Tanzaphilia

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Tanzaphilia

A DIAGNOSIS BY

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WHAT IS TANZAPHILIA? It is neither a disease nor an exotic flower. It is a political phenomenon. I would define "Tanzaphilia" as the romantic spell which Tanzania casts on so many of those who have been closely associated with her. Perhaps no African country has commanded greater affection outside its borders than has Tanzania. Many of the most prosaic Western pragmatists have been known to acquire that dreamy look under the spell of Tanzania. Perhaps many Easterners too have known moments of weakness.

What explanation can one advance for this striking phenomenon?

Opium of Afrophiles

The first thing which needs to be noted is that Tanzaphilia has been particularly marked among Western intellectuals. If we are seeking to know its causes we should perhaps first seek to understand what in an African country is likely to appeal to Western intellectuals.

Intellectuals everywhere in the world have a weakness for fellow intellectuals. A major element in the mystique of Tanzania is, of course, Julius K. Nyerere himself. He is the most intellectual of all English-speaking Heads of African States. He has commanded the same admiration among Anglo-American intellectuals that Leopold Senghor used to command among French ones. Westerners sometimes saw in these two men an incarnation of their own cultural achievement.

As I have argued elsewhere, Julius Nyerere is perhaps the most Anglicised of all Heads of State in East and Central Africa. Again I emphasize that by "Anglicized" I do not mean "Anglophile". I do not mean that Nyerere is more pro-British than this or that other leader. But I do mean that Julius Nyerere has an intellectual turn of mind which is unmistakably a product of the Western system of education, both in Tanganyika where he had his early education and at Edinburgh University from which he graduated. I remain convinced that Nyerere would have been a different kind of person if he had been educated in, say, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan or Communist China.[1] Nyerere is what he is partly because of himself and partly because of the impact of his intellectual preparation in the Western tradition. And yet he is still among the most radical leaders today.

What needs to be remembered is that intellectual acculturation is not to be confused with ideological conversion. If Nyerere had been "pro-Western" instead of "Westernised", this would have been something which could change overnight under the impact of powerful disenchantment. A pro-Western African could cease to be pro-Western tomorrow if he suddenly discovered something shockingly evil about a particular Western policy. The discovery of C.I.A. activities in Africa could profoundly disillusion an African who might, only the day before, have been more naively trusting in American candour and good will. Similarly, many Western Marxists became deeply disenchanted with the Soviet Union, and sometimes even with Communism, under the shock of the brutal Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolution. Many Indian

communists were thrust into an agonising reappraisal under the shock of China's invasion of India in 1962. And who knows how many Africans began to hate the United Nations as soon as the murder of Patrice Lumumba was revealed?

All these are indications that ideological conversion is a more superficial state of mind than intellectual acculturation. To be in favour of this country or that, to be attracted by this system of values rather than that, are all forms of ideological conversion. And under a strong stimulus one can change one's creed. But it is much more difficult to change the process of reasoning which one acquires from one's total educational background. No amount of radicalism in a Western-trained person can eliminate the Western-style of analysis which he acquires. After all, French Marxists are still French in their intellectual style. Ideologically they may have a lot in common with communist Chinese or communist North Koreans. But in style of reasoning and in the idiom of his thought, a French Marxist has more in common with a French liberal than with fellow communists in China and Korea. And that is why a French intellectual who is a Marxist can more easily cease to be a Marxist than he can cease to be a French intellectual.

Applying this to Julius Nyerere, we find that someone like him can more easily cease to be "pro-Western" than he can cease to be "Westernised" in his basic intellectual style and mental processes. And it is the latter quality which has often captivated Afrophile Western intellectuals.

Many Western intellectuals are, in their own countries, starved of intellectual leadership in politics. They would like to see a man of ideas at the helm in their own countries. And yet their own electorates have repeatedly let them down. For a brief period John F. Kennedy satisfied this craving for intellectual leadership that many Western intellectuals have had. And yet even Kennedy achieved intellectual greatness almost by accident. When he was first elected, many intellectual sceptics in his own country regarded him merely as a clever young manipulator, with a lot of wealth on his side. But he turned out to be more inspiring than expected.

Nevertheless, the real measure of the place of intellectualism in Western politics was not John F. Kennedy but Adlai Stevenson. Here was a great American intellectual who had failed twice to snatch the presidency from a gallant but mediocre rival. Stevenson was the great symbol of the impotence of intellectualism in Western politics, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world.

