

# Mwalimu and Marx in Contestation: Dialogue or Diatribe?

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## Abstract

The October Russian Revolution of 1917 inaugurated the era of social transformation challenging the dominance of global capitalism.<sup>1</sup> It set in motion two lineages, one tracing its ancestry directly to October and its Marxist leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Among these must be included the Chinese revolution of 1949, the Vietnamese revolution of 1945, and the Cuban revolution of 1959. The second lineage is that of national liberation movements in the former colonized countries of Africa and Asia. Tanzania's independence movement Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) under the leadership of Julius Nyerere was one such national-popular movement that questioned both capitalism and imperialism with its blueprint called the *Arusha Declaration: policy of socialism and self-reliance* proclaimed in 1967. This essay focuses on Nyerere's philosophical and political outlook and his contentious relationship with Marxism. It also documents the intellectual history of Marxist ideas in Tanzania.

## Keywords

National liberation struggles, Julius Nyerere, Ujamaa, Arusha Declaration, Marxism in Tanzania

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## Socialist Lineages

The October Russian Revolution of 1917 inaugurated the era of social transformation challenging the dominance of global capitalism. It set in motion two lineages, one tracing its ancestry directly to October and its Marxist leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Among these must be included the Chinese revolution of 1949, the Vietnamese revolution of 1945 and the Cuban revolution of 1959. The second lineage is that of national liberation movements in the former colonized countries of Africa and Asia. With the failure of European revolutions that Lenin and his comrades had anticipated following the Bolshevik seizure of power and the establishment of the first soviet socialist republic, Lenin turned his attention to anti-colonial movements mainly in Asia. Africa was not yet on the radar of Bolshevik Marxists. To the extent that national liberation movements would weaken the capitalist-imperialist camp, Lenin considered them to be an ally of socialism. Lenin had theorized his political position on anti-colonial struggles and national liberation earlier in his 1916 April theses on the right of nations to self-determination (Lenin, 1916). But then his main pre-occupation was with big nations in Europe oppressing small nations like in the Balkan Europe and the position that social-democratic parties should take in the struggle for self-determination and secession. Only later, Lenin's position on mutual support between anti-colonial and socialist struggles in Europe took a concrete shape and found organizational expression in the Third International. Yet, Africa's presence in the congresses of the Third International was meager because largely communist and social democratic parties were invited to participate.

The Chinese revolution (1949), the Indian independence (1947) and the fifth Manchester Pan-African Conference in 1945 gave national liberation movements and recently independent countries a greater presence. Bandung was the turning point in bringing the Third World countries on the political stage. It inaugurated the Bandung epoch. Samir Amin argues in a recent article that it was the communist and left parties in countries, such as Egypt, Philippines and Indonesia, which prepared the ground for Bandung (Amin, 2014). The Bandung and the October streams merged in their democratic demands—freedom, equality and national sovereignty—while at other times they diverged or ran parallel. Nonetheless, the Marxist stream and October's legacy were never totally absent from the debates within what Samir Amin calls national-popular movements (*ibid.*). In some countries, at some moments, the movements even showed the potential towards authentic socialism (*ibid.*). In many more countries and at different moments in their trajectory, regardless of

the labels they gave themselves, these movements did in their own way challenge the hegemony of capitalist-imperialism. Tanzania's independence movement Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) under the leadership of Julius Nyerere was one such national-popular movement that questioned both capitalism and imperialism with its blueprint called the *Arusha Declaration: policy of socialism and self-reliance* proclaimed in 1967 (Nyerere, 1968, pp. 231–250).

2017 marks 100 years of the October revolution and 50 years of the Arusha Declaration providing us with an occasion to examine the legacy of a great event that shook the world and a great document that stirred the continent and continues inspiring its post-colonial generations. In this essay, I focus on Nyerere's philosophical and political outlook and his contentious relationship with Marxism.

## **In Search of Equality**

Julius Nyerere, the leader of the nationalist movement, TANU and the president of Tanzania for quarter of a century, was a remarkable African statesman and a great leader. His people fondly called him *Mwalimu*, teacher, not only because he began his career as a classroom teacher but also because he turned the whole nation into a classroom patiently explaining to his people his politics and principles. He is distinguished from his contemporaries for three things: his consistent struggle for the liberation of Africa, his articulate expounding of the cause of African unity and his bold, albeit understandably contested, venture to build a socialist future for his country. It is for this later 'experiment' that he shares with Marx—and Marx's political heir, Lenin—the long lineage in the struggle of humanity for equality and human freedom. While the struggle for equality is universal, the path it traverses is varied and specific to the historical and social conditions of different societies and communities. Both the universal and the local, to varied degrees depending on the extent of exposure, education, contact and qualities of the individual contribute to the philosophical, political and ideological formation of leaders who lead the struggle. Whether they emerge as great leaders ultimately depends on the conditions and circumstances given by history. Their greatness lies in recognizing these conditions and deploying their qualities and talents to accelerate their happening. Every great person is a beginner, and he or she is a beginner 'precisely because he sees *further* than others and desires things *more strongly* than others' (Plekhanov,

1969, p. 176). Nyerere was such a great leader who desired very strongly to build his society based on equality, equity and individual freedom, or what he called in Swahili *Ujamaa* or socialism.

Nyerere began to articulate his concept of equality and socialism very early in his intellectual life. When he was at Makerere University in Kampala, where much of the first generation of East African nationalists were trained, he wrote a letter under a penname JUKANYE to *Tanganyika Standard* arguing for ‘African socialism,’ critically rejecting the individualism of European capitalism. Capitalistic values are rooted in the European, he asserted, while the African is naturally ‘socialistic’. ‘The European tendency is to be as individualistic as possible. But it is not African’ (Quoted in Molony, 2014, pp. 68–71, 70). The letter demonstrates the young man’s idealism wanting to do something for his people against the destructive values of capitalism. Next he wrote a long essay in Swahili on women’s freedom, which inclines towards gender equality pointing out women’s oppression, presumably recalling the life of his own mother as a peasant woman, which he had witnessed firsthand (Nyerere, 2013). The first most elaborate working out of his concept of equality is in a paper he wrote much later, most probably late 1950s, which to the best of our knowledge has never been published (Nyerere, n.d.). The paper is in Swahili. It is written in the form of self-interrogation in a Socratic fashion. The first part argues that everything we observe and know of a human being shows that human beings are unequal. Nyerere is grappling with the idea of equality when evidently human beings are neither equal nor born equal. Indeed, Nyerere observed, it would be a bleak day if all human beings were equal like currency. ‘On my side I believe that this day would be disastrous if human beings were to be equal in the manner of currency’ (ibid., p. 5). They are unequal in their physique; unequal in their talents and expression; and they are unequal in their ability and life-styles. Having argued forcefully to show that human beings are not equal in the first part, then in the second part of the article he attempts to answer the question: What is the basis and source of the belief in human equality?

