

AFRICAN RESISTANCE IN TANZANIA  
AGAINST GERMAN COLONIAL RULE

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INTRODUCTION

Many Historians have referred to the exploits of the foreign conquerers of the African Continent. The consequences of occupation have ranged from the ruthless system of human slavery to the no less despicable system of colonization. In both cases, the African has been on the receiving end. Yet, it is important to remember that throughout the African response to these twin evils has not been that of timid submission.

Whether in the epoch of Portuguese and Arab interventions with their attendant policies of slavery or in the period of aggressive European imperialism during the second half of the nineteenth century, the subject people have always resisted in one form or another. Writing on the African reaction to European conquest during the period of 1885 to around 1914, Jack Woddis points out:

"... The armed conquest of Africa by the European imperialist powers was met by the resistance of the African peoples to save themselves from foreign rule. Not everywhere was the struggle intense or protracted, for spears were little match for Maxim guns, but nowhere was European invasion accepted without opposition, and armed resistance was wide spread".<sup>1</sup>

Resistance to the European colonization was thus a universal phenomenon. The nature and technique of these resistances varied depending on the local political circumstances, the degree of social organization and the type of leadership.

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\* In 1961 Tanganyika attained its independence. In April 1964, the country merged with Zanzibar to become the United Republic of Tanzania. Currently, what was known as Tanganyika is referred to as Tanzania mainland. For the purposes of this study however, the name Tanzania refers only to Tanzania mainland - the former Tanganyika.

1. Woddis, Jack, AFRICA THE LION AWAKES, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1961, p.6.

have dismissed the resistance "as merely foolish, fanatical and retrograde or simply as the work of the uncivilized".<sup>5</sup> This denigration of the African response to imperialism was in some cases done by historians who, at any rate, considered Africans as inferior human beings.<sup>6</sup> The truth is, however, that the African reaction was a natural and logical response of the colonized. There was nothing foolish or fanatical about it. The resistance was aimed at maintaining the African's independence from those who desired to impose foreign domination. The aim, to paraphrase Woddis, was a simple and elementary one of resistance to conquest.<sup>7</sup> The "White Man's right to govern and civilize the blacks..." was rejected by the Africans and thus the revolt.<sup>8</sup>

The resistance of the Tanzanians to German conquest typifies the African response to foreign domination. This study will examine the nature of resistance in that former German colony. In order to put the study in a proper perspective, the paper will also consider a historical background of German occupation of Tanzania.

## II

### TANZANIA RESISTANCE: AN OVERVIEW

\* The case of Tanzania resistance is instructive in several ways. First, it ought to be noted that European imperialist interests, to a very large extent, made use of the country to penetrate the rest of East Africa and in certain instances even used it as

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5. Kimambo and Temu, op.cit., p. 85
  6. Ibid.
  7. Woddis, op.cit., p. 7
  8. Kimambo and Temu, op.cit., p. 118.

a gateway to Central Africa. As Gwassa records: "Most European missionaries or explorers who called at the court of Kabaka Mutesa, for example, passed through Tanzania".<sup>9</sup> Secondly, the imperialists of the time faced one of their fiercest resistance in Tanzania. The revolt of the coastal people led by Abushiri and Bwana Heri, the fierce battles waged by the Nyamwezi, Ngoni, Chagga and the Hehe in the early 1890's and more significantly, the great Maji-Maji Uprising of 1906 are cases in point. The importance of these revolts must be viewed in their proper perspective. The coastal people's revolt demonstrates that German conquest was resisted from the very beginning. As German colonization started in the Coast so did the African resistance to conquest manifest itself there first. The Nyamwezi, Ngoni, Chagga and Hehe "rebellions" connote the element of tribal resistance to conquest. Significantly, these resistances were led by the traditional chiefs whose determination and perseverance was remarkable. As Cartey and Kilson rightly observe:

"Not only did all European powers participating in the scramble for Africa in the nineteenth century confront some armed resistance from African traditional rulers, but, in some cases, the resistance was substantial and of some duration".<sup>10</sup>

The magnitude and dimension of the Hehe revolt can be properly understood when account is taken that historians on the subject are generally agreed that it posed one of the greatest challenges to the German colonization effort in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Led by their famous and great Chief Mkwawa, the Wahehe humbled the Germans

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9. Ibid., p. 86  
10. Cartey and Kilson, *op.cit.*, p. 3.  
11. Kimambo and Temu, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

of the Germans in 1890.<sup>17</sup> Chief Mchemba, whose defiance of the German colonizers was only overcome in 1899, is reported to have proudly and defiantly written to Major Wissmann:

"... I find no reason why I should obey you. I would rather die first ... I am Sultan in my land ... You are Sultan there in yours. I will not come to you, and if you are strong enough, then come and fetch me".<sup>18</sup>

Chief Mkwawa's pleas of national resistance met with positive response in the nationalist struggle against British Colonial rule in Tanzania in the 1950's. But, even during German occupation, Mkwawa's words had an impact on the country's struggle. This was clearly manifested in the Maji-Maji rising - the nearest to the national resistance - incorporating as it did, people of various tribes.

