election of a President must be held."¹⁵ The Foreign and Commonwealth Office noted with satisfaction, the crucial role that Njonjo had played to ensure the smooth ascent of Moi to the Presidency after Kenyatta's death.

The Attorney-General, Mr. Charles Njonjo, appears to have played an important part in ensuring the smooth handling of the announcement of Kenyatta's death and the swearing-in of Mr. Daniel Arap Moi, the former Vice President, to exercise the functions of President for the 90-day period provided under the constitution. Mr. Moi has accordingly assumed the title of President.¹⁶

Government bulletins broadcast on Voice of Kenya were relentless in urging Kenyans to remain calm and also to resume business as usual. As far as possible, the government sought to avoid a national lock-down that could have easily led to panic thus providing ample opportunity for initiating political mischief and then the dreaded spread of political rumors. A posture that resembled an emergency, however modified, would have inevitably given rise to heightened fear and nervousness in the country. In the given circumstances, it would have been challenging for the government to plan for the funeral while also incessantly refuting

¹⁵FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

¹⁶FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

rumors of alleged political plots and counter-plots. It was, therefore, vital for Moi and his team to appear to the country as being resolute, and firmly in charge of government affairs. Also, it was crucial for all Members of the Cabinet to demonstrate, without hesitation, their loyalty to the new leader. After Moi had been sworn in as acting President, the British High Commission in Nairobi communicated to London that he had “received public acts of loyalty from a number of his opponents, including Hinga (Commissioner of Police) and Koinange (Minister of State).” The memo added that the Cabinet appeared to be “acting in unity” under Moi’s leadership. More important, Moi’s “authority over his colleagues in cabinet and over the civil service is for the present unquestioned.” Moi had also “held a number of private consultations with Mulinge, Kanyotu and Kariithi.” Overall, “a sense of confidence in the future is already beginning to emerge as Kenya surmounts its first substantial post-Kenyatta hurdle.”¹⁷

Fingland, the British High Commissioner, observed that Kenyans seemed to have “responded readily to the Government’s instruction that work should continue as usual and by the following day life had returned to normal.” This readiness to resume normal routine was helped by several factors.

These included the suddenness of the President’s demise without any long period of obvious incapacity; the manner in which the death was announced soberly and with dignity, without any deliberate delay, and the way in which the new Government under President Moi got quietly and effectively down to business and started preparations for a lengthy period of national mourning, laying stress on the need for unity and for continuation of the policies laid down by the ‘Father of the Nation’, through a constitutional succession.¹⁸

The local media looked at this “dignified expression of sorrow” as “one of the best omens for the future of the country.”¹⁹

¹⁷FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

¹⁸FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

¹⁹*The Weekly Review* (August 25, 1978), p. 7.

The Kenya Armed Forces were charged with the responsibility of making preparations “for the main funeral procession.” From the start, this funeral was planned to be an elaborate and “major national and international occasion with no expense or effort spared.” The Armed Forces, through the Ministry of Defence, very quickly turned to Britain for help and guidance on several aspects of staging the planned state funeral for Kenyatta. Requests for British help were coordinated through the Defence Adviser at the British High Commission in Nairobi. And so, “at the request of the Kenyan Ministry of Defence, the UK Ministry of Defence ... provided the Kenyans with advice about ceremonial for the lying-in-state and State Funeral.” Specifically, Britain provided “on loan a gun-carriage for the funeral procession,” plus “blank ammunition for the salute.” Also, provided to Kenya were “two British officers and three men” to instruct “Kenyans in handling the gun-carriage,” and its maintenance.²⁰ All of this elaborate and multi-dimensional British help was coordinated in London through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The gun-carriage supplied by Britain, was “similar to the one that carried the body of Sir Winston Churchill during his State Funeral.”²¹ Kenya also sought for help in the staging of the state funeral for Kenyatta from the USA. The government obtained the services of “Mr. Paul Miller, Director of Ceremonies and Special Events for the United States Army in Washington.” Mr. Miller had, in the past, “organized President Kennedy’s funeral.”²²

Prior to Kenyatta’s death, there had been no public or, as it turned out, official consideration as to where he would be buried. Almost 32 years after Kenyatta’s death, Njonjo revealed that “the government had never considered where the President would be buried if he died.”²³ And so soon after Moi had been sworn in as acting President, a Cabinet sub-committee, guided by Njonjo, “was formed to decide on the founding father’s final resting place.” Geoffrey Kariithi, Head of the Civil Service, was also a member of this important committee. As part of its limited consultation, the committee “held discussions with the Kenyatta family and finally agreed on Parliament grounds as the burial site.”

²⁰FCO 31/2317 (London: National Archives) Confidential memo to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

²¹*The Observer* (August 27, 1978), p. 4.

²²*The Observer* (August 27, 1978), p. 4.

²³*Sunday Nation* (August 22, 2010), p. 3.

Before this final determination, the committee explored several options for the burial: his Gatundu home, and even Mombasa. None of them was palatable to the committee for after all the “President was ‘bigger’ than his constituency in Central Province.” Burying him in Mombasa, one of his favorite places in the country, was ruled out due to the fact that “Kenyatta was not from the Coast Province and that he was the father of the nation.”²⁴

The Parliament grounds were chosen because of the power and meaning of their symbolism. “The committee finally agreed to bury him at his present site to reflect his national stature and also as an honour to the institution of Parliament. We felt,” Njonjo recalled, “that he should be buried in a Parliament that he created.”²⁵ This decision had been arrived at with minimal in-put, if any, from other national agencies or institutions. Certainly, the KANU as a party was not represented at the table. Also, the Parliament itself, as an institution, was not represented in the discussions. No special session of the Parliament was convened to vote on the matter or even to symbolically endorse the decision made by the Cabinet sub-committee.

How about the future? Were the Parliament grounds to be the designated burial site for the country’s Presidents? This question was not considered at all by the Cabinet sub-committee. “It may be,” Njonjo reflected years later, “that the current leadership would say that the next president when he dies should be buried where he comes from, his home and not in the centre of Nairobi.”²⁶ The Cabinet sub-committee, Njonjo revealed, had not given any thought or consideration to the possibility of Kenyatta’s “body being moved at a later stage”²⁷ to some other site away from the Parliament grounds.

The day after Kenyatta’s death, the Cabinet sub-committee made two crucial decisions: that he would be buried in the Parliament grounds and in a mausoleum. And so, by “late Wednesday afternoon a bulldozer began digging a hole in the immaculate lawns of the Parliament Buildings.” More than 100 men toiled “day and night to have the

²⁴ *Sunday Nation* (August 22, 2010), p. 3.

²⁵ *Sunday Nation* (August 22, 2010), p. 3.

²⁶ *Sunday Nation* (August 22, 2010), p. 5.

²⁷ *Sunday Nation* (August 22, 2010), p. 5.

mausoleum ready on time.”²⁸ Kenyatta’s body was flown from Mombasa to Nairobi on Tuesday. Here, at the State House, his body was “to lie in state for ten days.” The Cabinet, Assistant Ministers, MPs, and then “members of the diplomatic corps and senior civil servants, the public were allowed to pay their last respects to the man who had spent more than half a century in struggle for Kenya’s independence and in the effort to build a nation out of diverse communities.”²⁹ Crowds of Kenyans from diverse communities filed “in dignity” past Kenyatta’s body at the State House. No disturbances or instances of civil strife were reported anywhere in Nairobi or beyond following Kenyatta’s death. In the period before the burial, the VOK (television and radio) “played and replayed films and recordings of events in Kenyatta’s past life and, with the press, publicized large numbers of messages of condolence from Kenya and overseas.”³⁰ The day before the burial, Kenyatta’s body was taken to Gatundu for “a final night lying at” his country estate and farm. And here, “in the heartland of his Kikuyu people, huge crowds of those closest to him—the small farmers and workers on his estates—surged into the narrow road leading to this small village to pay tribute to the former Kenyan leader.”³¹ The body, “sealed in a glass coffin draped with black cloth,” was transported to Gatundu “in an army vehicle with police and army escort in front and behind.” The Cabinet led by Moi followed behind the coffin “through the silent crowds.” His family, including “his half-English son, Peter, his fourth wife, and his first wife,” accompanied the body to Gatundu.

Throughout this period, Moi, as acting President, sought to project an image of strength and confidence while not seeming to drown out Kenyatta’s status and importance. Specifically, he had to be very skillful in the handling of the Kenyatta family at this time. The British High Commission in Nairobi noted approvingly that Moi had “stepped quickly and unpretentiously into the President’s role.” He had also “received a warm welcome when making public appearances.” More crucially, Moi was “determined not to humiliate Kenyatta’s family” and had

²⁸ *The Observer* (August 27, 1978), p. 4.

²⁹ *The Weekly Review* (August 25, 1978), p. 7.

³⁰ FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta. Fingland added that the mourning period had been accompanied, “throughout the country ... by a remarkable absence of almost any kind of routine crime.”

³¹ *The Guardian* (August 31, 1978), p. 4.

“been scrupulous in sending them his personal condolences as well as according them pride of place as mourners.”³² In a separate memo to London, Fingland pointed out that Moi had, with skillful balance, managed to acknowledge “the debt owed by all Kenyans to the life” and career of Kenyatta, while at the same time firmly “getting a grip on his Cabinet colleagues and officials and the machinery of government.”³³ This skillful balance would be repeated in Moi’s remarks at the official burial ceremony.

At around 10 a.m. in the morning of August 31, Kenyatta’s body “on its ceremonial gun carriage drawn by members of Kenya Armed Services and accompanied by members of his family and Cabinet Ministers was brought in solemn procession from the State House to Parliament Grounds.”³⁴ The Parliament grounds could not accommodate all the people who wanted to witness the ceremony and so thousands of them “assembled in adjacent parks and gardens with loud speaker and television relays from the mausoleum site.”

Assembled at the burial site were local and international dignitaries. This was the first state funeral in Kenya for its head of state. The government, therefore, paid a lot of attention to the level and even size of the delegations sent by different countries. As expected, the Kenya government was very pleased that Britain had a high-level delegation. “It was a matter of great satisfaction to President Moi, to members of the late President’s family and to Kenyans generally,” Fingland wrote to London, “that Her Majesty The Queen was represented at the funeral by the heir to the throne, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.”³⁵ Moi made this observation to Prince Charles when they held a private meeting after the funeral. Mama Ngina, on her part, was “obviously deeply touched by Prince Charles’s presence when he expressed condolences to her at the ceremonies.” The Kenya government was also gratified that the British government was represented at the funeral by

³²FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Memo from the British High Commission in Nairobi to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

³³FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

³⁴FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

³⁵FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

Dr. David Owen, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Also, included in the delegation was “Lord Carrington representing Her Majesty’s Opposition and Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, Kenya’s last Governor and then Governor General on the attainment of independence.”³⁶

Britain’s help, “quickly and willingly given,” was greatly appreciated by the Kenya government. In September 1978, J.G. Kiereini, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence, wrote to Fingland to express Kenya’s official gratitude. “On behalf of the Kenya Government, and as a member of State Funeral Steering Committee,” Kiereini wrote, “I take this opportunity to thank your Government for the assistance given to us during the arrangements of the State Funeral of our Father of the Nation and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta.” Kierieni added, for emphasis, that, “the arrangements made by Colonel G. Alderman and all concerned to make it possible for the Gun Carriage and ammunition to arrive from UK at such short notice, and with a Gun Carriage crew to advice on the drills is very much appreciated.”³⁷ Kiereini asked Fingland to pass this note of official gratitude to all relevant offices in London. And Fingland did. On September 12, 1978, Fingland informed London that, “Britain gained a lot of kudos from this assistance, willingly given.”³⁸ This help, characterized by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as “unobtrusive expertise,” had been an “essential ingredient in Kenya’s dignified conduct” of the state funeral.

The level of the US delegation on the other hand, left the Kenya government somewhat underwhelmed. There was no Vice President or even a senior member of the cabinet in the delegation. Instead the delegation was comprised of: Thurgood Marshall (Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court), Mr. and Mrs. Donnell Jeffrey Carter (Son of President), Andrew Young (US Ambassador to the United Nations), Mrs. Coretta King (widow of the assassinated civil rights leader), Charles Diggs (US Congress), Richard Hatcher (Mayor of Gary, Indiana), and Wilbert Le Melle (US Ambassador to Kenya). “The essentially black

³⁶FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

³⁷FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) Letter from Kiereini to Fingland.

³⁸FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) Note from Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Ministry of Defence.

composition of the American delegation, and the absence of any senior political figure from the US to rank with the Russian Vice President,” *The Guardian* knowingly pointed out, “has not been lost on the Government here.”³⁹ It is quite possible that in selecting the American delegation the Carter White House wanted to make a symbolic gesture to Kenyatta’s earlier identification with the Pan African struggle. The inclusion of Thurgood Marshall was probably expected for he had after all participated as a consultant and adviser to the African delegation at the Lancaster House constitutional conference in 1960.⁴⁰ His legal hand was visible in what came to be known as the Bill of Rights in the constitution. Still, whatever may have been the rationale for the composition of the American delegation, something was “lost in translation” As a result, “whatever the rights and wrongs, the choice made by the US President” was seen in Nairobi as not “perfectly fitting”⁴¹ for the occasion.

The State Funeral Steering Committee was pleased to see several delegations led by Heads of State or government. There was Nyerere (Tanzania), Kaunda (Zambia), Tolbert (Liberia), Amin (Uganda), Ahmed Abdallah (Comoro Islands), Moraji Desai (India), Leabua Jonathan (Lesotho), Siaka Stevens (Sierra Leone), Major-Gen. Mutuvu (Swaziland), Banda (Malawi), and Gen. Zia-ul-Haq (Pakistan).⁴² The USSR and Botswana were each represented by their Vice President. Most of the other delegations were led by a foreign minister or some other government official. This was true of France and West Germany. Some of the countries were represented by their respective ambassadors in Nairobi. Thus, the Nordic countries were represented by their “respective ambassadors in Nairobi.” None of the then radical African countries (with the exception of Tanzania) was represented by a Head of State or government at the funeral. Mozambique, for example, was represented by Chissano, the foreign minister.

The funeral ceremony itself was, as expected, inter-denominational. It was lengthy, “taking over three hours from the time of the arrival of the funeral procession.” Still, it was an impressive display of solemn pomp, efficiency, planning, and coordination. The “occasion as a whole went

³⁹ *The Guardian* (August 29, 1978), p. 4.

⁴⁰ George Bennett and Carl G. Rosberg, *The Kenyatta Election* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 18–23.

⁴¹ *The Guardian* (August 29, 1978), p. 4.

⁴² FCO 31/2317 (London: National Archives) Steering Brief for Secretary of State.

off in the same dignified spirit of national unity and national mourning at which the Government had clearly been aiming.”⁴³

In his prepared remarks at the ceremony, Moi emphasized two things: his personal connection to Kenyatta and then Kenyatta’s unique and unequalled status as the magnanimous Founding Father of the country. He sought to remind the country that he had been a loyal and dedicated follower of Kenyatta. “I find it difficult to speak about Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, who has been,” Moi announced, “my father, my teacher and my leader. Here lies,” he continued, “the man whose life was dedicated to the service of each and every one of us.”⁴⁴ Kenyatta had served as an inspiration to all Kenyans “to resist subjugation;” he was one of the few who had “jeopardized their personal comfort, family life or familiar surroundings in the service of their people. Let it be said,” Moi stressed, “that Kenya was blessed with one such man.”