Human beings are equal in their humanity. Juma and Mwajuma do not differ in their humanity. In all other matters, Juma and Mwajuma are not equal, but in their humanity they do not differ an iota. Neither you, nor me, nor any body else nor God can make Juma to be more of a human being than Mwajuma or Mwajuma to be more of a human being than Juma. God can do what you and me and our fellow beings cannot do—God can create Juma and can make Mwajuma to be a different creature better or worse than a human being, but

God cannot make Juma or Mwajuma to be better or worse human beings than other human beings; God can neither reduce nor increase their humanity. (ibid., 6, author's translation)

Contemporaneously, he wrote a beautiful poem 'Human Equality' again divided in two parts, part one in nine stanzas showing the inequality of human beings and then asking: *Tell me then wherefrom human equality?* (Nyerere, n.d.). In part two, he answers his own question in 11 stanzas, one in which he illustrates his argument by reference to water deserves quoting:

*If I say water is water, you may understand  
Water to drink, water to shower  
Of dew and snow, of rain, rivers, lakes  
Its ancestry is in air, doesn't diverge in its wateriness.*

Many Western writers and observers have failed, in my view, to see this deeply nuanced concept of human equality in Nyerere, thus collapsing it with the bourgeois notion of equal rights or equal opportunities. To be sure, there is nothing unique in Nyerere's reflections on, and search for, equality. All great philosophers and thinkers have agonized and reflected on the idea of equality. As Frederick Engels, the famous collaborator of Marx, stated the idea of equality is primeval, but it took thousands of years to arrive at the idea of equal rights in states and society. What is specific to Nyerere's idea of equality is that it is inseparable by definition from the idea of *utu*—best translated as 'human dignity' or 'humanness'. For Nyerere, all beings are equal: *Binadamu wote ni sawa*. It is not that all human beings *have* equal rights or opportunities or are *born* equal. They *are* equal, period. And they are equal in their *humanness*. Built into Nyerere's concept of equality is by defining the idea of equity/justice because without equity and justice there is no human dignity (Shivji, 2014). In a slightly different context, he stated that it would be a 'mockery of equality' to argue 'that a one-armed man and active young man are equal if they each have ten acres of fertile land and a hoe'. He continues as follows,

There is, therefore, no absolute and simple rule which can be easily applied everywhere and to all aspects of life in relation to equality. Instead we are forced back to concepts of human dignity; every member of society must have safeguarded by society his basic humanity and sacredness of his life-force. (Nyerere, 1967, p. 15)

It is this same philosophical building block of equality that Nyerere used to build his case for socialism. As he rightly stated, ‘however they arrive at their belief, Socialists believe in human equality’ (Quoted in Steele, 1970). Elsewhere he affirmed, rightly again, that, ‘No one who qualifies his belief in the equality of man is really a socialist’ (Nyerere, 1968, p. 4).

From his fundamental premise of equality, another of Nyerere’s philosophical premise inexorably followed, individual freedom. Since neither equality nor freedom could exist or be exercised or enjoyed in an unequal, inequitable, unfree and undeveloped society, Nyerere’s political principles of non-discrimination, self-determination and self-reliant and equitable development logically followed. His first three volumes of collected speeches published during his lifetime all had ‘freedom’ in their title: *Freedom and Unity* (1966), *Freedom and Socialism* (1968) and *Freedom and Development* (1973). The essence of self-determination is the right of the people to make their own decisions, Nyerere consistently argued; hence, a free society must be a self-reliant society otherwise it would lose its freedom to make its own decisions. Thus, he built his philosophical case for socialism and self-reliance. He believed that neither freedom nor development was possible for African countries without national and pan-African unity. He became a lifelong devotee of national and African unity. Whatever kind of unity—economic, cultural, social and eventually political—however achieved, gradually or otherwise (barring militarily), was a step forward.

These philosophical premises made Nyerere a life-long critic of privileges and hierarchy. A devout Catholic who regularly did his morning mass in a Church following all the rituals including kneeling down before a pulpit, he was intensely critical of Church hierarchy in private.<sup>2</sup> For his principles and personal integrity, which could not be doubted even by his enemies, he was admired all over the world. President Giri of India summed it up by calling him ‘the voice of conscience of this continent’.<sup>3</sup>

## Influences

### *Historical Circumstances*

There is a raging debate among Western academics and scholars on the influences on Nyerere’s political philosophy and ideological formation. The debate gained momentum much more after Nyerere’s death probably

because, as Stogër-Eising says, the romanticized approach of the 1960s and 1970s has lost lustre (2000, p. 1). Broadly, the protagonists can be divided into two groups, Afro-centrists and Euro-centrists. Afro-centrists emphasize Nyerere's traditional upbringing on the values of caring, sharing and familyhood. Viktoria Stogër-Eising exemplifies the Afro-centrist approach that emphasizes the traditional roots of Nyerere's socialism, tracing them to Nyerere's own 'tribe' Zanaki (Stoger-Eising, 2000 *passim*). The biographer of Nyerere's early life, Thomas Molony (2014) illustrates the Eurocentric approach. Molony meticulously traces the links between Nyerere's particular ideas and concepts that he picked up from his lecturers and texts that he was required to read while studying for his Masters at Edinburgh University in Scotland. While useful and informative, in my view, the debate contributes little by way of explanation to the towering role that Nyerere played in charting the course of his people's history. Whatever the influences, ultimately it is the historical conditions and circumstances that produced the historical Nyerere we know. The individual Nyerere may well have been influenced by his upbringing, education, religious faith and intellectual encounters and myriad other accidental factors, but these could not have determined the course of Tanzania's history outside the conditions and circumstances of his society and country.

We adapt Plekhanov's (well-known as the father of Russian Marxism) approach in identifying the cause of historical development and the role of the individual. Rephrasing Plekhanov, we can say that the *general cause*, namely, the development of productive forces and the social relations based on those forces, is true of the development of the history of all humankind. But this general cause operates and plays out in the particular historical situation of each people, country or nation. This gives us the *particular cause*, which in turn is influenced and coloured by the *individual cause*, thus giving the historical event its individual features. It is on the latter plane that the role of a great leader like Nyerere is located (Plekhanov, 1969, p. 175).

