CHAPTER - II

MAN'S FIRST UMBILICAL CORDS:

KENYA

1. The Republic of Kenya - abode of Gikuyu and Moombi - is an ancient land, lying on the east-central coast of Africa, across the Equator and encompassing some of the most arid as well as most fertile parts of Africa within its geographical bounds of 5,82,644 square kilometers. Bordered in the north by Sudan and Ethiopia, in the east by Somalia and the Indian ocean, in the south by Tanzania and in the west by Uganda, Kenya is a former British colony which at one time was known as East African Protectorate. Its present 15,000,000 strong population comprises the Gikuyu, the Luo, the Luhya, the Kamba, the Meru, the Kisii, the Embu, the Kipsigis, the Kalenjin and the Masai as major tribes. Besides, about 30,000 Europeans and 1,20,000 Asians also live in Kenya.

2. According to a Gikuyu myth, Gikuyu and Moombi were the first couple to appear in this part of the world. For more details see Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya (London, 1938), Preface. This and all subsequent references are from the 1979 edition published by Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
Anthropologists would have us believe that man first appeared on earth in these parts of Africa, as also in many other parts of the continent, 'about a million years ago'. Once again, like in other parts of the world, the people in this region too passed through various stages of development:

We have vast quantities of the tools and weapons of stone with which they armed themselves, and one of the most striking things about these is their amazing similarities in type to the stone weapons of the men who inhabited Europe at about the same time.

A fairly stable society, split into what were probably several tribal divisions with variations of the same general culture seems to have come about during the Stone Age, when several groups lived near the lakes and rivers surviving exclusively on shell-fish, while others lived in jungles with antelopes as the principal source of their food:

Archaeology has shown that early in the first millennium B.C. a food-producing

3. For details about this see H.B.S. Leaky, Kenya: Contrasts and Problems (London, 1936).
4. Ibid., p.36.
population established itself in the central part of the Rift Valley and in the highlands to the west of it, a population which lived by hunting and pastoralism, making good pottery and basketry and carving stone bowls and platters, grindstones and pestles for pounding wild vegetable food.

These inhabitants of Kenya seem to have soon come in contact with traders from some of the civilised countries of that time, such as Egypt, Greece, Persia and India. Discovery of coloured glass beads of Egyptian and Mesopotamian origin at the excavation sites lends credence to the speculation that probably these traders came to Kenya for spices, ivory and gold and exchanged them for these beads. In all probability, it is these traders who first introduced agriculture and domestication of animals to the people of this period. By this time, the inhabitants, unlike their ancestors, had also given up living in the caves and had learnt to build circular huts. Although the original inhabitants of Kenya may have been dark skinned and curly haired, they were definitely quite

different from the present-day Kenyans, who are in most probability a product of the intermingling of the Stone Age agriculturists with the invading negro stock from neighbouring Sudan.

There were no 'classes' in Kenyan society at that time. There were only different ethnic groups with varied styles of political and economic organisations. Because of lack of means of communication, they lived in isolation of each other. The mode of production was subsistence-oriented and was based on communal system of labour utilisation which was either voluntary or obligatory or both. Each tribe was a distinctive unit, generally managed by the tribe-elders, as was the case with the Gikuyu, for instance.

Land tenure was a complex affair. While land was not saleable, each adult had rights to its use which was controlled by the tribal authority. A member had a temporary right of use on a piece of land, which ceased when he moved to another assigned area under the shifting cultivation system. Some tribes, however, had recognised individual rights though of a rather complex nature and permitted sales. Such was the case with the Gikuyus.

More recent history of Kenya, however, begins with the first year A.D. when the people of the region
were overcome after stiff resistance, by the Bantus, who occupied the principal coastal areas of present Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique. The first colonisation of these people and of the coastal region began with the arrival of Arab Muslims - both Shias and Sunnis - in the eighth century, who came to propagate Islam but stayed on to trade in ivory, gold, timber, iron and black slaves:

Archaeological evidence makes it almost certain that in the ninth century there was an important Islamic town on Manda island, which is very close inshore.

In course of time a number of independent city states - mostly ruled by Arabs - came up all along the coast from Mogadishu to Kilwa. Most of the Arab influence was, however, confined to the coastal areas only and there is no evidence of a similar contact with the natives of the interior. In the words of Oliver -

The reasons for this strange disjunction between coast and interior are in large measure geographical. Behind the narrow coastal plain, the land rises towards the great central plateau in shelf after shelf.

of dry thorn scrub, hard to inhabit and difficult to cross.

By the middle of the 15th century, the Portuguese who had by then become a major colonial power and who were looking for controlling the sources of 'exotic products of the Orient' for trade purposes, "made their first penetration of the coast.... in their search for gold and spices and began to expand their slave trade." In doing so, they drove the Arab rulers from the coastal areas of Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania, which they continued to occupy and exploit for the next 200 years. But the chief purpose of the Portuguese control of East African coast was "to maintain a base on the way to the East... This is signified by the fact that for almost the entire period of Portuguese ascendancy, officials in East Africa received their orders from the Viceroy in Goa." Some of these areas were recaptured by the Arabs towards the end of the 18th century. The beginning of 19th century, however, saw more European powers, particularly the British, the Germans and the French become more interested in Africa in general and the East Coast particularly. A number of

explorers and missionaries travelled into the interior and made contacts with the Africans. A number of these missions were undertaken with the intention of locating the source of the river Nile for its eventual control for strategic reasons.

