

SHOWDOWN IN KENYA

A. Lerumo

THE MORE FOREIGN capital is invested in a colony, and the bigger the population of privileged settlers, the more protracted, exacting and bitter will the struggle be to wrest its right to freedom and independence. Algerian independence cost seven years warfare and a million dead. The Congo has been and still is being crucified and turned into a battlefield of imperialist powers for control of its mineral treasures. The greatest struggles of all are still to come in Southern Africa.

Kenya's path to independence, formally proclaimed on December 12th, 1963, has been bloody and tortuous, and for the very same reasons. Much sterile argument has taken place about the relative effectiveness of 'violent' or 'non-violent' methods for winning colonial freedom. Certainly—at a particular period and regarding particular areas—instalments of independence have been won from the British or the French around the conference table. Some people therefore claim that negotiations with the imperialists is the best or the only way to secure independence. They forget that success in those negotiations was only possible because of bitter struggles, mass demonstrations, strikes, armed combat and other forms, lasting over very many years, and covering vast areas of the earth's surface. As the *African Communist* pointed out (No. 25, 1966):

To those Africans who may ask: what has this far-away country of Vietnam got to do with us? We answer—these same Vietnamese peasants, ill-clad and hungry, bought with their lives the independence which so many of our African countries enjoy today.

Kenya independence gave the outward appearance of being the product of protracted and endlessly complicated negotiations between the British Colonial Office and rival groups of Kenya politicians and settlers at Lancaster House, during the late fifties and early sixties. But in fact Kenya independence was bought in bitter struggles of

the workers and peasants lasting over very many years. Not least of these were the protracted guerilla struggles of the early fifties—the so-called ‘Mau Mau’ emergency, in which thousands of African patriots lost their lives and the Kikuyu people in particular were rounded up en masse, dispossessed of their land, and herded into concentration camps (the so-called Emergency villages).

Of this period, Mr. Tony Hughes writes:

Certainly all indications suggest that violence had the support of an overwhelming majority of the Kikuyu and of many other Africans. And, equally, there seems little doubt that violence did much to accomplish the aims of African nationalism in Kenya.—*East Africa: The Search for Unity*.

Kenya was designed by British imperialism to become a second South Africa or Rhodesia. The ‘Highlands’ were alienated from African ownership for exclusively ‘White’ occupation; apartheid and pass-laws prevailed everywhere; various ‘legislative councils’ were set up from time to time in which White settlers dominated. For example, in 1948 the Legislative Council was composed of sixteen British civil servants, eleven elected Europeans, five elected Indians, one elected Arab and four Africans not elected but appointed by the Governor. (By 1959, under the so-called Lennox-Boyd constitution, Africans were allowed to elect fourteen out of ninety-two members. But the franchise was restricted to Africans who had been screened as ‘loyal’.)

But this diabolical plan to turn Kenya into yet another fortress of White colonialism on the continent of Africa failed. The White settlers were not numerous enough to impose a Verwoerd or Smith type regime; they could not rely on economic and military aid from a bordering state. Britain was not prepared or able to sustain them indefinitely in power by force of arms. The war of liberation of 1952-55 had cost the imperialists over £50 million; news of the savage atrocities perpetrated by British forces and authorities had spread abroad and led to storms of protest in Britain itself. Although it failed in its direct objective, therefore, the armed struggle of this period was decisive in proving to the British that continued White settler rule in Kenya was untenable as a policy. They therefore ‘abandoned’ the settlers (many of whom proved their much-vaunted patriotism, by demanding extravagantly large money ‘compensation’ and clearing out of the country they could no longer dominate).

FORGOTTEN MEN

Thus, although the terms of independence were negotiated in the main by political leaders who had taken no part in the uprising, and although those leaders subsequently took their places in the govern-

ment and the leadership of the new Kenya, the foundations of victory were laid by the forest fighters, the detained and victimized; the forgotten men of Kenya today.

Indeed, the whole period of the 'Emergency' has been almost deliberately 'forgotten'; there is a marked tendency not only to avoid or postpone any evaluation of its historic significance, but even to 'bury' any thought or mention of this anguished decade of Kenya's history.

It is not difficult to understand why this should be so. Throughout their period of rule, and more than ever during the settler-fanned hysteria which prevailed during the uprising, the rulers intensified to the utmost the exploitation of every division among the population. They not only exploited inter-racial and inter-tribal differences; their system of loyalty oaths and purges succeeded in creating deep cleavages between those who compromised and those who fought to the bitter end.