What conditions Tanganyika found itself in the last quarter of the last century during which Nyerere led the independence movement and then ruled the country for the next 25 years? Tanganyika was Britain's trust territory under the League of Nations and then the United Nations. The Mandate obliged the Trustee to ensure that Native interests were paramount. One result of this was that land could not be easily alienated to settlers. For this and other reasons, Tanganyika, unlike Kenya, did not develop into a settler colony; rather the British developed it as a peasant-plantation economy. Foreign companies owned the plantation sector,

mainly sisal. Plantation labour was largely migrant, which at best, could be described as semi-proletarian. The peasant sector was, by and large, undifferentiated with pockets of rich peasantry in a few places. Foreigners, such as Greeks and a few British who settled in the country after the Second World War, owned middle-scale coffee, tea and tobacco farms. There was hardly any industrial sector to speak of because Tanganyika was a market for multinational capital based in Kenya, which was the East African hub. Only after the War, a couple of industrial plants were established to produce intermediate goods, such as tin cans and meat processing. Trade union activity started after the war and intensified during the fifties; it was confined mainly to dockworkers (Coulson, 2013; Rweyemamu, 1973; Shivji, 1986). In such an undifferentiated society, Nyerere was able to lead the struggle peacefully, on the one hand, and play a towering role, appearing to rise above society, on the other. The situation comes close to the Marxist theorization of a Bonapartist state where the state as the only organized force in society appears to be above society. And the individual, who heads the state, as Nyerere did, plays larger than life role in the making of history. Nyerere himself summed up this role when he observed that in a country like Tanzania where the capitalist class was not developed, the state had the double function: that of building the nation and bringing development. The state indeed becomes the historical agency rising above, or appearing to rise above, classes and class struggle.

Moreover, Nyerere was a talented and hugely gifted individual. His understanding of politics, life and society; his personal morality and ethics; his ingenuity in making pragmatic political decisions and justifying them *ex post facto* in a principled way and his articulation and facility to communicate with the masses, gave the Tanzanian political history its *individual* features. It can truly be said that Nyerere left his imprint on the history of Tanzania. In the next section, I briefly touch on both the contextual and personal influences on Nyerere that fed into the making of the man.

### *The International Context*

Freedom movements in the colonies were assisted and influenced by a variety of left and liberal-left groups in colonial metropolises. Nationalist, co-operative and trade union movements in British colonies, for instance, were invariably in touch with the Fabian Colonial Bureau, the Labour Party's think-tank which had great influence, and in some cases

even tutored nationalist leaders. Nyerere and his colleagues too had a share of this. Joan Wicken, Nyerere's personal assistant for almost four decades who came from the left labour tradition, was active in the Fabian Colonial Bureau. Some early expatriate recruits—including the attorney general Ronald Brown—who taught at the Kivukoni College, the party school, were either active members of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, or sponsored by it. Political and ideological influence of left labour tendencies on African leaders, including Nyerere cannot be discounted.

African countries were born in the womb of the raging Cold War in the early 1960s. Invariably they became a pawn in the big power contention between the then superpowers, the United States and the USSR. Imperialist countries under US hegemony quickly branded even nationalist leaders, who asserted a modicum of independence, communist. They became the target of military coups engineered in many cases by the American spy-agency CIA (Blum, 2001). For reasons of survival, more astute political leaders like Nyerere had to steer clear of superpower rivalries. Many of them took refuge in the policy of non-alignment. Influence of Cold War considerations on the ideological and political formation of African leaders, including Nyerere, played its role. At one of his familiar encounters with leftist students at the Dar es Salaam University College, Nyerere was asked if non-alignment meant steering a middle course between capitalism and socialism. He answered quickly, 'No, we are not non-aligned ideologically. We are Socialists'. But as quickly he added, 'we must beware of domination. You can't label a type of domination Socialist, and say, therefore, it's all right. Thank you for it, sir' (Quoted in Steele, 1970).

### *Education, Faith and the Peasant Mother*

Nyerere went to a formal school at the age of 12. Until then, he grew up by the side of his mother, one of the 22 wives of his father Chief Nyerere Burito. Every morning, the boy Nyerere accompanied his mother as she went to the field breaking ground with a hoe. It was backbreaking work, but thus the Tanzanian peasant woman fed her children. Meanwhile, Nyerere herded livestock. Reading between the lines of his 1944 essay on women's freedom, one can discern the profound influence of his mother's own condition on his advocacy of gender equality (Nyerere, 2013). One may even venture further. The peasant life that his mother led and his own boyhood experience left a deep imprint on Nyerere making him a peasant populist, in the good sense of the word. Many

years later when he came across Rene Dumont's *False Start in Africa* (1968), he made it a compulsory reading for his ministers. Dumont was a very well-respected French agronomist with firsthand experience of Africa. He was a fierce advocate of the peasantry against the new African elite. As he himself put it: 'As an agronomist and grandson of a peasant, I feel called upon to defend the underdeveloped and often oppressed peasants, the true proletarians of modern times' (ibid., p. 23). Dumont's populist position fitted perfectly well with Nyerere's own outlook.

Nyerere came under the influence of White Fathers while he was still at the primary school. Their relatively liberal attitude towards Africans and austere living styles must have impressed him. Eventually he was baptized at the age of 20 and became a devout Catholic (Molony, 2014, p. 63). He was close to White Fathers and Maryknoll Brothers and Sisters. Priests like Father Walsh and Father Willie were particularly close to him and no doubt could be considered his mentors. While he must have been influenced by some Christian values, it is an exaggeration to claim that Nyerere would have described himself as a 'Christian humanist', as his friend Archbishop Trevor Huddleston suggests (Huddleston, 1995, pp. 1–8 at p. 6).

After attending the primary school in Mwisenge, Nyerere went onto the Tabora Government School, variously described as the Eton of Tanzania. Nyerere was a bookworm; he read voraciously and debated with his fellow students various issues, but otherwise the school was run on lines of 'an English public school in Africa' (Molony, 2014, p. 54). After Tabora, he went to Makerere University, another elite college where many future East African leaders and literati were trained. At Makerere, he came across Africans from other East African countries but was most active in the Tanganyikan group. Both at Tabora and Makerere, no doubt, he expanded his intellectual horizons and engaged in some local political discourses, but it was at Edinburgh, which he joined in April 1949 for a three year Master degree, that he was exposed to a wide variety of philosophical and political writings of the Enlightenment period. Although communist cadres were active trying to influence African students, the British intelligence was as active to ensure that its African wards did not come under their influence. Thus protected, Nyerere probably had more contact with Fabians than communists (Molony, 2014, pp. 100–103).

Molony (2014) gives a very detailed and meticulous account of the influence of European philosophers of the Enlightenment period—John Locke, John Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill and contemporary more left-wing labour party leaders like Harold Laski—at

Edinburgh. He goes further to trace particular ideas in Nyerere's political philosophy, whether on democracy, organization of the state or socialism, to specific writings of European writers and thinkers, leaving little originality to Nyerere except that he labelled his socialism *African*. 'Nyerere's contribution to socialism was to make it African; and, in his eyes at least, to bring "traditional" communal societies into the modern world' (ibid., p. 162). The Edinburgh lecturers, according to Molony, himself currently a lecturer at that University,

played a hitherto unacknowledged role in moulding the political mind of their ambitious and inquisitive Tanganyikan student. By extension, the lecturers unknowingly contributed to charting the course of the history of the nation that Nyerere went on to govern. (ibid.)