There was a lot of emphasis on Kenyatta’s extended stay in the UK in the service of African nationalism. He had faced, as Moi put it, “hostility in unfamiliar lands, seeking redress for his people’s grievances ... through the many years of toil, hardship, degradation and ridicule, his confidence in the ultimate success of his assignment was unshaken.”⁴⁵ Moi touched briefly on Kenyatta’s arrest and detention in October 1952 without in any way mentioning or alluding to the Mau Mau peasant revolt. In the period after his release from detention, and especially after assuming power in December 1963, the emphasis was on Kenyatta’s spirit of forgiveness. It is this spirit that helped in the forging of the new Kenya nation. This position was in keeping not only with Kenyatta’s own published remarks, but also with several assessments of Malcolm MacDonald and a variety of agencies of the British government. Kenyatta had “engaged in neither retribution nor recrimination for the many wrongs done to Kenyans and himself. He sought neither past enemies nor new adversaries. He turned his back on past suffering. He forgave. He

⁴³FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

⁴⁴FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) President Moi’s Address at President Kenyatta’s Funeral.

⁴⁵FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) President Moi’s Address at President Kenyatta’s Funeral.

preached love and brotherhood; where lesser men expected hate; he brought peace, unity and justice where lesser minds expected crime. To this,” Moi affirmed, “we testify.”⁴⁶

Kenyatta had championed what Moi termed “moderation and responsibility.” Kenyatta’s government, Moi went on, “formulated policies to protect those very rights and freedoms for which we had struggled under his leadership.” This was a clear defense of the conservative policy agenda advanced by the ruling elite, including Moi, since the ousting of radical nationalists from the KANU and government. Moi ended his relatively short speech, by submitting that Kenyatta has to be seen as a champion of “justice and equality. He advocated respect for human dignity and the preservation of our culture. His concern for the welfare of all Kenyans was deep and binding.”⁴⁷

These themes touching on Kenyatta’s magnanimity and heroic past were restated in the religious leaders’ remarks at the ceremony. Rev. G. Gatu reminded all those assembled, that this was a burial ceremony of “the great son of Africa who has rendered memorable service to his country and the continent of Africa in the struggle for freedom and human dignity.” He was to be remembered for what Gatu called “his dauntless resolution and untiring vigilance, and for his example of courage, endurance, and forgiveness.”⁴⁸ Bishop Z. Okoth’s remarks at the ceremony were more elaborate, almost deliberately emotive. Kenyans were urged by Okoth never to forget Kenyatta’s inspiration, “the Father of this nation, whose Harambee spirit, and his emphasis on unity and brotherhood, inspired the people of Kenya to live in peace and harmony as one people, one nation.”⁴⁹ Okoth wished for Kenyans to “always be inspired by Mzee’s spirit of forgiveness which he portrayed so clearly in his life, he who suffered without bitterness.” Further, Okoth urged Kenyans to always “honour, respect and cherish African culture and

⁴⁶FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) President Moi’s Address at President Kenyatta’s Funeral.

⁴⁷FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) President Moi’s Address at President Kenyatta’s Funeral.

⁴⁸*Memorial Programme for The State Funeral for His Excellency The Late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, C.G.H., MP* (Thursday 31, August 1978) at 11am, Parliament Grounds, Nairobi, Kenya, p. 3.

⁴⁹*Memorial Programme for the State Funeral for His Excellency The Late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta*, p. 4.

heritage with pride and dignity as the unique contribution from Africa to the rest of mankind and forever to march forward,” he insisted, “in the way of African Socialism.” It had been a while since African Socialism was invoked at a public function. Perhaps quite perplexing, given the realities of the recent historical past in the country, were Okoth’s remarks on the relationship between Kenyatta and the Parliament. “That resting Mzee’s body in these Parliament grounds may symbolize his respect for democracy, the supremacy of Parliament, the role of the Judiciary and that of the Executive.”⁵⁰

The only sensational story to emerge from the proceedings at the burial ceremony concerned an alleged “snub” of Amin by Prince Charles. “A sector of the British press” floated this story immediately after the burial. It was alleged that Prince Charles had declined to shake Amin’s hand at the funeral. It shall be recalled that by this time, Amin’s relations with Britain were decidedly frosty. Fingland found it necessary to inform the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that this story was “entirely mythical.” He wanted to put it on record that, “Amin came in after the Prince of Wales at the funeral ceremonies. He shook hands with Nyerere and Kaunda who were first in the row of seats and then sat down in his own seat next to them. The Prince of Wales was separated from Amin by two other people, and at no time did Amin try to approach the Prince of Wales, although he looked in his direction a number of times.”⁵¹ To forestall the possibility of Amin ever coming in contact with Prince Charles at the funeral ceremony, the staff of the British High Commission, “naturally had an arrangement under which” they did their “best to avoid Amin catching Prince Charles’s eye.” All of this, of course, “was done discreetly and there was no overt movement at all by Amin to shake hands and no ‘snub.’”⁵²

Amin’s account of the events of the day was, as expected at this time, partly delusional. In a report on Uganda radio, monitored by the BBC from its listening post in Nairobi, Amin saw himself as the key figure at the funeral ceremony. “The Ugandan leader and his entourage walked

⁵⁰ *Memorial Programme for the State Funeral for His Excellency The Late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta*, p. 4.

⁵¹ FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

⁵² FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

on foot from his hotel to the burial grounds, a distance of about 30 miles and back. On his way back to Hilton Hotel he was accompanied by chanting crowds that mounted police tried to control. The crowds had noticed him preferring to walk like them on foot rather than using the car and chanted: Amin is the lion of Africa, the president of the masses. At one time," the report continued, "they were so dense that Prince Charles's car was diverted on an alternative route."⁵³ Even Amin denied attempting to shake hands with Prince Charles. He had, according to the broadcast report, shaken hands "with all the heads of state who were present at the solemn occasion. His Excellency had no reason whatsoever to shake hands with the representative of the Queen, who happened to be Prince Charles, who was seated far away from the heads of state." Dr. David Owen did not meet with Amin, nor was he expected to. Indeed, he was "obviously relieved that there was no meeting" between Prince Charles and Amin.

Owen had a scheduled meeting with Moi after the funeral. As part of the preparation for this meeting, Owen had, with him, detailed "notes and briefs" on issues likely to come up for discussion. These "notes and briefs" revealed what Britain considered to be its key priorities in the post-Kenyatta era. In general, Britain's relationship with Kenya was very good with no major outstanding issues. There were no areas of friction or tension between the two countries. "Anglo-Kenyan relations have been consistently friendly since Independence despite President Kenyatta's long internment during and after the Mau Mau troubles." Britain had also enjoyed good relations with Moi "and his principal associates and have every reason to believe that, if as seems likely, they continue to hold the reins of Government, Anglo-Kenyan relations will prosper."⁵⁴ Britain's interest in Kenya was, as in the past, three-fold: political, commercial, and military. In the eyes of the British government, Kenya was "the one firmly Western-oriented state in mainland East Africa." It was in Britain's "interests it should remain so and continue to be stable." On the commercial side, it was acknowledged that, "British investment in Kenya is substantial, totaling several hundred

⁵³FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) Ugandan account of Amin's attendance at Kenyatta's Funeral.

⁵⁴FCO 31/2317 (London: National Archives) Visit to Nairobi for the Funeral of President Kenyatta.

million pounds.” Britain had “about 18% of the Kenya market and are its largest trading supplier. UK exports to Kenya in 1977 amounted to £118 million and imports were £155 million. The largest single categories of exports were, non-electronic machinery (£30 million) and transport equipment (£23 million).”⁵⁵ On the military side, Britain retained in Kenya “certain defence facilities including over-flying rights, army training facilities and use of Mombasa” by Royal Navy ships. There were also delicate consular issues to be considered. There were over 18,000 “Asian UK Passport holders and dependents and 11,000 resident ‘belongers.’” It was approvingly noted that the Kenya government had “been reasonably tolerant towards Asian UK Passport holders” and that no sudden change was expected on this matter. A call for a “speedier departure of UK Asians” could nonetheless “manifest itself if the country were to experience a recession.”

The question of economic aid was no doubt expected to feature in the discussions between Moi and Owen. The “notes and briefs” wanted Owen to know that, “the Kenya Aid Programme” was “Britain’s largest in Africa. Since Independence in 1963, Kenya has received about £220 million Sterling through bilateral capital and technical co-operation.” Priority in this aid was given to “agricultural, rural and peri-rural development with the emphasis on projects having an impact on employment and income generation.”⁵⁶ Aid to Kenya was funded “in three year cycles.” For the 1976/79 cycle the economic aid was in the amount of “approximately £45 million Sterling.” Key projects targeted in this cycle were “construction of the Tana River reservoir,” that was expected to “support hydroelectric, irrigation and settlement schemes.” It was also expected that Mumias Sugar Project would be extended with British assistance “and that of the Commonwealth Development Corporation which has some £30 million invested in Kenya.”⁵⁷ Lastly, in the general area of economic aid, Britain had “a substantial Technical Co-operation Programme in Kenya.” Also, Britain continued to fund training awards

⁵⁵FCO 31/2317 (London: National Archives) Visit to Nairobi for the Funeral of President Kenyatta.

⁵⁶FCO 31/2317 (London: National Archives) Visit to Nairobi for the Funeral of President Kenyatta.

⁵⁷FCO 31/2317 (London: National Archives) Visit to Nairobi for the Funeral of President Kenyatta.

to Kenyans to study in Britain. The Land Transfer Programme, which had dominated the economic and political headlines in the country in the 1960s and early 1970s, was “now virtually complete.”

The most sensitive topic in the discussions was about the secretive Bamburi Understanding, which had remained a “significant feature of the British Government’s relationship with President Kenyatta.” The Bamburi Understanding was known only to Kenyatta, and “a small circle of senior Kenyans, prominent among whom is the Attorney-General, Mr. Njonjo, who is a close ally of Mr. Moi, now carrying out the functions of President.” In the scheduled meeting with Moi, Owen was to reassure the Kenya government of Britain’s friendship and support. “Kenya knows that it can rely on the friendship and cooperation of the British Government. President Kenyatta’s death does nothing to alter that.”⁵⁸ Were Somalia to attack or threaten the security of Kenya then “the British Government would respond quickly to any wish on part of the Kenya Government to consult” with it. Although the Understanding was still valid, the British government did not want to engage in any “substantive discussion” on this matter immediately after Kenyatta’s death. What Owen was offering were general reassurances. He was also to tell Moi that Britain had been “trying to encourage the Somali Government to take steps to bring about a real improvement in relations with Kenya.” In the meantime, there was to be a speedy fulfillment “of orders for military equipment placed in the United Kingdom.” This included the request for “additional arms supplies” which was made when “Mr. Moi visited the United Kingdom”⁵⁹ 1978.

What was clear was that the nature and intent of the Bamburi Understanding continued to undergo periodic revisions within the British government. Originally, the Understanding had been given to Kenya in 1967 “because at the time” Britain “wished to dissuade the Kenyans from embarking on substantial military purchases. However, in recent years,” Britain had “adopted an alternative approach by offering the Kenyans military equipment worth in excess of £100 million, under favourable credit terms, to enable it to stand on its own militarily.” Yet in

⁵⁸FCO 31/2317 (London: National Archives) Bamburi Understanding (points to make).

⁵⁹FCO 31/2317 (London: National Archives) Bamburi Understanding (points to make).

spite of these changes, it was evident that Kenya expected military help from Britain in the event of an attack by Somalia.⁶⁰

In August 1978, a few weeks before Kenyatta's death, the planning staff at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, produced an internal memo outlining possible revisions in the Bamburi Understanding. The aim of this memo was to seek to arrive at a position whereby Britain would considerably relax its commitment to the Understanding without abandoning it. "In the reinterpretation of the Bamburi Understanding following Kenyatta's departure or a Kenyan approach" to Britain, "for reaffirmation," it would be necessary to "avoid repudiating it but at the same time spread the onus of implementing it." This would entail explaining to the Kenyans that Britain's "military capability would not" allow it to "provide the kind of military help which the Kenyans may be expecting. By definition," the memo continued, "spreading the onus is a difficult thing" for Britain "to do unilaterally (or bi-laterally with Kenyans)," but it could be achieved "by translating the implied obligation" on Britain "to act on behalf of Kenya into an obligation on" Britain "to try and get the international community to help Kenya."⁶¹ In a separate memo in August 1978, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office wrote to the Ministry of Defence on the future of the Bamburi Understanding. "Ministers, having seen the papers, decided that we should not take any initiatives, at least for the time being, with Kenyans about the Understanding. The expectation," the memo stated, "is that it will wither on the vine."⁶² At some point in the future, it may become necessary to encourage Kenyans in the direction of standing "on their own feet militarily." This was, however, an objective to be pursued with caution in the distant future. It was too risky for Britain to seek to implement this radical modification to the Understanding in the current period. The future of Britain's relationship "with Kenya is too important to be put at risk by so doing." The Foreign and Commonwealth Office notified the Ministry of Defence that there was hence no need

⁶⁰FCO 31/2317 (London: National Archives) Bamburi Understanding (points to make).

⁶¹FCO 31/2325 (London: National Archives) Bamburi Understanding.

⁶²FCO 31/2325 (London: National Archives) Internal Memo on Bamburi Understanding.

to “initiate a new planning exercise. In the unlikely event of there being a requirement to deploy British troops,” the memo concluded, “we should, therefore, have to respond on an ad hoc basis.”⁶³

While Kenyatta was still President, Britain avoided tinkering with the Bamburi Understanding. It was recognized in London that “Kenya’s confidence in their relationship with” Britain, “could be severely damaged to the detriment” of many of its interests in the country were this Understanding to be terminated. It is useful to remember that under this Understanding were agreements on Presidential Security provided by the SAS. Owen was hence eager to emphasize that Britain wanted to continue its traditional “close relations with Kenyatta’s successor, particularly as the present indications are that this is likely to be Mr. Moi, who, with his close supporters, is well disposed to”⁶⁴ Britain. It would cause immeasurable damage to British interests to “simply say that the Bamburi Understanding died with Kenyatta.” Any further discussion on this issue, soon after Kenyatta’s death, was, however, deemed inappropriate, “particularly when Mr. Moi is exercising the functions of President for an interim period pending election.”

This special consideration of Kenyatta by Britain was evident in the official messages of condolence. In his message on behalf of the British government Jim Callaghan, the Prime Minister, sought to show that Kenyatta was held in very high regard in Britain at this time. “I write to express the deep regret that is felt in Britain about the death of President Kenyatta. He was indeed,” Callaghan continued in his message addressed to Moi, “the father of the Kenya nation and his courage and wisdom have ensured him an honoured place in the history of our time.”⁶⁵ Callaghan then recalled his earlier encounter with Kenyatta during the Emergency period. Kenyatta was still in detention and Callaghan had travelled to Kenya to meet with him in 1958. He remembered that even at that time Kenyatta had expressed his “long term desire to bind the country together” through unity of “all the people of Kenya.” Subsequent events, according to Callaghan, demonstrated that Kenyatta

⁶³FCO 31/2325 (London: National Archives) Internal Memo on Bamburi Understanding.

⁶⁴FCO 31/2317 (London: National Archives) Bamburi Understanding (points to make).