Towards the end of Nineteenth century, European interests in the continent had reached competitive proportions. In a conference held in Berlin, in 1884-85, in which Britain, Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Austro-Hungarian Empire, etc. participated, it was decided to 'partition Africa'. Germany and Britain, however, continued to clash over supremacy in East Africa. Eventually it was agreed that the Lake Victoria will form the boundary between their areas of influence. The territories lying north of the lake -- Kenya and Uganda -- came under the British control, while the territories lying south of the lake -- Tanganyika -- became the German domain. The British government, however, chose not to administer these areas directly. A trading company -- The Imperial British East Africa Company -- was founded in 1888 through the granting of a Royal Charter to Sir William Mackinnon, a shipping magnet. Besides Kenya and Uganda, a ten mile strip of the East Coast was obtained from the Sultan of Zanzibar on
lease. The company, it was claimed, had been 'formed for the purpose of pushing forward the civilisation of Africa.' The modus operandi of this colonisation in the name of civilisation was once again the same as in Asia: eventual political control in the guise of trade.

The company, however, had to face stiff resistance from the Africans and it soon ran into financial rough weather and in order to overcome this, it was decided to strike inland for Uganda. But this brought in another problem: the 700 odd miles route from the coast to Uganda lay through different patches of desert as well as steep slopes with hardly any significant habitation enroute. Thus the trade, particularly in ivory, became extremely expensive on account of high costs of transportation. It was then decided to construct a railway right from Mombasa upto Lake Victoria. During its construction which was being done with the help of labour force brought from India, the company had to bear huge financial burdens particularly as it had once again to fight African resistance during the laying down of the railway track in the hinterland. Eventually, the company became bankrupt and sought to withdraw from the region completely. Then, for 'wider strategic considerations, a

Protectorate over Uganda was subsequently proclaimed in June, 1894. The company gradually wound itself. Its Charter was annulled in 1895, thereby leaving a vacuum in the administration of the coast, particularly the strip leased from the Sultan of Zanzibar. To fill this, the East Africa Protectorate was proclaimed in 1895, with Lord Hardinge as its first commissioner. Immediately after taking over, Hardinge had to face a revolt from the coastal tribes, particularly the Mazrui. However, by 1896 the British control over the area had stabilised, and the work on the railway was progressing smoothly.

Big game hunters and explorers passing to and from Uganda had been particularly struck by vast tracts of fertile land in the Rift Valley region. Among such travellers was one Captain Lugard who dreamt of large scale agricultural farming and stock raising since "some of the land is unoccupied and much of the nominally occupied land...isn't being used." Similar sentiments were expressed by Lord Delamare who had visited the area on a shooting expedition in 1898.

The principal inhabitants of this region, which later came to be known as 'White highlands', were the

Gikuyu who were primarily agriculturists. Towards the end of 19th century, owing to almost simultaneous occurrence of a series of disasters like drought, famine and smallpox, a large section of the population had been decimated and the Gikuyu were forced to fall back, leaving vast areas of land uncultivated, which as mentioned above were noticed by travellers and explorers.

With the completion of the railway in 1901, the idea of European settlement in the area was taken up in earnest so that "the traffic derived from settlement would make the railway a profitable undertaking." This together with the transfer of the Eastern province of Uganda, where most of the highlands were situated, to the East African protectorate in 1902, further strengthened the possibility of non-African settlement. Harry Johnston, who was then the Special Commissioner for Uganda initially proposed to develop the area as 'a white man's country'.

Reports of the fertility of the land sent out by the administrators to South Africa and attracted a number of Europeans and as per the available records, the first batch of settlers mainly from Great Britain and South Africa arrived in 1902. These settlers occupied large

chunks of fertile land for both farming and trading. Through a number of Ordinances, the government reserved the Highlands exclusively for the white Europeans, excluding the native Africans and Indians. Thus through these Ordinances, reserving the Highlands for the Europeans, the colonial administration had sown the seeds of racial discrimination and eventual racial conflict on the Kenyan soil - a conflict not only between the Europeans and the Africans but also between the Europeans and the Indians who had in the meantime became "artisans, carpenters, masons, small contractors, quarry masters, dealers in lime, sand stone and domestic firewood, barbers, pedlers, boot makers, nursery-men, tailors and occasionally land owners."

The principal sufferers were of course the Gikuyu, since it was they who primarily inhabited the area and who were dislocated more than once after their land had been 'alienated' -- a more appropriate expression would be 'misappropriated' -- and given away to the European settlers literally for a song. As the land-lust of the settlers increased, other tribes were deprived of their land as well. The Masai, the Nandis and the Kissiis too suffered through removal to far-flung areas labelled

as 'native reserves'. A series of land legislations - Land Regulations of the East Africa (1897), Indian Land Acquisition Act (1896), East Africa Land Acquisition Order (1901) and the Crown Lands Ordinance (1902) - provided the government with control of all land in Kenya and parts of Uganda for selling, granting lease or otherwise disposing of.