And then some of these frustrated Western intellectuals turned their eyes towards Africa — and saw Julius Nyerere in remote Tanganyika. Here was an intellectual in full command of his country. Here was an Adlai Stevenson in Africa — but victorious against the forces of mediocrity. What the American electorate had denied itself, the Tanganyikan peasants had bestowed upon themselves.

Even the very fact that Nyerere could be affectionately referred to as *Mwalimu* was a major difference in the status of intellectualism as between the political ethos of Tanganyika and that of the Anglo-Saxon world. What aspiring President or Prime Minister in America or Britain would let himself be known as "the Teacher"? Such an epithet would be enough to compromise his image. Only his enemies or critics could come up with such a name for him. Harold Wilson, like Julius Nyerere, was a teacher once. Wilson tutored at Oxford for a while. But Wilson would definitely regard it as a liability in public relations if he were known by the British equivalent of "mwalimu". The British political ethos is too anti-intellectual to let the national leader be its mentor.

And so Wilson himself is hardy recognisable any longer as an intellectual. He has become too much of a straight politician — too cynical and calculating. And so British intellectuals too are without an Adlai Stevenson in power. Very few regard Wilson as one of their own kind.

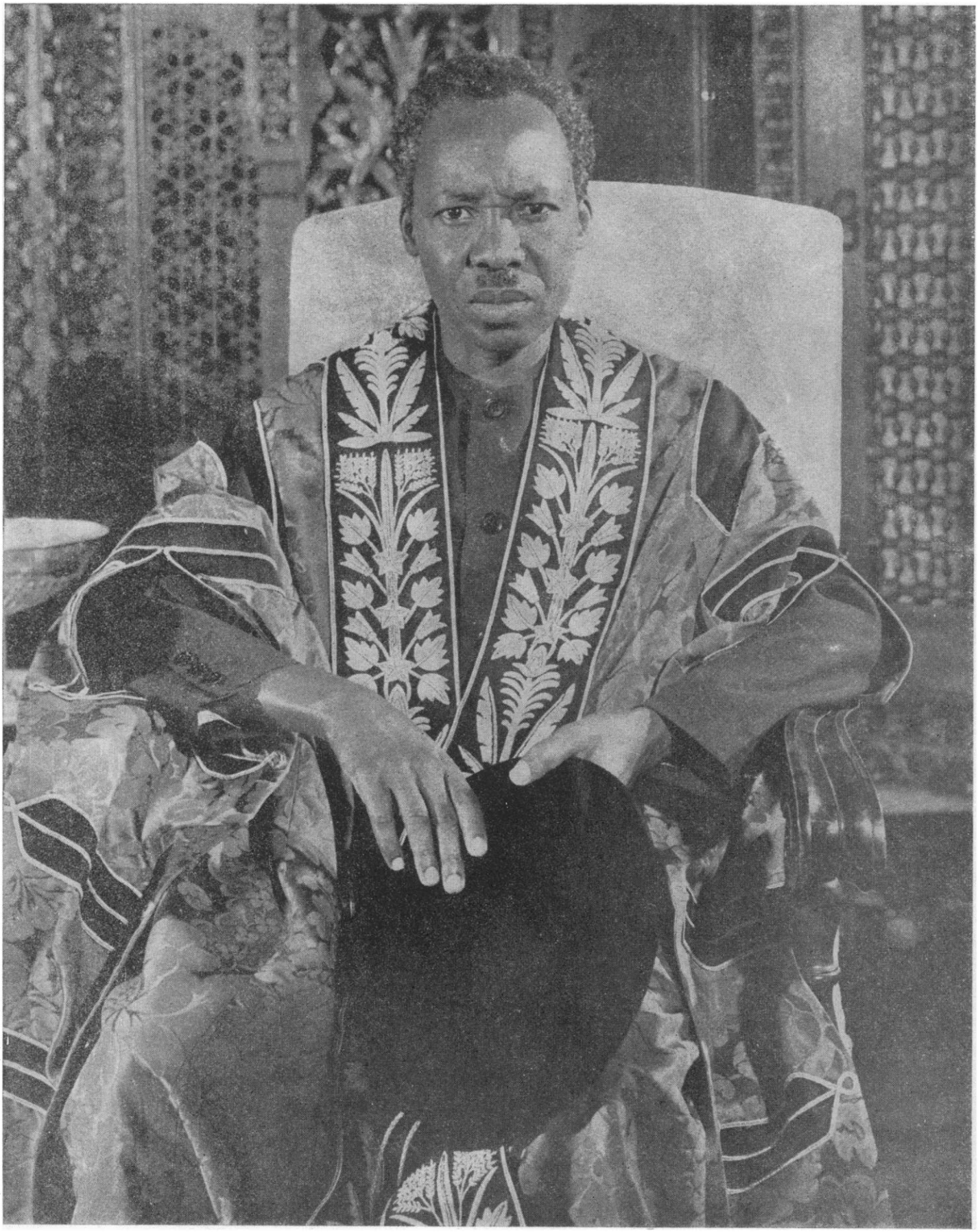
What should be remembered is that just as there is a deep anti-intellectual tradition in Western politics, there is also a deep anti-political tradition in Western intellectualism. The old saying that "politics is a dirty game" helped to deprive politics of aesthetic stature. The deceptiveness, the quest for popularity, the intrigues, the broken promises, all combined to give political activity a quality which offended some of the aesthetic ideals of intellectualism. And so many intellectuals have tended to despise the game of politics itself.

