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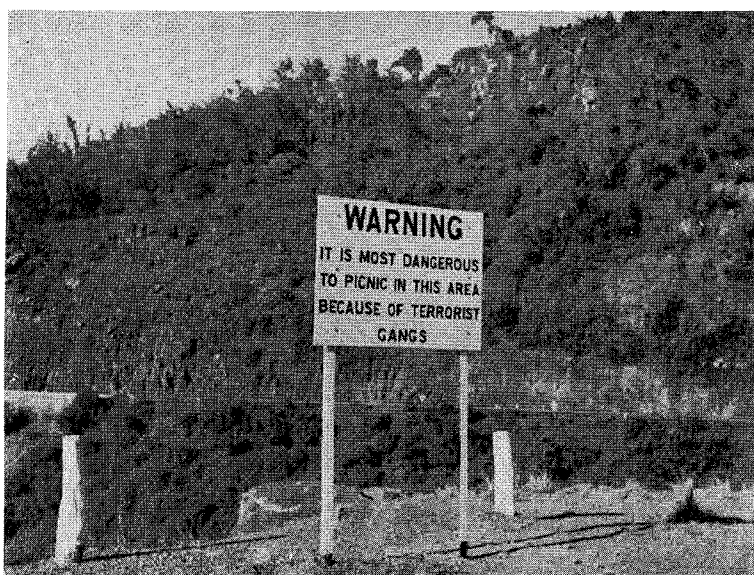
DER - 34 & 35
The Rise of Mau Mau
Introduction

January 7, 1955
c/o Barclays Bank
Queensway
Nairobi, Kenya

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

This month marks the completion of 18 months in East Africa for me. Most of it was spent in and around the troubled areas of Kenya. During that time, I saw no Mau Mau on the loose, fired no shots in anger. But still this little war has been a reality and sometimes a grim one.



Kenya Road Sign

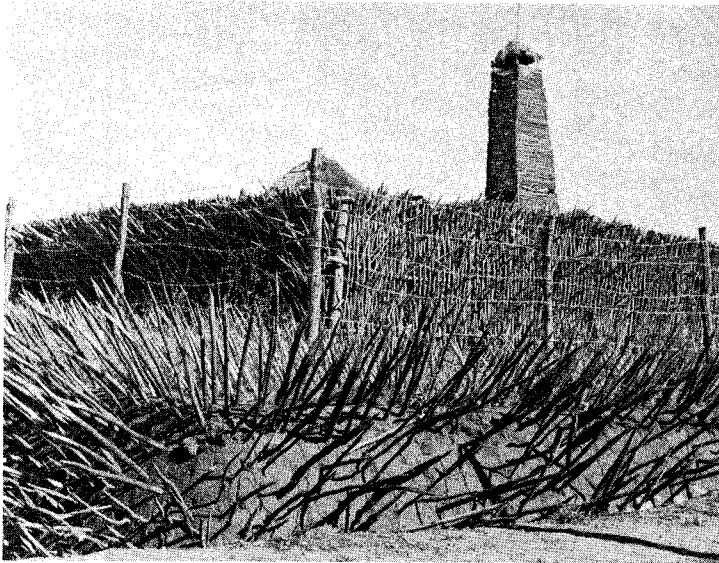
In my "home-town"--- Nairobi---the roar of bombers is heard every few days as they take off to pay their respects to the Mau Mau gangs in the Mount Kenya and Aberdare forests. Troops with fixed bayonets regularly sweep Nairobi's streets in miniature Operation Anvils and scores or hundreds of suspected Mau Mau agents are hustled off for "screening."

At night behind the Norfolk Hotel, where I stay, quick burps of Sten guns sometimes interrupt the serene choruses of the swamp crickets. Barreling at high speeds around corners

of roads approaching Nairobi, one regularly encounters police road blocks---reinforced by heavily-spiked planks placed across the road. They are guaranteed to stop anything that runs on rubber tires. I know. The first time I ever encountered one, I thought it was just an old plank. It shredded two tires in a matter of seconds and almost put the car in the ditch.