The Maji-Maji revolt constituted a new approach of regaining independence. Unlike previous resistances which were tribally based, the Maji-Maji revolt "tried to unite people without regard for their tribes".<sup>19</sup> Even the Germans had to concede that this resistance was different from the tribally based revolt. They had termed the resistance "a revolt of the people".<sup>20</sup>

It is clear from the foregoing that German colonization of East Africa was not a smooth affair. The conquerors were confronted with energetic resistance. But, to say this is not to deny that there were also some Africans who cooperated with the Germans. This then brings us to another important fact of Tanzania's experience

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17. Ogot, B.A., ed., ZAMANI: A SURVEY OF EAST AFRICAN HISTORY, East Africa Publishing House & Longman Group Ltd., Nairobi, 1968, 1974, p. 297.

18. Ibid., p. 297

19. Iliffe, John, "Tanzania under German & British Rule", in SOCIALISM IN TANZANIA, Vol. I POLITICS, eds. Lionel Cliffe and John S. Saul, East Africa Publishing House, Dar es Salaam, 1972, p. 10

20. Ibid.

in the resistance against European colonialism.

Tanzania during the German rule had its own Quislings as exemplified by the Arab aristocrats who betrayed Abushiri bin Salim to the enemy leading to the former's capture and subsequent hanging at Pangani in December 1889.<sup>21</sup> Then there were the Askaris who were recruited from amongst the Africans to fight against the Africans. This is a recurring phenomenon in colonialist tactics. As Rodney put it: "It is a wide spread characteristic of colonialism to find agents of repression from among the colonial victims themselves".<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, the lack of political unity and absence of common purpose among the multitude of tribal and other groups was fully exploited by the colonizers. This was true of Tanzania as it was indeed so with respect to other parts of the continent which fell prey to the European colonialism. The division within the African ranks made it possible for the European "intruder to play the classic game of divide and conquer".<sup>23</sup> As an anecdote, we can observe here that, while the style and perhaps even content of modern imperialism has radically changed from that practised in the 19th Century, many of its tactics have remained with some refinement, of course. The strategy of divide and rule is one of those ever valid concepts and practices.

There are other similarities between the experiences of German conquest of Tanzania and some of the aspects contemporary

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21. Ogot, *op.cit.*, p. 296

22. Rodney, Walter, HOW EUROPE UNDER-DEVELOPED AFRICA, Tanzania Publishing House, Dar es Salaam, 1972, p. 158.

23. Ibid., p. 159

colonialism as indeed neo-colonialism. At least two of these are clearly discernible. The German colonial rulers used typical "Machiavellian method of striking terror to win allegiance".<sup>24</sup> Not only did the German authorities indulge in brutalities and subjecting the people to indignities, but in order to overcome resistance, they resorted in some instances to collective punishment of villagers. Such practices are a common occurrence in Southern Rhodesia today,<sup>25</sup> to say nothing of the motives behind the formation of the so-called "strategic hamlets" in Vietnam in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

One of the scourges facing some African countries (eg. Zaire, formerly Belgian Congo) in the 1960's had been the use of mercenaries. This is a problem which is still considered seriously in African councils as evidenced, for example, in the recent Brazzaville Communique of the Heads of State and Government of the East and Central African States, warning against the use of mercenaries in attempt to retard the process of decolonization in the Portuguese dominated territories of Mozambique and Angola.<sup>26</sup> Yet, the use of mercenaries is not a new phenomenon in Africa. To overcome the resistance launched by the coastal people under the leadership of Abushiri and Bwana Heri, the Germans, under Major Von Wissmann recruited Nubians, Somalis, Zulus and Turkish mercenaries.<sup>27</sup>

Then there was the "famous" Emin-Pasha. This German mercenary

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24. Kimambo and Temu, op.cit., p. 95

25. United Nations Document A/9623/Add.2, annex, para 40.

26. Final Communique issued by the Summit Conference of the East, Central and Southern African States at the conclusion of their meeting in Brazzaville, Congo, August 1974.

27. Kimambo and Temu, op.cit., p. 106

whose name was Dr. Edward Schnitzer until he became a Muslim and took the name of Emin-Pasha, led many an expedition in Tanzania in the process of consolidating German colonial conquests. It is an interesting coincidence that Emin-Pasha was Governor of Southern Sudan in 1878. A little less than a hundred years later, his compatriot - the mercenary Rudolph Steiner was arrested and convicted of treason in Khartoum for his mercenary activities in Southern Sudan in support of the "rebels" in the country.