Land grab was not the only problem brought about by the colonial policy of European settlement. The settlers wanted a constant supply of cheap or free labour to work on these farms and with the African reluctance to work for outsiders i.e. European farmers, they found it increasingly difficult to obtain cheap labour. The African's reluctance was due to the fact that their basic needs were provided by the subsistence economy and moreover, they did not want to work for the colonialists. In those cases where African settlements became part of European acquired lands, the Africans were declared squatters with permission to cultivate a small plot of land on the farm premises and to keep members of the family as well as a few cattle. Appalling working conditions, and severe restrictions on both the physical movements of the squatters and also on the number of cattle they could keep and the kind of crop they could
cultivate were definitely oppressive. Moreover, the wages were abysmally low. They were subjected to most cruel punishments on the flimsiest of excuses. In fact, their plight in many ways was worse than their brethren who had been sold as slaves in the Americas by the Arabs and the Europeans. The result was that as in other countries of Tropical Africa, labour force in Kenya was created by 'methods of extra economic coercion.' In the words of Haily:

A complete history of this aspect of labour development would comprise....slavery, direct statutory compulsion, pressure through the imposition of personal tax, the curtailment of native lands, assistance given by administrative officials to the efforts of private recruiters and the use of chiefs to recruit their people as labourers.

The East African Standard, a newspaper of the European settlers, in an editorial on 4th February, 1913, pleaded openly for such coercion:

We consider that taxation is the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking work. Only in this way can the cost of living be increased for the native.

A year before, Lord Delamere in his submission before the Labour Commission of 1912, had strongly demanded that the land reserves for the natives be cut "so as to prevent them from having enough for a self-supporting level of production."

In fact, the settlers, with the help of successive government legislations "seized more than 7.6 million acres of most fertile land. Yet even close before the end of the colonial period only 18% of this land was cultivated" while millions of Africans strived to eke out a living in highly congested reserves.

These steps together with prohibitive rates of poll and hut taxes led to massive migration of peasants in search of a living. This led to further problems in the native reserves, from which most able-bodied males were absent, earning money as wage-labourers, for paying

personal taxes. Not only did it cause physical hardships for peasants who "walked large distances, sometimes hundreds of miles, for many weeks and sometimes months" but it also "stripped the African village of its most efficient labour force, leaving mainly old men, women and children."

Barnett and Njama sum up the plight of migrant labourers in the following words:

When one adds to the European land, tax and wages policies, the restrictions placed upon African cultivation of certain profitable cash crops such as Arabica coffee, and the Kipande or labour registration system which obliged African, on pain of imprisonment, to obtain the signatures of their employers when they wished to seek other work or return to the reserves, it is not difficult to understand the emergence in Kenya of land hungry labour exporting African peasantry.

The European settlers, many of whom came from

19. Ibid., p.23.
South Africa and hence had developed extreme racial views, sought to coerce -- the right word should be blackmail -- first the Protectorate Commissioner and later the Colonial Administration into granting them not only maximum concessions in matters of land, labour and taxation but also for a share in administration. "From the beginning of Administration into granting them not only maximum concessions in matters of land, labour and taxation but also for a share in administration the European settlers strove for self government which of course in practice 21 meant minority rule." This clamouring for a share in the administration led to an early confrontation between the white settlers and the government. In most such cases, however, it was the government which gave in, thanks to the complicity of the earlier commissioners and Governors, many of whom shared the South African background with the settlers.

As early as 1902, the settlers -- only twenty two in number -- formed a committee to negotiate with the government on various issues. Their memorandum to Charles Eliot, the then Commissioner, included demands for more freehold land for settlers, more cheap black labour through coercive government legislation, stoppage of any

further Indian immigration and disallowance of sale of land in the High-lands to either Indians or Africans and above all the setting up of an advisory council. "In their marked hostility to the Indians, the Europeans were thus early beginning the first racial struggle of Kenya politics." Eliot, who had no understanding of African customs and way of life and was openly contemptuous of the local Africans because 'they shocked him by their barbarity and their nudity' assured the settlers of the government policy to promote European settlement. He also floated the idea of setting up a legislative council with some unofficial members of non-African origin. In fact, so blatantly did Eliot favour the South Africans as a source of European settlement that his deputy Jackson, was forced to complain against it to the foreign office that "the Protectorate was becoming a haunt of 'nigger' and game shooters, that the majority of the settlers were a lot of 'Scalligwags'". Eliot, then, was the Progenitor of the white settlement in Kenya. He was supported by Lord Delamere, who had become the leader of a European Settlers' body - The Planters' and Farmers' Association.

Incidentally, Delamere had also earlier opposed, through

23. Ibid., p.11.
the publication of a pamphlet on the settlement of Jews in East Africa - a proposal which never materialised. Eliot, who in reserving land for exclusive white settlers seems to have acted without proper authorisation from London, was eventually forced to resign when his negotiations with two South Africans, Robert Chamberlain and A.S. Flemmer for grant of land in the Masailand in the Rift Valley region was disallowed by the foreign office. Once again, he expressed his contempt for the Africans in his communication to Lansdown:

...There can be no doubt that the Masai and many other tribes must go under. It is a prospect which I view with equanimity and a clear conscience... (Masaidom) is a beastly bloody system founded on raiding and immorality.

Again, it was Eliot who in his farewell speech at Mombasa, urged the settlers to strive for 'some local government' for strengthening the paramountcy of white interests, thereby launching them on a path of further confrontation.

24. The full title of the pamphlet was 'The Grant of land to the Zionist Congress and Land Settlement in East Africa.' This was proposed by the British government to solve the problem of settlement of Jews. The other place proposed was, surprisingly, Kashmir in India.

