

Chambi Chachage and Annar Cassam (eds.) (2010), *Africa's Liberation: The Legacy of Nyerere*, Oxford etc.: Pambazuka Press, ISBN 978-1-906387-71-6, XVIII + 195 pp.

Julius Nyerere was the founding president of Tanzania from its independence in 1961 until 1985, when he voluntarily stepped down and did not seek another term in office (in an election he easily could have won again). He remained chairman of the ruling party CCM (Revolutionary Party) until 1990 and continued to have a dominating influence on Tanzanian politics until his death in 1999 at the age of 77. He was a highly respected and widely admired leader among the first generation of African politicians that forged the destiny of the continent during the early post-independence period from the late 1950s onwards. Nyerere's name is still held in high esteem not only in Tanzania, where he is fondly remembered as *Mwalimu* ("teacher") and "father of the nation", but also among politically conscious people of all shades throughout the African continent. But the political, economic and social realities in Africa are today significantly different from the key concerns of these earlier periods, and the younger generations (in Tanzania as well as outside) have only a faint idea of the issues and problems that comprised the centre of Nyerere's thoughts as a political philosopher and of his concrete actions as an all-powerful president.

It is therefore the intention of this small paperback book to provide a condensed reassessment of Nyerere's role and influence both domestically and, just as importantly, on the wider pan-African and international scenes. Most of the 14 essays were originally written for a special journal issue commemorating the tenth anniversary of Nyerere's death and have now been put together in this volume with reprints of interviews with Nyerere (from 1984 and 1991). Most authors have in different ways been his collaborators, but some are also from a younger generation, without that close attachment. The texts do not pretend to be of an original academic calibre. They are all written from a perspective of highlighting Nyerere's deep moral convictions regarding a full liberation, both political and economic, of African countries and their peoples. This appreciation is predominantly shown within the context of the then-prevailing international conditions, but it is (although only in limited and indirect references) also contrasted with the shortcomings and problems of the present preponderance of neoliberal socio-economic policy prescriptions. Such a publication in memory of an acclaimed historical figure could have easily been a purely nostalgic retrospective exercise, but this is not the case here. The relevance of many of Nyerere's thoughts and visions about a people-centred development and about cutting loose from the perpetuation of a dependency syndrome in

most African countries is today still as true as it ever was. This is intended to be one key message of the book.

A wide range of subjects are covered by different essays. Among other topics, they reflect on the liberation struggle and pan-Africanism; the role of the Commonwealth; qualities of political leadership; concepts of economic development; the role of villages and the issue of land; religious and racial tolerance and human rights; and the role of education in a general improvement of the human situation. A home-grown type of socialism (*Ujamaa*) and a concept of self-reliance were the overarching key orientation points for Nyerere in his thinking and writings, as well as in his actions as president. Quite understandably, none of the short essays can provide an independent, original and exhaustive interpretation of the accomplishments of Nyerere's time in office, but they allow a somewhat personalised glimpse into areas that were of major importance at the time. Although all texts are written from an underlying perspective of sympathy with Nyerere's concerns, they are by no means apologetic, and they do not shy away from also pointing out obvious shortcomings and contradictions of the practically executed government policies.

For instance, in respect to the enforced creation of *Ujamaa* villages, the prevailing attitude of a top-down state benevolence and the absence of participatory governance structures are clearly acknowledged. Reference is also made to ambiguities in respect to religious and racial policies (sidelining of Muslims), to the application of human rights (retention of repressive colonial laws, detention and deportation orders) and to the implementation of educational policies. A reduction of productivity in some sectors of the economy and a general decline of economic growth during the socialist (*Ujamaa*) era is also acknowledged, though somewhat in passing, but a wider and more substantive critical analysis of the errors and shortcomings of the general socio-economic development policies, with negative consequences right up to the present, is nevertheless missing.

Nyerere had the rare gift of combining very different roles in his personality: He was an intellectual political thinker and philosopher with a wide appeal both in the then so-called "Third World" and in the Global North. However, he was also a simple, people-oriented leader easily understood by illiterate villagers. Simultaneously, he was a crafty politician who exercised almost undisputed executive power (even with authoritarian tendencies, when required) for approximately a quarter of a century. This was an important part of the fascination he invoked in his many admirers, and some of this is reflected in the essays of this book. Although another quarter of a century has passed since Nyerere's relinquishing of power, and the majority of Tanzania's young population has hardly any vivid memory of the *Ujamaa*

era (in fact, the term itself has long gone out of usage), a few somewhat nostalgic references are still made in contemporary commentaries about Tanzania's current political and socio-economic problems. Although the party founded by Nyerere in 1954 (then, TANU; since 1977, CCM) has been in power without interruption and is still absolutely dominating the political scene, its perception in the eyes of large parts of the general public has significantly shifted. Today, it is largely seen as a party of the rich that has over the years abandoned its former identity of primarily embracing the interests of the workers and the peasants, as was the case during Nyerere's time. During the recent election campaigns in 2010, only a few local commentators lamented this sharp change in perspective, but these voices generally have no noticeable impact on today's policy discussions and political controversies.

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