This is presumptuous, besides being patronizing. The links that Molony makes between Nyerere's ideas and the specific texts of the authors are, at best, tenuous. The furthest I would go is that these texts contributed significantly to the formation of Nyerere's idealist world outlook, the philosophical lens through which he peered into his society and set the goals for the future. It is interesting that in Molony's study of influences covering several chapters, nowhere one finds Nyerere engaging with the materialist, specifically Marxist, tradition. Nyerere no doubt was taught and read Adam Smith who glorified capitalism, but there is no evidence that he was also taught and or referred to texts critical of Smithian tradition. It is possible that Nyerere imbibed his rhetorical style from Smith. Could this be a reason for Nyerere's ignorance of both classical and Marxist political economy, which in turn contributed to his rather feeble understanding of the Marxist materialist tradition?

## **Mwalimu's Diatribe Against Marxism**

### *Clash of Outlooks*

Marx's and Nyerere's world outlooks were worlds apart. Nyerere's was idealist, Marx's materialist. Nyerere did not have a well-formed theory of state, society or history beyond the eclectic postulates of the Enlightenment writers. He was scathing in his attack on capitalism but more in the tradition of 'utopian' or petty bourgeois socialism (Engels, 1880, pp. 95–151). Marx developed a holistic theory of society rooted in political economy through the method that has come to be called historical

materialism. Admittedly, there is very little by way of political theory in Marx. The task of developing a coherent theory of state and imperialism fell to Lenin. Nyerere probably read Lenin but it is doubtful if he was acquainted with Lenin's theoretical works on state, class struggle and imperialism.

Nyerere probably read snippets of original Marx but much of his knowledge of Marx and Marxism seem to have derived from the second and third hand Western writers who themselves never read or understood Marx in its original. Nyerere tended to lean on some of the tired critique of Marxism that came from either the right or the social democratic left. Nyerere, unlike Nkrumah, for instance, never wrote a full-fledged treatise on his philosophy or ideology. Nyerere's longest essay (32 pages) on socialism in English is the 'Introduction' to the collection of his speeches entitled *Freedom and Socialism* (1968).

We find there are odd references to Marx in Nyerere but almost always made in juxtaposition to his oft-repeated position that while socialist *values* are universal there are varied paths to socialism. On surface, this position is valid but defining socialism in terms of *values* rather than the historically determined relations of production is what sets apart Marx and Nyerere. Nyerere's definition of a socialist society has little to do with the character of the system of production, who produces surplus and who appropriates it, how is surplus accumulated and how the social (class) relations of production and appropriation of surplus reproduced. For example, one of the characteristics of a socialist society in the list that define Nyerere's socialist society is that 'there will be no exploitation of one man by another' (ibid., p. 6). It will be immediately noticed that Nyerere's definition of exploitation is at the level of individuals rather than large social groups, classes, which play a definite and defined role in the system of production. This way of looking at exploitation allows Nyerere to make a remark, which obliterates the difference between exploitation and cheating: 'A man who cheats his fellows by dishonesty, who fails to do a full day's work, or who fails to co-operate with his fellows because he wants to bolster his own personal interests, is exploiting other men' (ibid., p. 7).

This idealist approach to socialism is what made Nyerere define socialism as an attitude of mind in his 1962 essay, 'Ujamaa—The Basis of African Socialism' which was his first long essay expounding his concept of socialism (Nyerere, 1966, pp. 162–171)

In the individual, as in the society, it is an attitude of mind which distinguishes the socialist from the non-socialist. It has nothing to do with the possession

or non-possession of wealth. Destitute people can be potential capitalists—exploiters of their fellow human beings. A millionaire can equally well be a socialist; he may value his wealth only because it can be used in the service of his fellow men. But the man who uses wealth for the purpose of dominating any of his fellows is a capitalist. So is the man who would if he could! (ibid., p. 162)

In this, Nyerere is no doubt in good company with early nineteenth century socialists, such as Robert Owen, Saint Simon, Charles Fourier and more recently Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Gandhi called upon ‘the capitalist to regard himself as trustee for those on whom he depends for the making, the retention, and the increase of his capital’.<sup>4</sup> In a similar vein, Nelson Mandela after describing the caring, sharing and hospitality of the traditional African society which he called the philosophy of Ubuntu observes: ‘Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves’.<sup>5</sup> Both Gandhi and Mandela’s are reconstruction of the values, real or perceived, of traditional pre-class societies in the capitalist milieu ending up objectively to be the apologia for rapacious capitalism. Nyerere, to be fair, was not. He traversed long from his 1962 essay to the 1967 Arusha Declaration, which entailed taking concrete measures to what he believed would arrest exploitative tendencies in his society. The Nyerere of 1967 vintage no longer relied on preaching and inculcating socialist attitudes of mind in capitalists and ‘potential capitalists’ like lazy workers!

It is clear from the above that Nyerere belonged to the idealist tradition of socialism and although may have had some inkling into the philosophical and political basis of Marxism, which he occasionally used without acknowledgement,<sup>6</sup> he consistently and openly disavowed his association with the Marxist historical and political outlook based on the question of classes and class struggle. Rebuking students in a question and answer session with the University community in February 1976 for, according to him, ‘parroting’ the concept of class struggle when the real issue was one between the rich and poor countries, he declared:

In this distinction between the rich and the poor, I am a kind of reactionary. I drew this distinction ages ago, I think 1962 at Moshi.

I usually make a disclaimer, I quickly make a disclaimer. I am not a revolutionary and I am not a Marxist. ... This disarms some people and annoys the others but there is a lot of truth in it. There is a lot of vague talk about class struggle, class struggle, class struggle. There is no effort at all even to examine society, each society and look at these classes you are talking about. (Nyerere, 1976, p. 10)

This was an unusual outburst to which we shall return later in this article. Suffice to say at this stage that the difference of outlook could explain Nyerere's critical intellectual stance towards Marxism which one would expect resulting in a kind of dialogue or debate with Marxists. But most of the time, this was not the case. Instead, Nyerere adopted a polemical style, which degenerated into a diatribe, particularly when conversing in public with the students and faculty of the University of Dar es Salaam (Saul, 1970). The University was known to be the hotbed of Marxist-Leninist students and faculty in the sixties and seventies, albeit small in numbers but very vocal. While they sympathized with Nyerere, they were critical of his way of building socialism, which they expressed openly in their writings, and magazines, the leading light of which was one called *Cheche* or 'The Spark', recalling Lenin's *Iskra*. In my view, there were factors other than differences of outlook that made Nyerere adopt an unusually virulent style towards Marxism-Leninism in the 1970s.