25. George Bennett, op.cit., p.15.
with the colonial government.

The Masai were soon removed from the Rift Valley to Laikipia district by the new governor, Sir Donald Steward, although the foreign office in London continued to claim that 'the primary duty of Great Britain in East Africa is the welfare of the native races'. It can perhaps be inferred from the above that the policies of the British government were janus-faced which through their various actions intended to destroy the economic life of Africans by turning them into mere labourers but continued to claim itself as the defenders of Africans' welfare.

Soon the settlers got the first opportunity for a direct say in the administration when a committee to consider the Land Laws was appointed and to which not only a member of the Planters' and Farmers' Association was nominated but the committee itself was headed by Lord Delamere.

The settlers felt further encouraged when on April 1, 1905 the Protectorate was transferred from the foreign office to the Colonial office, something which they had been demanding, hoping for less interference by the London rulers. Emboldened, the settlers coined the slogan 'no taxation without representation'. Finally, the Legislative Council was granted, although Churchill told the colonists' Association:
Never before in colonial experience has a Council been granted where the number of 26 settlers is so few.

In the new system, the Commissioner was redesignated as Governor and the two Councils - and Executive and a Legislative - were set up. The Legislative Council consisted of five officials from the Executive Council and three unofficials, to be nominated. In the first nominations, two Europeans and an Indian -- A.M. Jeevanjee -- were nominated. The Europeans were, however, not satisfied and wanted elected representation instead of nominations. They were also opposed to the nomination of an Indian because they felt that they could represent the interests of both Indians and Africans as well.

The very first meeting of the Legislative Council discussed among others the Steward Land Committee Report and decided to reserve the White Highlands for Europeans only and also decided for the registration of natives who were squatters on the European farms. Thus the settlers were able to obtain significant concession in the very first meeting of the Council, which whetted their appetite for demanding more concessions, including elected official representation on the Council. They had earlier won

another major victory when a 'Masters and Servants Ordnance' had been promulgated in 1906, allowing among other things 'imprisonment of labourers for breach of contract.'

A Secretary for Native Affairs was appointed to deal specially with the problem of labour supply. The measures suggested by the Secretary were grossly misused by the settlers, as a result of which the labour supply diminished considerably in spite of the coercive methods used by the village chiefs at the instance of the government. The settlers led by Delamere 'advocated the use of whip and acknowledged using it' to discipline the natives and demanded Pass Laws and increased taxation for flushing out more labour. The Native Labour Commissioner, appointed in 1912, recommended, among others that a system of personal identification for the natives -- a euphemism for bonding them to forced labour -- be adopted and the tax on natives increased. The latter fact would force them to work as labourers for earning the money to be paid as tax.

The settlers also launched a frontal attack on the government's policy on Indian immigration since it was from the Indians that they immediately felt threatened.

Thus they demanded restrictions on Indian immigration, segregation in land allotment, a ban on employment of Indians in government jobs and exclusion of Indians from voting rights. This created quite a controversy which is generally known as 'the India Question'.

As a counter to the threat by the white settlers, the Indians formed the East African Indian National Congress, demanding 'in the fullest degree perfect equality in the eyes of the law' with their European fellow settlers.

With the outbreak of the war, which led to constitutional advance in almost all British colonies, the settlers put more pressure on the government by boycotting the Legislative Council unless elected representation was granted to the Europeans. Although Henry Belfield, the then governor, gave it his support, the London office turned it down on the plea that it talked of only one section, and that too of a very minor section, namely the white settlers.

Captain Grogan, a hawkish settler of South African origin, whipped up the war hysteria, which resulted in the appointment of a War Council on which three settlers, including Grogan, were appointed. The Council soon strengthened the European position, although
its function was limited and was purely advisory in nature. The most important gain was the appointment of three settlers to the War Council after election by three separate electoral divisions of the Europeans. The settlers felt that their demand for elected representation had been conceded in principle and it was a matter of time only before it would be extended to the Legislative Council. A committee appointed in this regard recommended that voting rights be granted only to 'every male British subject of European origin on proof of twelve months' continuous residence.' 28 The committee did not find it desirable to extend the franchise to Asians and Africans, since they outnumbered the whites and would vote 'solid'. It was recommended that ten European electoral areas be delineated for election, two Indians be nominated and the Africans and the Arabs be represented by the Chief Native Commissioner and the Resident Magistrate at Mombasa respectively. However, no action was taken on the recommendations.

This highlighted the obvious discriminatory nature of the recommendations, thereby building a case for social discrimination in Kenya. Incidentally this was the most unique case of perverse logic ...voting rights to a miniscule minority. They were probably working on the same

lines as in South Africa, where white minority rule had already been imposed on a overwhelming vast majority of black Africans.

The settlers found an ardent ally in the new Governor, Edward Northey, who soon after his arrival announced that 'the principle had been accepted at home that his country was primarily for European Development' and that 'European interests must be paramount throughout the Protectorate'. This attitude of the Governor emboldened the settlers to take a more hostile stance against both the Indians and the Africans, which evoked protests not only from the Indians and Africans but also from the white Christian missionaries who had hitherto restrained the Africans in the name of Christian virtues of patience and sacrifice. The memorandum submitted by Rev. Dr. Arthur of the Church of Scotland on the notorious 'Northey circulars' on labour recruitment evoked a sharp reaction in the British parliament which led to a directive to the Governor that the officials were 'to take no part in recruiting labour for private employment.