But all of these are routine occurrences in Nairobi. Nobody gets excited. They rate at best a few ho-hum lines in the local newspapers.

Upcountry I have encountered more convincing evidence that a war is in progress. But it still is an elusive war. One night at the Mawingo Hotel, on the slopes of Mount Kenya, the usual sundowner



Upper left: Kikuyu Guard post near Nairobi, surrounded by sharpened stakes to ward off Mau Mau attacks, and topped with watchtower.

Lower left: Guard leader, with well-tested simi or sword.



conviviality was shattered as the army suddenly began lobbing heavy mortar shells across the hotel grounds and into a river valley close by. There wasn't necessarily a gang down there, we were informed amid thunderous blasts. "Just part of our psychological warfare," an officer explained. It turned out that there was no gang down there and everyone in the hotel was one drink down all evening because of the interruption.

After such a traumatic experience, the fish were suspicious of even a Coachman fly for several days. The fish recovered, though, and one afternoon I was pulling them out of the river one after another when my Kipsigis lookout-bodyguard informed me that there were "watu"---men, about 20 of them---in the bushes upstream. We inventoried our armaments: three arrows (non-poisonous), one pen-knife, one pistol,

eight bullets. We beat a strategic retreat.

In nearby Nyeri, it looks more like a war is going on. Close by are the two great Mau Mau reserves---Kenya and the Aberdares. The town is always jammed with soldiers, police, jeeps, military lorries and even a few armored cars. Along with these, one sometimes sees sullen groups of captured Mau Mau, sitting around in police station compounds, awaiting their day in court and then, perhaps, their moment on the gallows.

From Nyeri, I tramped around one time for three blisterous days in the Aberdare bamboo forests with an army patrol hunting a Mau Mau gang. But all the ammunition that we so wearily carried up those mountains was wearily carried back down again. Again, no Mau Mau.

I spent a number of tense evenings on isolated settler farms, one time muttering Christmas carols within reach of a .45. Silent Night! We hoped it would stay that way. It did.

On another night, my car bogged down in mud near Thomson's Falls, a bad Mau Mau area. A ranch manager, whose car also was in the embrace of the good earth, invited me to spend the night at his place nearby. Warming ourselves with brandy in front of a roaring fireplace, he told me that the previous owner of the ranch had been killed by a Mau Mau gang in that room. The owner's wife was hacked with pangas and left for dead, but somehow survived and drove a car to the Thomson's Falls police station, there to collapse over the horn. "The gang might want to return," the manager said. "If they come tonight, don't spare the ammunition." Now I understood why he was so eager to have guests. He locked all of the doors between the various rooms in the house. "That would slow them down a bit," he said. He showed me my room. It opened onto the verandah. He gave me some keys and said, "Now if you want to find the bathroom, you go down the verandah and then through that door and into the main part of the house and..." I thanked him but said I didn't think I'd be getting up during the night.

Riding around on horses the next morning, with the purple-tinted Aberdares in the distance, we found that a gang had stolen a couple of steers.

No, I've never seen a Mau Mau on the loose, but they've certainly been in the vicinity several times. During these 18 months I've formed a number of impressions about this terrorist movement. In a little more than a month, I will be saying kwaheri (goodbye) to Kenya and start on the long road home (one stop en route: West Africa). Now I would like to summarize these impressions. The accompanying two newsletters do not purport to be exhaustive by any means; the reader would find himself exhausted long before the subject would be. They are meant as essays, but I feel they do give an idea of what went into the making of Mau Mau and what it represents today.

Sincerely,

David E. Reed
David E. Reed

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

DER - 34
The Rise of Mau Mau - I

January 7, 1955
c/o Barclays Bank
Queensway
Nairobi, Kenya

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

When Mau Mau exploded in highland Kenya during 1952, to be followed by the declaration of a state of Emergency in October of that year, most Europeans thought it would be crushed in a very short time. All that was needed, it was felt, was to show a few white faces, hoist the Union Jack and, perhaps, fire a few shots. Then the Kukes would quiet down.