### *Why Diatribe and not Dialogue?*

Two factors, one internal and another external, weighed heavily on Nyerere's mind in his attitude towards Marxism, as he adopted a reasonably independent policy for his country which he called 'socialism and self-reliance' or *Ujamaa*. One was the international context of superpower rivalry between the Eastern and Western blocs defined in terms of their ideologies of capitalism and socialism. Marxism or Marxism-Leninism was the official ideology of the Soviet bloc. The second factor was internal, the presence of a strong Roman Catholic Church with a considerable political clout to which he belonged. Although Islam too was quite prevalent in Tanzania, it never had the same political weight as the Church, although many Muslims played a very significant role in the struggle for independence (generally, Said, 1998; Sivalon, 1992). The Church defined its two enemies as Islam and communism (Sivalon, 1992, p. 80). Both these factors threatened the independence, as a matter of fact, even the survival of Nyerere's regime. His response was to adopt two policies and preach and pursue them with unusual robustness. These were non-alignment and secularism. His secularist position, as far as the state politics were concerned, did not mean that he was not sensitive to the role of religion in society, particularly the Catholic Church, which wielded political clout and used it when needed. He was thus particularly sensitive to the views and positions of the Catholic Bishops and went out of his way to appease them (Sivalon, 1992), so much so that some Muslim writers accused him of being partial to Christian religion (Said, 1998).

### *Superpower Rivalries*

Nyerere was a political leader, a head of state, of a poor newly independent African country who had constantly to navigate the rough waters of superpower rivalries that dominated the post war world of the 1960s, 1970s and much of the 1980s (Hobsbawm, 1994, p. 226 et. seq). His country provided a rear base to the liberation movements carrying on armed struggle in Southern Africa, ANC and PAC in South Africa, Frelimo in Mozambique, MPLA in Angola, SWAPO in Namibia. The white regimes of South Africa and the then Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, were directly or indirectly supported by Western powers. Inevitably, therefore, liberation movements turned to the Soviet bloc countries for arms and training. Arms were supplied to them through Tanzania where the liberation movements had their bases. While Nyerere supported and facilitated this, partly under the cover of OAU, he himself went to great lengths to distance his country and foreign policy from super-powers. When he declared the blueprint of socialism in the form of the Arusha Declaration in 1967, he had to go an extra mile to assure the sceptical Western world that this was no communism. Partly for this reason and partly for his own intense ideological aversion to the Soviet Union, he distanced himself from the Eastern bloc, in particular the Soviet Union. In a sense, the lukewarm relation between Russia and Tanzania was reciprocal. While welcoming Nyerere's declaration of socialism as progressive, Soviet theorists never accepted it as socialism per se. They evaluated and assessed such 'socialist' moves in Africa as 'non-capitalist' or 'national democratic'.

Things stood differently with China. Although China's official ideology was Marxist-Leninist and was led by a robust Communist Party firmly rooted in the Marxist world outlook, China never interfered with the internal affairs of its African friends nor assessed or tagged these countries with any labels. They stuck to Bandung principles of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries characterizing itself as a Third World country. Its aid and assistance to African countries, including Tanzania, usually did not have any ideological strings attached. Besides, China had its own huge quarrel with the Soviet Union in the 1960s. Thus, China's position sat well with Nyerere. He was genuinely obliged to China for undertaking to build a railway to link Tanzania with Zambia on very generous terms. This was a massive project by any standard, undertaken at a time when none of the Western powers and the International Financial Institutions like the World Bank controlled by them would assist. In fact, their advice was that the project was not feasible or viable (Coulson, 2013, p. 277; Monson, 2009, et. seq).

In sum, China's communism did not bother Nyerere. As a matter of fact, the austere life styles and dedication of Chinese leaders and the hard work of its people sat well with Nyerere's own Catholic values. In his wide-ranging, militant speech made on his third visit to China in March 1974, Nyerere was full of praise for China's values of dedication and hard work and 'revolutionary solidarity' with African countries still under colonial, racial and imperialist yokes. Declaring that he had come to learn from the Chinese people, Nyerere summed up the experience of his previous two visits and what he expected to learn from his third visit.

When I first came to China in 1965 I was impressed by the serious dedication of your people and your Government to the cause of national development. I was impressed by your discipline, the selflessness of the people and the people's cadres, and the way in which you were using your own resources for the benefit of the masses rather than the enrichment of a few individuals.

In 1968 I saw that the Chinese people themselves had still been dissatisfied with the progress which had so much impressed my colleagues and myself. The Cultural Revolution reflected that dissatisfaction, and the determination to remain true to the revolutionary principles of the Chinese Communist Party. It seemed to me then that this new effort had further strengthened the people of this country, and enhanced their power over themselves and their destiny.

Now we have come to learn of the further progress which you have been making. I suspect that we shall, once again, be impressed by your achievements, and that we shall discover that you and your colleagues, Mr. Prime Minister, are still dissatisfied. As I am a Christian I regard your attitude as that of 'divine discontent', ... I think that we in Tanzania, who have done much less than you, have need to study what you would regard as your revolutionary discontent and to apply it, in our language, to our own situation. (Nyerere, 1974a)

These are not empty, or diplomatic, words. Nyerere was expressing his genuine sentiments albeit in his language and within his idealist world outlook in which the two-line class struggle of the Cultural Revolution becomes a struggle born of dissatisfaction.

### *Catholic Bishops*

The second source of Nyerere's strident anti-Marxism was the fears expressed by the Catholic Church which has a predominant presence in Tanzania and the faith to which Nyerere belonged as a practising

Catholic. When Nyerere first announced his policy of socialism and self-reliance, he went out of his way to educate the Church and its leaders. According to John Sivalon (1992), himself a Catholic priest and an academic researcher, there were three phases after the Arusha Declaration in the relationship between Nyerere's government and the leadership of the Catholic Church. The first period was between 1967 and 1970, when the Catholic leaders supported Nyerere's socialism seeing it as being compatible with the Christian faith (p. 39 et seq.). They distinguished between Marxism and Ujamaa, classifying the later as 'our' Tanzanian socialism that had no relation with Marxist socialism. Tanzanian socialism, they asserted, was based on traditional values of brotherhood, social unity and harmony unlike Marxism which was based on and propagated class war, hostility and conflict. Although the Church's preaching hitherto had always upheld private property, during this phase bishops refrained from criticizing Nyerere's nationalizations.

During the second phase, roughly from 1971 to 1975, things changed for three reasons, according to Sivalon. The bishops were not happy with the developments at the University of Dar es Salaam. They believed that radical students and faculty at the University were propagating Marxism and communism contrary to Tanzanian socialism, which they had supported. Second, they disliked that some party and state leaders were condemning church leaders as 'exploiters' and 'parasites'. Third, they saw the party document adopted in 1971 called *Mwongozo* or Guidelines as evidence that the Party was increasingly veering towards Marxist philosophy. 'The leadership [of the Church] saw these three things as proving that they had lost their prominence in directing the socialist process' (ibid., p. 78). It so happens, though not touched upon by the bishops or Sivalon, that during the same period Nyerere made some of his most militant anti-imperialist speeches (Nyerere, 1974b).