To overcome this legacy of bitterness it was important that independent Kenya should start with a clean slate; without the passions provoked and aroused by the alien occupation regime. It says much for the militants that they were big enough to understand this key essential.

K.A.N.U. adopted the slogan '*Harambee*'—let's all pull together. The symbolic personality of Jomo Kenyatta—the revered veteran of the liberation struggle who had spent years in detention for alleged participation (always denied by him) in instigating the rebellion—was powerful enough to unite discordant personalities, and to prevent negative recriminations about the past.

Anyone who was prepared to work for the building of a united Kenya—irrespective of whether he had collaborated in the past with the imperialists, or even whether he had right up till independence played their game of tribalism—was welcomed to play a part in the Kenya African National Union and in public affairs.

No doubt this generous, patriotic gesture by the revolutionaries and African patriots was correct and fully justified. The great wave of national sentiment that carried K.A.N.U. into power spelt defeat for tribalism. Even those compromising politicians who, in the past, had played an opportunist role, seeking personal advancement and accepting bribes from the imperialists, realized that they could not swim against the stream and hastily jumped aboard the K.A.N.U. bandwagon. Had all of them been actuated by a sincere desire to establish Kenya's independence firmly, raise the standards of the masses, and fight imperialism, then there would be no need to hark back to the past, but to concentrate on the present and the future,

in the spirit of '*Harambee*'. And to be just one must say that some were sincere. Others were not. They had for too long been in the service of British, American and other imperialists. Entering K.A.N.U. they did so not in order to further the cause of independence, anti-colonialism and socialism, but in order to advance their personal interests, to undermine K.A.N.U. from within and transform it into the instrument of Kenya's subordination to neo-colonialism.

K.A.N.U. represented a coalition, a coming together of various class forces in Kenya, with different views and ideologies. The same can be said of most of the national liberation organizations that fought for independence in Africa and subsequently formed single-party governments. But the 'coalition' represented by K.A.N.U. differed in important respects from most others. Even after independence, for example, K.A.D.U. (Kenya African Democratic Union) was playing the game of imperialism and the White settlers, trying to delay independence and emasculate it by insisting on a tribalistic federation, on Nigerian lines, which would have made the country an easier prey to neo-colonialism. Others, like Mr. Tom Mboya, favourite of the American State Department-dominated I.C.F.T.U., were career politicians who were determined to steer the country away from the attraction of radical socialist ideas which were popular among the masses and answered the needs of the new Kenya. Many people were in K.A.N.U. to feather their own nests and to keep the country firmly within the 'Western' sphere of influence.

When K.A.D.U. finally in December 1964 merged with K.A.N.U. on its own terms, it was not in order to further K.A.N.U. principles of independence and socialism, but in order to strengthen the right-wing opportunist trend. This was not a step towards national unity, but as events have shown, a move to capture control over K.A.N.U. and thus profoundly to split the nation.

ANTI-COMMUNISM

The 'Westerners' within K.A.N.U. and their imperialist advisers were astute enough to recognize that outright anti-socialist policies had no chance of success among the workers and peasants. They therefore decided on a line of policy which they have followed consistently ever since—to present a policy under the guise of 'African Socialism' which, in fact, would be nothing but a plan of capitalist development.

The beginnings of this strategy were to be discerned in the K.A.N.U. election manifesto issued on the eve of independence. Side by side with much talk of socialism, and promises that 'the agrarian revolution will be accelerated'; 'the problem of the unemployed landless will be

vigorously tackled', there were ominous anti-Communist, pro-capitalist undertones. 'We must avoid any fixation or obsession about imperialism', the voters were told. They were warned that colonialism 'can come from communist as well as capitalist sources', though this nonsensical statement was not and could not be backed up with any supporting facts whatever. Workers were warned that 'the Marxist theory of class warfare has no relevance to Kenya's situation'.

This line of extremely misleading thought was developed by Mr. Mboya in his writings on 'African Socialism' (analysed in the *African Communist*, July-September 1963) and carried further in the government paper on the same theme—drawn up by an American 'expert' in Mboya's Economic Planning Ministry—which was hurriedly pushed through the Cabinet and Parliament, and ruthlessly exposed by Sol Dubula (*African Communist*, Third Quarter 1965).

