

A way of life

*Jenny Dyer and Shirley Moulder discuss the theory and practice of
AFRICAN SOCIALISM*

AT the invitation of the Senegalese Government, African leaders met at Dakar in December, 1962, to examine and define the character of African Socialism.

They failed. And the reason for their failure is that "African Socialism" has not been the product of a single thinker.

This contrasts with the history of Western socialist thought, where there is a clear relationship between individual thinkers and ideological movements.

On the other hand, no single leader has been uniquely and distinctively associated with the ideology of African Socialism. Rather the ideology has been the product of a diverse group of leaders, each of whom has been influenced by the particular problems which face his country. This diversity of leaders and problems helps to account for the lack of development of a unified theory.

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AFRICAN Socialism can perhaps be best understood when viewed against a background of the other main socio-economic systems.

At the one extreme — Communism, where no individual can own productive property, and the State is the only proprietor and employer. Then European socialism, where the remedy for capitalism is state nationalisation of all basic enterprises and trouble spots. Only restricted capitalism is allowed.

On the other side, capitalism, where property is owned by a privileged few and workers are entitled to wages and not to a share in property or the business. Then the welfare state, where capitalism and company law are left uninterfered with, but the Government helps workers with pensions, progressive taxation, social security, etc.

In the middle, we find African Socialism. This is socialism achieved by radical legislation and not by nationalisation. The role of the state is to keep a socialistic control over the economy, thus ensuring the widest possible decentralisation of property and wealth.

Company structure will be reformed to include employee-membership of companies and all div-

idends will be limited. Co-operatives will be foremost. There will be private enterprise, but not capitalism; public control of the economy, but not communism.

Africa has gone through a series of political revolutions, but must still experience social and economic revolutions before African Socialism can emerge.

African leaders have found that they must remain integrally African, even while modernising their way of life. Ancient African life was well-integrated thanks to the operation of certain principles of economic, social, cultural and political life based on human nature. African neo-socialism aims to use these values and principles by devising the best techniques, the best institutions and processes for incorporating and perpetuating them under modern conditions.

So, briefly, African Socialism is the modernisation of traditional African communitarianism.

What are the main points of it? Firstly, there is the human or psychological element. African Socialism is, first and foremost, not a doctrine or ideological abstraction, but a way of life.

It is more than an economic formula or political structure — these are necessary, but they must spring from a truly African mentality and a socialist view of life and human relationship. The soul of African Socialism is the spirit of

solidarity and brotherhood; of co-operation and of service.

African Socialism must therefore be defined in psychological and sociological terms — in terms of a will, an attitude, a people, a conception of life — as well as in economic and political terms.

Secondly, there is the element of social justice; socialism and "hunger after justice" are identical. A return to the traditional values is not a nostalgia for the primitiveness, but for the equity of tribal life.

Their forefathers are admired for their way of doing things together and for their instinct for justice which was based on their ideal of the sacredness of life. Everyone was seen as a "brother", hence there was no exploitation of one man by another on any scale worth noting. Capitalism, feudalism and proletarianism were unknown! Every man stood before the other as a person — to be counted upon, loved and assisted. He contributed to the physical and spiritual strength of the community by taking part in community discussions and projects.

His sense of his own dignity was fostered by a stable family life and by direct access to property and economic activity without the intermediary of a bureaucracy of any kind. Everyone had equal access to social capital. Their ancestors were both socialists and personalists. The basis of the system was distributive justice.

African neo-socialism, therefore, cannot compromise with injustice. It must state the principle of social control of all productive wealth; but the purpose of this will not be to concentrate wealth for the benefit of politicians or civil servants, but to regulate the just distribution of cash income and economic responsibility.

The policy of eliminating the enormous number of propertyless citizens must be the essence of African Socialism. Thus full employment and high salaries, even if attainable, would not be enough; would, in fact, be outside the point. Everyone must become an owner or part-owner of his house, land, factory or business. Only in this way would justice, after the traditional African pattern, be done.

Citizenship without ownership is a feature of European civilisation. The African way of life is that each person should have immediate access, not only to consumer goods, but to productive goods — always, however, under social control.

This programme under modern conditions is a difficult one; so difficult that only a socialist nation can attempt it; so unheard of that the socialism that will be created from it will be altogether unique and original.