It is a contention of this article that part of the mystique that Nyerere has had for Western intellectuals is that he has not really been a politician. Relatively speaking, he has not as yet been forced to be one.

Political Hygiene:

A major reason why Nyerere has not been forced to be a full politician so far is, of course, the sheer support he has enjoyed in the country. In relative terms, he has not been forced to plot and intrigue in order to remain in power. He has an easier country to handle than Nkrumah had, or Obote has had. The cleavages between tribes and other kinds of groups in Tanganyika have not been as deep as they have been elsewhere. There has also been a tradition of acceptance of authority in Tanganyika greater than has been evident elsewhere. Even during the colonial period Tanganyika did not have a militant form of nationalism. There was a certain *gentleness* in Tanganyika's "struggle" for independence which made it hardly a struggle at all. And it was fitting that Tanganyikans should have accepted the leadership of a gentle personality like Nyerere.

But there were perhaps other reasons why Nyerere has not emerged as a stereotype politician of the kind distrusted by Western intellectuals. And one reason is precisely the fact that Nyerere himself is too much of an intellectual. He too has believed that politics has a great potential for being a dirty game. But to him what can so easily make politics dirty is precisely



what Western intellectuals themselves have often jealously valued — the multi-party structure of competition for power. In his stimulating analysis of "Democracy and the Party System," Nyerere said:

> "Why, then, have so many come to associate 'politics' with trickery and dishonesty? It is not, I am sure, that politicians are a naturally dishonest set of individuals. But if you are going to start from the premise that there *must* be more than one party, you may find before long that complete honesty becomes almost impossible to maintain."[2]

He goes on to argue that political honesty and party politics of the Western style are often in a state of tense incompatibility. At election time "each party is led into conducting its election campaign by the 'political' tactics of evasion, distortion and even downright lies about the other party's motives and intentions. Nor does it stop there. Once in Parliament, as we have seen, members of the opposing parties must still observe the rules of party unity which, in themselves, must inevitably stifle not merely freedom of expression but, indeed, honesty of expression".[3]

When in 1965 Tanzania therefore experimented with competitive elections within a single party structure, the motivation was, to some extent, political hygiene. If dirt in politics was to be avoided, it was essential to avoid the conditions which give rise to it. Pre-eminent among those conditions is inter-party political contests. It was far healthier to devise elections in which members of the same party competed for office. In such elections the Party itself would be in a better position to control the degree of mutual mud-slinging which its members were to be permitted to indulge in. And in any case a shared loyalty to the same party principles in a single-party system could go some way towards reducing the kind of virulent and cheap antagonism which members of opposing parties in Western systems sometimes felt against each other.

In the election of 1965 TANU did control the language and style of campaign between candidates. It also narrowed the kind of issues which could be raised. There was a determined attempt to prevent the election degenerating into a breeding ground of deadly social bacteria that might harm the body politic. That is why the 1965 Tanzanian election was an excuse in political hygiene.

This again was a matter which had a direct appeal for certain intellectual taste. "Clean elections" constituted an aesthetically satisfying ideal. Clean elections in new countries can sometimes be particularly difficult to achieve. And yet here was Tanzania making a brave attempt.