Running through these documents was an attempt to belittle Marxism as incorrect and obsolete, and to prettify modern capitalism. Their practical proposals were all designed to encourage capitalism in industry, commerce and agriculture, to favour private, as opposed to public, ownership of the means of production, and to placate imperialist opinion and investors.

Of course, like all K.A.N.U. documents, this government paper and the election manifesto had their positive sides as well. Many progressive steps were advocated—in sharp contrast with and even in contradiction to this capitalistic bias. These progressive features were a result of the presence of a powerful patriotic element within the K.A.N.U. leadership which remained true to the interests and socialist aspirations of the masses.

Disappointed in the failure of Jomo Kenyatta to check the steady drift to the right, K.A.N.U. militants rallied around the extremely popular and dynamic personality of the Vice-President, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. He and his supporters and colleagues constituted a formidable barrier to the plans of the reactionaries and careerists, to make Kenya a secure base for capitalism and neo-colonialism in East Africa.

A furious and reckless anti-communist campaign was therefore launched, master-minded and financed by Western intelligence agencies, and aimed in the first place at Odinga and the men around him.

The ugliest incident in this campaign was the vile assassination in February 1965 of Pio Pinto, M.P. and journalist, the only Asian to have been detained during the Emergency, and able supporter of Odinga. The men who did this foul deed have never been brought to

justice, but it is clear that it was a political murder which admirably suited the purpose of the conspirators of the right.

The capitalist press in Kenya issued smear after smear against Odinga, Minister of Information Oneko, Kaggia and other stalwarts. A convoy of Uganda army trucks carrying arms was 'discovered' in Nyanza, Odinga's home territory—the press rushed in to insinuate that 'the Communists' were smuggling arms to Odinga, and smothered the truth: that the arms were part of a consignment to Gbenye's anti-Tshombe Congo guerillas. Who was responsible for diverting the trucks to Nyanza, and then ensuring that they were 'intercepted' has never been cleared up—though British and American intelligence was widely, and plausibly, held responsible.

The American C.I.A. was openly accused of being behind the circulation of mysterious leaflets purporting to come from Dar es Salaam and advocating 'revolution' in Kenya. But again the right-wing press used the occasion to smear Odinga and the militants in K.A.N.U.

Again, a year ago, wild and sensational 'leakages' and rumours accompanied the arrival of a shipload of Soviet arms in Mombasa. It was implied that the arms were intended for the Vice-President. Actually, the arms were a gift to Kenya from the Soviet Government which had been agreed and negotiated officially by the Kenya Government with Kenyatta's full approval, a year before. But the reactionary wing of K.A.N.U. precipitated a full-scale government and international crisis. The British and American Ambassadors were said to have threatened an end to all aid if the gifts were accepted.

Under pressure from the right-wing elements in K.A.N.U., the government decided to yield to this blackmail and send back the arms, on the pretext that they were 'obsolete and second-hand'. But Roger Milliss, Australian journalist who was working in Kenya at the time, declares that in actual fact

they consisted of the most modern and up-to-date weapons which would have made the Kenya Army one of the best-equipped in independent Southern Africa.—*Tribune*, May 4th, 1966.

MANOEUVRES WITHIN KANU

Meanwhile, the intriguers continued their desperate manoeuvres within K.A.N.U.—in which straight argument was replaced by manipulations and corruption—to remove Mr. Odinga from the Vice-Presidency. They finally—despite his undeniable popularity in the Party and in the country—succeeded in doing so. This 'victory' for the right wing, with the apparent blessing of the President, finally precipitated the split which the militants had for so long been patriotically leaning

over backwards to avoid. It had become clear that with the machinery of K.A.N.U. firmly in the hands of the right-wing splitters and factionalists, there was no longer any prospect of maintaining K.A.N.U. as the instrument of achieving 'UJAMAA', justice and socialism, in Kenya. A new organization was established, ultimately called the Kenya People's Union, and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga was invited to head it as President. A large number of K.A.N.U. militants, including twenty-eight members of Parliament resigned from K.A.N.U.

The reaction of the right-wing K.A.N.U. leadership was to force through a Constitutional amendment declaring that any M.P. who crossed the floor to join another Party would automatically lose his seat. The 'rebel' M.P.s had to face by-elections in June. Odinga himself easily held his seat, but a number of his colleagues were defeated in elections in which ballot-rigging and other malpractices were alleged against the government.