### III

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF GERMAN CONQUEST

Tanzania came under German rule between 1884 and 1888. Earlier on during the period 1880-81, the Germans had established several commercial centres. This was the beginning of the process of the intrusion in East Africa at the expense of the domains of the domains of Seyyid Bargash, the Sultan of Zanzibar.<sup>28</sup>

But besides traders, German intervention in East Africa had also manifested itself in the form of individual explorers, geographers and missionaries.<sup>29</sup> And as the number of Africa societies in Germany increased, there was a corresponding increase in the number

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28. A SHORT HISTORY OF ZANZIBAR, A.S.P. Publication, Zanzibar, 1974, p. 80. As a matter of historical interest, it is worthwhile to take note of the fact that German conquests of what was till then the Sultan's dominions found Seyyid Barghash completely hopeless. Though the British Consul, Sir. John Kirk was "sympathetic" to the Sultan and vehemently opposed to German colonization of East Africa, Her Majesty's Government as such did very little or nothing to stop the process. As John Flints puts it, "German inroads on the Sultan dominions proceeded without impediment from Britain". (Oliver and Mathew, A HISTORY OF EAST AFRICA, Volume One p. 371). Furthermore, when eventually the British and the Germans sat down to define the possessions of the Sultan, they did so in total disregard of the Monarch's views. (Ibid., p. 374) In the process, the Sultan became a mere pawn in the wide chessboard of Anglo-German diplomatic manoeuvres. His interests were sacrificed. For, in the final analysis his position was "Not even that of a pawn which is so strategically placed that its player will defend it as a minor piece". (Ibid, p.370).

29. Kimambo and Temu, op.cit., p. 97



of German African associations (as was the case of similar interest on Africa exhibited in London for example), were motivated by a combination of "curiosity, commercial and religious ambitions".<sup>30</sup>

Some were, however, clearly motivated by clear and unequivocal designs and ambitions of imperialism. One such society was Gesellschaft fur Deutsche Kolonisation (The Society for German Colonization).<sup>31</sup> Founded by the "impetuous, ruthless, impatient" Carl Peters<sup>32</sup> and persons of his persuasion in March 1884, the Society aimed at the establishment of German colonial possessions. Its manifesto was quite explicit:

"The German nation finds itself without a voice in the partition of the world which has been proceeding since the fifteenth century. Every other civilized nation of Europe possesses in other parts of the world territories on which they are able to impose their language and culture. The German emigrant, after he has crossed the frontiers of the Empire becomes a stranger in a foreign land. The German Empire has been rendered great and strong unity obtained by outpouring of the German blood. The great stream of German emigration has been lost for many years in foreign countries ... To remedy this deplorable state of affairs, a society has been founded in Berlin which will resolutely and energetically undertake the execution of colonial projects and will support the efforts of associations having the same aim".<sup>33</sup>

This imperialist manifesto is quite revealing. There is the urge not to be left behind by the other imperialist powers. This brings forth the element of competition presaging the scramble and

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30. Oliver and Mathew, HISTORY OF EAST AFRICA, Volume I, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, London, 1963, p. 353.
31. Harlow & Chivler, op.cit., p. 124
32. Ingham, Kenneth, A HISTORY OF EAST AFRICA, Revised Edition, Praeger, New York, 1967, p. 133... This German imperialist has been referred to as "adventurer, thruster, dreamer, orator, (and) liar. "... Kinambo and Tenu, op.cit., p. 98. His cruelty and barbarism has been discussed by several historians and writers. Hannan Arendt, for example, refers to Peter's "wild murdering in South East Africa". (Arden, "Imperialism" in THE ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM, A Harvest Book, New York, 1973, p. 185. It is not without reason that the Africans labelled him "MKONO WA DAMU", (the man with blood-stained hands).
33. Steeve, G.L., THE JUDGEMENT ON GERMAN AFRICA, London, 1939, p. 249.

partition of Africa latter to be formally institutionalized at the Berlin Conference. There is also the concern manifested at what then appeared to be the Germany's lagging behind in the "imposition of language and culture" on the subject people. Here we find both Arendt and Rodney handy. "Racism is the main ideological weapon of imperialist politics",<sup>34</sup> writes Arendt while Rodney stipulates that, whereas economics determined Europe's investment in Africa as well as the continent's raw materials and labour. "It was racism which confirmed that the form of control should be direct colonial rule".<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, we note the exhortations of Empire building and the appeal to German nationalism. Again Arendt's observations are pertinent. "In theory, there is an abyss between nationalism and imperialism; in practice it can and has been bridged by tribal nationalism and outright racism".<sup>36</sup>

On 14th November, 1884, Peters with three associates arrived in Zanzibar. They proceeded to the Tanzania mainland and by 17th December 1884, they returned to Zanzibar with treaties purporting to place several areas including Usagara, Uzigua, Uluguru and Ukami under the protection of Peters' society.<sup>37</sup>

Several writers on this period have characterized these Treaties as bogus which were imposed on the Chiefs who, at any rate, could neither read nor understand German (the language of the Treaties). The interpreters were equally unreliable. Deception was the operative

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34. Arendt, Hannah, *op.cit.*, p. 160

35. Rodney, *op.cit.*, p. 155

36. Arendt, *op.cit.*, p. 153

37. Oliver and Mathew, *op.cit.*, p. 369

38. See, for example, Kinambo and Temu, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-100, Ingham, *op.cit.*, p. 134 and ASP Publication, *op.cit.*, p. 80. For a sample of these Treaties, See Annex I.