But the isolation of the white man in Africa is such that Kenya's Europeans were unaware of the depth of the Mau Mau movement. The Security Forces eventually wrested the initiative from the gangs, but the Emergency dragged on month after month without any prospect of a decisive victory. The gangs were completely on the defensive, but they could not be stamped out.

The main reason that Mau Mau managed to stay in business was that it had the active or passive support of the great majority of the Kikuyu tribe. The foundations for Mau Mau were laid among the Kikuyu many years ago. Today it is estimated that 90 per cent of them have taken at least one of the Mau Mau oaths. Some took it under force, but many took it voluntarily.

Large numbers of Kikuyu keep the terrorist gangs going by supplying them with food, information, stolen firearms and recruits. The number of reported killings of Africans regarded as Mau Mau has risen to around 100 a week. But there are more than a million Kikuyu and there are more than half a million Meru and Embu, who also are affected by Mau Mau. And in addition there are some Wakamba and Masai in "The Organization."

Even the Kikuyu Guard, for whom Mau Mau reserves its worst fury (and who reciprocate), are not particularly pro-government or pro-settler. They just happen to be anti-Mau Mau. If the unlikely should happen, and the gangs were completely eliminated, Mau Mau still would not be dead in the Kikuyu tribe. It could easily flare up again in a few years.

The story of what brought the Kikuyu to this state of active and passive rebellion began a little more than half a century ago when the coming of the white men set into motion the greatest social revolution that the Kikuyu and the other tribes of the interior had ever known.

Before then, the Kikuyu and the others were living in something perhaps approximating the early Iron Age. Theirs was a society dominated by witch doctors and ancestral spirits, where persons suspected of sorcery were burned alive or forced to submit to ordeals.

The missionary Cagnolo reports that twins were killed if they resulted from the first lying-in, and that if a baby cut its upper teeth first, it too was put to death.* Periodically the tribe was decimated by plagues. The Kikuyu had no notion of the existence of the outside world and its great civilizations. They had not discovered the principle of the wheel, nor had the idea of the written word dawned on them. Tribal life did have its good aspects, of course, but it certainly was no simple idyll.

With the advent of the Europeans, the Kikuyu were plunged suddenly into modern civilization. Within a few decades, the sons of blanket-clad primitives were sitting on governmental bodies, dressed in British woollens and participating in budget debates. Hospitals and schools sprung up across the strikingly beautiful rides of Kikuyuland, and as the witch doctor faded into obscurity, or near obscurity, such a man as the Kikuyu doctor of medicine, trained in modern institutions, came onto the scene. The city of Nairobi rose where before there had been grass huts and Kikuyu truck drivers soon were battling with the skill of their opposite numbers in Chicago for the rare parking space.

The Kikuyu had grasped eagerly at what western civilization had to offer. In fact, they were the most advanced of all the tribes. But in the wake of the great revolution, there came the bitterly anti-white Mau Mau, dedicated to driving the Europeans from Kenya. What caused it? The purpose of these two newsletters is to sketch out some observations on this score made during 18 months' residence here.

* * *

A holy cause for Kikuyu discontent and later for Mau Mau has always been the land question---the land that the Kikuyu say was stolen from them by the European settlers. I would not say that it actually is the most important factor in Mau Mau, but it certainly has played a part. The land question has to be seen against events that took place long before the coming of the Europeans.

The Kikuyu, a Bantu-speaking agricultural people, are thought to have formed as a tribe some 700 or 800 years ago. The present Fort Hall administrative district, the headquarters of which is 70-odd miles northeast of Nairobi, is regarded by the Kikuyu as the "birthplace" of the tribe. The area was forested at the time and when a Kikuyu wanted more land for cultivation, he cleared a plot from the encircling forest.

There existed a system of private ownership of land, on an individual basis. If a person cleared a plot from the forest, he had sole cultivation rights in it. But it seems that there were few or no "sales" of land from one Kikuyu to another at that time. There was no need to buy land; one could always acquire it free by clearing a patch of forest.