What was it at the University that disturbed the Church hierarchy so much that they withdrew their support from Nyerere's Ujamaa during the second phase, 1971–1975?

### *The University Debates*

The University of Dar es Salaam was established just a couple of months before independence as part of the University of East Africa. Between 1961 and 1966, it operated in the typical Oxbridge tradition yet it had attracted a small group of young radical expatriates from some Western countries who saw themselves making their contribution to a young

African nation which seem to be different from other African countries by the radical nationalist pronouncements of its leader, Julius Nyerere.<sup>7</sup> In 1966, University students demonstrated against the Government plans to introduce compulsory national service for the educated elite. This entailed 5 months of living in semi-military camps undergoing basic military training and working on public projects and then 18 months of doing whatever the person had been qualified in but at 40 per cent of his/her salary. The demonstration placards had been quite virulent condemning Nyerere's leaders as self-seeking rulers who were reaping the 'fruits of independence' while denying the same to the newly educated, aspiring elite. Nyerere was enraged. He made a historical extemporaneous speech to the demonstrators having directed his police to bring them to the compounds of the State House. In memorable words he summed up his position thus:

You are right when you talk about salaries. Our salaries are too high. You want me to cut them? (some applause) ... Do you want me to start with my salary? Yes, I'll slash mine (cries of 'No'.) I'll slash the damned salaries in this country. Mine I slash by twenty per cent as from this hour

The damned salaries! These are the salaries which build this kind of attitude in the educated people, all of them. Me and you. We belong to a class of exploiters. I belong to your class. Where I think three hundred and eighty pounds a year [the minimum wage that would be paid in the National Service] is a prison camp, is forced labour. We belong to this damned exploiting class on top. Is this what the country fought for? Is this what we worked for? In order to maintain a class of exploiters on top? ...

You are right, salaries are too high. Everybody in this country is demanding a pound of flesh. Everybody except the poor peasant. How can he demand it? He doesn't know the language. ... What kind of country are we building? (Quoted in Coulson, 2013, pp. 220–221)

Salaries of politicians were slashed. Civil servants followed suit. And some 400 students of the University were rusticated. Nyerere used the occasion to prepare his people to receive the Arusha Declaration. He spent the next couple of months going round the country in what a party journalist dubbed as 'The Long March' (*The Nationalist*, 17 January 1967). At the end of January 1967, he first revealed his plan to adopt the policy paper on socialism and self-reliance, in other words concretize with action what had always been the party policy of *Ujamaa*. This was carried out at a meeting of regional commissioners who also doubled up as regional party secretaries. This was followed by the meeting of his party's National Executive Committee, the chief policy organ of

the party. It came as a bombshell (Masha, 2011). There was no prior discussion, the cabinet had not been involved, and the central committee of the party had not been consulted (Masha, 2011; Pratt, 1971, pp. 226–240 at p. 236; see also Bibi Titi's version in Geiger, 1997, pp. 172–173). Party members had not discussed it. There was opposition, first mute then open, but Nyerere used all his skills of persuasion and cajoling and with the help of a few loyalists, he got the Arusha Declaration through. Nyerere triumphantly announced it publicly on 5 February 1967 in a meeting attended by over 100, 000 people.

The two important measures of the socialist policy were nationalization and the leadership conditions. All banks and some seven manufacturing enterprises were taken over by the government. Internally, this was welcomed although externally the right wing press went on a spree warning the hitherto moderate and West-friendly Nyerere that he was going down the slippery road of communism. The leadership conditions that forbade leaders of the state, party and public sector from owning houses for renting, receiving two incomes and having shares or directorships in private companies were strongly opposed. In spite of some compromises, and a few defections, both overt and covert opposition within the party and the state continued. At the University, though, the Arusha Declaration heralded a period of great intellectual activity changing the exiting turgid dominant discourse based on academic compartmentalization of disciplines and bourgeois world outlook. Borrowing from Hegel, militant students proclaimed 'the truth is the whole' and waged what they dubbed as ideological struggle against traditional disciplines and bourgeois lecturers both inside and outside the classroom. This is not the place to go into details. A full intellectual history of that period still needs to be written (Kimambo et al., 2008; Shivji, 1990, pp. 49–66). Suffice it to say that a group of militant East African students and a few radical faculty, the towering figure being the Guyanese Marxist historian, Walter Rodney, formed the University Students African Revolutionary Front (USARF) headed by a young militant Ugandan student, Yoweri Museveni, who was later to become his country's president with the direct and indirect assistance of Nyerere's Tanzania (Hirji, 2010, pp. 1–11).

The USARF published a cyclostyled magazine called *Cheche* (spark/s) recalling Lenin's *Iskra* and Kwame Nkrumah's 'The Spark'.<sup>8</sup> The magazine carried incisive critiques of the existing capitalist system including questioning whether state policies and practices in Tanzania were conducive to building socialism. Its self-declared standpoint was Marxist-Leninist. The organization behind it USARF did not let any

major event in Tanzania and Africa pass without a critical comment. It organized public lectures by leaders of liberation movements and Marxists and advocates of Black Power. The USARF's activity that irked the Church most was its Sunday classes whose self-declared purpose was 'ideological self-cultivation'. Radical students of some or the other kind of left orientation did not perhaps exceed 50 in a student body of some 1600 but their vocal opposition to the dominant ethos and discourses and their well-researched articulation of their positions far outweighed their numbers. From the outside, it appeared as if the University had gone red. To be sure, as in any other movement or tendency, there is always the well-grounded core but then there are on the fringes fellow travellers who try to distinguish themselves by demagoguery and dogmatism. The student activism of the time had its full share of such fringes, which often provided ammunition to its ill-intentioned critics, both of the right and the non-Marxist left, including Nyerere.