Western liberals were also pleased for other reasons by the 1965 electoral experiment. In the first flush of Afrophilia as independence was achieved some Western liberals had believed too readily in the democratic intentions of some African leaders. A number of Western scholars burst into print in defence of the African one-party state, convinced that Africa was about to display to the world a new form of democratic genius.[4]

But then disenchantment set in. One after another of African leaders in both Francophone and Anglophone countries capitulated to the temptations of power — and betrayed the democratic optimism of that first Independence Day. Ordinary African citizens, who felt the brunt of political mismanagement, felt also the disenchantment most directly. But in addition many Afrophile Western liberals experienced a sense almost of personal betrayal as their old eulogies of African democratic instincts were reduced to mockery.

And yet the record in Africa was far from being uniformly depressing. The tendency towards cheap authoritarianism had its exceptions. And among the most promising of those exceptions was the case of Tanzania under the leadership of Julius Nyerere. To some Western liberals, Nyerere was almost the last hope. Could he save a little of their old pride? Could he vindicate at least a little of their old faith in the feasibility of new democratic forms in Africa?

In 1965 Nyerere's country rose to the occasion. Genuinely competitive elections within a one-party structure were held. That they constituted a real choice for the electorate was demonstrated by the fact that several Ministers lost their seats. It was a great experiment — promising as well as precarious. In this case Tanzaphilia was a form of escape for disenchanted Western Afrophiles.

The Courage of Betrayal:

These great experiments and inspirational ideas are an indication that the mystique of Nyerere is not simply in his being an intellectual. It is also in his being a gifted and imaginative one. Of all the top political figures in English-speaking Africa as a whole, Nyerere is perhaps the most original thinker of them all. But here it is perhaps worth distinguishing between an original thinker and an independent thinker. In some ways Kamuzu Banda of Malawi has been a more consistently independent thinker than Nyerere has been, though less of an original thinker than Nyerere.

At least until the bold Arusha Declaration, Nyerere's ideas were, on the whole, *safe* ideas. The policies they advocated were widely advocated in many other parts of the continent. The originality of Nyerere consisted not in the policies advocated but in the arguments advanced in their defence.

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1. See the interview I gave to *The People* (Kampala), April 8, 1967.

2. See his pamphlet *Democracy and the Party System* (Dar es Salaam: Tanganyika Standard, 1962) p. 13.

3. *Ibid.* p. 14

4. For a critical survey of some of these theories see the recent book by Aristide R. Zolberg, *Creating Political Order* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966). See also Ruth Schachter (Morgenthau) "Single-Party Systems in West Africa", *American Political Science Review,* Vol. LV No. 2, June 1961; and Morgenthau 'African Election: Tanzania's Contribution", *Africa Report,* Vol. 10 No. 11, December 1965.

On the other hand, there has not been much of an abstract thinker in Hastings Banda. Originality of thought at this level does require some capacity for abstract analysis — and Kamuzu Banda has not gone out of his way to display such an ability. What there has been in Banda is a marked capacity to arrive at decidedly independent decisions — even if at variance with the climate of opinion in the African continent as a whole. It is this quality which makes Banda more of an independent thinker than Nyerere — if less of an original one.

At least until recently, there was in Nyerere a marked concern with Pan-African respectability. He was all too conscious of African public opinion at large. This was never more dramatically illustrated than after Tanzania's use of British troops to subdue her own mutinous soldiers. All three East African countries had had to resort to the use of British troops, but only Tanzania felt it necessary to call a special meeting of the Organization of African Unity to clear her name. She called this meeting in spite of the slight tension the move created with her two East African neighbours. Uganda's Head of Government, Dr. Milton Obote, was driven into expressing public scepticism about the meaningfulness of the O.A.U. cleansing ceremony in Dar es Salaam.[5]

There have been other cases since then of Tanzania's preoccupation with Pan-African respectability. Even the militancy of Tanzania on the issue of Rhodesia had a little of this preoccupation.

Not until the Arusha Declaration and its aftermath can Tanzania claim to have demonstrated a political boldness at all comparable to that exhibited by Banda in his very heresies. Banda has been the Bourguiba of sub-Saharan Africa — heretical and irritating, but also refreshingly blunt. There are times when it takes revolutionary courage to be a pragmatist. Habib Bourguiba had the boldness to mention to his fellow Arabs the possible need of a rapproachment with Israel. Hastings Banda is demonstrating to his fellow Africans the feasibility of a rapproachment with South Africa. Both leaders have deviated from the militant norms of their fellow kind. To be so defiantly pragmatic in the company of militant revolutionaries is perhaps itself a form of revolutionary heresy.

