



## **Time Travel, Kapenguria Museum**

### **Goal**

Understand the struggle for independence and the importance of the Kapenguria trial

Reflect on peace, justice and reconciliation and how to work for that today

Introduce the Time Travel method as a way of using local heritage to reflect on contemporary issues

### **Facts**

The Kapenguria six – Bildad Kaggia, Kung'u Karumba, Jomo Kenyatta, Fred Kubai, Paul Ngei, and Achieng' Oneko – were six leading Kenyan nationalists who were arrested in 1952, tried at Kapenguria in 1952–53, and imprisoned thereafter in Northern Kenya.

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the British alienated large amounts of Kenya's best land for exclusive white use. Black Africans were allowed to remain as tenant farmers ('squatters') on land they had previously owned or newly cultivated; their terms of service steadily worsened. There were many disputes and conflicts over the land. The first Mau Mau oaths were probably administered in 1944 at Olenguruoune, when 11,000 squatters were expelled. Jomo Kenyatta returned home from the UK in 1946. By 1947, oath-taking had spread all over Kikuyuland. The new organisation was called Mau Mau, meaning get-out in Kikuyu language. A new Governor, Evelyn Baring, arrived in Kenya on 30 September 1952.

In 9 October 1952, two chiefs of central province of Kenya, Warihiou wa Kungu and Tom Mbotela, loyal to the British, were killed by Mau Mau gunmen. At the funeral, Baring and Kenyatta looked over the casket. Days afterwards, Baring signed the arrest warrants for the Six. On the night of 20/21 October, a mass arrest was carried out of Mau Mau and KAU leaders. Baring had signed the State of Emergency order on the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup> and it was publicly proclaimed on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup>.

The six persons were brought to Kapenguria and were detained in the six cells in November 1952. Others were sent to different detention camps in Kenya.

The reasons why the leaders were brought to Kapenguria were:

Kapenguria was a remote place with poor roads and poor communication. They could not escape easily. Any African entering in and out of Kapenguria was to be checked. Everybody was supposed to have a pass which was not easy to come by. Kapenguria was far from central province, where the leaders came from. The British wanted to separate them from their own people, who might want to demonstrate for the six to be released.

The six stayed in Kapenguria for six months in remand, attending court proceedings, which took 48 days in Chewoyet court.

The trial for the six on 3 December 1952. The charge was that they had jointly managed a proscribed society, Mau Mau, that had conspired to murder all white residents of Kenya. The defence was led by Denis Nowell Pritt, assisted by a multiracial team. 46 witnesses were bribed.

As Baring admitted later, "every possible effort has been made to offer them rewards". Baring offered Ransley Thacker, the presiding judge, an unusually large pension; the two also maintained secret contact during the trial. Rawson Macharia, the key witness at the trial, was later to testify that he had been offered a university course in public administration at Exeter University College and a government job on his return from the UK. Other witnesses were offered land at the Coast. The crucial piece of evidence was Macharia's. He testified that in March 1950, he had taken one of the Mau Mau oaths at Kenyatta's hands. He further claimed that the oath had required him to strip naked and drink human blood. Macharia's submissions were the only evidence of a direct link between Kenyatta and Mau Mau produced before the court. The defendants were all convicted in 8 April 1953, and sentenced to seven years hard labour. Immediately after the sentence the six were sent to Lokitong in Turkana county for seven years imprisonment.

The remainder of the nationalist movement kept up the pressure for the release of the detainees. In 1961 first Kenyatta was released and the rest of the six soon thereafter.

Kapenguria is the place where the founding fathers of Kenyan nation were detained. The museum was officially opened to the public on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1993.

### **Scenario, Kapenguria, April 1953**

It is a new morning at the Kapenguria prison. The six detained persons are still in their cells. They have been here for more than five months now, leaving for the court in the morning, coming back in the evening.

Kapenguria is a remote place, but still there has to be several persons guarding and taking care of the prisoners. There are several policemen and prisonguards, also some servants who prepare meals, clean and wash the clothes. These, mostly local Pokot people, but also people from a few other tribes, have come to know the prisoners quite well over the months. They are aware of the charges and they hear rumors from what is happening in the court. Most of them are not happy with the way the British and the new Governor are ruling the country, maybe some of them even support the Mau-Mau up- rise (in secret).

Today is the last day of the trial. In a few days the prisoners will leave Kapenguria, either to freedom or to many years behind bars. Some extra persons from the community has been called to clean the compound, to help with the meals, to mend and wash the clothes. The area is more busy than usual.

Yesterday judge Thacker had his final pleading. And he was quite aggressive. Today is the day for the defendants to make their pleading. What will they say? What do I want them to say? Is there a way for peace and justice in the country? How do I want to see a future Kenya where all groups live in peace? And where there is respect for justice? Can I even hand over some messages to a prisoner?

Soon the prisoners will be taken for their short morning walk and a small breakfast meal. After that they leave for the court. What will be their future? Is there a peaceful way for the country?

## **Roles**

Students/ participants

- Policemen (and homeguards)
- Prisons guards
- Cleaners
- Cooks

Leaders

- Chief inspector (in charge of the policemen)
- Leader of the prisons guards
- District clerk, preparing and handing out the food
- Leader of the cleaners
- District Officer from the court
- Prisoners

Everybody keep their age and sex

## **Key Questions, Peace and Justice**

1. What are the injustices in the country
2. What are the conflicts?
3. How to work for peace, justice and reconciliation? With or without violence? What is our/ my responsibility?

## **Activities**

- Policemen patrolling and checking up (led by chief inspector)
- Guards watching over the prisoners (also smuggle messages, newsclips etc)
- Prepare the meal/bread for the prisoners and others, wash up dishes (led by District clerk)
- Cleaning the compound
- The prisoners (wakeup, head count, empty buckets, cleaning, take breakfast, leave for court.)

Also

- Make messages and smuggle to the prisoners
- Mend the clothing
- Washing the clothes

## **Time Plan**

09.00 Welcome, dividing into roles and activities

09.40 Initiation. Chief inspector wakes up the prisoners.

09.50 Activities start. Discussions on key questions. Make messages. Check the prisoners

District Clerk coming, take orders on food

Prisoners empty their buckets, eat their breakfast

Activities continue

10.45 Everybody come together. District Commissioner reads the charges.

Prisoners taken to court, tied together

11.00 Time Travel ends, bell ringing

11.10 Short workshop on peace and justice in Kenya today, the same key questions; injustices, conflicts and how to work for peace, justice and reconciliation

Short reflection on the Time Travel

12.00 End

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Paul Oondo, National Museums of Kenya, Western Region

Phoebe Awiiti, Kisumu museum

Ebbe Westergren, Kalmar county museum/ Bridging Ages