By now the Africans were sufficiently alarmed about the settlers' conspiracy to annex their land.

29. Despatch to the Governor of East Africa Protectorate, 5th September, 1921, cited in Bennett, op.cit, p.44.
permanently and they formed two associations to defend their interests. The first -- The Kikuyu Association (K.A.) -- was formed in 1920, with the primary aim of defending Gikuyu land. It comprised mainly of Gikuyu Chiefs and headmen. A year later, a more broadbased and more militant association -- The Young Kikuyu Association (Y.K.A.) -- was formed with Harry Thuku as its secretary. Thuku, a government telephone operator, launched his agitation against not only the policy of annexing Gikuyu land, the 'Northey circulars' on forced labour, but also against the policy of carrying of Kipande -- a card bearing the finger-prints of the bearer -- by all African male adults and the doubling of the Hut and Poll tax from 5 to 10 rupees. Thuku received generous help from M.A. Desai, an Indian leader and journalist, in running his association. Although, he started by enrolling only the Gikuyu, he soon extended its membership to other tribes as well. His arrest and subsequent deportation by the government, led to a large demonstration in Nairobi in which over 20 Africans were killed by police firing. In a

30. The Gikuyu were referred to as 'Kikuyu' by the British and the names of their organisations were also referred to by that term. Most modern literature on the Gikuyu, however, refers to them as Gikuyu. Whenever the term occurs as a part of the name of an organisation, it will be referred to as 'Kikuyu' but elsewhere the term Gikuyu has been used.
way this act of the government triggered off the militant struggle by the Africans which led to the full-scale national liberation movement and eventual independence of Kenya in 1963. The administration tried to depoliticise these associations with the help of missionaries. Archdeacon Owen, for instance, organised Kavirando Taxpayers' Welfare Association with the aim of planting trees, digging sanitary pits etc.

Since the controversy between the Indians and the settlers could not be resolved and the situation was becoming worse with each passing day, the Governor, Coryndon, together with the leaders of the warring factions was summoned to London for negotiations by the new Secretary of State, Duke of Devonshire. This eventually led to the publication of a White Paper entitled Indiana in Kenya -- the famous Devonshire Declaration -- in July 1923. Although the paper talked of the interests of Europeans, Indians and Arabs which "must be severally safeguarded", it "rediscovered the vast majority of Kenya's population namely the native Africans". The declaration set at rest, once for all, the controversy regarding the dominance of Kenya by

declaring that "Primarily Kenya is an African territory...the interests of the African natives must be paramount". It also added that the British government's trust on behalf of the Africans was which could not be delegated or shared:

The declaration had three aims - by declaring the African interests paramount it aimed at silencing the Indians and Europeans. It also aimed at confusing the liberals of England who supported the Africans. It expected to lead the Africans into believing that since the British government herself was looking after their welfare they need not fight for it. The British government, it was stated was the 

However, this unequivocal declaration provided the most timely fillip to the Africans who had earlier launched a struggle through the Kikuyu Association (K.A.) and the Young Kikuyu Association (Y.K.A.) and it also forced the settlers to change their strategy by demanding a federation or 'closer union', as it came to be called, of the British African territories.

Naturally, this evoked a strong reaction from the Indians who non-cooperated by withdrawing from the elections for the Legislative Council and who nursed a suspicion that the Hilton Young Commission which had been sent to examine the feasibility of a federation was nothing but an eye wash for foisting European control over the whole of East Africa.

Thuku's Y.K.A. which had been banned after his arrest and subsequent demonstrations, reappeared in 1925, under the new name Kikkuyu Central Association (K.C.A.). Its appearance had coincided with the transfer of authority among the Gikuyu from one age-group to another, an event which occurred once in about twenty years. The K.C.A. immediately demanded, among others, the Africans' right to grow coffee, the appointment of a Gikuyu Paramount Chief, the publication of laws in Gikuyu language and the release of Harry Thuku. It also demanded direct representation by twelve Africans on the Legislative Council since the Europeans had neither 'true sympathy' nor 'thorough contact' with the people. They also expressed their fears about the security of title of their land after the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915. Meanwhile, the idea about fixing the boundaries of the land reserved for natives was being discussed seriously and
Grigg proposed, through a Bill, the appointment of a Board of Trustees for this purpose. But the whole exercise was suspended till the publication of the Hilton Young Commission report. The report, published in January, 1929, not only reiterated the Devonshire Paper's claim of native paramountcy but it also gave a rebuff to the settlers' plans to grab the whole of British East Africa under the garb of 'closer union'. The report stated that "what the immigrants communities may justly claim is Partnership, not control." The Commission also advocated the appointment of a High Commission for East Africa regarding matters of common concern. Moreover, the Commission urged that for election purposes, 'a common roll on an equal franchise with no discrimination between races' be used. The report, therefore, gave a big blow to yet another design of the settlers to gain control over Kenya, mainly because of Kenya's strategic importance.

The new labour government in Britain amended Grigg's Land Reservation Bill for the Natives to include a provision, in spite of strong protests from the settlers, to reserve for the natives "Land equal in extent, and, as far as possible, equal in value" if any were taken away by the state. The Bill was finally passed with the

33. Bennett, op.cit., p.66.
official majority since the settlers voted against it. This was considered a victory for the K.C.A. which had made such a demand in its very first memorandum.