* Works cited appear in the appendix.

As the Kikuyu expanded in numbers, they began to move north into the Nyeri area---which was not inhabited---and south into the Kiambu area---which at that time was sparsely populated with a tribe of hunters and gatherers called the Dorobo. Leakey and others say that the Kikuyu did not seize the land from the Dorobo by force, though they might have been able to do so. Instead, individual Kikuyu purchased tracts of it, using sheep and goats for payment. They believed that if they took the land by force, the offended spirits of the departed Dorobo would see to it that they had no success with their agricultural undertakings.

The ceremonies involved in these transactions are important for an understanding of the difficulties that were to arise when European settlers appeared. First of all the Kikuyu family purchasing the tract would enter into a ceremony of "mutual adoption" with the Dorobo sellers. This, among other things, would ensure that the Dorobo spirits would be friendly toward the Kikuyu newcomers. The goats and sheep then were handed over. After that, a religious ceremony of marking the boundaries of the tract would take place. Then the Kikuyu family would install itself on its new holding, called a githaka.

During the early 1930s, the Kenya Land Commission looked into these transactions as part of its study of Kikuyu land claims and said the whole process was one "partly of alliance and partnership and partly of adoption and absorption, partly of payment and largely of force and chicanery." It has also been suggested that the Dorobo agreed only to "lend" the land in return for a loan of livestock. But, according to this view, the Dorobo died out or were absorbed into the Kikuyu tribe. Hence the Kikuyu "borrowers" were the only persons left to claim it. Leakey, who has spent his life among the Kikuyu, seems to regard the transactions as above-board purchases, though.

It is generally agreed that the Kikuyu accession to Kiambu gave rise to a new system of buying and selling land between members of the tribe. At the same time, another important system grew up. Those Kikuyu who had felt the population squeeze back in Fort Hall, but who lacked enough goats and sheep to purchase land from the Dorobo, moved into the newly-purchased ithaka (pl.) as ahoi or tenants. They were not required to pay rent, but were expected to assist the owners occasionally in certain heavy work and to present them with small gifts from time to time.

The land-owner was free to sell all or part of his holding, but others in the family had the right of "first option." Further, no sale was valid unless the religious ceremony of marking the boundary had been held.

Leakey says the movement south into Kiambu started in about the late 1500s. It was still going on near the end of the 19th century and it had brought the Kikuyu in places to the outskirts of what is now Nairobi. "There can be very little doubt that, had the start of white settlement in Kenya come at this particular time instead of later, very little (if any) land in Kiambu, Kabete and Limuru* would have been alienated to white farmers, for the land was carrying a big native population and no government would have tried to dispossess them for the sake of European farming," Leakey says.

* Kabete and Limuru are part of the whole Kiambu area.

But a series of disasters hit Kikuyuland at the turn of the century. Epidemics of smallpox and rinderpest decimated the human and stock populations. These were followed by severe drought and a locust invasion---with consequent famine for the survivors of the epidemic. In Kiambu, the drought lasted for three growing seasons---18 months. McGregor Ross says survivors reported that three out of every four Kiambu Kikuyu died either from smallpox or famine. Leakey says estimates of the death rate ranged from 20 to 50 per cent.

Kiambu was hit the hardest and survivors fled back to Fort Hall where conditions were not so bad. Some families left a male relative or tenant to watch over the githaka, but with the absence of almost all of its cultivator force, the Kiambu land quickly reverted to typical African bush.

At that point, the first white settlers appeared. The Uganda railway had reached Kisumu, on the Kavirondo Gulf of Lake Victoria, in 1901. The purpose of the railway had been to secure the British position in Uganda---to stamp out the slave trade, control the headwaters of the Nile and open the country for British missionaries and business enterprise. Kenya was rather incidental to the whole affair.