Co-operatives of all kinds are of the utmost importance in African Socialism; therefore housing co-operatives, insurance, credit, hospitalisation, burial, utilities, libraries, handicrafts, cottage industries, mortgage banks, producer, marketing and consumer co-operatives. This presents

an endless field for human collaboration without injustice.

Another area where there is a need for distributive justice is in the salary and wage structure. Absolute equality of income is not advocated and is not possible. Nevertheless, the present structure of salaries in Africa is a far cry from absolute equality.

The scandalous gap between the income of government ministers and that of other salary-earners in the country can be compared only with another gap, equally unjust — between the income of salary-earners as a whole and primary producers.

Ministers in under-developed Africa receive the same salaries as ministers in prosperous European countries, where the cost of living is higher.

Salary-earners receive more than half the country's revenue, but form only 10 per cent of the population (1965). In Africa the proletariat is the peasantry. It is the task of African Socialism to reduce this great inequality.

Thirdly, there is the problem of economic development. There can be no social development without economic progress or without the full exploitation of productive resources. Where there is under-development, there must be a rational plan to ensure the steady increase of the investment ratio and national income.

To have progress there must be agricultural development. Here African Socialism differs with Marx who neglected agriculture and who felt the peasants were not the right material for revolution.

Africa is, however, 80 per cent rural, so the revolution must begin with the peasantry. African farmers need a mission of technicians, organisers and animators to stir them up and serve their needs. Guinea, Ghana and Senegal have advanced programmes which appeal to and involve the peasantry.

The problem of unemployment can be solved only by industrialisation. The worker must not be considered to be a second-rate personality or a vassal. His labour contract must include his legal right to own shares and become a member of the company.

True socialism cannot tolerate the anonymous investor who sits back and watches his investment grow while receiving dividends, while the men who cause the capital growth and earn the profits by the labour, spend all their lives as dependent wage-earners, without ever becoming owners in the industry!

Large-scale and long term foreign aid is required for full industrial development, preferably "aid without strings"; also better terms of trade.

Fourthly, there is the question of nationalisation. African Socialism has as little to do with the nationalisation of private industries as it has to do with capitalistic enterprise. Government industry will not be typical of African Socialism.

In the years following independence, the urgent need for industrialisation forces the nation to depend initially on foreign capital or public capital, or both.

It has been suggested that foreign capital should be treated differently from indigenous private capital. But all government capital invested in the new industries should be considered as held in trust for the people. It should form part of the national share pool, which later on will be on sale in the form of share certificates, as soon as the people are ready for it.

This shows that the unique role of African Socialism is to distribute positive values evenly among the citizens, rather than to strip them of these values and have them dumped in the hands of the state.

African Socialism wishes to be a personality and community-building socialism. Every opportunity will be given to the citizens to grow as persons, not merely in the sense of providing them with their basic needs (food, housing, education, health, etc.) but also in the higher sense of enabling and leaving them to serve their own needs themselves, without trampling on their fellows.

In big businesses, the anonymous directors, who usually serve only the investors, should be turned into quasi-public servants and made to be directly answerable to the National Industrial Council.

The policy in Africa will be to create an economy largely based on private individuals, but not on individualism; an economy which eliminates individualism, without introducing statism.

Fifthly, there is the sovereignty of the state. Because of the many anarchic forces present in Africa, a united and sovereign central authority is required. The state must be physically and morally stronger than any other force within the nation if it is to implement the socialist programme. This sovereignty is one of service and not of domination; a service dedicated to the rehabilitation of the most underprivileged sections of the population.

The road towards African Socialism is a stony one, as many will oppose it. There are some who believe society was meant to be stratified, especially when they are well situated in it. Some are too individualistic and have lost the capacity to work for their less fortunate brothers, especially self-serving politicians and backward-looking intellectuals. There are also saboteurs from outside the continent — communist and western.

The West has made and can make a great contribution towards the development of Africa, but Africans insist on their right to choose their own path. African Socialism chooses democracy without an opposition party; private enterprise

without the unjust company law; socialism without state monopoly of economic activity and without atheism.

African Socialism does claim to be a new type of socialism. It springs from a completely different background from European socialism.

African Socialism is not anti-clerical, not based on the factory worker nor on any particular social class, it starts off with practically no industries to be nationalised and must be very constructive so as to fill the economic vacuum.

It is being advocated by people in power, not by an underground movement. It draws its idealism not from "Das Kapital" but from traditional African values. It is for a community-loving people, who are impatient of ideologies and suspicious of alien imported "isms".