KPU's POLICY

In its press statement of May 19th, issued by its President, the K.P.U.—which for a long time the government refused to register as a party—strongly attacked the Constitution-rigging procedure of the K.A.N.U. government, which it warned was 'probably only the first change to suit the immediate objective of the clique of power-seekers who now control the government'.

Increasing restrictions on individual freedom and on the constitutional right to form political associations are also becoming apparent. Intimidation and terror are being used to silence people who disagree with the government and want to speak their minds. A much more insidious but dangerous form of infringement of constitutional rights is being practised through administrative means—all the familiar practices of the former colonial regime.

For the first time in Kenya, the much-peddled slogan of 'African Socialism' 'in the mouths of Government and K.A.N.U. leaders' was exposed as having become 'a meaningless phrase'.

What they call African socialism is neither African nor socialism. It is a cloak for the practice of total capitalism. To describe the policies of the present government as 'African socialism' is an insult to the intelligence of the people. The deception is obvious, but the leaders of the Government and of K.A.N.U. do not have the courage to admit that they are fully committed to the Western ideology of capitalism.

The actions of the Government and of K.A.N.U. cannot be judged by what its leaders say—words come easily to them and plenty of Western advisers are available to produce suitable statements. The true test of their policies lies in what they actually do or do not do. Socialism as

commonly understood implies several basic principles. Has the Government's and K.A.N.U.'s 'African Socialism' done anything to promote these principles? The answer is a very clear no. In fact, its policies are dedicated to objectives which are quite the opposite. It is promoting vigorously the development of a small privileged class of Africans; the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. Not a single act of nationalization (with the exception of v.o.k.) has been carried out. On the contrary, its development plan will make capitalism in the country even stronger. The control of the economy by foreigners grows every day.

The K.P.U. condemns the Government's and K.A.N.U.'s capitalist policies. It is opposed to the creation of a small class of rich people while the masses live in poverty. It will pursue truly socialist policies to benefit the wananchi. It will share out the nation's wealth more equitably among the people, extend national control over the means of production and break the foreigners' grip on the economy.

The K.P.U. policy statement bitterly attacks the way in which the K.A.N.U. leadership has betrayed African traditions and culture, above all in their acceptance of the values of capitalism; alien values imposed by the colonialists who destroyed many of the democratic and fraternal ways of the people, based on community ownership of land. 'The K.A.N.U. leaders . . . continue to pay lip-service to African traditions, but it is impossible to serve capitalist ideals and honour African tradition at the same time. The two are incompatible.' This is reflected also in the field of culture. Hardly anything is being done to support African cultural activities, but the door is opened wide to admit foreign influence, without discrimination between what is good and what is bad. 'The mass media are devoted almost entirely to the propagation of Western values. Bookstalls are full of pornographic literature imported from abroad.'

THE LAND QUESTION

One of the subjects of the most bitter contention in Kenya throughout the colonial period, and still under independence, is that of land. Land-robbery was one of the most hated features of British rule. Kenya patriots fought for uhuru, meaning in the most literal sense, the return of the soil to its rightful owners. During the war of liberation, the Kenya Parliament set up in the Aberdare Forests in 1953 replied to the question, why are you fighting? 'We are fighting for all lands stolen from us by the Crown. . . . The British Government must grant Kenya full independence under African leadership and hand over all land previously alienated, for distribution to the landless.'

But the greatest disappointment of the 2½ years of K.A.N.U. rule has been the failure of Kenyatta's regime to tackle this problem of land redivision in a bold and radical way, despite many promises and election pledges. Landlessness and unemployment are still the lot of the masses (*wananchi*: Swahili), and even in the limited amount of re-allocation that has come about through the buying-out of a section of the White farmers on the Highlands, the least consideration seems to have been to those who fought hardest and sacrificed most for freedom. According to the notorious *African Socialism* paper the Government has stated that the resettlement policy has accomplished its purposes and will now be ended.

One of the most scathing of the indictments of the Kenya People's Union relates to this very question. It says aloud what very many people have been saying to themselves for a long time. 'To millions of people the end of colonialism meant the return of the stolen lands. They have so far waited without satisfaction.

The Government and K.A.N.U. have betrayed the wananchi's expectations. This repudiation of earlier promises over land is the most serious of the string of broken promises since the end of colonial rule. Tens of thousands of starving and landless people are now tasting with bitter irony the fruits of the Government's 'African Socialism'. In its paper on African Socialism and also in the recently published development plan, the Government has clearly stated the abandonment of settlement schemes on the grounds that the settlement already achieved is 'sufficient'.