⁶⁵FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Message of condolence by Prime Minister Callaghan to Moi on occasion of Kenyatta’s death.

had succeeded in the implementation of this crucial national goal. "It is a tragedy," Callaghan lamented, "that his attitude was not better understood earlier," for indeed if it had been, "much bloodshed might have been saved."⁶⁶ In his reply, Moi, writing "on behalf of the people of Kenya, the family of the late President and Founder of the Kenya Nation" and himself, assured Callaghan that the Kenya government had been very grateful for British assistance and support in all matters related to the state funeral. "The assistance and understanding we have received from Britain in the traditional style of a good friend, was particularly welcome."⁶⁷

Owen's message of condolence sought to emphasize two things: Kenyatta's international stature and then the indispensable service that he had rendered to Kenya. Here was a man very hard to replace. "President Kenyatta was by any standards," Owen outlined, "a remarkable international statesman, and certainly not just in Kenya but in Africa, and the Commonwealth and the whole world really has to be grateful for all that he has done."⁶⁸ There was then an attempt to summarize Kenyatta's long political career, especially his anti-colonial agitation, "through the 1920s, 1930s, all through the struggle for the independence of Kenya." Through all these struggles, which in reality encompassed "the life of a nation," Kenyatta had made a remarkable contribution to Kenya's history, especially after Kenya became independent "after a great struggle." Kenya under Kenyatta, had maintained very good relations with Britain. Owen then expressed regret that Britain had perhaps taken "far too long to realize that Kenya was bound to become independent."⁶⁹ When Kenya attained *Uhuru*, Owen pointed out, Kenyatta gave the country stability. More importantly, "he ensured that it was a country in which every body was respected, the rights of all the people" were also respected and in which "all Kenyans wherever they came from and whatever the colour of their skin could be Kenya citizens." In Owen's view this was Kenyatta's signature accomplishment

⁶⁶FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Message of condolence by Prime Minister Callaghan to Moi on occasion of Kenyatta's death.

⁶⁷FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) Moi's letter to Callaghan.

⁶⁸FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Statement by Dr. David Owen on Kenyatta's death.

⁶⁹FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Statement by Dr. David Owen on Kenyatta's death.

as a leader. “It was a remarkable achievement, and so he built a prosperous, independent Kenya which contributed greatly to Africa, and to the stability of Africa, and I believe his legacy will be one which will leave a stable Kenya, that now we can look forward, even after his passing to a stable and peaceful Kenya.”⁷⁰ Kenyatta’s influence, Owen concluded, would be “felt all through Africa for many, many decades to come.”

The death of Kenyatta was covered extensively in British newspapers and television news. All of this coverage was closely monitored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which in turn relayed this information to the British High Commission in Nairobi. In television and radio news, “both BBC and independent radio carried profiles of the Kenyan President in their Tuesday evening bulletins as well as tributes from British diplomats and newspaper correspondents who had known him. BBC 2 devoted an hour-long documentary on his life.”⁷¹ The Foreign and Commonwealth Office notified its High Commissioner in Nairobi that this extensive coverage was an unprecedented. “Rarely,” the memo pointed out, “has any African leader received such widespread British press and radio coverage as Kenya’s ‘Burning Spear’—Jomo Kenyatta.” The news of his death had been “the first item on TV—all channels.” How was this to be explained? Why this intense interest by the British media? According to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, this extensive coverage was an indication “of the importance attached to Kenya and its affairs” in Britain. Also, it “of course reflected the strong interest” in Britain “in Kenyatta himself.”⁷²

The coverage in the newspapers expanded on the intense interest in Kenyatta and his life. The underlying theme was that this death was seen as a great loss to Britain and the West. In its extensive obituary, *The Times* stated that Kenyatta had been “a stabilizing force in African affairs.” In his long political journey, Kenyatta had been “one of the small group of Africans in Kenya who sought to speak for their own people in a colony dominated by white settlers years before the Second World War.” He had subsequently become a controversial figure

⁷⁰FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Statement by Dr. David Owen on Kenyatta’s death.

⁷¹FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Reactions of British Newspapers to Kenyatta’s death.

⁷²FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

“on whom world attention was first focused in the Kikuyu rebellion in the fifties.” In 1953, he was convicted of “managing the Mau Mau,” then imprisoned “or detained until August 1961.” Sir Patrick Renison, the governor at the time, had described him as the “leader to darkness and death,” and yet “within five years was affectionately referred to by the remaining white settlers as the ‘squire.’”⁷³ The obituary paid a lot of attention on Kenyatta’s post-colonial embrace of the West (in official policy and international politics). This had led him to the unshakable position that “Kenya’s best policy was to cooperate with the West.” And for this “he was rewarded with a big inflow of investment, and even more highly profitable tourism.” *The Times* wrote approvingly that in power Kenyatta had taken “a moderate line” that moved him away from radical Pan Africanism. This may explain his difficult relationship with Nyerere leading to the closure of the Kenya/Tanzania border in 1977. On the other hand, “Banda was accorded a state visit.” On the thorny issue of Rhodesia, Kenyatta avoided any confrontation with Britain. Instead, he “allowed others to take the initiative against Britain on Rhodesia, and firmly rejected threats to leave the Commonwealth, which he thought a useful tool for emergent Africa at this stage.”⁷⁴ Still, Kenyatta remained an enigma to the British: “perhaps he enjoyed first their fear, then their fawning.”

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office compiled a file of excerpts of the coverage of Kenyatta’s death in leading British newspapers. In its leader column, *The Times* discussed the value of Kenyatta to Kenya and the West. He had brought stability and ensured the rise of a fair country. As a result, Kenya was “one of the fairest countries of Africa ... where more freedoms have been preserved than anywhere else in that unstable, brutal, race-torn, cant-ridden continent. The basis of that stability can primarily be attributed to President Kenyatta.” This appraisal also touched on the lessons that could be learned from Kenya and hopefully transplanted for implementation in Rhodesia, thus solving that country’s intricate racial and political problems. “At a time when the transfer from white to black power in Rhodesia is inspiring so much hypocrisy in the continent, and revealing so many double standards,” *The Times* wrote, “it is well to remember that Kenya, with Kenyatta at its head, has given

⁷³ *The Times* (August 23, 1978), p. 14.

⁷⁴ *The Times* (August 23, 1978), p. 14.

the world a shining example of just how successful such a transfer can be, given will power and a desire for genuine reconciliation propagated from the very top.”⁷⁵

The *Daily Telegraph* gave an extensive coverage to the evolution of Kenyatta from the most reviled nationalist leader to the most admired and even revered post-colonial African leader. He had been the “symbol of primitive savagery in the early fifties because of his leading role in Mau Mau terrorism.” But after 1963, he went on “to become the shrewdest and most successful ruler of post-colonial Africa. This,” the *Daily Telegraph* observed, “speaks volumes for the qualities of this remarkable man.”⁷⁶ He had turned Kenya into a thriving “conservative and capitalist” country. This development, celebrated by the *Daily Telegraph* as evidence of national prosperity, made Kenya a “more promising target for Communist subversion.” Nonetheless, post-Kenyatta Kenya could count on its many “well wishers in Africa.” It had become the flag-ship of capitalist development in Africa. And “its economic progress,” the *Daily Telegraph* concluded, “has impressed those who contrast it with Marxist chaos.”⁷⁷ The *Financial Times* carried the story on its front page, where it noted that Kenyatta’s death was an event of the greatest historical significance “not just for Kenya but for the whole of Africa.” Associated with radical nationalism in his early years, Kenyatta had changed after *Uhuru* and this had led to a rethinking about him in Britain. As leader of post-colonial Kenya, Kenyatta came to be seen “as the grand old man of African politics, the statesman who more than any one else has been the guardian of a multi-racial society and a healthy private enterprise rare in the continent.”⁷⁸

The *Daily Mail* devoted two pages to the story. Its correspondent, Peter Youngusband, thought that Kenyatta was “one of the great men of Africa. I do not mean that he was perfect,” Youngusband wrote, for “these are not the attributes by which one measures greatness in Africa.”

⁷⁵FCO 31/ 2316 (London: National Archives) Reactions of British Newspapers to Kenyatta’s death.

⁷⁶FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Reactions of British Newspapers to Kenyatta’s death.

⁷⁷FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Reactions of British Newspapers to Kenyatta’s death.

⁷⁸FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Reactions of British Newspapers to Kenyatta’s death.

In his estimation, Kenya under Kenyatta had “struck a fine balance between democracy and authoritarian black rule.”⁷⁹ The *Daily Express* was very explicit in linking “progress under Kenyatta” to the recurring impact of whites in Kenya. Kenyatta had been “Africa’s top statesman.” The *Daily Express* did not fault him for not being a liberal democrat, for after all, “hardly any Africans are.” Still, he “made sure that the whites had a place in independent Kenya. They were allowed to flourish and so in consequence did his country.” Also, he “maintained strong defence links with Britain.”⁸⁰

Coverage in periodicals and journals was more analytical, even if it touched on many of the themes and issues outlined in the newspapers. However, unlike the newspapers, coverage in some of the periodicals was critical of aspects of Kenyatta’s rule. To the *New Statesman*, Kenyatta had led a serially contradictory life, combining both the traditional and the modern. “Traditional and modern combined in one man. He would alternately wear tribal robes and London University tie.” He had nonetheless been consistent on one issue: bringing to an end British colonial rule in Kenya. But “once that was achieved, he would adopt the trappings of British governorship.”⁸¹ Kenyatta also came to personify what the *New Statesman* called a “sense of ‘ancient wisdom’” partly because of his age, and partly because of his long association with Pan African struggles for black political independence. “He was the symbol of African independence when ‘white settler rule’ indicated Kenya not Rhodesia.”⁸² Like many of the newspapers, the *New Statesman* concluded that Kenyatta’s major achievement had been “to heal the wounds between black and white after the brutalities of the 1950s. For a man who had been incarcerated for nine years ... this was a colossal triumph of spirit.” His forgiveness, especially of white settlers, “was made possible by his innate worship of land. When he found white farmers with similar emotions, they met on common ground.”⁸³ Yet this readiness to forgive white settlers, the *News Statesman* wrote, “did not lead him to a belief

⁷⁹FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Reactions of British Newspapers to Kenyatta’s death.

⁸⁰FCO 31/2316 (London: National Archives) Reactions of British Newspapers to Kenyatta’s death.

⁸¹*New Statesman* (August 25, 1978), p. 231.

⁸²*New Statesman* (August 25, 1978), p. 231.

⁸³*New Statesman* (August 25, 1978), p. 231.

in an equal right to land—or other forms of wealth—for all his people.” This led to the rise and expansion of “elite privilege since independence.” Kenyatta had, almost from the start of the *Uhuru* period, steered Kenya into becoming a “conservative capitalist country.” In Africa and beyond, Kenya had quickly become “a classic example of the Western ‘trickle down’ theory.” Consequently, capital had “been poured into the country; especially favoured by American capitalists.” The “trickle down” theory “assumed that an increase in National Product will eventually bring prosperity to the masses. There is no sign,” the *New Statesman* concluded, “of the theory being vindicated in Kenya or anywhere else.”⁸⁴ What was certain was that Kenyatta’s successors would have to deal with the inherited problem of income inequality now complicated by the potentially toxic phenomenon of “tribal jealousies.”

The Spectator determined that Kenyatta had a mixed legacy. At his heart, he was “an old-fashioned Kikuyu nationalist,” and that “his real beliefs would have amazed and shocked the smiling English do-gooders with whom, in the Thirties, he discussed socialism and other topics that blacks were then expected to take seriously in return for a free meal.”⁸⁵ He was a conservative man whose African Socialism “meant a rawer go-getting capitalism than any conservative leader in Europe could hope to achieve.” Kenyatta’s single most important achievement was seeing Kenya become an independent country. This had taken place, according to *The Spectator* peacefully, “admittedly by a predominantly Kikuyu elite.” Linked to this was the strong encouragement by his government to foreign enterprises to invest in the country. On the political front, Kenyatta had, for some time, “maintained a widely-based multi-tribal government at the top level: western people like the Luos ... carefully represented.”⁸⁶ Kenyatta’s policies had also resulted in general prosperity and indeed *The Spectator* hailed the success of the “trickle down” theory in Kenya, “despite the occasional violence and corruption.” This was the formula for the future for “as long as the extended family exists,” wealth created “trickles down to many of the rural millions.” There was also freedom of expression in Kenya with a vibrant political culture that

⁸⁴ *New Statesman* (August 25, 1978), p. 231.

⁸⁵ *The Spectator* (August 26, 1978), p. 6.

⁸⁶ *The Spectator* (August 26, 1978), p. 6.

allowed “Kenyans to chuck out their MPs every five years.” For all this, “all praise to Kenyatta” and not his family who “should not inherit the glory that Kenyatta alone deserves.”⁸⁷

Yet for all these achievements, *The Spectator* nonetheless faulted Kenyatta for being too much of “an old-fashioned Kikuyu nationalist,” who, as a result, “deep down felt no great sympathy ... towards the non-Kikuyu three quarters of Kenya.” This was evident, according to *The Spectator*, in the ever-sensitive issue of distribution of land after *Uhuru*. Here, the Kikuyu had “recovered not just the heartland of Kikuyu country in the foothills of Mount Kenya—for which Kenyatta had a mystical reverence—but also the huge acreages of the Great Rift Valley, which were historically in no sense Kikuyu. The Masai are the ones that have been hard done by, in terms of land, both by the colonialists and after.”⁸⁸ *The Spectator* then touched on the question of poaching, which was of course a tension-ridden topic at this time in Kenya. “Kenya’s abundant wildlife did not inspire him, though poker-faced Americans would present him with prizes for his services to conservation, while his relations enriched themselves through the ivory poaching trade.”⁸⁹ Participation in poaching was part of his family’s “uncontrolled desire for riches.” This “unchecked irresponsibility,” which escalated as “Mzee became old and senile,” was definitely “a serious blot on Kenyatta’s later record.”⁹⁰

In its report on Kenyatta’s death, *The Economist* placed emphasis on his unrivalled domination of Kenyan politics for a long time. He had “put his stamp on every facet of life.” Also, his general influence had “spread beyond the borders of Kenya: not because he much wanted it to (in recent years he refused to travel abroad) but because his reputation as a leader who brought his country to independence was so respected in Africa that not even critics could ignore his example.”⁹¹ *The Economist* provided an additional factor: that Kenyatta had, in 1978, become “the first nationalist to die a natural death in office.” In the matter of historical achievements, Kenyatta had accumulated two enduring ones. His first was “to drive the British, as a colonial power, out of Kenya. His

⁸⁷ *The Spectator* (August 26, 1978), p. 6.

⁸⁸ *The Spectator* (August 26, 1978), p. 6.

⁸⁹ *The Spectator* (August 26, 1978), p. 6.

⁹⁰ *The Spectator* (August 26, 1978), p. 6.