policy. The German Government recognized Peters' Treaties and laid claim to all the land in question as being under German's sphere of influence.<sup>39</sup>

Bismarck, the great German chancellor who hithertofore was opposed to the proposition of German colonial conquest had now changed his previous professed policy. A number of Theories are advanced to explain Bismarck's 'conversion' to imperialist conquests.<sup>40</sup>

Dismissing for the sake of argument, the theory that Bismarck was infact all along in favour of colonial expansion but he was simply concealing his true beliefs and intentions, we can allude to some of the domestic factors which made Bismarck favour colonization

First, account must be taken of the fact that this was the era of imperialism when "statemen were taken seriously only if they talked in language of successful businessmen and 'thought of continents'".<sup>41</sup> Second, theories of economic, nationalism and the need for overseas expansion not only for markets and raw materials of the rapidly expanding German industries, but also for settlement of the "surplus German population" gained momentum.<sup>42</sup> These theories of imperialism also extolled German culture and proclaimed Germany's mission to provide civilization to the "barbarous races."<sup>43</sup> As we have already pointed out earlier, these exhortations were similarly

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39. The Kaiser signed the SCHUTZBRIEF (Equivalent of the "Royal Charter") on Feb. 26, 1885, placing the administration of what then became German East Africa to the Society for German Colonization. (Oliver & Mathew, op.cit., p. 369). This Society delegated its authority in East Africa to the German East African Company, Deutsche Ostafrikawische Gesellschaft. Ibid, p. 386.
40. See Harlow & Chivier, op.cit., p. 125.
41. Arendt, op.cit., p. 138
42. Oliver & Mathew, op.cit., p. 362
43. Ibid.

embodied in Carl Peters Society for German colonization.

The fact that German policy in Tanzania laid stress on the question of economic production would seem to collaborate the theory that the need for tropical raw materials was one of the factors behind German conquest.<sup>44</sup> Hassert put the problem in the following terms: "Colonization consists in the utilization of the soil, its products, and its men, for the economic profit of the colonizing nation".<sup>45</sup> Whatever the reasons, it would seem that economic considerations were also a very compelling force behind Bismark's decision not to be left completely out in the final scramble for the African territories and thus lose a share of the spoils.<sup>46</sup> It would also appear that factors of diplomatic bargaining should not be underrated.<sup>47</sup>

Summing up some of the factors behind German colonization of Tanzania, we can state that all the three different types of the Eurocentric theories of imperialism referred to by Fieldhouse<sup>48</sup> were relevant. First, imperialism - (in this case colonial conquest) was becoming a 'popular' undertaking for German prestige and power. Second, the expanding German industries were in need of overseas markets. The colonies giving the special and 'unchallenged' privileges (no tariff barriers), to the colonial power provided an important outlet. Third, colonies were found important as diplomatic bargaining counters.

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44. Kimambo & Temu, *op.cit.*, p. 100. According to them, Karl Peters principal aim was a plantation colony. (p.92).  
45. See Hassert, E. *Deutschlands Kolonien*, 2nd edn. Leipzig, 1910, pp. 235-318.  
46. Harlow & Chivjer, *op.cit.*, p. 125.  
47. Ingham, *op.cit.*, p. 127-128.  
48. Fieldhouse, D.K. *The THEORY OF CAPITALIST IMPERIALISM*, Barnes & Noble, Inc. New York, 1967, pp. XIV and XV.

IV

EXAMPLES OF MAJOR RESISTANCE:  
NATURE, CAUSES AND EFFECTS

It took the Germans fourteen years to complete the occupation of Tanzania. During all this period, they met with the resistance of the people. These were revolts of a people determined to resist conquest rather than the struggle of an already conquered people.<sup>49</sup> The end of this type of resistance came about with the death of the great Chief and warrior of the Wahehe, Mkwawa in June 1898.<sup>50</sup> There were to be later resistances. But such struggles were geared towards fighting both the invaders as well as the consequences of foreign rule. The most significant of this latter type of resistance was the Maji-Maji uprising.

One of the significant aspects of Tanzania's resistance against the German conquest is that, such resistance, though not nationally organized, was in reality of national dimension in the sense that wherever the Germans attempted to impose their domination, they were confronted with resistance. The only drawback was that the organization of revolt was on tribal basis. The Germans thus successfully managed to proceed with the colonization for lack of a nationally organized and nationally oriented resistance. The global nature of the resistance is manifested in the fact that the struggles against conquest took place in the east (i.e. the coast), the west, central, northern and southern areas.

In the south the Hehe under Chief Mkwawa gave the German officers constant nightmares as the former engaged the latter in

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49. Ingram, op.cit., p. 177.

50. Iliffe, op.cit., p. 9

battles.<sup>51</sup> The Wagogo in the central region put considerable resistance. Deploying a scorched-earth policy, and indulging in brutalities, Emin Pasha suppressed the Wagogo resistance while he was passing through Ugogo in June 1890. In the north, the Chagga Chief Meli of Moshi put a determined resistance. And it was only the factor of traditional rivalry among the chiefs as it prevailed at the time of German conquest which made the German occupation possible. This rivalry among the traditional rulers which as we have already mentioned, is characterized by Gwassa as "adaptive" resistance to the Europeans intervention, existed in other areas. Chief Merere of Usangu, for example, collaborated with the Germans against Chief Mkwawa,<sup>53</sup> though the latter managed to wage a war against the Germans which made it not only the most important resistance in the south, but indeed one of the protracted and effective throughout Tanzania.