Radical activities and pronouncements of USARF and the content of its magazine *Cheche* deeply troubled the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church. Father Walsh, who was then the University Chaplain at the University, wrote a special article to the bishops raising alarm that Marxist philosophy was taking hold of the University. He emphasized that more and more students were getting convinced and abandoning their belief in God. His associate C.K. Omari was of the same opinion and wrote that the attendance of students at Sunday services had fallen to only 25 per cent. 'The opinion of these two added to bishops' fear that the future leaders of the country were being indoctrinated in a politics other than Nyerere's socialism' (Sivalon, 1992, p. 60). Father Walsh was a close friend and associate of Nyerere. He had made and mentored Nyerere from his Tabora days. It is unlikely that Walsh did not communicate his misgivings to Nyerere. Not unsurprisingly, therefore, Nyerere took the opportunity of his frequent teach-ins and question-answer sessions at the University to rebuke left students in his characteristic rhetorical style, sometimes verging on sarcasm. This elated the rightist faculty and students, a big number of whom was 'apolitical, and already bureaucratic and technocratic in outlook—much more interested in their own eventual perquisites and economic well-being than in the imperatives of Tanzanian socialism' (Saul, 1970, pp. 289–292 at p. 289). Matters came to a head towards the end of 1960s. After publishing two ordinary issues, *Cheche* published a special issue in September 1970 called 'Tanzania: The Silent Class Struggle', a long essay by one of its active student members.<sup>9</sup> The essay analysed the economic structures of Tanzania prevailing after the Arusha Declaration

and questioned whether nationalization by itself was sufficient to affect socialism. It argued that nationalization did not mean socialization, particularly when the nationalized property was put back in the hands of the former multinational companies through management agency contracts. Following on its heels, two months later to be exact, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, himself a party cadre, on orders of the Chancellor, Nyerere, proscribed USARF and banned its magazine *Cheche* under the pretext that *Cheche* was a foreign name and that the magazine was spreading foreign ideology, namely, 'Russian socialism'. Progressive students were undeterred. Under the branch of the youth wing of the party, Tanu Youth League (TYL), they continued publishing *Cheche* under the new name *Majimaji*. Its inaugural issue published in January 1971 carried three articles commenting on Shivji's *Silent Struggle*, followed by a special issue on 'Status Quo and Socialism' with a critique of Shivji written by a fine Hungarian political economist Tamás Szentés who was then teaching in the Economics department of the University.

Shivji answered his critiques in a longer essay 'Tanzania: The Class Struggle Continues', which was published by the Department of Development Studies of the University in 1973, obviously to avoid further trouble for the new *Majimaji*. Later, a revised and enlarged version of this essay was published jointly as a book *Class Struggles in Tanzania* by the state company, the Tanzania Publishing House, together with Monthly Review of New York and Heinemann of London (Shivji, 1976). The book was no longer ambiguous and argued forcefully that under the umbrella of the Arusha Declaration Tanzania had embarked on the road of building state capitalism and there was a tendency towards the development of a new class which it called the 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie'. The workers movement of strikes and take-overs (discussed in following section), which broke out between 1971 and 1973, was characterized in the book as the beginnings of the proletarian struggle against the emerging bureaucratic bourgeoisie.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, Milton Obote, the president of Uganda and a close ally of Nyerere, was overthrown in a military coup headed by the army General Iddi Amin Dada (Mamdani, 1983). There was widespread belief that the coup was supported by Israel and possibly Britain. At the same time, FRELIMO had scaled up its armed struggle in Mozambique resulting in increasing military incursions by the Portuguese into Tanzanian territory. Just the previous year the Portuguese commandos had invaded Guinea-Conakry, which like Tanzania was providing a rear base to the liberation movement of Guinea-Bissau, PAIGC, led by a fine Marxist and guerrilla

leader Amilcar Cabral. Tanzania felt threatened. It was quick to draw lessons. In February 1971, the Party adopted one of its most militant and forthright anti-imperialist document called *Mwongozo* or the ‘Guidelines’ (Tanganyika African National Union [TANU], 1971). It called the nation to arms in the literal sense. Workers in factories and peasants in border villages must be trained and armed for the defense of the country against Portuguese colonialists and their Western backers, it stated. Clause 15 touched on the relationship between workers and the management of nationalized enterprises famously called in Tanzania ‘parastatals’. It said: ‘For a Tanzanian leader it must be forbidden to be arrogant, extravagant, contemptuous and oppressive’. The phraseology and content of the *Mwongozo* left no doubt that the left in the Party had played a prominent role in the drafting of the document. Ngombale-Mwiru, an avowed Marxist and an articulate left ideologue, was in fact the secretary of the drafting committee (Ngombale-Mwiru/Shivji, 2009; Ngombale-Mwiru, 2013, pp. 11–22). As the regional commissioner of Coast region, Ngombale quickly set on forming people’s militia and organizing ideological classes for workers after office hours.

Clause 15 resonated with the working class. It became a clarion call sparking off a spate of strikes in parastatals and private enterprises alike. No free trade unions were allowed in the country after their forced dissolution in 1964, following the army mutiny, and the establishment of a state trade union, the National Trade Union of Workers in Tanzania, NUTA. Workers had no faith in it. They turned their factory floor workers committees into their vanguard to lead the struggle. Workers committees very fully elected bodies. They had been established by law to help employers maintain and enforce discipline on the factory floor. They were now turned on their head by militant workers. State proposes, working class disposes. Between 1971 and 1973, there were 31 ‘downing of tools’ (an euphemism for strikes since strikes were illegal) involving 28,708 workers with a loss of some 63,646 man-days. This was twice the figure for the previous 6 years (Shivji, 1976, p. 136). Accused of sabotaging production, the movement quickly graduated to the second stage, locking-out of ‘arrogant’ managers. This was a short step from taking-over. If they could run factories without their managers, why did they need them at all? The next step was to throw out the owner all together and take-over their places of work. That is what exactly happened. The state and state media reacted ferociously. The paramilitary Field Force Unit was used to evict workers and dismiss them *en masse*. Nyerere had until then not commented. Workers perceived that he was on their side; after all they were only implementing the Party

Guidelines. Not so. In his May Day speech of 1974, Nyerere roundly condemned workers' spontaneous movement and called for discipline. He rhetorically asked them: When you strike, against whom are you striking? The implication of his rhetoric was that they were striking against themselves because after all these were state enterprises, *their* enterprises (see generally Shivji 1976 and the sources cited there). Not untypically Nyerere was confusing state property under state capitalism with workers' property. At best, the Tanzanian situation could be described as 'collective capitalism', to use the apt phrase of I. Sachs.<sup>11</sup> This speech broke the backbone of the workers' struggle by providing ammunition to the right wing in the party and to the bureaucratic management of parastatals. The following year, Nyerere's government amended the relevant law in effect abolishing workers' committees and turning them into NUTA branches. That brought to an end one of the most intense struggle of workers in Tanzania and together with it removing the radical sting of *Mwongozo*. Among others, the Catholic bishops too celebrated the end of leftist *Mwongozo*. Why?