⁹¹ *The Economist* (August 26, 1978), p. 11.

second was to welcome them to stay on, as junior partners in the prosperous enterprise of Kenya, Inc.”⁹² There had been a radical change in the white settlers’ perception of Kenyatta, especially after 1963. For the white settlers and their allies, “the man whose name was synonymous with unspeakable outrages during the Mau Mau emergency came to be both a bulwark against communism in Africa and the guardian of a sort of fair play for Europeans in a continent where cricket seemed to be on the way out.”⁹³ Kenyatta had emerged as a trusted, energetic, resourceful, and effective participant in the West’s war against communism and socialism in Africa. This effort, in the service of imperialism, was now being acknowledged and celebrated. “Under President Kenyatta,” *The Economist* narrated, “a free enterprise economy burgeoned; tribalism was contained; and many of the bits of democratic machinery that came with Kenya’s independence constitution in 1963 continued to operate. Compared with many African countries, Kenya has been a paragon of prosperity and stability.”⁹⁴

Still, *The Economist* identified many areas where Kenyatta had failed. The most prominent one was the rise of the avaricious elite and the consequent expansion of income inequality in the country. This “inequity of Kenyan society, whose extremes of wealth and poverty are indeed striking,”⁹⁵ had grown unchecked during Kenyatta’s reign. Regrettably, the trend would continue to expand with vigor in the subsequent period. Linked to this was the matter of corruption. By 1978, corruption had “passed the point at which it is merely a useful lubricant to the cogs and pistons of the economy. It now,” threatened “to generate such resentment that no politician can enjoy the trust of all Kenyans. For this,” *The Economist* concluded, “President Kenyatta must take much of the blame, for though his own nest-feathering aroused relatively little criticism among Kenyans, that of his ministers, and particularly of his family has aroused lots.”⁹⁶

The Economist drew attention to the tragedy inherent in “tribal politics,” which had flourished under Kenyatta. This had, of course, been an integral part of the MacDonald formula. But it had several limitations

⁹² *The Economist* (August 26, 1978), p. 11.

⁹³ *The Economist* (August 26, 1978), p. 11.

⁹⁴ *The Economist* (August 26, 1978), p. 11.

⁹⁵ *The Economist* (August 26, 1978), p. 11.

⁹⁶ *The Economist* (August 26, 1978), p. 11.

as a basis for nation building. There had to be a dominant “tribe in power” with all other ethnic groups held in sub-ordinate positions. It is a very colonial take on the politics and even on the meaning of a nation. During Kenyatta’s reign, *The Economist* deduced that the official policy was to keep the Luo, “firmly sub-ordinate to the go-getting Kikuyu, who in recent years have been placed in more and more of [the] key positions.”⁹⁷ “Tribal politics” was, in the ultimate, short sighted. It provided no solutions to the complex problems that nation building inevitably encompasses. “This was a policy,” *The Economist* wrote, “of temporary containment, not one of long term co-existence and cannot last.”⁹⁸ The rise and perpetuation of “tribal politics” depends at a very fundamental level, on the manipulation of the political memory of the masses of the various ethnic groups by the profiteering elite. It does not provide a credible formula for the peaceful co-existence of various communities dedicated to the enterprise of nation building for mutual benefit. At the time of Kenyatta’s death, *The Economist* identified what it called “Kikuyu hegemony” as an “obstacle facing Kenya’s next ruler.”

Linked to this was the escalation in official intolerance toward oppositional politics. Since 1966, especially after the formation of the KPU, Kenyatta had grown “more and more intolerant of criticism.” In June 1966, his government pushed through the Parliament the Public Security Bill that gave the President authority to detain without trial, all those individuals deemed by his government to be a danger to national security. Only one MP “G. J. Mbogo (Embu North) voted against the Bill, describing it as ‘a very dangerous, South African-style legislation.’”⁹⁹ A few days after the Parliament had endorsed the bill, Kenyatta addressed a huge rally in Nakuru and warned that he “would not tolerate trouble-makers who want to ruin the confidence, and wreck the foundations on which Kanu Government was built.” He told the crowd that he now had powerful legal weapons to unleash against opponents of his government. “I have today given my assent to the Public

⁹⁷ *The Economist* (August 26, 1978), p. 11.

⁹⁸ *The Economist* (August 26, 1978), p. 11.

⁹⁹ Gerard Loughran, *Birth of A NATION: The Story of a Newspaper in Kenya*, p. 89.

Security Act and will now deal very firmly with all trouble-makers and those bribed to undermine the integrity of this Government elected by the people themselves.”¹⁰⁰

After 1969, the use of detention as a political weapon to silence opposition became routine. This was especially true after J.M. Karuki, “a prominent chastiser of the government was found murdered, having last been seen in the company of senior security officials.” Frightened and rattled by the public furor over Kariuki’s murder, Kenyatta’s government was “more ready to detain political dissidents without trial than in the past.”¹⁰¹ This recourse to detention to silence opposition would be wielded with astonishing frequency by Kenyatta’s successors, especially during Moi’s reign. Here, it may be useful to remember that,

whatever reason may be given to justify authoritarian rule, there can be little doubt that lack of political pluralism and mass political activism and participation tends to postpone the erection and growth of the political culture of tolerance. It also avoids the establishment of institutional guarantees for peaceful dissent and it unfortunately always equates dissent with sedition.¹⁰²

At the end of Kenyatta’s rule, the country did not have an unshakeable culture of tolerance of political dissent. Certainly, there were no institutional guarantees for dissent. Kenyatta, therefore, “bequeathed to his successor a country without an effective safety-valve for legitimate opposition and for rectifying wrongs.”¹⁰³

Within Kenya, immediate media commentary on Kenyatta’s death was filled with praise for him as a person and leader: the man who brought *Uhuru* to Kenya. There was no room, at this stage, for elaborate and annotated criticism of Kenyatta’s reign. Directly or indirectly, such criticism would come later as the country came to grips with lingering problems with definite origin in Kenyatta’s reign. Writing a few days after Kenyatta’s death, *The Weekly Review* commented that, “the measure of a man’s greatness is the scope of the impact of his life on his fellowmen. By all yardsticks, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta was a great man, for his life touched

¹⁰⁰ *Daily Nation* (June 6, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁰¹ *The Economist* (August 26, 1978), p. 11.

¹⁰² W.O. Maloba, “Decolonization: A Theoretical Perspective,” p. 17.

¹⁰³ *The Economist* (August 26, 1978), p. 11.

upon the destinies of virtually all Kenyans and his fame had by the end of his long and eventful life spread to all corners of the earth. For whole generations of African leaders”, *The Weekly Review* continued in its praise, “he was a guiding light, a freedom fighter who fought bravely for the liberty of his people and for the dignity of the down-trodden wherever they were.”¹⁰⁴ *The Weekly Review* did not provide details of the nature of the impact of Kenyatta’s reign on the lives of “his fellowmen” in Kenya. Doesn’t the nature and long-term meaning of the impact count in assessing a leader’s legacy? Also, *The Weekly Review* avoided dealing with the tricky question of the metamorphosis of Kenyatta’s image in the West, from “a Communist trained revolutionary and advocate of African savagery” to a beloved and respected elder statesman. What accounts for this radical change within a very short period? On the question of support for liberation, it is not true that Kenyatta had, while in power, fought for “the dignity of the down-trodden wherever they were.” Indeed, his government scrupulously avoided any entanglement in foreign affairs that would upset or seriously challenge the West and its imperial objectives around the world. During his reign, at the height of the Cold war, national struggles for liberation in Africa and beyond were in reality struggles “for the dignity of the down-trodden.” And in these struggles, Kenyatta’s Kenya was not on the front line. On this question, Kenyatta’s record fades in comparison to some African leaders, for example, Nyerere of Tanzania.

The Weekly Review praised Kenyatta’s tolerance, especially toward the media. Deliberate or not, an impression was created of Kenyatta having been tolerant not only of oppositional politics but also of literature and publications opposed to his government’s chosen ideology: conservative and capitalist. “It is to him,” *The Weekly Review* wrote, “that we owe the large measure of freedom which the press in Kenya enjoys today. His patience and understanding in matters of free expression, as in all other national issues, is a legacy that Kenya journalists will cherish with gratitude for years to come.”¹⁰⁵ How about the country’s constitution, didn’t it guarantee these freedoms? Were these freedoms the product of a presidential dispensation? What was not mentioned or even hinted at was the direct and intimate connection between the media (especially the major

¹⁰⁴ *The Weekly Review* (August 25, 1978), p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ *The Weekly Review* (August 25, 1978), p. 3.

national newspapers) and the government during Kenyatta's reign. This matter, as already mentioned, was well known to local political observers, and the British intelligence services. Recent studies have reaffirmed the nature and extent of this close connection between the government and the media.¹⁰⁶

This linkage, in the pursuit of common political objectives, placed severe limitations on the media: on what it could report and criticize about Kenyatta and the follies of his government. It should be mentioned that possession of certain communist literature, was prohibited by law and several individuals were jailed for being in possession of such publications. In March 1969, a Mombasa senior resident magistrate sentenced Abdul Latif bin Abdalla, whose mind was "full of revolutionary ideas" to 18 months in prison "on charges connected with a seditious pamphlet." He had been found in possession of a political pamphlet entitled, "*Kenya Twendapi?*" meaning, "Where are we heading in Kenya?" The magistrate argued that the

translated version of the pamphlet pointed out that its contents meant that the people of Kenya should prepare themselves to overthrow the Government by force of arms "in other words, it incited the people to prepare themselves for a revolution in Kenya as was done in by the people of Zanzibar in 1964. The reference to Mau Mau, North Vietnam and Biafra clearly meant that the Kanu Government should be removed by the use of violence if in the 1970 elections it rejected the papers of KPU candidates."¹⁰⁷

Any one found in possession of Mao's books was generally convicted and jailed. In March 1969, a high school student at Ngere Secondary School was, "sentenced to six months' imprisonment for being in possession of prohibited publications." He had been found in possession of "20 copies of prohibited publications including Mao Tse-tung thoughts, military literature and catalogues."¹⁰⁸

Another compelling example of the limited nature of freedom of expression under Kenyatta is the case of Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Toward the

¹⁰⁶See, for example, Gerard Loughran, *Birth of a NATION: The Story of a Newspaper in Kenya*.

¹⁰⁷*Daily Nation* (March 20, 1969), p. 28.

¹⁰⁸*Daily Nation* (March 22, 1969), p. 13.

end of Kenyatta's rule an order was issued for the arrest and detention of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Kenya's pre-eminent writer. At the time of his arrest and detention, *The Weekly Review* argued that "part of Ngugi's problem seems to be that as he has moved farther to the left of the country's political ideological spectrum, he has tended to operate in a world which does not allow for objective appraisal of the political realities not only in Kenya but in other parts of the world."¹⁰⁹ *The Weekly Review* accused Ngugi of failing to condemn suppressive practices of countries whose overall ideology he allegedly supported, for example, North Korea, the Soviet Union, and other communist regimes. Ngugi was then accused of political and tactical recklessness in his leftist political leanings. "During the past year or so," *The Weekly Review* wrote,

Ngugi has acted the part of ideologue rather than writer and he has done so with increasing inability to relate to the limits of the sphere of an author's operation which is possible in a developing country in areas where ideas, however noble, can be translated into actions which then have far reaching implications to the general pattern of law and order.¹¹⁰

In other words, Ngugi was through his recklessness, responsible for his detention. It was an extraordinary claim. It seemed to suggest that there was a wide and steadfast line of demarcation between art and politics, and further that the role of the artist was not to disturb the status quo.

Upon his release from detention, Ngugi wrote his prison memoir, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, in which he was very critical of *The Weekly Review*, and especially its founder/editor, Hilary Ng'weno. Ngugi accused Ng'weno for in effect "advancing an ideological justification" for his detention.¹¹¹ As Ngugi saw it, the "aim of such speculative journalism," was to "shift the debate from the issue of suppression of democratic rights and of the freedom of expression, to a bold discussion and literary posturing about problems of other countries." It is useful to remember that Ngugi's detention had very little to do with his failure to condemn suppression of authors in communist countries! Kenyatta

¹⁰⁹ *The Weekly Review* (January 9, 1978), p. 6.

¹¹⁰ *The Weekly Review* (January 9, 1978), p. 6.

¹¹¹ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (London/Nairobi: Heinemann, 1981), p. xvii.

sanctioned this detention after “two gentlemen very highly placed in the government flew to Mombasa and demanded an urgent audience” with the President.

They each held copies of *Petals of Blood* in one hand, and the other, a copy of *Ngaahika Ndeenda*. The audience granted, they then proceeded to read him, out of context of course, passages and lines and words allegedly subversive as evidence of highly suspicious intentions. The only way to thwart those intentions—whatever they were—was to detain him who harboured such dangerous intentions, they pleaded. Some others had sought outright and permanent silencing, in the manner of J. M. Kariuki, but on second thoughts this was quashed for “national stability.” And so to detention I was sent!¹¹²

Ngugi’s writings were perceived to be a danger to the class structure in Kenya, but especially in Kikuyuland. There were intricate bottled up tensions here that revolved around issues of class, land and also the division between the collaborators (especially the former Home Guards and their families) and the veterans of the Mau Mau struggle.¹¹³ It would thus be difficult to argue, like *The Weekly Review* did, that Kenyatta upheld “the principle of freedom of the press and freedom of expression in general.”

One of the most intriguing appraisal of Kenyatta and his meaning to Kenya, was written by Duncan Ndegwa, the first African Chief Secretary and Head of the Civil Service. He was there from the beginning, when the official policies of the independent government were established. He also had a decisive hand in the shaping of some of these policies, including the administrative structure of the new government. Details of Ndegwa’s career were well known to the British intelligence services. Born in 1925 in Nyeri, he was educated at “Kagumu, Alliance High School, Makerere and St. Andrews University (MA Hons. Economics and History) 1956.” Before 1963, he had held a series of senior appointments in the colonial service. These included, “Senior Assistant Secretary

¹¹²Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary*, p. xvi.

¹¹³Ngugi’ play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (literally, ‘I will Marry When I want’) received a very critical and harsh review by Karugu Gitau during this period. See, *The Weekly Review* (January 9, 1978), p. 13. For a recent detailed study of Ngugi’s writings see, *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Ngugi wa Thiong’o*. Edited by Oliver Lovesey (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2012).

and Deputy Permanent Secretary, Treasury, 1963.” After *Uhuru*, he was appointed Secretary to the Cabinet and Permanent Secretary Office of the President and Head of the Civil Service. In 1967, he was appointed as the Governor of the Central Bank. He had also been a senior official in GEMA. He is however widely “known for the Civil Service report of 1971, the ‘Ndegwa Commission Report’ a massive and controversial document which has been strongly criticised as a charter for the wholesale involvement of top civil servants in business and corruption.” Also, these security services added, he was “a poor administrator and moderate economist who has failed to make the Central Bank a major core in policy making and seems too tolerant of corruption.”¹¹⁴

Ndegwa owed his ascent in the civil service, after 1963, to Kenyatta. And this ascent was in turn tied to their shared political values, but especially to their common ethnicity as Kikuyus. Kenyatta had picked him out “from among several other colleagues to serve as Permanent Secretary for his Planning and Development docket.” Although to be sure, Ndegwa did not know Kenyatta personally prior to his elevation, he had several advantages over his would-be competitors. First, he brought to the table high recommendation from the colonial civil service. “He had chosen me although he did not know me. Perhaps it was his way of acknowledging that since others, including the colonial government, had tested me, therefore, he could. That background, I guess, gave him peace of mind as well as confidence.”¹¹⁵ Second, Kenyatta felt comfortable working with him because he was a Kikuyu. “That Kenyatta and I shared a common tongue and a cultural background,” he would later observe, “certainly helped break some of the barriers that could have cropped up had there been a marked dichotomy in world views between us. In hind sight, this was the critical primer that prepared the ground for the sensitive, and sometimes, daunting path I had to walk with him as a servant of a new Kenya.”¹¹⁶ This is an important consideration to bear in mind for as Ndegwa himself says he was at the center in the making of key civil service decisions including the hiring of senior civil servants during the crucial period of the Africanization of personnel. “My position as his Secretary,” he recalled, “challenged me to respond on his behalf at

¹¹⁴FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

¹¹⁵Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta's Struggles: My Story*, p. 4.