The task facing African Socialism is not to curb over-charged citizens, but to give life and vitality to a static and inactive population. It is not confronted by overwhelming capitalism and a reactionary clergy, but by local tribalism, foreign imperialism, apartheid, inertia, ignorance and disease and poverty.

In general terms, African Socialism is the firm and deliberate will on the part of the African nations to rid themselves of colonialism, to create a new society of free but socially responsible citizens, where traditional African values of human solidarity, national unity, social equality and economic democracy will be of utmost importance.

Expressed in psychological terms, African Socialism becomes a socio-cultural philosophy, way of life based on traditional African humanism. It wants to get rid of exploitation and social stratification by providing each citizen with equal and easy access to ownership and economic activity, within the framework of political democracy.

To attain these goals, African Socialism will use a single mass-party system, with a presidential form of democratic government; dialogue between all the different parts of society, a mixed economy; a reformed and democratic system of company and labour contract law; a system of national share pool available to all; free education, which is African and socialist; and, to crown it all, a super-structure of Pan-Africanism.

Naomi Mitchison, in her book "The Africans", says that money alone cannot solve their problems and the great African leaders know this. They know that the Africans must help themselves, out of confidence in their own abilities,

The countries of Africa must come together, even if a few politicians must step down and some civil servants become redundant or accept lower salaries. They must not allow a gap to

develop between town and country; it could be as dangerous as the gap between the haves and the have-nots. It is the country people who are most likely to keep the real African values safe and honoured.

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IN April 1962, Dr Julius Nyerere delivered an address entitled "Ujamaa — the basis of African Socialism" to the Tanganyika African National Union (Tanu) study conference on Pan-African Socialism.

His opening thoughts set the tone of his treatise: "Socialism — like Democracy — is an attitude of mind. In a socialist society it is the socialist attitude of mind, and not the rigid adherence to a standard political pattern, which is needed to ensure that the people care for each others' welfare welfare."¹

Ujamaa therefore is neither a call to action nor a programme for development, but a statement of humanistic ideals. And so Tanzania's men of action did not quite know how to regard it or to use it.

For example, for one deputy secretary, Ujamaa is a national and revolutionary concept requiring the co-operation of all the people on communal farms and other self-help projects. He thinks in terms of nation building and conjures up images of massive work brigades.

Thus to men like the Tanu secretary, Ujamaa is used to describe and to justify their own activities which centre on the promotion of self-help schemes, co-operatives, party organisation, etc.

The area chairman on the other hand is inclined to think of Ujamaa in terms of the local community. Helping one's neighbour — or ideally all Tanzanians — but in fact not extending beyond one's village; or at most beyond one's tribe.

Although it is not fully understood and at times it is misinterpreted, the influence of Ujamaa can clearly be seen in three areas. Firstly in the co-operatives; secondly in the land policy; and thirdly in the self-help and villagisation schemes.

I will take a brief look at the first two and then discuss the third in more detail.

● Co-operatives were established many years ago and reached a high level of development under colonial rule. Although they were efficient, they were largely limited to agricultural marketing and they were regarded primarily as economic institutions.

Colonial co-ops were involved in production as well as marketing. For instance they bought approved seed, fertilised, encouraged good habits of culture and set crop targets.

The independence period has seen the decline of money-important co-ops, for example among the Wachagga. They had become relatively progressive, wealthy farmers, and in Chaggaland were in the process of individualising land holdings.

But independence has also contributed to the co-operative movement in a positive way. Since independence, the co-operative movement has struck out in new directions.

Its sphere of operation is no longer restricted to agricultural marketing but extends into nearly every sector of the economy. A change in the "attitude of mind" has also taken place. This is seen in a growing awareness of the co-operative movement as a social force.

● In 1962 the Tanganyika Agricultural Corporation (TAC) launched a programme which involved granting 80-acre holdings to individuals.

The intention behind this programme was the development of large scale African commercial agriculture. This programme was shelved because it contained a contradiction in terms of Ujamaa's classless society.

To quote Nyerere: "And in rejecting the capitalist attitude of mind which colonialism brought into Africa, we must reject also the capitalist methods which go with it. One of these is the individual ownership of land. To us in Africa, land was always recognised as belonging to the community... The Tanu Government must go back to the traditional African custom of land holding."²

In 1963 legislation abolished freehold title and set out procedures for the conversion of leasehold. It also outlined the obligation for development that the new forms of tenure implied. This policy did not affect land held "under Native law and custom". On the other hand, it did affect land leased by Europeans and Asians.

