

Kenya Tribesmen to Vote For Independent Statehood



TOP CONTENDER—Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's minister of state for constitutional affairs and economic planning, looks at book about himself in library of the Kenya Institute

By JACK ENSOLL
Associated Press International

Nairobi, Kenya—(UPI)—Nearly 800,000 Kenya tribesmen will go to the polls next month to vote into power their first home-rule government.

The tribesmen await the vote in delighted anticipation of approaching independence. The whites of Kenya await it fearfully. They call it bitterly "another Cecil."

Polling will be staggered over one week — from May 11 to May 26. The elections are for the two Houses of the National Assembly — the Senate and the House of Representatives. There also will be elections for seven regional assemblies.

Kenya has been a British colony for 43 years. At one time it was thought to be the "white dominion" in East Africa but the rising tide of African nationalism has swept away these British hopes — and the hopes of the vastly outnumbered white settlers.

In the coming elections the faces of European politicians in Kenya will disappear. Three African nationalist parties are contending for power — the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) led by Ronald Ngilu, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) led by one-time Mau Mau leader Jomo Kenyatta and the newly formed African

People's Party (APP) under Paul Ngũ.

The breakdown of political parties reflects profound political, economic and social changes caused by ancient tribal wars and jealousies. KADU is a coalition of the smaller tribes throughout Kenya who have drawn together out of fear of the powerful and predatory Kikuyu tribe.

KANU is a union of the Kikuyu with the equally militant but smaller Luo tribe. KANU formerly received the support of the Kamba tribe from whose ranks most of the Kenya Army and police are drawn.

Paul Ngũ, Kamba leader, took his tribe out of the alliance and formed his own party, the APP, with the slogan "Freedom and Land."

Warrior Tribe

The Kikuyu are a warrior tribe numbering 750,000 and are the largest in Kenya. They make up half of the king's African rifles, which could cause a great deal of trouble after independence if Ngũ can carry these soldiers with him.

Ngũ, a tall handsome man, is bitter anti-European. His political platform is simple. He tells his people: "You want land. The Europeans have land. Stick to me and I will give you European land and give it to you." He is idolized by his people in the same way that the veteran nationalist, Kenyatta, is idolized by the Luo.

Whether this land plan — which will take five years to complete — will stop the mad rush for land by various tribes when independence comes is anybody's guess. No date has yet been set by Britain for Kenya's independence. The new government will be required to prove it can function and full independence will come after

another constitutional conference, probably in a year's time.

The new constitution which comes into effect with the elections is a compromise between a federal and centralized form of government. The regional system was decided on because of KADU's fears that the smaller tribes would be overwhelmed by a Kikuyu dictatorship. Under the two-tier legislature it is hoped the rise of a single party dictatorship will be prevented.

The House of Representatives will contain 117 single member constituencies. These members will then choose a further 12 specially elected members, making a total for the House of 129 members.

The Upper House or Senate will have a total membership of 41 — all directly elected. The total membership of the seven regional assemblies will be 211 and each regional assembly will have an elected president. The executive authority of each region will be vested in the regional assembly, not the central government.

Then there is still another major and potentially explosive problem. Once the home rule government is in power it must face a decision on the issue of the Somalis of the Northern Frontier district. The Somalis occupy nearly one-quarter of Kenya's territory in the north-east corner. There are 350,000 of them. They are a Hamitic people and don't want to be ruled by Africans in Nairobi.

Nomadic People

The Somalis are a nomadic people who wander over the huge desert uplands of their country seeking seasonal pastures. They seek the right to join up with their fellows in the Independent Somali republic to the north when Kenya becomes independent. And they have stated they will fight for this right of self-determination if it is not granted.

The British government has postponed a decision on the Somali but went part way by designating their territory as one of the seven districts of Kenya, making detachment easy if such a decision were made. But this did not satisfy anyone and last

month the Somali republic broke off diplomatic relations with Britain despite British assurances that once the new Kenya government was elected it would discuss the separation question. Leaders of both the KANU and KADU parties have said they will not agree to accession for the Somalis. Entirely apart from the worries of what the future will bring for Kenya itself and its white minority, failure to settle the Somali question quickly could sow the seeds of war in the horn of Africa.

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