In the meantime, yet another confrontation broke out, this time between the missionaries and the Africans. In 1929, the Church of Scotland condemned the tribal practice of female circumcision -- a form of clitoridectomy -- as 'savage' and 'barbarous'. Female circumcision was a custom which was regarded by the Gikuyu as also by many other tribes, as an essential element of their social structure.

The issue was immediately taken by the KCA and it held large meetings in the Gikuyu reserves, highlighting the condemnation as yet another attack on their way of life by the Europeans, since the missionaries threatened to debar from church those practising female circumcision and polygamy and also disallow the children of such parents from obtaining education in missionary schools. Most schools, as we know were at that time run by Christian missions. It, therefore, called the bluff of the missionaries doing 'the wonderful job, at least in educating Africans'. The Africans went to the extent of setting up their own African Church and Independent African Schools, both of which institutions were to play a very crucial role in the Kenyan struggle for national
independence. The controversy also provided an excellent opportunity to Jomo Kenyatta, the general Secretary of the KCA, to increase the sphere of the influence of his organisation as well as to project himself as a leader. He addressed big political meetings which helped the organisation in enrolling new members and collecting money for the struggle.

The British government, under the Labour party now, disturbed by the difficult Kenya position, issued a Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa which stated among others that responsible government was the goal in 'Kenya as elsewhere'. Since less than one per cent people had been enfranchised at that time, the trusteeship must rest with His Majesty's government 'alone' and theirs must be 'the ultimate decision and final control'. Since this in most blunt terms ended the dream of an independent settler-governed state, it evoked a very sharp reaction from the settlers. With the end of settlers' search for self-government, Kenyatta's departure for Britain and the enforcing of 'firm administrative measures against Africans', political activities, there followed in early 1930s, a period of lull in the political history of Kenya. The Europeans now under the leadership of Francis Scott in the new Council turned their attention to gaining control over the financial affairs of the colony. Here too they
suffered a setback as a committee appointed by the parliament advocated that the additional revenue be raised from the non-natives through income tax. Similarly, another commission to survey the land situation made recommendations which drew protests from the settlers. Besides recommending additions to the native reserves, it proposed delimitation of the Highlands. This then was the second major blow to the settlers who had earlier lost the battle for self-government. Other African grievances, however, received little government attention inspite of Archdeacon Burn's passionate pleas and Indian settler leader Ishar Dass's strong advocacy for their favourable consideration.

As the fever of another world war mounted in the mid-thirties, the Italians invaded Ethiopia, bringing war into the East African theatre. The government raised a regular Kenya Regiment. Simultaneously, the settlers exerted fresh pressure on the government for changes in the constitution and the introduction of the post of 'a sort of minister' to be held by unofficials. This was a clever move to shift the fight from the Legislative Council where the settlers seemed to have been defeated once for all. The settlers under the leadership of Cavendish Bentinck pressed for defining Highlands for
Europeans which would have legally enforced colour bar, being practised de facto in matters of land allotment. However, the government order in this regard issued in 1939, cleverly avoided the use of the word 'European' with 'Highlands'.

The joint fight by the Indians and the Africans against this order helped in strengthening the unity between them which had earlier been brought about through contacts among the trade union leaders. The government tended to overlook the strength of the African associations. The government decision in 1938, to destroy thousands of cattle heads belonging to the Wakamba provoked a mass protest by them and brought them in touch with the Gikuyu.

At the same time, the simmering discontent over appalling working conditions among the labour broke into a full scale strike. Makhan Singh, an Indian Printing Press Worker, who had organised the Labour Trade Union of East Africa and the K.C.A played a stellar role in organising this strike which led to the appointment of a commission to enquire into the working conditions of labour force in Kenya. "Their report revealed government neglect in a scandalous state of affairs".

With the outbreak of the war, K.C.A and other

35 Bennett, op cit., p.93.
such organisations of the Kamba and Teita were banned and their leaders arrested. The Indians and Europeans too suspended their political activities. The settlers were, however, strengthening their grip over the administration; unofficials had become 'semi-official Members' and Scott looked forward to the appointment of unofficial ministers after the war.

The militant speeches of Rev. Beecher, who had been appointed to the Legislative Council in August, 1943, to represent the Africans created apprehensions in the minds of most settlers about the foundations of representation in the Legislative Council on the one hand and made some wake up to the realisation of self-government 'on the basis of all races cooperating' on the other. Couldrey in fact, went to the extent of demanding the nomination of an African to the Legislative Council. As a result, in October, 1944, E.M. Mathu was nominated to the Legislative Council, which marked the emergence of the African on to the full stage of Kenya's politics, thereby giving a new form to 'the eternal triangle' of Europeans, Indians and the Africans in Kenya.