¹¹⁶Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta's Struggles: My Story*, p. 4.

times even without consulting him. Many decisions thus stopped at my door. I had to make them not only on behalf of Kenyatta but also for the government.”

One of the early key decisions made by Ndegwa involved the appointment of the first African Permanent Secretaries. These were presidential appointments. “Kenyatta’s faith in me,” Ndegwa reflected with pride years later,

had spoken loud since a little earlier when he honoured me with the task of naming the first batch of African Permanent Secretaries just days before Independence Day ... I handed him on a list headed, “List of proposed Permanent Secretaries.” When Kenyatta read through it, he changed the heading to, “List of Permanent Secretaries” and ordered me take it to the Governor-General, Sir Malcolm McDonald for it to be made public.¹¹⁷

Ndegwa does not provide credible criteria used in arriving at this list. Nor is there any indication that this list was composed of the most able and qualified Africans at this time.

These are crucial questions to consider in any discussion about Kenyatta’s reign. As Ndegwa himself acknowledges, colonialism and the struggle for *Uhuru* had left a legacy of disunity in the country. “At this point, ours was a severely divided people and nation ... Kenyatta was thus inheriting a disunited people. Hostilities were now rife not only between communities but also between members of the same families and clans. It was a society in transition and turmoil ... A sense of justice had to be restored.”¹¹⁸ During these early years, that sense of justice for most communities revolved around their representation at the center of power: access to power and its benefits. One of the major drawbacks of the MacDonal formula was to have failed to anticipate this outcome, that domination by one ethnic group spawned distrust and then hostility.

As the country settled in the *Uhuru* era, it became apparent to most local and international observers that the Kikuyu community held “many top positions in the Civil Service.” This led to on going out-cry against “tribalism” in the allocation of lucrative and powerful positions in the public and private sector. “Some people have said, at times with much bitterness,” Ndegwa remembered, “that Kenyatta favoured his own

¹¹⁷Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 273.

¹¹⁸Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 7.

people in the appointments. Perhaps I am the wrong man to comment on this issue since I am from the Gikuyu community and headed the civil service.” In his memoirs, Ndegwa provided an improbable rationalization for this most troubling episode in the country’s history. “The fact, however, is that Central Province, by virtue of having embraced education early enough and more enthusiastically than most other Kenya regions, produced adequate candidates once they were required. We could not turn them down,” Ndegwa concluded, “on grounds of creating an ethnic mix at a time when there was need for rapid Africanisation of the Civil Service.”¹¹⁹ This surely, is a clear case of finding comfort in seductive mythology to rationalize an obviously indefensible and unsavory practice. There are simply no facts to buttress Ndegwa’s claim. Nor is there any evidence that the government took a concerted effort to look for qualified candidates for these senior positions. Many of the positions were filled through executive appointment having by-passed competition in open searches. This debunks Ndegwa’s claim that those appointed were the most qualified. This theory was rarely, if ever, tested. Ripples from this undertaking, with definite origin in Kenyatta’s reign, continue to have a confounding, and sometimes tragic, political and economic impact on the country. How can this “false start” be overcome? It is also worth noting that the rapid Africanization of the civil service was ironically the result of the dogged and voluble efforts by radical nationalists, including Achieng Oneko, “who passionately advocated the removal of Geoffrey Allerton as the Secretary to the Cabinet.” On his own, Kenyatta had wanted to be more “more methodical in replacing the white civil servants. He retained,” as Ndegwa states, “a warm heart for whites who had reconciled themselves with the reality of an independent Kenya. They included his former enemies.”¹²⁰

Ndegwa also revealed that as these appointments accumulated and gained momentum, “some members of the Agikuyu community ... felt that they deserved more because, as they argued, they had suffered more during the struggle for independence.”¹²¹ But as it happens, the main beneficiaries of the “fruits of *Uhuru*” had not suffered in the Mau Mau struggle or even in subsequent tension-filled nationalist politics. It was

¹¹⁹Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 316.

¹²⁰Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 316.

¹²¹Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 307.

mainly the sons (and sometimes daughters) of collaborators who assumed key positions in Kenyatta's government. Their fathers and relatives had, during colonial rule, fought with singular determination to defeat the nationalist movement. Many were opposed to the very idea of having Kenyatta as the country's leader. The collaborators had not only benefited materially during the Mau Mau struggle, they had also been responsible for brutality against their kith and kin. It is now generally acknowledged that after "independence it became apparent that many of the former guerillas and detainees failed to assume the key posts of power in the government and the private sector."

On a general level, however, this claim by some members of the Kikuyu community raises very troubling questions. First, it discounts the many and heroic contributions of other communities to the nationalist struggle for *Uhuru*. Second, it unfairly downplays the "central roles played by the trade unions, the newly elected political elite and the parliamentary battles"¹²² at a time when political organization in Kikuyuland was either weak or emerging as a result of colonial restrictions. Third, it unfortunately seeks to localize and privatize the heroic nationalist struggle by essentially making it a "tribal" undertaking. Such efforts, no doubt propelled by greed of the elite in Kikuyuland, do complicate any efforts toward nation building. It is always vital to remember that,

what makes Mau Mau a national movement is not its composition but its political aim. Like the KAU before it, and then the KANU and the KADU after it, Mau Mau remained committed to the idea of political freedom. This was the one issue over which there was general agreement in the forests. Freedom was pursued in general terms; no specific details issued from the forest discussions. Still, Mau Mau was determined to eliminate European domination in Kenya and to attain an African government.¹²³

While it is true that the Mau Mau revolt, "did not alone lead Kenya to independence in 1963," it nonetheless played a very critical national role in the attainment of *Uhuru*. "It made settler colonialism no longer feasible in Kenya" and it "raised the price of colonial control for Britain to an intolerable level." But it was always a national movement and must

¹²²W.O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of A Peasant Revolt*, p. 170.

¹²³W.O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of A Peasant Revolt*, p. 171.

therefore continue to be seen and celebrated as a national movement for the liberation of the country.

One of the hauntingly sensitive questions in post-colonial Kenya is unequal development of districts and provinces, which as it happens, tend to be inhabited by separate ethnic groups. During Kenyatta's reign, there were rumblings of discontent from areas that had been "forgotten" in national development efforts. Central Province (land of the Kikuyu), was generally perceived to have galloped ahead of other provinces during Kenyatta's reign. Ndegwa's explanation for this development draws on the colonial paradigm that ascribed more industriousness and innovative energy to the Kikuyu compared to other ethnic communities. "As a result of mainly historical and cultural reasons," he has written,

some sections of the country were bound to develop faster than others. Some were predisposed to high levels of motivation while others were favoured by advantageous physical environments ... Central Province, for instance, showed remarkable growth within a very short while after the government boosted advisory services for small scale farmers. Tea and coffee farmers in the province, already familiar with these crops to some extent, did not need much goading to embrace new farming techniques to boost production of the two cash crops.¹²⁴

When investigated, the political economy of unequal development reveals a story that is much more complex than just the possession of "innate industriousness and agility," by a group or community. This question of unequal development, of areas and communities, lies at the center of all past and current discussions on the project of nation building for mutual benefit.

How about Kenyatta's accomplishments? Ndegwa provides a list of key achievements. First, he held the country together "by insisting on centralized governance when it was threatened by balkanization—or worse, break-up—through the divisive and ill-advised majimbo system."¹²⁵ It is useful to mention here that this unitary system, susceptible to abuse, was routinely faced with several challenges and discontent over the years. By 2010 it had lost a lot of its initial attraction and luster. A new Constitution was passed promising to devolve "political and economic powers to 47

¹²⁴Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta's Struggles: My Story*, p. 314.

¹²⁵Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta's struggles: My Story*, p. 529.

independently and constitutionally elected county governments. In their composition, mandate of governance and resource empowerment, the county governments will be entirely novel establishments unlike the hundreds of central-government-controlled local government, and county establishments and provincial administration as provided by the current Constitution.”¹²⁶ Some of the objects of devolution as spelt out in the new Constitution are,

to foster national unity by recognizing diversity; to give powers of self-governance to the people and enhance the participation of the people in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them; to ensure equitable sharing of national and local resources throughout Kenya; to promote social and economic development and the provision of proximate, easily accessible services throughout Kenya.¹²⁷

The new Constitution is corrective in intent and tone, and it promises the establishment of local democracy and access to resources for all regions. “Simply stated,” Njehu Gatabaki has observed, the new Constitution “removes the authoritarian and corrupt un-elected Provincial Administration first imposed by British colonialists to control ‘natives.’ This much-hated colonial relic, which the British themselves do not have,” Gatabaki concludes, “imposes the will of the central government, mainly minister/permanent secretary in-charge of Provincial Administration and internal Security on behalf of the President as happened in previous Kenyatta and Moi administrations on the rest of the country.”¹²⁸

Second, on economic development, Ndegwa writes approvingly of efforts by Kenyatta and his government to “steer the country from major economic disaster, ala Mugabe’s Zimbabwe, by holding back from outright repossession and wholesale free redistribution of white lands to landless Africans.” Kenyatta’s chosen path, praised in London and other centers of international capital, believed that, “financial empowerment and training of Africans to acquire first, and then manage, such property

¹²⁶Njehu Gatabaki, “Power to the People” in *Finance* (Special Issue) Nairobi: 2010, p. 33.

¹²⁷*Republic of Kenya: The Proposed Constitution of Kenya* (Nairobi: Government Printer, May 6, 2010), p. 113.

¹²⁸Njehu Gatabaki, “Power to the People,” p. 33.

and new forms of wealth generation was the more realistic and preferred option.”¹²⁹ Ndegwa is consistent in his strong defense of Kenyatta’s economic policies. They were both correct and inevitable; they avoided economic disaster and created wealth. He also defends Kenyatta’s actions against the radical nationalists and their insistence on the nationalization of land, or at least establishment of controls on land ownership. Ndegwa finds the policy suggestions of the radicals to have been ill advised for they would have relied on the country “tilting to the East.” And the

East would, of course, not have given the necessary aid without special conditions and exertion of certain influences. With the East for a partner, conditions for nationalisation of farms and industries could not be ruled out. Kenyatta was not ready for such [a] course of action. He believed that any attempts at nationalisation would destroy foreign investment prospects.¹³⁰

It is the ideological implications of “tilting to the East” that Ndegwa feared and opposed with unyielding tenacity. It should be pointed out that indeed Western aid came with a multitude of conditions that reinforced the capitalist system established under colonial rule. Western conditions on economic aid were acceptable to, and embraced by, the ruling elite who benefited immensely from the system left in place at the end of colonial rule. “Critics of Kenyatta’s policy regarding buying out white farmers in scheduled areas,” Ndegwa would later point out, “were perhaps not aware that the money that his government got to buy those farms was also tied to other sectors which equally begged financing.” The fate of white settlers had a direct impact on the provision of Western aid in general, and more specifically, British aid to Kenya. “Kicking out the farmers without compensation would therefore have meant the loss of British resources with which to finance the skeleton military Kenya had then at a time when there was a real threat of secession in the North-Eastern Province.”¹³¹

This hostility toward “tilting to the East” as already discussed, reflected an ideological resistance by the ruling elite to any hint of socialism. But it also demonstrated the powerful presence of the departing

¹²⁹Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 529.

¹³⁰Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 312.

¹³¹Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 312.

British colonial masters in the country. The British still had immense supervisory power over the country's economy and continued to wield considerable influence over Kenyatta. On another level, the hostility reflected the lingering impact of what can loosely be termed colonial mentality and disposition acquired by the new ruling elite through education under colonial conditions (local or overseas). Many of them went through an education system that seriously censored information from other cultures, especially from the East. "One has only to look around," Okello Oculi astutely observed, "to hear some of our elite speak about 'democracy' to appreciate the extent to which they reflect the unfortunate stamping of colonial and neo-colonial propaganda. For a considerable number of the elite the accusation could be made that they 'read' books but they did not 'learn how to learn.'"¹³² This issue is especially relevant when we attempt to analyze some of ideological tendencies and biases of the new ruling elite. For many of them, education meant being very knowledgeable about the West and then the "mother country" and its cultural heritage but not much else. This was censored education with definite political implications.

A considerable proportion of the elite is likely to be quite well read on the history of the metropolitan country. The colonial syllabus made this second if not first placing with the Bible (i.e. the uncensored or non-indexed part of history). They are most likely to be timid about the history of "foreign" countries like China, the Latin American group of countries, Scandinavia, Russia, etc. The list [Okello Oculi correctly states] has a common attribute in the sense that pre-independence history lessons and text books tended to treat them as irrelevant (except when they were reflected in the history of the "mother country" as the "bad fellows" or the victims of "the gallant." This kind of ignorance (nurtured or protected ignorance) is likely to create a state of mental inertia, a static disposition that is marked by a refusal to learn about the "foreigners" even at the post-colonial period. Much of the hostile reaction to Communist countries [Okello Oculi concluded] can be explained along these lines. A propagandist watching the situation would look at it as the "returns of investment paying off."¹³³

¹³²Okello Oculi, "Ignorant Elites: Africa's Threat," *East Africa Journal* (October 1968). p. 26.

¹³³Okello Oculi, "Ignorant Elites: Africa's Threat," p. 27.

This system of free enterprise, celebrated with much fanfare after the radical nationalists had been subdued, failed to deliver. It was highly hierarchical, exploitative, and burdened by corruption at all levels. Even Ndegwa conceded that in the end, “leadership was now viewed as the road to enrichment and not service. Parliament was just a vehicle for self-enrichment, and so were seats in local authorities.” It was disappointing to see that in fact “the gate-keepers had become poachers. The man-eat man society, as Nyerere called Kenya’s capitalism had become a reality.”¹³⁴ Part of the explanation for this development, according to Ndegwa, can be found in Kenyatta’s failing health, which robbed him of energy and ability to focus on the task at hand. Ndegwa’s successor as the Chief Secretary “often complained of a host of challenges; being met by far-away stares, arranged briefings and meetings being put off or key decisions to being unduly delayed. Kenyatta’s sharp memory had disappeared as well as his mastery over facts and issues.”¹³⁵

The end of Kenyatta’s reign, especially after 1973, is a disappointment to Ndegwa. Failing health and old age led Kenyatta to “to lose grip” on affairs of the state, giving way “to others to fill the vacuum and lay succession games.” In other words, Kenyatta most probably over-stayed “his tenure” as an effective President. “Had Kenyatta retired from the Presidency in 1973,” Ndegwa would later write with some evident sadness, “history would have accorded his leadership a shade of sainthood. He would have been in office for ten years during which time he had control of the country and been responsible for its destiny.” Had he chosen to retire from office in 1973, “Kenyatta could have indeed died a saint,” for he would have handed over power to the next generation, “the generation that was nearing the age of 20 in 1963,” and was “now ripe to take over,” but was “being denied a chance to engage in party politics.”¹³⁶

Ndegwa also touched on the problem of abuse of power for personal gain by the ruling elite in Kenyatta’s last years. The Provincial Administration, acting in the name of the President, became even more high-handed and abrasive in its dealings with the public. According to Ndegwa, Kenyatta’s rule and image was tarnished by the cumulative

¹³⁴Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 527.