It is not possible in a study of this scope to catalogue all the different revolts that have taken place. Neither is it possible to go in to elaborate details of the whys and wherefores of many of them. Yet the study will be too general and suffering from too much abstraction if we do not examine the nature, causes and effects of the resistance. To do so and still keep the scope of our study to manageable proportion, a brief consideration will be made of two of the major revolts in the country. These are the coastal peoples revolt (otherwise referred to as the Abushiri "rebellion") and the Maji-Maji rising. The first is a good illustration of the

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51. Cartey & Kilson, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

52. Kimambo and Temu, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

53. Kimambo and Temu, *op.cit.*, p. 96. For a better understanding of the question of how the traditional rulers used the Germans to settle traditional rivalries and how their whole process eventually facilitated German intervention, see pp. 93-96.

active resistance launched by the Tanzanians at the very beginning of conquest. The Maji-Maji war of 1905-1907 on the other hand, demonstrates their attempt to eliminate occupation subsequent to the bitter memories of foreign rule. It was also the last major resistance by Tanzania against the Germans. After Maji-Maji, Tanzania was generally "pacified" and German colonial rule had become firmly established.

#### Revolt in the Coast

The people of the coast were the first to revolt against the German rule. In August 1888, the Arabs and the Africans at Pangani began the resistance which later spread throughout the coast and went up to forty miles inland. The leaders of the resistance were, a half-caste Arab, Abushiri bin Salim and the African, Bwana Heri of the Zigua tribe, the ruler of Sadani.<sup>54</sup> Both leaders had one thing in common. Their undying opposition to the Sultan of Zanzibar. Abushiri was considered an enemy of the Sultan while Bwana Heri had never accepted the Sultan's rule.

Some historians have deliberately distorted the significance of this uprising. They seemed to satisfy themselves by the German interpretations of the events. Thus, in the HISTORY OF EAST AFRICA, edited by Harlow & Chivler, an attempt is made to explain the revolt in the perspective of the Arabs' attempt to protect their position which, according to the writer, was being seriously challenged by the European intervention. Like the German imperialists, these historians try to explain the revolt as a simple attempt to preserve

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54. Iliffe, op.cit., p. 8; Kimambo and Temu, op.cit., p. 106 and Harlow and Chivler op.cit., p. 128.

the slave trade.<sup>55</sup> The fact that Bwana Heri was not an Arab and in fact fought against Arab rule, is conveniently omitted or by-passed. Equally ignored is the popular nature of the revolt!

The revolt was so wide spread that the German East Africa company was driven out from all the coastal towns with the exception of Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam. According to Ingham, in the assertion of their authority in the coast, the Germans were insensitive to the feelings and susceptibilities of the coastal people. They showed no respect to the people's religious feelings and treated the African tribes with brutalities,<sup>56</sup> and thus instigating hatred. This view of German excesses against the local populations is shared by Redmayne.<sup>57</sup> While Clark also points out that the Germans "were not polite in dealing with the Arabs and Swahili of the coast"<sup>58</sup> The revolt led by Abushiri and Bwana Heri forced the German Government to make a direct intervention by sending troops under Major Wissmann who arrived in Tanzania in May 1889.<sup>59</sup>

The direct intervention of the German Government led to the suppression of the resistance. Abushiri was caught and hanged in December 1889. Bwana Heri met with similar fate and by the middle of 1890, the revolt had been effectively curbed.<sup>60</sup> The revolt had clearly demonstrated the inability of the German East Africa company to administer the territories that it claimed. The end of the Abushiri revolt therefore marked the beginning of direct administration of German East Africa by the Imperial Government.<sup>61</sup>

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55. Harlow & Chivler, *op.cit.*, p. 128

56. Ingham, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

57. Alison Redmayne, "Mkwawa and the Hehe Wars", *JOURNAL OF AFRICAN HISTORY*, No. 3 (1968) as reproduced in Cartoy and Kilson, *op.cit.*, p. 24 & p. 25.