In crossing Kenya, the railway ran through several hundred miles of empty (or seemingly empty) land. The line seemed doomed to be a financial liability, to be borne for strategic, humanitarian and business reasons, for a very long time. Then the British government invited settlers to take up farming along the line so that produce and stock shipments would help make it a paying proposition. Some of the best land along the line lay in Kiambu---now empty or nearly empty. This was parcelled out to white settlers, chiefly during the years 1902-07.

Leakey takes the view that the alienations were made in good faith because of ignorance of the Kikuyu exodus. But McGregor Ross, who also was on the scene at the time, says there was an avaricious land scramble on the part of the settlers.*

McGregor Ross writes:

"Out in the districts, a number of sporadic disputes were in progress between administration officers and surveyors, the latter, under pressure from clamorous applicants, seeking authority to survey as farms many areas of apparently unoccupied land which the former asserted to be under native ownership, to have been under recent cultivation and to be merely lying fallow prior to early recultivation.

"The administration officers were ordinarily overruled by higher authority and a broad wedge of European occupation was driven across the lands of the Kikuyu."

* Ross says the settlers continued to cry for a number of years afterwards for more alienations of land. He cites as an example the report of the 1917 Economic Commission, which advocated the "interpenetration" of the African Reserves by European farms.

Later the Kikuyu owners returned to Kiambu and demanded their land. (Leakey says they did not begin returning till after World War I.) The idea that these "savages" had any system of private ownership seemed absurd to the early Europeans. Their attitude would have been: "The land had been empty, hadn't it? Why should they have it? There's plenty of land elsewhere---let them go there. They're always moving around anyway."

In some cases land was seized from Kikuyu in an outright fashion. Where a few Kikuyu were found on a farm allotted to a European, the Kikuyu were told they could either remain as laborers or accept "compensation for disturbance"---a few rupees---and get out.

Even when a European "purchased" land from a Kikuyu, the purchase price represented nothing more than rent to the Kikuyu. Under his custom---the only one he considered binding---mutual adoption and the ceremony of marking the boundary were needed to finalize a sale. Otherwise the European was only "borrowing" the land. He could always be evicted merely by refunding the purchase price. Naturally the European purchaser did not see things that way.

But the important consideration was that what the Kikuyu wanted was his land---not money or other land. Ownership of a particular plot of land is an all-important part of his culture. His plot of land, for instance, is the connection between him, the spirits of his ancestors and his yet-unborn descendants and gives him a sense of psychological security in a hostile and little-understood world. Many Kikuyu rites connected with birth, marriage, parenthood and death are bound up with the land. Kenyatta says:

"In studying the Gikuyu* tribal organization, it is necessary to take into consideration land tenure as the most important factor in the social, political, religious and economic life of the tribe.

"As agriculturalists, the Gikuyu people depend entirely on the land. It supplies them with the material needs of life, through which spiritual and mental contentment is achieved.

"Communion with ancestral spirits is perpetuated through contact with the soil in which the ancestors of the tribe lie buried... The earth is the most sacred thing above all that dwell in it or on it. Among the Gikuyu the soil is especially honored and an everlasting oath is to swear by the earth."

How much land did the Kikuyu lose?

There are those among the settlers and among government officials who say either that the Kikuyu lost not an inch of territory or that they have been compensated for everything they did lose. After a year and a half of wading around in this confused issue, I could not subscribe to either of these views. It seems that

* Gikuyu is perhaps a more correct phonetic rendering of the root of the tribal name (Mugikuyu would refer to one person; Agikuyu to more than one). But Kikuyu has become customary.

they did lose more than that for which they were compensated. (And compensation meant little to them.) On the other hand, the Kikuyu have made some extravagant claims about the extent of the loss. A half a century of bitter controversy and wild assertions, plus Kikuyu population increases and alterations in the terrain as a result of European development, have made it seemingly impossible to arrive at any approximately correct assessment now.

The vast bulk of what became the White Highlands (12,200 square miles reserved for white farmers and 4,000 square miles of Crown forests) was never Kikuyu land in any sense. Most of it---some estimates run as high as three-fourths---had been grazed over by the nomadic Masai.