Yet, as Mr. Odinga points out, only one-eighth of the land formerly held by European settlers has been allocated for settlement; and even those families who have been resettled are saddled with 'impossible burdens' as a result of the exorbitantly high compensation paid to the former owners. 'The country is in debt to get rid of people it never wanted.' In any case, the substitution of large-scale African farmers for large-scale White farmers is not what the country needs. 'We do not want a new class of big landlords.'

K.P.U. bluntly charges the K.A.N.U. Government—'in its pursuit of undiluted capitalism'—of deliberately neglecting the development of co-operative farms in favour of those privately owned. 'Of all the loans issued by the land bank since independence, co-operatives received only 6.7 per cent. . . . the share of the co-operatives in the loans of the Agricultural Finance Corporation is even less, only 5.3 per cent.' Similarly, it is charged, the system of land consolidation is being used in a way that could lead to a situation 'where many will find themselves without any land at all and at the mercy of a new class of artificially created landlords. And finally the question of limitation of the size of individual land-holdings has been deliberately

shelved. A committee to 'look into' this question was promised over a year ago. It has never been appointed.

Why is the K.A.N.U. Government failing to deal energetically with this burning question of land? K.P.U. gives the answer in blunt and straightforward terms. It is not only the K.A.N.U. leaders' 'ideological commitment to capitalism'. This is reinforced by the ownership by many individual members of the Government of hundreds and even thousands of acres of land. Most of the ministers and assistant ministers own big estates, some of them more than one. This being so, they cannot pursue policies which will benefit the wananchi (the masses). They have become the allies of the settlers who fully appreciate the position. It is an irony of history that European settlers' organizations should be swearing loyalty to the government. They have good reason to support their friends.

'The wananchi cannot tolerate this situation. Not only are many European settlers still sitting on big farms, but we are getting a new class of Blundells, Delameres and Briggs, deliberately created.'

The K.P.U. demands a democratic land policy, and specifically:

1. Distribution of land acquired from European settlers 'to the neediest, including those who lost their lands in the struggle for independence';
2. Restriction of ownership of large areas of high potential land to Kenya citizens.
3. Encouragement of co-operative farming.
4. Limitation of the size of farms held by individuals.
5. Maximum assistance to farmers.
6. Democratic methods of land consolidation 'according to the wishes of the people in particular areas'.

A NEW NOTE IN KENYA POLITICS

The K.P.U. policy statement goes on to demand vigorous measures to raise living standards, eliminate unemployment, and eliminate nepotism and corruption. 'Humble people find more and more often that they have to pay bribes to get things done. . . . Ministers of the government shamelessly solicit directorships. . . . Throughout the country a member of the Cabinet is known as 'Mr. Ten Percent'. Yet he remains a Minister. So far from implementing its promise of free primary education, the K.A.N.U. government has actually raised primary school fees. The K.P.U. demands a big drive for free primary education, a better deal for teachers, expanded technical and university education.

The Kenya People's Union is a young Party, and its first policy declaration restricts itself to fundamentals. Doubtless many details

and additions to its policy will emerge in the course of its work.

But one thing immediately strikes one about this first declaration; here is straight talk, refreshingly free of all the ambiguity, bluff and phrasemongering demagoguery which have increasingly been characteristic of Kenya political tracts during the years of independence. It strikes a new note in Kenya politics.

For the first time a clear voice has come out of Kenya to say what clear-headed Africans inside and outside Kenya have long seen to be true: that all this I.C.F.T.U. and Mboya claptrap about 'African Socialism' was 'a meaningless phrase'; 'neither African nor socialism'; 'an insult to the intelligence of the people'.

It was doubtless a setback to Kenya that the reactionary intriguers should have succeeded in splitting K.A.N.U. and driving Oginga Odinga, Oneko and other honest revolutionary African patriots out of office in the Government. But their 'victory' and that of their neo-colonialist backers may well prove to have been a hollow one. As long as the militant patriots were part of an increasingly right-wing orientated regime, they were to some extent the prisoners of that regime. Now they are free to speak out, and though they have unselfishly sacrificed their immediate personal advancement to do so, Kenya and Africa have cause to be deeply grateful to them. The Kenya People's Union has regained for Kenya the spirit of the Land Freedom Army, of the earlier, crusading Jomo Kenyatta and the trade union pioneers; the spirit that once placed Kenya in the vanguard of the African Revolution—and will restore her to that proud position again in the future.