In 1945, the new governor, Sir Philip Mitchell, introduced proposals for the reorganisation of the

36. F.J. Couldrey in a BBC broadcast, 17th August, 1944.
government with the aim of bringing about racial parity between the three races concerned. However, the appointment of Cavendish-Bentinck, a conservative or rather racialist leader of the white settlers as 'Member' Agriculture gave a rude shock to the Africans and the Indians and led to a 'racial explosion'. To assuage their feelings, Mitchell introduced a set of proposals for setting up a Central Assembly for inter-territorial organisation of East Africa on the basis of racial parity. The acceptance of the proposals by the Africans and the Indians only heightened the racial tension in the colony. The post-war liberalisation had led to increased African political activities and a more vocal African press was voicing their problems in a more forthright manner. The reconstituted Legislative Council with 22 unofficial members and only 15 official members drew severe criticism from the Africans and the Indians while the white settlers' hopes of yet another chance for 'self-government' were raised once again. As a result, the Kikuyu African Union (K.A.U) feeling frustrated, began to talk of a revolutionary struggle to free themselves from the colonial yoke. It was at this stage that Kenyatta returned to Kenya after his long stay in England and other countries of Europe and was accorded a hero's welcome.
Kenyatta found that the country was a fertile field for political activities because of the post-war discontent. The war-returnees had become aware of the national liberation movements in Asia. As unemployment grew both in the cities and in the countryside, the cry of 'Africa for Africans' grew stronger. Overcrowding in the reserves and extensive soil erosion had made the Africans talk of getting back their 'stolen lands' from the Europeans. Kenyatta began to travel around the country and addressed large meetings. In June 1947, he was elected the President of the Kikuyu African Union (K.A.U) and began to attack the government policies. For instance, in July he chaired a large meeting in Fort Hall wherein it was resolved "that women should no longer take part in terracing, the vital operation in soil conservation. The following day no woman appeared for work. By the end of August all communal labour among the Kikuyu was virtually at a standstill."

It might be of relevance here to point out that Kenyatta had the reputation of being a moderate while in England. His ex-K.C.A associates were in fact apprehensive that he might join the government side.

37. According to Command 1030 (1960), there were 10000 people unemployed in Nairobi alone.
Kenyatta, therefore, took hardened postures in order to retain his position as the leader of the Gikuyu. But the initiative within the K.A.U was passing to a more radical group who were ready to resort to violent means if persuasion failed and Kenyatta had neither the will nor the courage to denounce them. One such group within the organisation -- the Forty Group, so named because all of them were circumcised together in 1940 -- began to administer secret oaths to the Gikuyu to fight for the freedom of their motherland. In fact, the word 'Mau Mau' was first heard by the police while investigating one such case of secret oath-administering in March 1948, in the Rift valley. In the meanwhile, Kenyatta was addressing large Gikuyu rallies analysing the ills of Kenya, at times admonishing his fellow Africans for their not adopting better forms of farming but attacking the colonial government for most of their problems. "Kenya would be a paradise", he said, "if the Europeans went back where they came from."

In May 1949, the government finally conceded the longstanding African demand of abolishing the compulsory carrying of Kipande by Africans. It also extended

registration to all races through the enactment of an Ordinance. The Europeans opposed it by saying that the taking of fingerprints smacked of a totalitarian state, ignoring the fact that such a practice had been in force for the Africans for thirty years and no European had protested against it. Labelling the Ordinance as an act of 'appeasement' for Africans, the settlers replied by publishing a brochure titled 'We are here to stay' wherein they demanded a clear statement from the British government that their settlement in Kenya was an irreversible act and that the British would always keep the reins of government in their own hands. They also wanted the government to increase its cooperation with Rhodesian and the South African governments both of which were highly racial in character. This naturally evoked protests from both the Africans and the Indians. Prominent among those who reacted strongly were the East African Trade Union Congress under the leadership of Fred Kubai and Makhan Singh. The ATUC, on May 1, 1950 demanded for the first time in Kenya, total independence. Both Fred Kubai and Makhan Singh were arrested for being office bearers of an 'illegal' labour organisation. Although the ensuing strike failed finally, fairly soon it further strengthened the increasing cooperation between the
Africans and the Asians in Kenya. As frustration increased and as Fred Kubai and Makhan Singh were deported, more cases of oathing were reported from all over the country.

In 1950, the government banned the so-called Mau Mau movement. Although Kenyatta and other so-called moderates denounced the movement, it continued to gain strength and as subsequent events were to prove, proscribing it proved to be counterproductive for the British government which got bogged down in it more and more with each passing day.

The publication of the Beecher Committee report on education provided the next fuel for the already bubbling cauldron of political unrest in the country. The Africans demanded more grants-in-aid for raising the standard of Independent Schools which as stated earlier had been set up after the missionaries had disallowed the children whose parents practised either polygamy or female circumcision. Kenyatta, capitalising on these issues, further strengthened his hold over the K.A.U and he began to attack openly the Europeans, their immigration and land

40. Kenyatta did so in a big meeting of the KAU in Nairobi in February, 1951.
41. We shall discuss the details of the Mau Mau struggle in chapter - IV while discussing A Grain of Wheat.
holdings. He urged the Africans "Don't be afraid to spill your blood to get the land". His praise became the subject of many a Kenyan hymn and there were rumours of secret links between Mau Mau and K.A.U., particularly Kenyatta, although the government had 'no concrete evidence for it.

The Europeans started putting pressure on the government to arrest the Gikuyu leaders and declare a state of Emergency in order to check the so-called Mau Mau activities, which, they alleged, were both anti-christian and anti-European. Attacks on European farms and the murder of a senior Chief -- Waruhiu -- near Nairobi made the new Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring to declare a state of Emergency on October 20, 1952 and immediately thereafter Kenyatta and eleven top leaders besides others were arrested. British troops were flown in from Egypt and the reins of decision-making passed from the local administration to the government in London.