In 1904, the Masai signed a treaty (reluctantly and under government pressure, it is said) surrendering their Naivasha and Nakuru lands in the Rift Valley for white settlement. The Masai were moved north to the Laikipia area. The treaty said that the "settlement now arrived at shall be enduring so long as the Masai as a race shall exist and that Europeans and other settlers shall not be allowed to take up land in the (Laikipia) settlements."

The Masai still exist, but the treaty was honored by the government for six years and 261 days; the Masai then were moved to the southern part of the colony. Laikipia was taken over by white settlers. Interestingly enough, the Masai have not been particularly vocal about their lost lands.*

Other areas that became parts of the White Highlands were unoccupied when the Europeans arrived. A large part of the Uasin Gishu area, for instance, was vacant. The Uasin Gishu Masai had been broken up by other Masai tribes in fierce wars that raged a few decades before the advent of the Europeans. Still other parts of the White Highlands represent no loss to the Kikuyu, but rather to other tribes. The Nandi lost land and the Wakamba at least claim they did. Taken as a whole, the White Highlands is not the best land in Kenya. The ex-Masai areas---Naivasha, Nakuru and Laikipia---are arid and suitable only for ranching. There is some first-rate land in the White Highlands, but African tribes still have a large share of the good land in the colony.

It seems that the Kikuyu loss was confined almost entirely to Kiambu, which is top-quality land. Not all of their Kiambu land was alienated, however. Various Kikuyu have estimated in conversations with me that Kikuyu owners lost a total of anything up to 500 square miles. But they acknowledge that these are only guesses.

The 1933 Kenya Land Commission, appointed by the government to

* The Masai have not fared too badly. Their new reserve comprises about 15,000 square miles, whereas they number only about 67,000. Much of Masailand is waterless, but they still manage to use it for grazing purposes. A few areas are fertile but the Masai do not practice cultivation and these fertile areas are either left idle or are used by persons of other tribes.

make a "final settlement" of the Kikuyu and other land grievances, sifted through numerous individual claims. On the commission's recommendation, 30-odd square miles of highlands was awarded the Kikuyu and another 383 square miles of arid lowlands was set aside for their future expansion. (*1) The commission said Kikuyu claims were wild and extravagant and commented that there was very little European-held land that was not claimed by at least two Kikuyu. Leakey says if the Kikuyu had not made "such outrageous claims," it is likely "that the recommendations of the commission would have taken a more generous form."

The Kikuyu, on the other hand, angrily charged that some of the 30-odd square miles, though outside the Kikuyu Reserve as then demarcated, was theirs anyway. They refused to occupy the lowlands---which was unsuited for their traditional type of agriculture---and it eventually was taken over by the neighboring Wakamba, who manage to eke out a living on it. Today the Kikuyu Reserve totals 1,964 square miles, 424 of which is in Kiambu. (*2)

A decade before the commission's investigation, the land question had already helped put Kikuyu nationalism on the march. In 1922, when other tribes were just stirring out of past primitivism (and some still havn't stirred very far), the Kikuyu formed a western-style political organization called the Kikuyu Central Association. Leakey says its program was: "We must be given back the lands which the white man has stolen from us." Some years later, a young man who had been educated in mission schools and who called himself Johnstone Kenyatta became Secretary General. Later he changed his name to Jomo Kenyatta.

A deeper significance of the land question was that it became a symbol of opposition to the whites. As anti-white feeling increased, so the symbol grew until today it has become, in the minds of many Kikuyu, considerably divorced from fact. Through the years the land question has provided the rallying cry for the Kikuyu leader and the specific channel of hatred and distrust for the immigrant whites. Today Dedan Kimathi, a chief Mau Mau leader, sometimes refers to his ragged followers as the "Land Freedom Army."

* * *

Other grievances existed too, and a year before the birth of the KCA, another Kikuyu group had been organized in an attempt to remedy the situation. It was called the Young Kikuyu Association

(*1) The commission found that 265 1/2 square miles had been given to the Kikuyu by the government and that 109 1/2 square miles had been taken from them---an apparent gain of 156 square miles for the Kikuyu. The commission said, however, that what was taken was of greater value than what was given, and assessed the real loss at 19,520 acres of good agricultural land. Taking other considerations into account, the commission recommended 21,000 acres (i.e., 32.3 square miles) as the final figure for compensation.