¹³⁵Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 281.

¹³⁶Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 524.

effect of all these developments. “Had he wanted to leave the legacy of having died a man of the people like Mahatma Gandhi,” he should not only have retired after 1973, but also “made the machinery of the party more inclusive so as to enhance the contribution of the new generation.” In spite of these failings toward the end of his reign, Ndegwa credits Kenyatta for grooming Moi to take over as President. This led to a smooth transition of power, but more crucially, it ensured that “government was not seen to be a Gikuyu monopoly, but a national legacy. Strident Gikuyu nationalism—as in the efforts of GEMA,” Ndegwa concluded, “might have been too much for other tribal interests in the country to bear.”¹³⁷

Ngugi’s assessment of Kenyatta’s reign, written in 1984, remains invaluable for two main reasons. First, Ngugi sought to understand (and partially explain) Kenyatta’s ceaseless efforts after 1961, to benefit from his earlier reputation as a fiery nationalist; the “burning spear.” By 1963 and beyond, he had long ceased to be the “burning spear.” Second, Ngugi wanted to situate the harmful impact of Kenyatta’s reign within the broad context of Kenya’s continuing struggle against imperial oppression and exploitation. In the 1920s and 1930s and even 1940s, Kenyatta had been under what Ngugi calls “his revolutionary KCA-influenced past.” This was followed by, “his Pan-African associations with Kwame Nkrumah, C.L.R. James, Paul Robeson, George Padmore, and W.E.B. DuBois.” And then there was the “KAU patriotic phase,” which gave way to the “cult of revolutionary anti-imperialist personality built around him while he was in detention.”¹³⁸ Ngugi accused Kenyatta of having an “almost instinctive sense of political opportunism” that enabled him to fool, “his peasant admirers who always thought he still concealed behind his gold-dyed beard and hypnotic eyes, a master plan for Kenya’s final deliverance from external and internal exploitation.”¹³⁹ Thus, Kenyatta had continued to cash-in on his earlier reputation as “the burning spear,” even as he consistently and vigorously repudiated this past in his actions and policies while in power. This was calculated and almost cynical political opportunism. Events surrounding the “brutal

¹³⁷Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 524.

¹³⁸Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary*, p. 90.

¹³⁹Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary*, p. 90.

murder of J.M. Kariuki and the subsequent cover-up,” had exposed Kenyatta’s callousness, opportunism, and lack of patriotic zeal.

At the time of Kariuki’s death, Ngugi wrote an article on the historical significance of the life and death of this populist politician widely admired across the country. In the article, Ngugi wrote not just about his intense personal pain but also about Kariuki’s admirable patriotism. The pain that he had endured in “concentration camps had opened him out to see the link which bound the peasants and workers of Kenya to all others struggling against oppression and exploitation.” Yet even in his brutal murder, Kariuki had written “one of the most important chapters in Kenya’s people’s continuing struggle for a meaningful national liberation from external and internal exploitation and oppression and signed it with his blood.”¹⁴⁰

Indeed, Kariuki’s death which had led to so much national anguish and rattled Kenyatta’s government was another example of the betrayal of patriots by collaborators in the service of imperialism. “I recalled,” Ngugi wrote, “the betrayal of Lumumba, Mulele, Old Waiyaki, Kimathi, Achieng Oneko (who was never allowed to see his dying mother), of all the militants of early resistance movements against the British farce of occupation by the Nandi, Masai, Galla, Akamba, Giriama, Luo, Kikuyu and other national minorities. Who betrayed J.M. Kariuki? Who killed him?” Ngugi felt however that silence, especially of the petty bourgeoisie, in the face of unrelenting oppression and exploitation had in some way, made this brutal murder possible. “I felt the truth pain, the truth hurt. For it was we, we who have kept silent and propped up an unjust system, because we were eating a bit of the fruits. So, we kept quiet when Gama Pinto was killed; when Mboya was murdered; when Kungu Karumba disappeared. We kept quiet saying it was not really our shauri [business].”¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, Ngugi saw hope in the future, especially in the stubborn faith of the youth in a future of hope; the willingness and determination of the youth to “take up the fallen sword of J.M. and continue the struggle against inequalities in our land ... this generation

¹⁴⁰Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “A Writer’s Tribute,” *The Weekly Review* (March 24, 1975), p. 19.

¹⁴¹Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “A Writer’s Tribute,” p. 19.

will never keep silent again. Not even if they have to pay with their blood. That for me,” Ngugi concluded, “is the meaning and significance of Kariuki’s death.”¹⁴²

Ngugi was also profoundly bothered by Kenyatta’s treatment of the veterans of the Mau Mau peasant revolt. He found this treatment to have been callous, cruel, and inexcusable. And on this question, Ngugi was not alone. Long before his detention at the hands of Kenyatta, the question of Mau Mau veterans had been a source of great tension between Kenyatta’s government and the radicals, especially Kaggia. Other than the issue of land for Mau Mau veterans, already covered in this study, Kaggia emerged as their champion on matters related to national recognition of their efforts and general welfare. In October 1964, Kaggia stated in the Parliament that, “although Nairobi City Council had honored Dedan Kimathi by naming a street after him, his widow was left to roam the streets with nobody to help her.” Another MP, A.L. Gaciatta, spoke in emotional terms of several cases of “discrimination against former freedom fighters.” He called on the government to take “immediate action to remove the sources of tension.”¹⁴³ In January 1964, Kenyatta’s government issued a strong warning to former freedom fighters to desist from breaking the law. “No flouting of the authority of the lawfully appointed chiefs, police and other officers of the Government will be tolerated.”¹⁴⁴

Tensions over the treatment of former freedom fighters increased during this time partly due to the government’s resolve to evict squatters mainly from white settlers’ farms in the former White Highlands. Some of these squatters were former freedom fighters. In March 1964, less than two months after the British troops had helped him put down the army mutiny in Kenya, Kenyatta announced that his government would take firm measures “to clear illegal squatters out of Nairobi and off up-country farms. As a Government,” Kenyatta stated, “we must keep law and order and we must make our citizens understand respect for other people’s property ... up-country strong action was being taken to remove illegal squatters from farms.” He added that it “was not only European farms which were affected, but also African farms and even small holdings in settlement schemes. At the same time,” Kenyatta

¹⁴²Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “A Writer’s Tribute,” p. 19.

¹⁴³*East African Standard* (October 2, 1964), p. 3.

¹⁴⁴*East African Standard* (January 9, 1964), p. 1.

concluded, “we are doing what we can to find plots for the landless, but we do not want grabbing of other people’s property.”¹⁴⁵ Soon after, the police together with the GSU evicted over 500 people accused of illegal squatting on white settler farms in the Naivasha area. All of the evicted squatters were immediately charged with “trespass.” Ndegwa has revealed that one of the express purposes of the police force after 1963 was to safeguard the property of white settlers. “For the sake of everybody’s security, it was thought that the police should be headed by someone who could command his men to forestall mob takeover of European and Asian owned properties. The threat for such action was real.”¹⁴⁶

These harsh and swift measures were alone not enough to bring an end to a problem that haunted the government throughout Kenyatta’s reign. How do deal with former freedom fighters? Even the *East African Standard* felt that more needed to be done for these veterans as a strategy for ensuring stability and social peace in the country. “In dealing with the men from the forests,” the paper wrote in an editorial, “the Kenya Government has been placed in a dilemma. Their return to normal life is essential to the even conduct of the country’s affairs, but they are finding difficulty in rehabilitation while impatient for the rewards of their service.” The paper then suggested that one way of employing these veterans would be to deploy them in the war against the *Shiftas* in the NFD. “Is it not conceivable that some of the forest leaders, and their followers, could be recruited and trained for national service in the North-Eastern Region?”¹⁴⁷ The *East African Standard* pointed out that there had been cases of intimidation carried on by former freedom fighters. “Many regrettable incidents have occurred. Flogging at the order of persons setting themselves up as area commanders,” the paper wrote, “cannot be tolerated, indeed, unofficial area commanders cannot exist side by side with representatives of lawful authority.” The paper feared that if uncontrolled, this might lead to a breakdown of law and order. There was hence an urgent need to facilitate the rehabilitation of these veterans if only to ensure that they would not disturb the peace by, for example, descending on white settler farms. “Side by side with repressive

¹⁴⁵ *East African Standard* (March 7, 1964), p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ Duncan Ndegwa, *Walking in Kenyatta’s Struggles: My Story*, p. 321.

¹⁴⁷ *East African Standard* (January 10, 1964), p. 4.

measures, however, projects must be initiated for the useful employment of those hundreds of people returning to normal life, so that they do not terrorise the neighbourhood. Something they should all realize is that the law is for everyone. The time for opposition is over, this is an African Government, and time now for co-operation in re-construction.”¹⁴⁸

In January 1965, the Kenya government hunted down and killed Field Marshall Baimungi and General Chui, two famous veterans of the Mau Mau peasant revolt. They were referred to in the media as “notorious outlaws.” The operation by the Kenya police and “tribal police men” around Mount Kenya also captured, “15 men and 15 women along with 22 home made rifles, a pistol and 41 rounds of ammunition.” Baimungi and Chui were, according to the official report, “slain when they opened fire on the police after their forest camp was ambushed and surrounded.” This raid on former Mau Mau guerillas was strongly defended by the government. It came after a warning from Dr. Mungai, Minister for Defence and Internal Security, “that ‘stern action’ was planned on outlaws who ignored the Jamhuri amnesty offered by President Kenyatta.”¹⁴⁹

By April 1965, the government was glad to report that in fact it was backed by former freedom fighters. At a meeting in Nyeri, attended by Dr. Mungai, “former forest ‘generals’ representing all freedom fighters from Central Province, including Meru and Embu, met ... under the chairmanship of Mr. Lucas Nguneti, chairman of the Central Provincial Advisory Council, and passed a strong resolution against trouble makers.” This meeting was important to the government because of its symbolism. It also passed another resolution dissociating itself “from any act or movement which might be planned to ruin the country and the leadership of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta.”¹⁵⁰ Kenyatta’s government took delight in the resolution passed by these Mau Mau veterans that, “‘acknowledged’ the present government as a ‘true’ one under the wise guidance of the President.” These veterans stated that, “they would not be misled by those who called themselves leaders.” Lastly, all present at this meeting denounced in the strongest terms “leaders who went about the

¹⁴⁸ *East African Standard* (January 10, 1964), p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ *Daily Nation* (January 27, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ *Daily Nation* (April 7, 1965), p. 3.

country ‘spoiling’ the name of the Government and promised to disclose them to the Government if they got them.”¹⁵¹

In the parliament, however, there was renewed pressure by several MPs agitating on behalf of the freedom fighters. Senator R.J. Gikunju (Kirinyaga) stated that “Kenya was suffering because the Government had not integrated or honoured its freedom fighters.” Gikunju then attacked the now African-led civil service for “colonial mentality which was against honouring freedom fighters.” As he saw it, the question of honoring freedom fighters was “nothing new—Britain did it by giving 1914–18 war veterans land here in Kenya, Israel is now doing it, Ghana is.” He therefore wanted recognition of “actual freedom fighters who courageously fought in the field during the struggle for independence.”¹⁵² Senator J. Mathenge (Nyeri), who was also Leader of Government Business, stated that in fact there were “settlement schemes in which freedom fighters had been given priorities.” But the government had no plans to give the Mau Mau veterans any more special attention in the development efforts. “Unemployment,” Mathenge stated, “was not confined to freedom fighters. What the government will not do,” he continued, “is give freedom fighters special privileges in Government service. In fact, the Government does not recognize freedom fighters as a certain group of people. All, who over the past 70 years fought and suffered in the cause of Kenya’s freedom,” Mathenge concluded, “are freedom fighters.”¹⁵³

Reflecting on these developments, Ngugi argued that Kenyatta’s government had over the years made a consistent effort to remove Mau Mau veterans (and therefore the movement itself) from the center stage of national politics.

This deliberate and conscious effort to remove Mau Mau and other patriotic elements from the central stage of Kenyan politics always reached ridiculous heights during commemorative month of October, in which Kenyatta was usually spoken of as the sole, single handed fighter for

¹⁵¹ *Daily Nation* (April 7, 1965), p. 3.

¹⁵² *Daily Nation* (April 9, 1965), p. 5.

¹⁵³ *Daily Nation* (April 9, 1965), p. 5.

Kenya's independence. It was as if others as Kaggia, Oneko and the millions dead and detained had been wiped off the face of known and written history.¹⁵⁴

Ngugi also noted in anger and astonishment that Kenyatta had chosen to distance himself from the heroic Mau Mau veterans. His court at Gatundu was essentially composed of "those who used to be actively anti-Mau Mau." Kenyatta therefore had come to rely "for administration and political advice" on "colonial chiefs and sons of colonial chiefs. The sole remaining symbol of Mau Mau militancy to occupy a place of national importance after independence was J.M. Kariuki. He too was finally murdered in 1975."¹⁵⁵

Kenyatta's death, which led to the eventual release of political detainees, did not evoke a sense of jubilation in Ngugi. He was sad because Kenyatta had missed his golden opportunity to attain greatness as a nationalist leader against forces of imperial oppression and exploitation. Kenyatta had compromised and thus become a collaborator. As a result, he had lost his claim to greatness not only in Kenya but elsewhere as an enduring symbol of the struggle against oppression and exploitation. "My reception of his death," Ngugi would later observe, "was then one of sadness: here was a black Moses who had been called by history to lead his people to the promised land of no exploitation, no oppression, but who failed to rise to the occasion."¹⁵⁶ In forswearing the radical portions of his past, Kenyatta had in essence betrayed the wishes and aspirations of the millions of peasants and workers that had seen him as the leader most capable of redressing the injustices of the colonial era. He had instead, surrounded "himself with colonial chiefs, home guards and traitors." Inevitably, therefore, he had moved very close to the imperial powers. These powers had in turn lauded him with praise describing him as "their best friend in Africa." Even in death, Kenyatta had missed an opportunity to be embraced by the masses. His body was "carried to the grave, not on the arms of the Kenyan people, but on a carriage provided by the Queen of England, the symbolic head of the British exploiting classes."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, p. 89.

¹⁵⁵Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, p. 89.

¹⁵⁶Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, p. 162.

¹⁵⁷Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, p. 162.

In Ngugi's estimation, Kenyatta was a tragic character, a "twentieth-century tragic figure: he could have been a Lenin, a Mao Tse-Tung, or a Ho Chi Minh; but he ended up being a Chiang Kai-Shek, a Park-Chung Hee, or a Pinochet."¹⁵⁸ In other words, he chose to collaborate with imperialism in its efforts to subdue people's struggles for liberation.

The example of Ho Chi Minh has definite historical significance for countries in Africa and of course Asia. Ho Chi Minh's legend in Africa and Asia (and beyond) was largely based on his dogged and unflinching efforts to liberate Vietnam from colonial and imperial domination. "By any measure," William Duiker has written,

Ho Chi Minh was one of the most influential figures of his era. As a prominent member of the international communist movement, he helped shape strategy and tactics of the socialist community for nearly five decades. As the founder and leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party, he created a revolutionary organization that first brought an end to three quarters of a century of French rule in Indochina and then was able to fight the powerful armed forces of the United States to a standstill, leading in 1975 to the unification of his country under communist rule. The process that he set in motion eventually changed the course of the Cold War and had a dramatic impact on American society as well. There are few people of the twentieth century [William Duiker correctly observed] whose life experience is more indelibly printed on his era.¹⁵⁹

Ho Chi Minh, like Kenyatta, studied in Moscow (1923–1924) at the University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV). From the start, he was fully committed to the fundamental necessity of national liberation. After "Chiang Kai-Shek turned against his former allies and crushed the last Communist resistance in China" in 1927, Ho Chi Minh saw the need for founding an "autonomous communist party" in Vietnam. "Furthermore," Pierre Brocheux informs us, "the Chinese experience taught him that he would have to link the national question with the social question, to ease the confluence of colonialism and communism."¹⁶⁰ And indeed, the success of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam was in

¹⁵⁸Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*, p. 162.