The outlawing of Mau Mau, the arrest of Kenyatta and other African leaders and the repression let loose on 42 Africans in general by the British troops and district officials soon proved to be counter-productive. Violence

42. Over 10000 Africans were killed by the Security forces and other 90000 were detained in concentration camps according to Barnett & Njama.
increased, leading to more repression which in turn generated more violence in reaction. The colonial government was, therefore, caught in a vicious circle of violence. Sentencing of Kenyatta and seven others at Kipenguria trial in most unjust manner added more fuel to this fire. The settlers, taking advantage of this situation, demanded once again a share in the conducting the emergency operations. In June 1953, the K.A.U was also banned, creating a kind of political 'vacuum' which once again was filled by the trade union movement under the leadership of Tom Mboya, a young Luo. The armed struggle, however, not only continued to be waged but became more broad-based.

In the new Legislative Council in which for the first time eight elected African representatives took their seats under the leadership of Tom Mboya, the Africans shocked the Europeans by demanding self-government on the basis of equal rights for all individuals, as had been done in the case of Ghana, which had obtained freedom only a few days earlier. The Africans, particularly Oginga Odinga, also demanded the immediate release of their leaders, particularly Kenyatta, from imprisonment. The demand soon spread and Kenyatta became overnight, as it were, a big hero once again. The
Africans also boycotted the Legislative Council demanding a constitutional conference and also an African majority in the Council. Only after obtaining such an assurance in the House of Commons did the members return to the Council. Soon a new organisation with Uhuru as its principal aim was founded by the Africans with Odinga as its President and Mboya as its Secretary. In October, 1959, the government through a Session Paper conceded the long-standing African demand of removing racial barriers from all spheres including non-Europeans' right to buy land in the White Highlands. The winds of change were blowing all over Africa in the sixties. The growing African nationalism was gaining ground as the powers of colonial administrations were waning.

As the Constitutional Conference was convened in London in 1960, the Africans gained an effective majority in the Legislative Council with 33 seats out of a total of 65. Africans would also have the largest number of ministers, viz. four against three Europeans and one Asian. This plan naturally irked the Europeans who dubbed it as 'a Victory for Mau Mau' and attacked the British volte face. Ngala, on the other hand, claimed triumphantly that the 'European domination had been broken'. The fond hope of 'Uhuru' in not so distant a future gave a new fillip to the efforts of Africans.
A new mass organisation - Kenya African National Union (K.A.N.U) incorporating the members of the K.A.U was formed in March, 1960, with Kenyatta as its President. Gichuru was, however, to act in his place until his release from prison. Odinga and Mboya were to be its Vice President and Secretary respectively. However, the new party from its very start was plagued with not only rivalry between Odinga and Mboya but also between the Gikuyu and other tribes. Since the leaders were mostly from among the Gikuyu, the very objectives of K.A.N.U were considered a suspect. Within two months Towett and Daniel Arap Moi organised all other tribes under the name KPA (Kalenjin Political Alliance) with the main aim of staking their 'historic' claims to the Highlands, suspecting that the Gikuyu with their majority in numbers might claim these for themselves. The Masai, now stimulated into political action, formed the MUF (Masai United Front). Within a month the two - K.P.A and M.U.F - had merged to form K.A.D.U with the main aim of opposing K.A.N.U.

The Europeans too in the meantime had formed two distinct parties: United Party under the leadership of Group Captain Briggs while Blundell formed the NKP. This multiplicity of political activity among the Africans drew a sharp reaction from the government which turned
down their now loud demand of Kenyatta's release describing him as 'the African leader to darkness and death'.

In the 1961 elections, K.A.N.U dominated the K.A.D.U while Blundell's party overwhelmed the Group led by Cavendish Bentinck. Although the African leaders were now allowed to visit Kenyatta in Lodwar but the Governor still refused to release him until a government had been formed and found workable. K.A.N.U, however, refused to enter a government before Kenyatta's release. As a result, Ngala became the leader of Government Business with the support of Blundell's N.K.P and Asians of K.I.C. Soon after, Kenyatta was released. Serious differences between K.A.N.U and K.A.D.U now came to the fore about the future of Kenya. K.A.D.U demanded the division of Kenya into 'regions' which they thought was necessary to protect various tribes from Gikuyu domination. K.A.N.U., however, was strongly opposed to it. The ensuing Conference in London saw K.A.N.U. concede significant ground to K.A.D.U, for disagreement could have meant indefinite delay in the granting of independence.

The compromise was a 'framework constitution', the details of which were to be worked out in the coalition government to be formed on return from London. The ensuing months were filled with so much political
bitterness that it was feared by some that K.A.N.U and K.A.D.U might fight each other on the streets. The confusion became manyfold when it came to delimiting regions and constituencies. The Luo under Mboya and the Kamba under Paul Ngei both belonging to K.A.N.U openly disagreed with Kenyatta and the official party position on these. K.A.N.U was in complete disarray at the end of 1962. The old rivalries had come to the fore in a menacing way on the eve of independence.

The election, however, saw K.A.N.U score landslide victory over K.A.D.U and on June 1, 1963, Kenyatta became Kenya's first Prime Minister. The real reason for K.A.N.U's victory were the split and suspicion among the various tribes that comprised the K.A.D.U. But more significantly, they showed the growing national feeling since regional and tribal parties were wiped out. The voting was for party rather than for personality. "Overall, K.A.N.U emerged looking like a truly national party with seats in every region and two-thirds of the vote."  

43. Bennett, op. cit., p.159.