(*2) The same source---the East African Statistical Department---puts the amount of alienated land in the Kiambu administrative district at 416 square miles. This should not be taken, though, as indicative of the Kikuyu loss. The boundaries of today's Kiambu would only coincidentally correspond with what was occupied by the Kikuyu in the old days.

and it was formed at a meeting in the Pangani location of Nairobi. One of its leaders was a young man named Harry Thuku who worked as a switchboard operator in the government treasury. He was fired for using the post office box of the treasury as the mailing address for his political group. His superiors must have been horrified when they found that their office had become a political headquarters of sorts. British civil and colonial servants are forbidden from having anything to do with politics.

Thuku's Young Kikuyu Association had three main complaints. They felt that native taxes were unjustly heavy (a view shared in other quarters as well.) They objected to being required to carry a kipande or identification card and they objected to a settler campaign to reduce African wages by one-third. Representatives of the Young Kikuyu Association secured a meeting with government officials, missionaries and Kikuyu chiefs and headmen at Dagoretti, just outside Nairobi, to air these grievances. McGregor Ross' description of the meeting shows a trend that was beginning to take shape---the elders no longer spoke for the tribe and the somewhat-educated young men, who were replacing them, were clashing with the government-appointed chiefs. Ross says:

"The young men acted and spoke with a composure and self-confidence that grated upon the paid chiefs. These young men were partially educated. They had attended mission schools (the only ones in existence) for the sake of getting some education. Under the glib classification of the average white immigrant, they were 'mission boys.' To the missionaries many of them were known 'failures' who had responded little or not at all to mission influence, but had only snatched the coveted boon of education which the missions offered free, and had then decamped with it.

"To the missionaries (as a body) they were an object of suspicion tinged with resentment. To the government they were a probable source of embarrassment. To the paid chiefs they were anathema. Nobody wanted them or wanted to meet with them. And here they were, forcing a hearing."

The settler campaign to trim wages eventually fizzled out and the settlers have since assumed a greater share of the tax burden. But the kipande was here to stay and even today many Africans object violently to being forced to carry these cards.

Thuku later toured the Kikuyu and other tribal reserves, speaking to large crowds. He was arrested in 1922 and when a large crowd gathered in front of the Nairobi police barracks, where he was detained, the police opened fire. At least 25 persons were killed. Thuku was exiled, but others like Kenyatta were already climbing the ladder of political leadership. Thuku eventually returned to Kikuyuland and became a "moderate." He is still around today, bitterly anti-Mau Mau and expecting at any moment to be assassinated by them.

* * *

The Christian missionaries were a powerful influence in

breaking down the old Kikuyu tribal way of life. The largest missions at work in Kikuyuland were the Church of Scotland Mission (Presbyterian), the Church Mission Society (Church of England) and the Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholics had two groups in the field---the Consolata fathers (Italian) and the Holy Ghost fathers (Irish). All of the missionaries were opposed to some or all of the old Kikuyu customs.

In the early years, the missionaries encountered a good deal of resistance to their teachings. Young men converted to Christianity refused to participate in the old tribal religious rites. They regarded these ceremonies as shenzi---uncivilized. In some cases the rituals were invalid unless the entire family was present, so fathers forbade their sons to go near the mission stations. The missionaries, too, forbade converts to have more than one wife. In some cases a polygamist was required to get rid of all but one of his wives.

But Kikuyu resistance eventually broke down. Probably a number of factors were responsible. The old tribal religion was losing its hold---particularly among the younger people. It just could not stand up under the impact of outside influences. Oliver says: "It was the parochialism of tribal religions which proved their undoing---the fact that the basic monotheism had been so overlaid by the cult of tribal ancestors and the sanctification of tribal customs, that belief was shattered by the first impact of wider-than-tribal government."