¹⁵⁹William Duiker, "Foreword," in Pierre Brocheux, *Ho Chi Minh: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. ix.

¹⁶⁰Pierre Brocheux, *Ho Chi Minh: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 41.

the end based on his ingenious ability to link the national struggle for liberation to communism, which provided for the forging of a new society based on social justice. “For good or ill, Ho Chi Minh managed to reflect in his person two of the central forces in modern society—the desire for national independence and the quest for social and economic justice.”¹⁶¹ In Ho Chi Minh, Ngugi saw what Kenyatta was not: a leader with unwavering fidelity to his nation’s quest for respect, dignity, and liberation from oppression, exploitation, and imperial domination.

In the USA, its leading newspapers, the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, carried several articles on Kenyatta’s death and his value to the West. While he had once been seen as “a menacing symbol of African nationalism for most of the world during the continent’s struggle for independence,” *The Washington Post* wrote, Kenyatta “became the key protector of Western political and economic interests in Kenya once he came to power.”¹⁶² In its obituary, *The Washington Post* pointed out that Kenyatta had risen from his humble origins, “a herdsman’s son,” to become “widely acknowledged as one of the prime movers of self-determination and decolonization in Africa.” He had endured 17 years of “self-imposed exile” in Britain and then more years of detention by the colonial government when he was “widely feared as a fierce nationalist in the years of the insurgency.” In power, Kenyatta ruled as a patriarch rules a family; “with justification,” the paper asserted, “it was said ‘Kenyatta is Kenya, Kenya is Kenyatta.’” The country’s economic development and political stability were the result of Kenyatta’s leadership. He had “promoted the establishment of a relatively free press and judiciary” and more crucially, he had actively courted the white settlers to stay in Kenya. “He made it clear that whites, who as settlers and businessmen had skills to teach black Kenyans, were welcome to stay. He kept in check divisive ethnic strains among Kenya’s 42 tribes.” On the matter of the ideological orientation of his government, Kenyatta “unabashedly sought aid and investments from Western governments and businesses.” And then he had, with determination, “encouraged a free-wheeling capitalist ethic among black Kenyans that has led to the growth of a sizable upper and middle class.”¹⁶³ In death, he was mourned peacefully and quietly. This

¹⁶¹William Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh* (New York: Hyperion, 2000) p. 3.

¹⁶²*The Washington Post* (August 23, 1978), p. A 1.

¹⁶³*The Washington Post* (August 23, 1978), p. A 26.

“presented a sharp contrast to the emotional outbursts and political tensions that have followed the deaths of some other leaders in emerging countries of Africa and the Middle East.”

The Washington Post nonetheless faulted Kenyatta for “hampering Kenya’s unfinished revolution.” He had promoted unabashed ‘tribalism’ and as a result, “almost every part of Kenyan society has fallen under the dominance of members of the Kikuyu tribe—his own.” There was no tolerance of multi-party democracy and the government had “grown increasingly intolerant of differing political views.” There was also the matter of corruption that had led to the concentration of land and wealth “in the hands of the Kenyatta family and other favored persons.” On legacy, the paper wrote that it was, in 1978, too “early to pass final judgment on the life and work of Jomo Kenyatta.” Still, it was however, “not too early to mark him as one of the great driving forces for independence—and some measure of orderly self-government—in Africa in this century.”¹⁶⁴

Regarding the future of the country after Kenyatta, *The Washington Post* noted with satisfaction that Moi had vowed that there would be no change of policy. He would instead “continue on the moderate pro-Western, capitalist course set by Kenyatta.”¹⁶⁵ Still, Moi’s administration would be faced with several long-standing problems. These included: “unemployment, land hunger, tribalism, a population explosion.” Many, if not all, of these problems had been “kept under control largely by the force of Kenyatta’s personality.” In his absence, the paper noted, “these issues are likely to test the ability of the new generation of leaders.” The new leaders had inherited a country that was “stable and prosperous by African standards.” After Kenyatta, *The Washington Post* insisted, the new leaders were now “facing a test not just of their own country but of post-colonial black Africa, a test of whether their relative prosperity and well defined political institutions can guarantee an orderly transition instead of upheaval.”¹⁶⁶

Articles in the *New York Times* also touched on Kenyatta’s rise from extreme poverty to fame as an international political figure. His life story was full of astonishing details. This story, “began in a Kikuyu

¹⁶⁴ *The Washington Post* (August 24, 1978), p. A 26.

¹⁶⁵ *The Washington Post* (August 29, 1978), p. A 12.

¹⁶⁶ *The Washington Post* (August 24, 1978), p. A 24.

tribal village facing Mount Kenya where Kenyatta spent his childhood” herding goats and “living in a nearly Neolithic environment.” He had subsequently enrolled at “a Presbyterian Mission school,” and then to “London where he studied Anthropology.” He had also gone to “Moscow where he was courted unsuccessfully by the Communist International.” The story concluded with Kenyatta being into “the thick of Kenya’s nationalistic struggle against Britain.”¹⁶⁷ The political career of Kenyatta, the “herdsboy and witchdoctor’s grandson,” had come to symbolize two contradictory forces: black-nationalism “and to many the embodiment of African terrorism.” Indeed, before 1963, the colonial government (and even the Colonial Office) had, with glee, spread the word that Kenyatta had “a fearsome reputation as a ‘wenching, hard-drinking and blood-letting terrorist’ bent on ‘plunging Kenya back into the abyss of primitive debased tribalism.’”¹⁶⁸ Yet in spite of this, he emerged as an eminent symbol of African nationalism. In his death, the *New York Times* wrote, Africa had “lost one of the last survivors of that generation of black-nationalist leaders who, with pamphlets and spears and guns, broke the yoke of colonial domination.”

In its long obituary, the *New York Times* pointed out that life for Kenyatta’s countrymen, especially in pre-colonial times, had “always been a peasant, primitive existence; corn grown and harvested in quantities sufficient only to sustain life in the family, with nothing left over to sell; cattle kept as a sign of family wealth, and consumed only reluctantly.” Attitudes had started to change slowly, especially under colonial rule. At that time, “what money could be raised went first toward education of the children that they might eventually climb out of the abyss of ignorance and poverty.” Here was colonialism performing the “white man’s burden” in Kenya. Yet this march to progress as envisaged under colonial rule was hampered by its ever-attendant contradiction: racism. And so, in the period of nationalist politics, progress for Africans to move out of “the abyss of ignorance and poverty” was blocked by “alien races: the Indians in commerce and the crafts, the white men in political power and holding all the good jobs in administration.” Kenyatta’s contribution under these circumstances, the *New York Times* wrote, “was to

¹⁶⁷ *New York Times* (August 24, 1978), p. 118.

¹⁶⁸ *New York Times* (August 23, 1978), p. 127.

lead the demand among his people for better facilities for education, for equal treatment of all races and tribes in Kenya and, eventually, for political independence.”¹⁶⁹

As expected, the paper heaped a lot of praise on Kenyatta’s tilt to the West after *Uhuru* and more specifically his embrace of the white settlers. There was no revenge or retribution against the white settlers. “Elsewhere in independent black Africa,” the *New York Times* disapprovingly noted, “it was a favorite tactic of leaders hoping to turn heads of their disappointed people or to vent their frustrations. Elsewhere in Africa, as Kenyatta saw it,” the paper continued, “excessive preoccupation with the past inequities of Western imperialism did much to open new lines of penetration from Communist countries in the East.”¹⁷⁰ In other words, to reflect on imperial oppression and exploitation was seen as dangerous. It was a suspect indulgence. It opened doors to communism in Africa. Those who chose to condemn the atrocities of imperialism were clearly seen as potential if not actual communists. Kenyatta had stood firmly against communism arguing that, “communism would not necessarily bring people more food, more hospitals,” and that “public ownership could be as prone to indifference as private ownership.” Lastly, Kenyatta had insisted that, “while nationalization might sometimes be desirable ... it would not necessarily add to the resources of the country.”¹⁷¹ In its praise of Kenyatta’s policies, the *New York Times* never raised the issue of the welfare of the majority of the Kenyans who were supposed to have benefited from the government’s anti-communist economic and political agenda. Had these policies added to the national wealth? Had these policies corrected the inequities inherited from colonial rule? It should be noted that throughout Kenyatta’s reign it remained politically dangerous for Kenyans to point to this shameful past and its crimes.

The *New York Times* praised Kenyatta not only for his tilt to the West, but also for his pragmatism. “The key to his pragmatism,” it was pointed out, “lay in his concept of ‘suffering without bitterness,’ which enabled him to quickly reverse nationalist inertia and cement ties with Britain in the recognition that to develop Kenya into a prosperous and stable land,

¹⁶⁹ *New York Times* (August 23, 1978), p. 127.

¹⁷⁰ *New York Times* (August 23, 1978), p. 127.

¹⁷¹ *New York Times* (August 23, 1978), p. 134.

the skills, technology and assistance of white experts and Western countries would be needed for many years.”¹⁷² Kenyatta was also praised for holding firm onto these pro-Western policies in the face of snickering from university students and opposition from “more radical politicians ... impatient with him.” These radical politicians included Oginga Odinga, “who broke the rule by flirting independently with the Russians and promoting a more radical approach to reform.” And for this, Odinga had been “drummed out of the party and into open opposition.” According to the *New York Times*, Kenyatta’s gradual approach, based on his concept of “suffering without bitterness,” was simply the best way to ensure Kenya’s progress. It attracted foreign investment and Western financial and technical support. And above all, Kenyatta’s approach “was the best way to keep the big, productive farms from reverting, through ignorance and hate, to patches of subsistence crops and bush.” Also, Kenyatta “did not want the public services to grind to a stop in a tangle of inefficiency. He did not want to frighten potential foreign investors in any quarter of the world. He did not want any violent swings in politics to reopen the bitter tribal rivalries of an earlier age.”¹⁷³

A few months after Moi had taken over as President, the *New York Times* reported that, “Kenya after Kenyatta is much the same as it was before—a combustible mix of competing tribes, a juxtaposition of rich and poor, but still an anchor of stability and prosperity in an increasingly troubled continent.” Like Kenyatta, Moi was keen to maintain very tight links with the West in political and economic matters. In this endeavor, Moi was aided by Njonjo, “a dapper, outspoken man of controversy and a staunch anti-communist who is married to a white Kenyan and respects the British.”¹⁷⁴ By stressing continuity with Kenyatta’s policies, Moi’s administration, the *New York Times* noted with delight, remained “fixedly in the Western orbit.” Also, it was most unlikely that Moi’s administration would tamper “with the extensive land and business holdings of members of the Kenyatta family who traded in charcoal, ivory and gems.”

In the African American newspapers and periodicals in the USA, Kenyatta’s death received prominent coverage. The “burning spear” was dead. This coverage, while not uniform in details and emphasis,

¹⁷² *New York Times* (August 23, 1978), p. 118.

¹⁷³ *New York Times* (August 23, 1978), p. 136.

¹⁷⁴ *New York Times* (November 20, 1978), p. A 1.

nonetheless invariably touched on: Kenyatta's involvement in Pan African struggles for liberation, especially during his stay in the UK, and then what these publications saw as his leadership of the Mau Mau movement in colonial Kenya. A lot of emphasis was also placed on the wide spread reputation of Kenyatta's Kenya as a pro-Western, stable, and thriving democratic country. Here was a black-led country that was successful and stable enough that African Americans could be reasonably proud of. Kenyatta's Kenya was seen as a black success story. Kenyatta was also reputed to have apparently succeeded in implementing the elusive goal of racial reconciliation and peaceful cohabitation in Kenya. What was lacking in many of the stories was any incisive analysis of the impact of Kenyatta's rule on the local African masses in Kenya. There was hardly any attempt to critically analyze the meaning of Kenyatta to Kenyans.

In its editorial, the *Pittsburgh Courier* argued that, "with the exception of Haile Selassie, the last colorful Emperor of Ethiopia, Africa has not had a more historic figure than Jomo Kenyatta." What made Kenyatta especially historic was that "he led the Mau Maus (a secret organization) that finally brought their British overlords to their knees." Further, the paper continued, Kenyatta had "virtually singlehandedly liberated Kenya from the yoke of colonialism ... Kenya got its independence by the wit, wisdom and intrepidity of a tireless leader: Kenyatta."¹⁷⁵ The paper concluded that, "Kenyatta cannot be forgotten as one of the leading figures in modern African history." The peaceful ascension of Moi to the Presidency was highly hailed. This was "important for Kenya and the West." Why so? Because "it points to a path of constitutional, civilian government which other countries might take. It is important for the West because Kenya is a vital stabilizing factor in East Africa, particularly when there is conflict in the Horn and a wayward dictator ruling Uganda."¹⁷⁶ There was a hint of mild criticism of Kenyatta in his last years when "the grand old man became increasingly remote from the people, surrounded by a close-knit group of friends and advisers."

Benjamin Hooks, Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), wrote an article on Kenyatta's death that was widely reprinted in several African American

¹⁷⁵ *The Pittsburgh Courier* (December 2, 1978), p. 5.

¹⁷⁶ *The Pittsburgh Courier* (December 2, 1978), p. 5.

newspapers. The NAACP remains the largest and most storied black civil rights organization in the USA. In his article, Benjamin Hooks outlined Kenyatta's lasting contributions to Kenya and the world. His political career, and especially his rule, had contributed "to strengthening the ideas of human freedom, national liberation and racial justice and harmony." Although initially widely condemned as a terrorist, Kenyatta emerged as a magnanimous leader, "a guarantor of civil and human freedom for all citizens, white as well as black, after independence. In proceeding with the second phase of liberation," Benjamin Hooks wrote, Kenyatta "developed political and social institutions which have been responsible for Kenya's measured progress."¹⁷⁷

In its coverage, the *Sun Reporter* pointed out that some Kenyans had been disappointed that Kenyatta "did not turn on the colonialists and give them a dose of the poison medicine they had dished out during the British colonial rule." Kenyatta had, however, wisely embarked on the correct path of racial reconciliation telling white settlers "we must forget and forgive. We must work together to help build this country. We must do it together." It is this spirit of racial reconciliation that had helped to propel Kenya to stability and prosperity. As a result, "whatever historians may say about the man," the paper insisted, "no chapter will be complete until the writer confesses that Mzee was the man who molded Kenya into a viable, stable, and prosperous country."¹⁷⁸

According to *The Afro-American*, one of the oldest and most respected African-American newspapers in the USA, Kenyatta was the genius behind the Mau Mau. He was "the spirit, the spark, the driving force behind the Mau Mau Movement. He took fire to the European (really British) overlords and their followers; he found a way to counteract guns, heavy artillery and imprisonment with weapons known best to those whose cause is just and who are fighting for more than bread

¹⁷⁷ *Racine Courier* (September 9, 1978), p. 4.

