

CARLETON UNIVERSITY.

Institute of African Studies One Day Video –Conference at Carleton University: **“The Legacies of Nyerere: Economies, Politics and Solidarities in Tanzania and Beyond”.**

Mwalimu: the man and his ideas.

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1. Introduction:

Much has been written about Nyerere, his character, his beliefs, his ideas and actions. Some of those who wrote knew him very well, having worked closely with him. One such recent book has been written by Mr. Ibrahim Kaduma, who held many posts in Nyerere's government among them Permanent Secretary in the Treasury and Foreign Minister. He is a staunch supporter both in ideas and in deeds. He raises many insights about the man. He however puts a lot of emphasis on the religious influence on his ideas and actions. Certainly Nyerere was very strong believer and we have do not intend to undervalue the work of Mr. Kaduma who is proposing the reinstallation of Nyerere's ethics in Tanzania. (Kaduma 2010). We wish however to highlight that while Nyerere was influenced by Catholicism he was also a product of his culture as a true African, of Western Education and many more experiences. Nevertheless he remained the final analysis an African of independent and original ideas and actions. He did so because he was a permanent thinker reacting to numerous and various situations

that faced him. He thought of changing the country he led, the Continent in which he was a leader, the third world in which he was one of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Chairman of the South Commission. Indeed he believed and acted so that the World was a better place.

Our intention here is to revisit his ideas and actions so as to reiterate his positions but also to discover what we missed for Nyerere was a visionary and in many occasions he was thinking ahead of his time. It is for example customary today to refer to his mistakes. He accepted mistakes because every person did so. He also acknowledged the mistake of his party, TANU and later CCM and on many occasion called for corrective action, using the term *tujisahihishe* (let's correct ourselves).

He however observed that at times his reading of the mistakes was not the same with that of other leaders. In one speech he gave during the third regime he urged leaders to drop mistakes of the first and second regimes and take the good things. He however observed that at times they took the silly things of those Regimes and dropped some principle beliefs and consequently destroyed some of the pillars which had been constructed. Indeed it is the challenge of the conference to revisit some of the so called mistakes of Nyerere now that we have the advantage of evaluating an alternative system which has been in place for more 25 years.

One of the pillars which had been dropped he believed was the Arusha declaration which he said he read all the time and did not find a fault. Since that time many Tanzanians have taken to reading it. It will be doubtful that many will find it as faultless as Nyerere did, however many will find most of it to be very instructive especially in the context of the recent debates in Tanzania.

My presentation wish to highlight Nyerere pillars or principles found in the ideas and actions of Nyerere, from the time of nationalist struggles, the time of nation

building, support for liberation in Africa and elsewhere and the time of quest for national development.

2. Nyerere the humanist: belief system, ethics and values.

Nyerere's was a humanist in that he believed in the equality of human beings of all races. He expressed this position as early as 1952 when colonial racial segregation was institutionalized and when he was discussing the race problem in East Africa. He wrote:

” If we all make up our minds to live like ‘ordinary sort of fellows’ and not to think that we were specially designed by the creator to be masters and others especially designed to be hewers of wood and drawers of water we will make East Africa a very happy country for everybody” (Nyerere 1966 p.29)

Nyerere would translate this belief into creed of his party, TANU which as its first principle declared “all human beings are my relatives and Africa is one”. He fought racism, all forms of segregation, bondage and oppression and exploitation. He believed in distributive justice where all people work hard and were assured of livelihood. He did not believe in great inequalities of wealth because there was no justification for it. For example one of the reasons he gave for nationalization of commercial buildings for renting in 1971 (URT 1991), most of which were owned by Tanzanians of Asian Origin, was that he did not support people sitting idle and only collecting rent.

Can we say that Nyerere's ideas and actions were influenced by Catholicism? His religion was important but sometimes he would not turn the other cheek as a Christian was expected when provoked. He supported wars of liberation; he supported Biafra in its fight with mother Nigeria and did not hesitate to fight when Iddi Amin of Uganda invaded Tanzania. His belief system was therefore wider and it also came from the traditional African society without syncretism in the context of Christianity. His ethics and values were therefore molded by the

two sources but also by Greek and other philosophies such as enlightenment. He for example brought up Plato's philosopher King who did not seek wealth and other social material benefits when contrasting it the political race to the State house in Tanzania where candidates were using money to get the Presidency in the expectation of greater wealth on other benefits. Nyerere did not parrot from the sources but they allowed him to espouse the ideas he gave and influence his actions.

3 The relationship between African traditional society and modernity in the ideas and political practice of Nyerere.

Nyerere was a true African in thought, practice and aspiration. He was rooted in the African culture as it was reflected in his personal life style. His food was African from breakfast to dinner. He believed in the extended family but in a frugal way. His members of family lived most lives as he did, which is big contrast to most leaders who followed him or other leaders in Africa. Yet he recognized that Africa was changing and had to change. To him however:

“The changes must be positive; they must be initiated and shaped by Africa and not simply a reaction to events which affect Africa” (Nyerere 1966 p.22).

Similarly he considered vital the building of a new social ethics appropriate to the development of a good and stable society. He went to develop a ten point creed which guided TANU which today some people have taken to re-reading. The principles include working for the nation and all its people, working hard to eliminate poverty, ignorance, disease and oppression, avoiding giving and taking bribes, not using a government of political position for personal benefit, pursuing education as far as possible for the benefit of all. Cooperating with others and saying the truth always and avoiding hypocrisy. (Kaduma 2010 pp.8-9)

He sought modernity as intellectually defined by Africans as opposed to modernization which implies westernization. He also believed in universal rights and principles as intellectually interpreted by Tanzanians and Africans. He was a Pan- Africanist and Universalist without believing that there was contradiction between the three positions.