The tribal religion (along with the indigenous system of government) suffered in another way as well from the imposition of British rule. In the old days, the elders had governed the tribe through councils and had lent authority to the old religion. With the advent of the British, paid chiefs---sometimes younger men---were appointed by the government as its agents in ruling the tribe. But the Kikuyu had never known chiefs, still less rule by younger men. They had no respect for the new chiefs, but at the same time the power of the elders and all that it implied for the old religion was permanently crippled.

With the old religion weakened, a strong factor in overcoming Kikuyu resistance to the missionaries was that they would teach the convert how to read and write. Kenyatta says:

"The African, having no other choice, superficially agreed to fulfil those conditions in order to get the little education which the missionary schools afforded him. The education, especially reading and writing, was regarded as the white man's magic, and thus the young men were very eager to acquire the new magical power; a fact which undoubtedly had escaped the notice of the Europeans."

The missionary's purpose in teaching literacy was to enable the African convert to read the Bible on his own and help spread the faith among his people. But as Oliver says: "It is significant that the first expression of interest by the Kikuyu in the activities of the Church Mission Society occurred in 1909 in the shape of a desire for the knowledge of reading and writing as accomplishments connected with the most highly paid employment on the newly-established European farms."

Although some Kikuyu became sincere and dedicated Christians--- and later died like martyrs at the hands of Mau Mau---a large number were on the order of China's "rice Christians." As will be seen, many soon left the missions. Later, when the Mau Mau war horn blew, still others were to abandon their new faith. Roman Catholic priests, called to administer the last rites to remaining converts of long standing, sometimes still find on leaving the hut that the witch doctor has been called too and is waiting to go in next.

The first desertions from the missions resulted from missionary attempts to stamp out the Kikuyu custom of female circumcision. The campaign was begun around 1929 by the Church of Scotland Mission.

Female circumcision consists of a clitoridectomy and is performed by various people throughout eastern Africa. The operation is carried out with knives that are often septic. At times the operation is fatal. Sometimes it makes the girl incapable of normal child-bearing. But female circumcision, along with male circumcision, was one of the most important tribal rituals for the Kikuyu. It was the "outward and visible" symbol whereby a boy or a girl became an adult and whereby the tribe perpetuated itself.

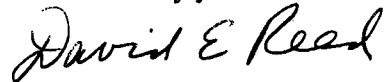
Given time, the custom might have died a natural death as more and more of the old customs were abandoned in favor of western ways. But the missionaries were adamant. With ignorant suspicion, the Kikuyu, already inflamed about the land question and other matters, regarded the mission attack on female circumcision (and polygamy, too) as a European scheme to reduce their numbers and eventually wipe out the tribe. Unless circumcised, a girl could not marry; hence there would be no more children. Polygamy was regarded as necessary to ensure that there would be enough surviving children. The Kikuyu politician was quick to advise the masses that once the tribe had been reduced in numbers, the Europeans would take over the remaining Kikuyu lands. At one point in the affair, a gang of Kikuyu thugs---forerunners of today's Mau Mau terrorists---forcibly circumcised a European woman missionary. She died as a result of it and her attackers were hanged.

Rather than abandon female circumcision, large numbers of Kikuyu broke away from the missions and, with the eager help of the Kikuyu Central Association, formed their own independent churches and schools. The churches offered a somewhat modified version of Christianity and of course approved of female circumcision and polygamy. The schools were staffed with Kikuyu teachers who generally had only a little education. Some had been dismissed from mission schools for "immorality"---this could include polygamy or practicing female circumcision. Both the independent churches and the independent schools were increasingly anti-white. As time went on, they began to emphasize and glorify more and more aspects of the old Kikuyu culture. It is charged that some of the schools and churches were hot-beds of the Mau Mau to come.

The Kikuyu had originally taken to education as a means of assuming the European culture. Now the aim was less clear. Education in the independent schools had its anti-European aspects, and the old Kikuyu culture was extolled.

The foundations were being laid for the rise of Mau Mau.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David E Reed".

David E. Reed