58. Clark, P.H., *A SHORT HISTORY OF TANGANYIKA*, Longmans Green & Co. Ltd., London, 1960, p. 95.

59. Iliffe, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

60. Ward, W.F.E., *A HISTORY OF AFRICA*, - George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963, p.132

61. Ingham, *op.cit.*, p. 141.



Besides the aspect of direct colonization, the coastal revolt brought home one important aspect of behavioural pattern of imperialism in relation to its victims. This is that, more often than not the rivalry and contradictions which exist between imperialist powers do not preclude their working together against their victims. Thus, the suppression of the Abushiri-led resistance was realized with the active collaboration of the British Government. British men of war assisted the Germans in blockading the coast as German troops proceeded with the suppression of the resistance.<sup>62</sup>

Ingham explains the rationale behind Britain's collaboration with Germany against the insurgents in blunt terms: "Whatever the rivalries existing between the nations, Britain continued to look upon Germany as a civilized power anxious as she herself was, to introduce the benefits of Western culture into tropical Africa".<sup>63</sup>

Another point of interest here is how the 'gospel' of fighting against slavery was used by the Germans to perpetuate direct intervention and suppress the resistance. As the Abushiri revolt effectively challenged Germany's sphere of influence in the coast, Bismarck was confronted with a difficult predicament. He could not allow the revolt to succeed since that would have undermined German interests and prestige. And yet, it was his professed policy that the German commercial companies would bear the cost of colonial development. German intervention, however, necessitated the utilization of funds of the German tax payer - something which the Reichstag might not have taken too kindly. Thus, the "battle cry"

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62. Kimambo and Temu, *op.cit.*, p. 106

63. Ingham, *op.cit.*, p. 141. Basil Davidson also makes the pertinent observation that the imperialist powers took extra care not to quarrel in Africa no matter how much quarrel they had elsewhere, Davidson, AFRICA: THE HISTORY OF A CONTINENT, Macmillan Company, New York, 1966, p. 279

of fighting against slavery was invoked. No cause would have been more 'noble'. To quote Henderson, "by claiming that the armed intervention of the Reich was necessary to suppress slavery, Bismarck achieved two objects - he secured both a grant from the Reichstag and the naval cooperation of Great Britain".<sup>64</sup>

To fight against slavery was of course a popular crusade in Germany as it was in many of the European capitals at that time. Both men of religion and those of business agreed on this point. To those who wished to spread the word of the God in Africa, slavery constituted "an affront against God, a blasphemy and abomination, a visible expression of Satan's will". While bourgeoisie economic and political theorists maintained that "slavery affronted the principles of laissez-fair economics. Men should be free to sell their labour to the highest bidder".<sup>65</sup> Hence Bismarck's false claims of fighting slavery did strike a responsive chord to the missionary-trader consensus. Rodney exposes this hypocrisy when he asserts that the Germans were not only opposed to leaders like Abushiri but to other chiefs who opposed German imperialist intervention. What mattered was the preservation of the imperial dominance and the "anti-slavery sentiments (were) at best superfluous and at worst calculated hypocrisy".<sup>66</sup>

#### THE MAJI-MAJI UPRISING

Besides the coastal revolt, the German faced the gravest threat

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64. Harlow and Chivler, *op.cit.*, p. 129

65. Oliver and Mathew, *op.cit.*, pp. 353-354

66. Rodney, *op.cit.*, p. 151. In the case of the coastal peoples resistance, the arguments of fighting against slavery were irrelevant. Admittedly, both Abushiri and Bwana Heri had their own economic and political power base to preserve. But as Gwassa points out, the wholesome participation of the coastal people in the revolt was not for preservation of individual interests. Rather, it was a struggle to retain independence in the face of foreign conquest. Kimambo and Temu, *op.cit.*, p: 107

to their domination in the Maji-Maji uprising which took place fifteen years after the death of both Abushiri and Bwana Heri. The following description of the revolt appearing in the Book, TANGANYIKA, published by Her Majesty's Stationary Office illustrates the significance of the event:

"It was not till 1905 that the great out-break of the tribes took place, the most important since the Arab (sic) rising of 1888. It differed from all preceding rebellions in that there was concerted action among the tribes, and it was not found possible by the German rulers to utilize ancient enmities to induce one tribe to attack another. The rising began in July 1905 in the Matumbi Hills, near Kilwa, and spread rapidly over the southern part of the colony".

"... the revolt spread northwards to the centre of the colony; but the tribes of the north did not take part in it. After the main rising had been suppressed, a guerilla war lingered on till 1907. It is admitted that 75,000 persons<sup>67</sup> perished through the war and concomitant troubles.

This last and most serious attempt by Tanzanians to eliminate German foreign domination took place almost seven years after the death of the legendary Chief Mkwawa. In the intervening period there was the period of "pacification" with the German authorities imposing their political and administrative authority. In the process of consolidating occupation, a number of measures were adopted which served to evoke resentment among the people and to breed the seeds of resistance. These included the maladministration, ruthless economic exploitation, land alienation, intolerable taxes and various indignities subjected to the population.

The twin processes of expropriation of African land and giving

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67. TANGANYIKA (German East Africa). H.M. Stationary Office, London, 1920, p. 35. More recent estimates however point out that the number of fatalities at Maji-Maji was 120,000 Africans. Many of them had died of famine. The Germans had resorted to the burning of villages and crops alike as part of the warfare. See Ward, op.cit., p. 234.

it to the European settlers as well as the imposition of hut and poll tax, writes Jack Woddis, were calculated to force Africans off the land and impose on them the European wage employment.<sup>68</sup> This practice was very much in evident in Tanzania under German colonial rule. European farming was encouraged by the Government in the highlands. The plan of the administrators was to make Tanzania a "White man's country lie Rhodesia or Kenya".<sup>69</sup> The hut-tax was introduced in 1897 whose purpose was not so much to get revenue "as in order to force natives to work for the planters so as to obtain money to pay the tax".<sup>70</sup> As the Germans were determined to perpetuate the plantation system, this method of supplying African labour became an important feature of the German colonial system.