● I will deal with the influence of Ujamaa on villagisation and self-help in two phases. Firstly the phase from 1962-66 — i.e. the period just before and after Nyerere's Ujamaa statement — and secondly, the phase 1967-74 — that is, the period which followed the Arusha declaration.

Nyerere realised that national identification and economic advancement depended to a large measure on the mobilisation of the peasantry. But he was also very aware of the dangers which are involved when one disrupts many relatively isolated communities.

The responsibility for prying the masses loose from their parochial concerns and involving them in the process of nation building was undertaken by Tanu. Tanu assumed this responsibility because, through its organisation and mass membership, it had links with all the villages as well as with the cities.

This educational process could not succeed without the co-operation of a variety of institutions and a great deal of grass-roots support.

ence. This paper implied that the peasants themselves would start these villages.

In 1968 some villages were started. But often, as happened at places like Hadeni and West Lake, they were started by over-zealous local politicians who used force or threats of force.

Almost in response to these methods Nyerere issued a paper in October, 1968, entitled "Freedom and Development".

The essence of this paper is that no one can be forced into a Ujamaa Village.

In March, Presidential circular No. 1 of 1969 directed that "all Government policies, and the activities and decisions of all Government officials, must therefore be geared towards emphasising the advantages of living together and working together for the good of all".⁵

This change was reflected in the second five-year plan, which started in July of that year.

Funds were made available to any group willing to work together and call itself an Ujamaa Village. But many of these, like earlier villages, suffered from over-capitalisation. They therefore became dependent on the central government and remained unproductive.

This year also saw the banning of the Ruvuma Development Association by the Central Committee of Tanu. It is not clear exactly why the association was banned.

Coulson (in his article on peasants and bureaucrats in the *Review of African Political Economy*, May/October 1975) suggests that it was probably due to the fact that they became too self-reliant and acted independently on the Government and the party bureaucracy.

During 1970-73 Nyerere sent presidential planning teams into areas containing these villages. This was done because of his concern at the number of villages that had been established without proper foresight.

These teams were not very successful because of their lack of local experience; because of the over-enthusiastic targets which were set and because of the willingness with which they offered material "inducements".

Thousands of peasants had already been moved into these villages — both willingly and unwillingly — and problems were experienced, especially with communal food production.

Because of these problems the emphasis was changed from communal agriculture to block farming in an attempt to increase productivity. But 25 000 tons of maize had to be imported that year. This was partly due to a drought but it was also due to lack of productivity.

In November, 1973, came Nyerere's order that the whole rural population had to be living in villages by the end of 1976. He also implied that if it could happen sooner it would be even better.

The order was carried out with great speed. (By October, 1974, the Mwanza leaders were able to announce that in their region more than

one million peasants had moved into planned villages.) Unfortunately, this sometimes required the use of force and property was sometimes destroyed.

One of the main requirements for the new villages was that they had to be along main roads, and this policy was implemented regardless of the consequences for agriculture.

For example, in Karagwe the roads run along the tops of hills but people were moved from the fertile, cultivated valleys to the tops of the hills.

And in nearby Kibondo, where the road ran at the bottom of fertile hills, people were moved from the hills to the valleys. In Mwanza houses were built on the most fertile cotton lands.

● Has socialism worked for Tanzania?

At the moment one has to say no for at least the following four reasons:

The initiative to start the villages did not come from the peasants — except in the 1962/63 period of spontaneous settlement schemes; and in the period after the publication of "Freedom and development" in 1968/69. But in each case the schemes were taken over by government Ujamaa planning teams.

From 1968 force was used. During the 1969/71 period force was replaced by the bait of social services. After this the main thrust was once again force.

The original aim of the Ujamaa villages was two-fold: To provide a better and happier life for people by living together, and to increase productivity by living together.

But the individual peasant did not have the ability to transform the economy.

The use of force could not make productivity increase in fact it resulted in passive resistance.

Because production did not increase, promise of aid and social services had to fail because the cost of these services could not be met.

It seems inevitable therefore, that a long and difficult struggle lies ahead for the people of Tanzania and for those of us in Africa who "believe in human brotherhood and the unity of Africa".

For in the words of Senegal's Leopold Senghor "our task is nothing less than to give the world the example of a new country creating a new civilisation in tune with Africa and with the 20th Century world".⁶

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