¹⁷⁸ *Sun Reporter* (September 21, 1978), p. 8. Also see, *Sun Reporter* (August 24, 1978), p. 7. "The fiercely proud Kikuyu farmer wouldn't have it any other way. Jailed, beaten, slandered, derided, and tempted in his day, (Jomo Kenyatta) never faltered for long in his ambition to lead his people to independence. After independence was achieved in 1963 Kenyatta rose to supreme power in the new nation, he continued to lead Kenya away from the hazards of potential poverty and economic ruin that threaten all 'newly emerging' Third World countries, and toward the path that made Kenya one of the most prosperous nations in Africa."

and acres.”¹⁷⁹ What made Kenyatta the “father of African freedom,” and therefore “a giant of twentieth century,” was not only his role in the liberation movement but also the type of policies he adopted after the achievement of *Uhuru*. Kenyatta had emerged as a pragmatic statesman eager to build his country. He immediately knew that “man cannot live by violence alone. With that understanding, since independence in 1963, he worked decisively, constructively, and cooperatively, to build his country; to have it remain fiscally strong; to develop his people, and to put hate in the background. To him, yesterday had its demands; today has its needs and challenges.”¹⁸⁰ In his letter to the editor in *The Afro-American*, Samuel L. Banks, an administrator in the Baltimore Public Schools, stated that Kenyatta’s death had removed “a formidable and towering African leader in the Third World and the world community.” He had unique qualities that enabled him to lead the struggle for Kenya’s freedom and then as President after *Uhuru*. “His intrepid daring, intellectual acumen, prescience of mind, rugged individualism and tenacious commitment to freedom catapulted Kenya to freedom in 1963.”¹⁸¹

In *Amsterdam News*, the preeminent African American newspaper in New York, the death of Kenyatta was given front-page coverage. The “name Jomo Kenyatta,” the paper wrote in admiration, “carries with it a magic that reflects the great personal charisma that he brought to the leadership of Kenya, and of the African liberations struggles generally.”¹⁸² *Amsterdam News* also emphasized what it saw as Kenyatta’s immense political talents, skills, and wisdom. These talents had enabled him to be an illustrious leader of a country “in which ethnicity was the most important sociological and political factor.” His political acumen made it easy for him to rise “above ethnic considerations.” Kenyatta’s centrality to Kenya was further reinforced by the fact that he had “almost singlehandedly moved” the country from “a colonial outpost of Great Britain into a modern independent state.” In death, he was leaving behind “a spirit of fierce independence, energy, and commitment to Black Africa.”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ *The Afro-American* (September 2, 1978), p. 4.

¹⁸⁰ *The Afro-American* (September 2, 1978), p. 4.

¹⁸¹ *The Afro-American* (September 9, 1978,) p. 4.

¹⁸² *Amsterdam News* (August 26, 1978), p. A 1.

¹⁸³ *Amsterdam News* (August 26, 1978), p. A 4.

Kenya, as a society, had nonetheless paid a price for all these accomplishments. There was the loss of internal political freedom. The paper identified the ousting of Odinga from the political arena, as evidence of the escalation of intolerance under Kenyatta. Odinga had “opposed Kenyatta’s strong ties with the United States and other Western countries.” And he was a Luo. At the time of Kenyatta’s death there were several political detainees: “at least a half a dozen former members of Kenya’s Parliament being held on various charges; but the underlying reason for their imprisonment was political—they opposed Kenyatta’s policies.” Some of this opposition was directed at Kenyatta’s lifestyle. “He liked material things ... after independence his suits were tailored by Savile Row in London. He lived well and enjoyed the trappings of power.” Yet in spite of all these glaring examples of corruption, intolerance toward opposition, and assault on freedom, *Amsterdam News* insisted that Kenyatta was still a great leader. “But any drawbacks to Kenyatta’s legacy and, to his leadership, all pale before the great man’s contributions to the cause of Black liberation everywhere.”¹⁸⁴

On the question of Kenyatta’s legacy, *Amsterdam News* identified two factors to consider. First, Kenyatta’s forethought and wisdom had ensured a smooth and peaceful transition of power in the country. “The transition of power from his era of leadership to a new era will apparently take place through the political process and will not provoke civil war.” This political outcome, the paper insisted, was Kenyatta’s “greatest legacy within Kenya.” Second, was the power of his symbolism in the Pan African world. “For more than two decades,” Kenyatta had “provided Blacks and other oppressed people around the world with a symbol of courage, determination, and unbreakable commitment to liberation.”¹⁸⁵ The paper still regarded him as the “burning spear.” As a result of this consideration, *Amsterdam News* was very reluctant to condemn Kenyatta and his rule. Instead, the paper rationalized and explained away Kenyatta’s political misdeeds, including an occasional assassination of his political opponents. “If from time to time, Kenyatta and his followers in the Kenya African National Union, seemed to overstep the bounds of accepted political maneuvering to impose repressive measures and to

¹⁸⁴ *Amsterdam News* (August 26, 1978), p. A 4.

¹⁸⁵ *Amsterdam News* (August 26, 1978), p. A 4.

harass and even assassinate political opponents,” the paper wrote in its editorial, “such acts, while sad, must be understood within the context of the complex ethnic groupings with which Kenyatta was attempting to deal.”¹⁸⁶

In Jamaica, the land of Marcus Garvey, the death of Kenyatta was covered extensively in the country’s main newspaper, *The Daily Gleaner*. Kenyatta was celebrated as a hero of African liberation and an elder African statesman. In its editorial, the paper stated that, “before the decade of the seventies, Kenyatta was the inspiration for freedom movements throughout Africa and elsewhere. He was the embodiment of protest, of dissent and the leonine voice calling for equality could and did move men to daring feats. He became a legend as ‘Burning Spear.’”¹⁸⁷ Kenyatta was also praised for having put “colonial injustice behind him” and instead “preached forgiveness of the colonialists and the once bigoted white minority. It is to his eternal credit,” the paper observed, “that he has been able to keep Kenya’s different racial groups and tribal factions in a national balance.”¹⁸⁸ In his youth (especially while in the UK), he had been identified with leftist politics. However, once he assumed power he became an “advocate and practitioner of private capitalism in union with State enterprises.” And as a result, “the Kenyan economy has been far and away the most developed and thriving in East Africa.” This embrace of “private capitalism” became a stumbling bloc in the Pan African objective of forging East African Union, especially with Tanzania, which was under what the paper called “the fierce socialism of Nyerere.” In Uganda, there was Amin’s “mad dictatorship.” Kenyatta’s chosen policies had, however, given rise to corruption involving his “beautiful wife the Kikuyu Mama Ngina and his family.” Nonetheless, any rumor of corruption in Kenyatta’s government, let alone his family, would have no impact on his reputation as a respected and admired African leader.

¹⁸⁶ *Amsterdam News* (August 26, 1978), p. A 4.

¹⁸⁷ *The Daily Gleaner* (August 23, 1978,) p. 8. Also see, *The Daily Gleaner* (August 28, 1978), p. 15. “The people of Kenya thought of President Kenyatta as a father. Africans in general respected Mr. Kenyatta as an elder statesman. He was thought of as a towering figure by other African leaders. This was because of his example of turning Kenya into a stable and prosperous country.”

¹⁸⁸ *The Daily Gleaner* (August 23, 1978), p. 8.

None of these will taint the image of this great African freedom fighter whose liberation of Kenya could be said to have accelerated the liberation of a whole continent. His cry of “No revenge for the past but build freedom for the future,” so beautifully summed up by the term “Harambee” will long be Kenya’s inspiration.¹⁸⁹

Michael Manley, Jamaica’s Prime Minister, expressed his regret “on behalf of the Jamaican people at the passing” of Kenyatta. In a message to Moi, Manley touched on his admiration for Kenyatta and his legendary past as an agitator against colonialism. “The world today mourns,” he stated,

the death of an outstanding African leader. President Jomo Kenyatta, who was a truly heroic figure among men, will long be remembered in history books as the architect, liberator and builder of the Kenyan nation. His unswerving determination, brilliant leadership and personal sacrifices throughout his long years of militant struggle to free the people of Kenya from colonialism, exploitation and poverty [Manley added] will stand as an epic in the history of Africa and the world.¹⁹⁰

Similar sentiments were also evident in a message of tribute by Edward Seaga, the Opposition Leader in Jamaica. According to Seaga, Kenyatta was “one of the true giants in the African Liberation Movement, of the mould of Nehru and Bustamante.” Seaga, a strong advocate of the “free enterprise system,” heaped praise on Kenyatta for having embraced a capitalist economic policy that led to Kenya’s growth. “In the case of Kenyatta,” Seaga stated in admiration, “he continued this policy as a strategy of development even after other former British colonies in East Africa abandoned this strategy for one of state control.”¹⁹¹ Dudley Thompson, QC, and Minister of National Security, was chosen to represent Jamaica at Kenyatta’s funeral. Thompson, it shall be recalled, was one of the lawyers who “defended Mr. Kenyatta in Kenya in the 1950s during the Mau Mau trials.”

The *Trinidad Guardian*, the largest newspaper in Trinidad and Tobago, gave Kenyatta’s death front-page coverage. Trinidad had, in

¹⁸⁹ *The Daily Gleaner* (August 23, 1978), p. 8.

¹⁹⁰ *The Daily Gleaner* (August 23, 1978), p. 8.

¹⁹¹ *The Daily Gleaner* (August 24, 1978), p. 2.

the past, produced some of the most illustrious and iconic Pan African thinkers and agitators, including C.L.R. James and George Padmore. The country's Prime Minister was Dr. Eric Williams, the prominent Caribbean historian and author of the pioneering study on the economics of slavery, *Capitalism and Slavery* (University of North Carolina Press, 1944, 1994). C.L.R. James and George Padmore had been Kenyatta's colleagues and friends in the Pan African movement in the UK. Kenyatta had worked very closely with Padmore and Makonnen in organizing the 1945 Pan African Conference in Manchester, UK. According to the *Trinidad Guardian*, Kenyatta had, in subsequent periods, become "an inspiration to African leaders." He was a dominant leader and "his authority flashed from him like 'the burning spear' he came to be called among his followers and enemies as he fought the British and finally conquered."¹⁹² There had been no army coup in Kenya and this was attributed to Kenyatta's overall dominance and especially his shrewd political skills in handling the armed forces and the political factions in the country. "In a continent where coups abounded, all Kenya's armed and security forces reported directly to the President." In its long editorial, the paper provided an outline of Kenyatta's long political career during which he had struggled against all odds to attain independence for Kenya. "For years he struggled on, his bulky frame giving him the toughness that his chosen path was to demand of anyone bold enough to tread it."¹⁹³ Due to his involvement in the nationalist struggle, he was

castigated, pilloried, jailed, derided as a leader of his people into darkness and death, limned as a man of blood, using his own sophistication to tempt ignorant cannibals into a futile war, survived all that to become among a country of fourteen different peoples, the man who had been tailored by nature for the presidential mantle.¹⁹⁴

In power, Kenyatta ruled with wisdom and dignity. Crucially, he facilitated racial reconciliation and development for his country. And so, for 15 years as President, he reigned virtually as "an uncrowned benevolent monarch."

¹⁹² *Trinidad Guardian* (August 23, 1978), p. 1.

¹⁹³ *Trinidad Guardian* (August 24, 1978), p. 12.

¹⁹⁴ *Trinidad Guardian* (August 24, 1978), p. 12.

On Kenyatta's legacy, the *Trinidad Guardian* saw him as a leader endowed with unique almost unmatched qualities. To be sure, he had assumed power in his old age, yet he was "very much alive and alert, a man in the centre of a great movement drawing into one coherent world the many countries, the many peoples, the many tribes that dot rich, sprawling bleeding Africa."¹⁹⁵ In short, Kenyatta had been the best African leader in managing the transition of the country from colony to independent state in a period of turbulence and instability in Africa. "If any single man could be said to have typified the best quality leadership in Africa during the turbulence that marked transition from colony to nationhood anywhere," the paper noted in admiration, "that man was Jomo Kenyatta, a man whose wielding of power was to belie all that critics prophesied about his rule."¹⁹⁶ The message of condolences from the government of Trinidad and Tobago, was sent to Moi by Ellis Clarke, the country's President. Kenyatta's persistent and fearless struggle for "the freedom and unity of African nations," the message stated, ensured him "a lasting place in the history of our times."

Back in Nairobi, Fingland, the British High Commissioner, wrote to London on the question of Kenyatta's legacy. He noted that this issue was complicated by what he called Kenyatta's "contrasts, and even paradoxes, of his long life." At one time, he had been "feared by some as a communist sympathizer and lauded by many more as the archetypical African nationalist." However, once in power Kenyatta, "went on to surprise many and to embarrass not a few of his former admirers—including some other national leaders—by concentrating pragmatically on building up an essentially democratic state with a mixed economy offering full scope for free enterprise and with a minimum of theoretical or radical ideology beyond that of Kenya's advancement as a nation."¹⁹⁷ Fingland also observed with satisfaction that, "The British, who imprisoned him, remained those to whom he turned first for friendship and help."

According to Fingland, these contrasts and paradoxes in Kenyatta's life, and then "the continuing uncertainties about the degree of his personal involvement in Mau Mau," left him "something of an enigma.

¹⁹⁵ *Trinidad Guardian* (August 24, 1978), p. 12.

¹⁹⁶ *Trinidad Guardian* (August 24, 1978), p. 12.

¹⁹⁷FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

Like many Kenyans, and particularly Kikuyu,” Fingland continued, “he undoubtedly had a dark side.” Still, all of these factors and contrasts could not diminish Kenyatta’s accomplishments. “But if a balance has to be struck between Sir Patrick Renison’s ‘leader to darkness and death’ and Jomo Kenyatta’s own description of himself, on his first steps to power, as ‘leader to light and prosperity’ the clear verdict of history, based on his contribution to the emergence of modern Kenya,” Fingland asserted, “will undoubtedly favour the latter.”¹⁹⁸

And what was the basis of his policies? A few months before Kenyatta’s death in 1978, the British intelligence services provided a detailed assessment of his political career and its linkage to Britain that in part provided an answer to this question. This was a discussion of his legacy, especially as it touched Anglo–Kenyan relations. Upon his release from detention in 1961, Kenyatta “distanced himself from more radical politicians and reached a tacit understanding with the British which became the foundation of his policies. He was able to outwit opponents such as Kaggia, and later Odinga and to eliminate opposition from rivals to his KANU party.” Kenyatta had also “contrived to remain President without once facing a contested election.” He had also “bolstered his position with a personality cult ... It is thus difficult,” these intelligence services observed, “to measure his real popularity, which has declined since the murder of J.M. Kariuki in March 1975. He may not be aware of this.”¹⁹⁹ The British intelligence services were satisfied with the overall relationship between Kenyatta and Britain. Their conclusion was that Kenyatta had “proved on the whole friendly to Britain.” He had over the years “developed a relationship which has been mutually beneficial to his own and British interests.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸FCO 31/2319 (London: National Archives) The Death and Funeral of President Kenyatta.

¹⁹⁹FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya.

²⁰⁰FCO 31/2314 (London: National Archives) Leading Personalities in Kenya. The intelligence services added that, “despite Communist associations in the 1930 s and a brief dependence on Communist money in the early 1960 s, he has proved remarkably anti-Communist probably because of Communist support for his major opponent, Odinga.”

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