The policy was bound to evoke strong opposition from the local population. Apart from the economic inequity involved, the policy threatened the very social and political structures of the tribes. These tribes had their own system, their own social and economic organization. They had furthermore, their own values. Most of them were capable of maintaining themselves without being wage earners and objected to being made mere tools of the plantation owners. The plantation system was thus inherently the source of perpetual discontent.<sup>71</sup>

The brutalities against the Africans took various forms. To begin with, the very agents of administration like the Akidas, overzealously enforced their collection of poll and hut tax

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68. Woddis, *op.cit.*, p. 9

69. Iliffe, *op.cit.*, p. 10

70. TANGANYIKA, H. M. Stationary Office, pp. 34-35.

71. Ibid, p. 40.

occasionally using brute force.<sup>72</sup> Some of the German officials themselves were simply sadistic. Flogging was a common practice, and in some cases even women and children were not spared.<sup>73</sup>

Then there was the German Government compulsory order forcing Africans to grow cash crops in order to supply the metropole, with the raw materials. In 1902, the Governor decided that the southern part of Tanzania will grow cotton and he decreed that every headman must establish a cotton scheme where his people must work.<sup>74</sup> There were also cases of flagrant affronts to the dignity and respect of the people - such for example, were the incidents of the violation of the women. There was also the element of outright ruthless exploitation. The proposal to pay Zaramo workers 35 cents as remuneration for a whole year's work is indicative of this. All these factors combined to produce the objective conditions for the revolt.

The uprising itself lasted three years. It encompassed the whole of the cotton area including the Rufiji River Basin, the Mahenge Plateau, Hukulea and Kilombero Valleys. The area of the rising was divided into two sections: in the east the Ngindo and others fought a guerilla warfare over a year until their leader

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72. At the head of the administration framework of German rule in East Africa was the Governor who enforced the Gesetze (laws) imperial edicts (vevordnungen), and chancellor's instructions and directives. But the Germans also retained some aspects of the local administration system which was in operation in the 1880s. An Akida was an official who had limited administrative responsibilities over a group of villages. Then there were also Jumbes (headmen). Harlow & Chivler, op.cit., pp. 132-135

73. Kikumbo and Temu, op.cit., p. III

74. Iilfe, op.cit., p. 10. The harsh and miserable conditions of the cotton scheme was one of the dominant factors which led the Wamatumbi in the Maji-Maji uprising. According to the scheme, after the sale of the cotton crop, the workers, the headman, and the marketing organization would receive one third of the proceeds. But poor land, bad organization and scarcity of crops made the scheme a non-starter.

Abdulla Mapanda was killed. In the West, the Germans using a strategy of encirclement, destroyed the hard core of the Ngoni and Bena leaders.<sup>75</sup>

The term MAJI-MAJI is a Swahili expression which literally translated means "WATER-WATER". It was so named because the water was distributed by the priests of Kolelo (others have referred them as medicine men) which was supposed to be a mark of comradeship and unity in combat. It was believed that the water would make the fighters immune from the German bullets! As they went to war, the fighters of Maji-Maji equipped by the medicine of Kinjikitire shouted "Maji-Maji".

There are those who have ridiculed the uprising as the work of fanatics by emphasizing the 'Maji-Maji' ritual. Yet the point to be borne in mind here is that the religion (if you like the superstition) factor was not the motive behind the resistance. Rather it was utilized as force of inspiration - a call of the spirits - to sustain the fighter in his resistance against foreign domination. Referring to this event, fifty years later, President Nyerere declared when addressing the United Nations Committee on Trusteeship and non-self governing territories. "They rose in a great rebellion not through fear of a terrorist movement or a superstitious oath, but in response to natural call, a call of a spirit, ringing in the heart of all men, and of all times, educated or uneducated, to rebel against foreign domination".<sup>76</sup>

Though Maji-Maji failed to obtain for the Tanzanians their

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75. TANZANIA TODAY, Published by the Tanzania Ministry of Information and Tourism, University - Press of Africa, Nairobi, 1968, pp. 46-47.
76. Nyerere, Julius K., FREEDOM AND UNITY, Oxford University Press, London, 1966, pp. 40-41.

goal of liberation from German rule, it constitutes an important chapter in the country's history for national independence. This is so for several reasons. It was a first serious attempt at national resistance. It was an inter-tribal effort,<sup>77</sup> though admittedly the unity was short lived. In a sense, the importance of the resistance can be viewed both in its positive and negative lessons.

The temporary unity achieved made the resistance wider and effective. This was positive and future nationalists would learn and draw the necessary conclusions from this. The failure of the united front to sustain itself; the success of the Germans in keeping both the Wahehe and Wanyamwezi out of this confrontation restricted the scope of the resistance to the benefits of the colonial authorities. These were negative lessons but bringing forth the same message of unity.