4 Nyerere the national builder.

Nyerere worked to create a nation by attacking sub-national and sectarian identities. He took affirmative action concerning issues of education, for example nationalizing some mission schools to allow students from all religions to attend as well as reducing gender gap. He created a real Tanzanian community based on a Tanzanian citizen as opposed to a subject. Yet he faced criticism as he took political actions which were considered to be authoritarian. He particularly marginalized regional economic centres as well as regional elites in favour of national redistribution and centralized elite. This was unlike many African states where there are elites who act as intermediaries between the Central government and the grassroots. In neighbouring Kenya such leaders take the form of modern tribal chiefs. All important leaders in Kenya have an ethnic base.

Nyerere developed a system of reaching the grassroots without local intermediaries. This had its advantages in that it marginalized sub-national identities but it had its disadvantages, including the marginalization of the local government system. It is important to recognize that early after Independence Nyerere faced many challenges which threatened the state. Muslims for example complained that Christians were more educated than them and therefore were likely to dominate government positions. Nyerere promised to address the problem, and then realized that the problem was greater than that because about 85% of the population was illiterate and 91% did not get access to basic education. (Mushi 2006).

In the end Nyerere nationalized all Christian schools except theological schools and all race based schools so that all pupils from all background could join and advance if they passed highly competitive examinations. He also designated some Church hospitals to be District Hospitals, owned by the Churches but administered and financed by the Government. Above all he created a national education and health network.

5 Nyerere on Democracy.

Nyerere abandoned the Westminster model and created a one party state which had peculiar characteristics. Dennis. Martin talks of the invention of a political culture in Tanzania. (Martin 1988). The experience in the African Continent would show that all states abandoned the multiparty system with the exception of Botswana and Mauritius. However unlike most states where personal rule prevailed Tanzania created a system where there was relative competition. There was political competition in the parliamentary election but not in the Presidential election. The turnover of incumbent MPs was around 50%. In the first single party Election in 1965 for example 2 Ministers and 8 Junior Ministers out of a cabinet of around 20 lost their seats. (Kaduma 2010 p.148).

The single party system in Tanzania degenerated to a totalitarian and parasitic system, especially when TANU was transformed to CCM. Nyerere acknowledged this when addressing a Commonwealth Universities Conference held at the University of Ottawa. (Nyerere 1998). Nyerere is credited to have urged hesitant CCM leaders to accept multiparty politics. The consequence has been that CCM has manipulated the democratic transition process.

This is an area of criticism especially when the single party system in Tanzania degenerated to a totalitarian and parasitic system. Nyerere however is credited to urging CCM to accept the multiparty system.

6 Nyerere on national sovereignty and defense.

Nyerere's believed strongly in the Independence of Tanzania so that the nation can act on the basis of principles against oppression and choose its friends. At certain times Tanzania broke diplomatic relations with Germany and Britain. He did not see any contradiction between Tanzanian sovereignty and his Pan Africanism. He believed that only sovereign people can enter into voluntary cooperation with others. Tanzania allowed many refugees but was not a country of free entry.

7 Nyerere on Socialism and self-reliance.

Nyerere's Socialism was not Marxist; it started as African socialism, based on a modified African traditional society. Later it was influenced by leftist ideas about the need to fight dependence. Yet the strategy of import substitution that Nyerere pursued was a failure. There is need to reflect on his quest for self reliance and factors that undermined it. What has happened is that the policy of socialism was abandoned, but also of self-reliance, which is not only economic but intellectual, in other words being at the center of thinking about the societies' well being.

The Arusha Declaration was the party ideological document of Nyerere's party. It had five parts. The first part contained the TANU creed mentioned above. The second part with socialist policies. The third part addressed the question of self reliance, the fourth was on party membership and the fifth introduced a leadership code for party and government leaders. Many people

think the third and fifth parts are relevant today. Self reliance stressed hard work, good policies, effective leadership, using judiciously local funds from taxation. That part also highlighted the dangers to foreign aid, loans and finances to national Independence. On this issue the position of CCM today is exactly the opposite of what is described in this part, to the detail. (TANU 1986).

Certainly the implementation of socialism showed many weaknesses, especially in the area of economic performance and social services provision. There was corruption and inefficiency. At the same time many Tanzanians became over dependent on State social services provisions. The system failed to perform and changes had to come. The issue of contention today is whether all the pillars of the Arusha Declaration have to be abandoned, such pillars as freedom and equal opportunities for citizens, state control of national resources, understanding the dangers of foreign finance in its three forms of grants, loans and international investments to the Independence of the country. The other pillar is instituting the leadership code of conduct since many leaders today are seen as corrupt while others are businessmen, using their political and government position for self enrichment and conspicuous consumption. Nyerere was against corruption but also against “pomposity”.

8 What remains of Nyerere’s legacy?

There are panels of this conference which will deal in details about Nyerere legacy. What we can take from him is not necessarily repeating what he has said and done because as a thinking and honest person Nyerere would have changed in some views. What we need is exactly that: to have courage to confront our situations honestly and intellectually. Nyerere had often reiterated that the greatest poverty of all is the failure to think independently.

To be an unquestioning receiver of ideas such as those of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

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