But with the Arusha Declaration and its aftermath Nyerere has given Africa an alternative form of political boldness. Nyerere has had the courage to try and reduce his dependence on Western aid and assistance. Banda has had the courage to try and increase his economic dealings with South Africa and Portugal. He has negotiated new trade agreements with both. Nyerere is out to demonstrate the lesson that what Africa needs is self-reliance in each individual country. Banda is out to prove that what Africa needs is interdependence even between a poor black country and the wealthy South Africa. Both Nyerere's experiment and Banda's overtures are, in effect, policies which demand significant political courage. I do not myself regard the two approaches as equally honourable. I find Tanzania's policies more defensible than Malawi's. But there is no doubt that each is an exercise in sheer boldness.

The White Marxist's Burden:

But it has not been merely the reduction of Western aid that the new Tanzanian military is supposed to accomplish. It is also designed to increase exertions by Tanzanians themselves.

The ethos of anti-parasitism and hard work in Tanzania is older than the Arusha Declaration. It goes back to the slogan of *Uhuru na Kazi,* or Freedom and Work, which accompanied the country into independence. It got translated into the self-help schemes of 1963-4, and into the regulations about maximum utilization of land in the country as a criterion for possession of that land on lease from the state. And finally in October 1966 the ethos of hard work in Tanzania culminated in the National Service, compulsory for sixth form and university graduates and for products of comparable educational institutions. The National Service was to consist, in part, in nation-building forms of toil like digging and construction. A person was to spend two years in the service before starting a regular career.

By the time that the National Service was launched Tanzania's ethos of anti-parasitism was assuming certain features of anti-intellectualism. There seemed to be a growing feeling among policy-makers that African intellectuals could very easily become parasites. And the way to prevent this was to initiate those intellectuals into the rigours of manual labour.

But even this incipient anti-intellectualism in Tanzania somehow captivated a significant number of intellectuals outside Tanzania. In the final analysis, there is a deep-seated masochism in many intellectuals. They sometimes enjoy seeing fellow intellectuals elsewhere "humbled". Western intellectuals sometimes enjoy manual labour in the same way in which Marie Antoinette enjoyed playing the peasant girl and shepherdess on the grounds of her palace. An exhibitionist posture with a shovel or a wheelbarrow, taken by a well-educated intellectual, is definitely in the tradition of "Back to Nature" romantic movements. Scratch a certain kind of Western intellectual in Africa and you will see the spirit of Marie Antoinette in her artificial village on the grounds of the Palace of Versailles.

The curious thing has been that the ultimate leader of anti-intellectual tendencies in Tanzania is himself an intellectual. In this respect Nyerere is reminiscent of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt was a millionaire. Yet his New Deal policies were the nearest point to socialism that the United States had ever got at that time. In a sense, he was starting a new movement to squeeze the rich in the interests of the poor. And since he himself was from a rich family, Roosevelt was regarded as a "traitor to his class".

The Report of the Tanzanian Presidential Commission on the Establishment of a Democratic One-Party State does refer to Roosevelt's difficulties with the Supreme Court on the constitutionality of his radical measures to deal with the Depression.[6] But from the

point of this article, the real point of similarity between Roosevelt and Nyerere hinges on their attitude to their own respective sectors of society. Just as Roosevelt had attempted to squeeze the rich for the sake of the poor, Nyerere has been trying to squeeze the intellectuals for the sake of the masses. To that extent Julius Nyerere, like Franklin D. Roosevelt, might indeed be described as "a traitor to his class".

But these might well be forms of "treason" which are creditable to the "traitors". They represent a wider loyalty of heroic dimensions. And perhaps Nyerere's "treason" to his own class might, in historical retrospect, be as vindicated as that of Roosevelt.

This brings us to yet another species of Tanzaphilia — the kind experienced by Western Marxists. In the old days of Tanzania's "multi-racialism" and humanitarian rhetoric, Tanzania was the darling of Western liberals. She was commended for being "moderate", and for being sensitive to the value of the individual and the virtues of an open society. Those were the days when a Western radical, then working at Kivukoni College, lamented that Tanganyika was suffering from *four* social ills — "poverty, ignorance, disease and empiricism".

Tanzania today is significantly less empirical and more ideologically committed than it was at that time. It has now more clearly captured the dedicated allegiance of a number of Western Marxists. There are advantages in this. Western liberals can be as evangelical as Western Marxists, but Western Marxists might sometimes have the added advantage of helping the country to recover an ideological balance which the colonial experience might have distorted.