The other point of importance is that, the uprising demonstrated the capacity of the colonized to organize. Despite the shortcomings, it is instructive to take note of the fact that the rising had been planned at least a year in advance. Governor Von Gotzon came to this conclusion after the interrogation of the P.O.W.s.<sup>78</sup>

At the same time it ought to be pointed out while the revolt failed to bring to an end foreign domination, it forced the Germans to embark on some reforms. A separate colonial office with a Minister for the colonies was set up in Berlin and the first Minister visited Tanzania and reported back on some of the despicable

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77. Among the tribes taking part in the uprising were Bena, Bunga, Ikemba, Kitchi, Matumbi, Mwera, Ngoni, Pogoro, Sagara and Zaramu.

78. Harlow & Chilver, op.cit., p. 138

atrocities of the administration - from the district officers to Akidas. Measures were taken against some of them. Forced labour was largely abandoned. Efforts were made to encourage Africans to grow cotton voluntarily. A more "benevolent" period of colonization had ensued.

#### CONCLUSION

The case of Tanzania under German imperialist intervention demonstrates both the operation of imperialism and the determination of its victims to resist. There was nothing "irrational" in Germany's expansionist drive in East Africa in as much as there was nothing fanatical about the resistance it encountered. The need for raw materials and world market while "confronting competition of other industrial nations",<sup>79</sup> the urge to "civilize" the subject races, and to maintain and expand the 'glory' of Germany - all these led the German imperialists to maintain the political, military and economic domination of Tanzania.

On the other side of the spectrum, we are tempted to paraphrase Mao Tse-tung in explaining Tanzania's response to the German conquest: Where there is oppression there is bound to be resistance; That this resistance has not been able to overcome the conquest does not in any way minimize the significance of the African reaction to imperialism. It only shows the deficiencies of the techniques used.

These were the deficiencies which the later national liberation movement in Tanzania endeavoured to overcome. In the process, the

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79. This fits well with Magdoff's characterization of the essential feature of new imperialism arising in the later 19th century. Harry Magdoff, THE AGE OF IMPERIALISM; Modern Reader Paperbacks, New York and London, 1969, p. 15.



examples and symbols of resistance to German occupation acquired special importance. Leaders like Mkwawa have been made a household name in the country.

The importance of national unity was underscored at the very outset of the nationalist struggle for independence in the early 1950s. Inspired by Mkwawa's ideals, the nationalist movement - The Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) sought to mobilize the country on a nationwide resistance to British imperialism. This it successfully did.

Yet, the experiences of resistance were not only significant and relevant in the struggle for colonial emancipation. One of the most positive and perhaps crucial aspects of contemporary Tanzania nationalism is the detribalization of politics. There are more than one hundred and twenty tribes in Tanzania. Bearing in mind the havoc that tribal politics has created in many emerging African States, the successors to Chief Mkwawa and to the Maji-Maji Resistance have made positive use of the lessons of past resistances by accomplishing the subordination of tribal to national identity.

ANNEX

TREATY BETWEEN KARL PETERS (and Partners) WITH  
SULTAN MANGUNGO OF MSOVERO IN USAGARA,  
NOVEMBER 29, 1884\*

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Mangungo, Sultan of Msovero in Usagara, and Dr. Karl Peters. Mangungo simultaneously for all his people and Dr. Peters for all his present and future associates hereby concluded a treaty of Eternal Friendship.

Mangungo offers all his territory with all its civil appurtenances to Dr. Karl Peters, as the representative of the Society for German Colonization, for the exclusive and universal utilization for German Colonization.

Dr. Karl Peters, in the name of the Society ... declares his willingness to take over the territory of the Sultan Mangungo with all rights for German Colonization subject to any existing suzerainty of Mwenyi Sagara.

In pursuance thereof, Sultan Mangungo hereby cedes all the territory of Msovero, belonging to him by inheritance or otherwise for all time to Dr. Karl Peters, making over to him at the same time all his rights.

Dr. Karl Peters in the name of the Society ... undertakes to give special ... attention to Msovero when colonizing Usagara.

This treaty has been communicated to the Sultan Mangungo by the interpreter Ramzan in a clear manner and has been signed by both sides, with the observation of the formalities valid in Usagara the Sultan on direct enquiry having declared that he was not in anyway dependent upon the Sultan of Zanzibar, and that he did not even know the existence of the latter.

Sgd. Dr. KARL PETERS  
Sgd. MANGUNGO

This contract has been executed legally and made valid for all time before a great number of witnesses, we testify herewith:

Kwagakinga (mark), Sultan Mangungo's son of Golola (mark). Sultan Mangungo's second son of Draman (mark). Graf Pfeil August Otto. Mark of the interpreter Ramazan etc. Dr. Karl Juhlke. Msovero Usagara November 29, 1884.

\*Source: Kimambo and Temu, A HISTORY OF TANZANIA, East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1969, p. 99 as quoted from G. L. Steere, THE JUDGEMENT ON GERMAN AFRICA, London, 1939, p. 249.

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