The danger arises when the evangelism is carried too far. This is as true with liberal evangelism as with Marxist, but it so happens that at the present moment it is the Western Marxists who have abandoned themselves to unrestrained proselytism in Tanzania.

A major target has been the University College, Dar es Salaam. A number of Western Marxists, in alliance with other Marxists, have apparently been contriving to "socialise" the University College.

As I have affirmed elsewhere, I accept the proposition that it is the duty of any University in the modern world to allow for the study of socialism. This is because socialistic ideas have an important bearing on twentieth century realities — and the University that leaves no room for their analysis is betraying its function and its duty to remain in touch with reality.

But it cannot be repeated too often that this is a different matter from converting a whole University into an institution for the promotion of socialism. There does remain a distinct difference between a University and an ideological institute.

It is true that there is no university in the world which is totally free of ideology. And if there were it is unlikely to be a good university. But a genuine university should not be intellectually monopolistic. It should be multi-ideological rather than uni-ideological. It should permit maximum interplay between different interpretations of reality.[7]

If Tanzania feels a need for an ideological institute, that might well be a good reason for establishing one. But such an institution should surely remain a distinct enterprise from the University College.

Yet the pressure to convert the University College into an ideological institute has tended to come more from inside the University College than it has done from the outside. And when it has come from the outside, it has often been at the instigation of forces within the University College itself.

As I have asserted before, there is indeed a group of radical academics who have had less faith in the concept of a University than President Nyerere himself. Yet I am not convinced that these radicals — products of distinguished Western universities — would themselves dream of sending their children to be educated in something like the old Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute in Ghana or the Lumumba Ideological Institute in Kenya. I doubt if any of them would send their children to the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow. They are all for transforming the University of East Africa into an ideological institute. But if the experience of British socialists is anything to go by, the ultimate academic ambition they have for their children is often admission into Oxford or Cambridge. Indeed, many British radicals send their own children to public schools.

This is not to deny that there is often a wealth of sincerity and genuine social conscience among Western radicals who come to Africa to be of service. And some of their ideas for reform might well constitute a genuine contribution to a healthier future for African countries. But a balance needs to be kept. Western radical zeal in Africa — as indeed Eastern proselytism — can all too easily deteriorate into a new form of cultural arrogance. There is a slight risk of a "White Marxist's Burden", disguised as a socialist crusade. As long as there is some restraint all round, this risk need not be fatal. There is room for debate between the different schools of reform movements in East Africa. What there is no room for is a weird, hybrid creature from the womb of the nineteenth century — a poet-ideologue called "Karl Kipling."

Conclusion:

It is to the credit of Tanzania that she had managed to command the varied loyalities and affection of a wide range of external admirers. From Gandhians to Maoists, humanitarians to ruthless revolutionaries — all these have been known to fall under the soothing spell of Tanzaphilia.

The range is partly chronological. Tanganyika was the favourite of liberals before it became the favourite of radicals. It was a moderate country before it became a militant one. And its union with Zanzibar gave it an added dimension of revolutionary fervour.

But a chronological interpretation of the range of admirers that Tanzania has known is inadequate. The range of the country's admirers has been impressive at every point of the country's evolution, however many may get disillusioned on the way.

No short article can ever be adequate either as an explanation of the phenomenon of Tanzaphilia. Here is a country which has at times appealed to people's diverse sensibilities. The ambition of purified politics, the ethos of symmetrical austerity, the romance of "Back to Nature" and the discipline of the countryside, the opposition to ostentation and opulence — these are all factors which touch deep into the *aesthetic* sensibilities of intellectuals.

But Tanzaphilia has also been an *ideological* commitment to the goals of self-reliance and egalitarianism. As an ideological commitment, it delves deep into *moral* responses.

It is these considerations which make the phenomenon of Tanzaphilia at once an aesthetic experience and a profound ethical longing. Its durability as a fact of political life depends upon a number of factors. But ultimately it depends upon a continuing compatibility between an intellectual leadership and a popular sense of mission in that remarkable African country.

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5. See also Mazrui, *On Heroes and Uhuru-Worship : Essays on Independent Africa* (London : Longmans, 1967) pp. 92-94.

6. *Report,* Presidential Commission on the Establishment of a Democratic one Party State (Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1965) p. 31.

7. See *The People* (Kampala), April 8, 1967 and May 19, 1967.