Unexpectedly, the *Mwongozo* and its edicts had emboldened the employees and laity of the Church to question the hierarchical decision-making of the Church and the privileges of bishops (Sivalon, 1992, pp. 57–59). With the banning of USARF and *Cheche* at the University and the suppression of workers by the State, the bishops breathed a sigh of relief. Nyerere himself assured the bishops that 'We know better societal relations than the bishops: we know robust methods of checking communism. I believe communism will never come to Tanzania if our methods succeed. Recently, I intervened to stop a group of students who wanted to start "Cheche," on the Russian lines' (Quoted *ibid.*, p. 67). Bishops could now sleep peacefully in the knowledge that Marxism and communism had been banished from the University and workers' militancy crushed. They could return to their saddle to lead *Tanzanian* socialism. Sivalon's precise summing up deserves quotation:

By the time of 1975, after that period when the leadership of the Catholic Church had misgivings on the meaning of ujamaa [dampening its relation with the Government], amicable relations between the Church and the Government were restored. ... The return of cordial relations was the result of the Government taking stern measures against the people with extreme views. *Mwongozo* was almost forgotten. Pejorative language by the media and Government leaders portraying Church leaders as exploiters was on the wane. And the Government had blocked Marxist politics at the University. (*ibid.*, p. 61, author's translation)

Nyerere voiced his resentment of the Marxist left during his question and answer session with the University community in February 1976. The answers were transcribed and edited by his assistant Joan Wicken but never published. The transcript was filed away with Wicken's note: 'Not for publication'.<sup>12</sup> In this session, Nyerere's rhetorical answers were delivered with eerie vehemence. He repeatedly underscored three points. One, the dogmatic approach of some Marxists; two, their penchant for inventing classes and advocating class struggle where none existed, and, finally, the doctrinaire position of some Marxists that you could not build socialism without first building capitalism. Ridiculing them as theologians, he asserted that some of the so-called Marxist had read little of Marx. 'So some of you here, if you want to really impress, you get some incomprehensive phraseology from, say some books of Marx; as you know, you can impress a lot of ignorant people!' He asserted that some Marxists spend their time interpreting and reinterpreting Marxism. They treat Marxist texts as scriptures and see if the situation they find fits the Marxist text like theologians. 'They find a problem in Tanzania and they say what did Marx say? And then, then some clever fellow discovers a text. Did Marx ever say this? Ooh, yes, he did. Where, you know, in, so they discover text. So then, they begin, ahaa! It is there'. 'This is the argument of theologians, not scientists'. This is a caricature, to say the least, of the Marxist debates on the Campus then.<sup>13</sup> In the pages of *Cheche* and seminar papers, Marxism was applied far more creatively than the impression Nyerere is trying to portray. To be sure, like elsewhere, the University had its demagogic fringes and they never produced anything substantial to become a butt of Nyerere's ridicule. It is apparent that he was referring to Marxists who had produced some of the most original analysis of the Tanzanian situation based on solid empirical research. It is precisely the originality that Nyerere disliked because it showed, among other things, that in spite of his intentions, various ostensibly socialist measures were objectively creating an environment for the nurturing of a new class. It was in this context that the Marxists talked about the emerging classes and class struggle. Nyerere, like many petty bourgeois socialists before him, would accept classes but not class struggle. Nyerere argued that for him there was no class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in a country like Tanzania because there was no bourgeoisie and proletariat to speak of. The real struggle, class struggle, was between the rich and the poor—in fact between rich countries and poor countries. The workers of Europe told their rich that 'you have been stealing from us' and therefore demanded change of structure. He continued:

I am saying the poor of the world must now say to the rich of the world, not just within a nation. You continue saying it within Tanzania. Continue saying it to the rich of Tanzania. And the rich of Tanzania I am going to tell you are not bourgeois, they are a bunch of bureaucrats among you, - and you are going to be in within this bureaucracy. The rich fellow of Tanzania, who is the rich fellow of Tanzania? The rich fellow of Tanzania is some fellow who is going to be given an office and, and from this office he is going to try, you know, and throw his weight about. He is not going to be very weighty! He is not going to have very much weight. For friends in Nigeria, for instance. We have cashewnuts not oil. So even when I have a bunch of some of you people saying, 'we want to be wealthy', you can't be very wealthy on cashewnuts! So any way you continue your struggle against us in the Party and the Government machinery, and the Parastatal machinery, to make us behave ourselves. I will be very pleased if you continue that. But, but that is not going to be the major struggle of the modern world, of the world of 1976, 77, 78. Why?

Because in Tanzania, you are not struggling against capitalists here. You are struggling against some fool who would like to make himself a tool of the exploiters, of the blatant fellows who want to use their powers and prestige to dominate Tanzania. That is the fellow you are going to fight against, not a Tanzanian capitalist. Where is he? (Nyerere, 1976, p. 13)

The real struggle, Nyerere asserted, was going to be between the rich and the poor. Even the nineteenth century slogan of the 'workers of the world unite' did not apply because 'Workers of the world now are very wealthy; they belong to the wealthy class. [...] they share in the exploitation of the poor of the world'. Today you can only say 'Peasants of the world unite' (ibid., p. 11). Nyerere's arguments, in a somewhat convoluted fashion, hark back on theories of labour aristocracy and peasant populism, a far cry from the Marxist method which identified classes in terms of their role in the process of production and accumulation rather than the size of wealth.

Finally, he asserted, that what he was trying to do in Tanzania was to by-pass capitalism. And there were

[S]ome very good Marxists who would say if you really want scientific socialism, wait. Wait until you have developed capitalism, ... Why? Because the instrument of socialism, the instrument of this socialist revolution is a product of capitalism. The proletariat is a product of capitalism. (ibid., p. 18)

No doubt, Nyerere was right that there was and has been a Marxist tendency of a Trotskyist variety that argues precisely in this way but such

was almost non-existent in Tanzania. So, this was really shadow boxing to score points when the duel did not exist.

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Besides this type of rhetorical exchanges, Nyerere never developed his position in any substantial writing but his intellectual friends did argue Nyerere-type positions in a more academic language. One of these was Cranford Pratt, a Canadian political scientist who was the first principal of the Dar es Salaam University College. There was mutual admiration between the two. Nyerere thought Pratt's first book on Tanzania *The Critical Phase* (Pratt, 1976) was 'brilliant'. When he was still reading the book, Nyerere quipped to Joan Wicken that 'I'm sipping it like wine'. Joan Wicken added in her letter to Pratt that 'He likes your "intelligent and academic" attacks on the Marxists of this world who try to "cut everyone to fit their theories," etc.'<sup>14</sup> In the book, Pratt had castigated those who were talking of the emergence of a new class, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, as dwelling in 'radical mythology' (ibid., p. 241). In his later piece, he dubbed them 'ultra-left' while categorizing himself, together with Nyerere and Joan Wicken, as 'democratic socialists' (Pratt, 1979, pp. 193–236). Pratt classified commentators on the Tanzanian socialist experiment between Marxist socialists and democratic socialists. Democratic socialists were those, according to him, who were not Marxists and who believed that Nyerere put the country on the transition to socialism. Marxist socialists' point of departure was different although within that category there were again two groups. One was that which never accepted that Nyerere was leading a transition to socialism. He called them 'ultra-left'. The second group was more sympathetic to Nyerere and was prepared to consider that the country was in transition to socialism. 'There is much to be gained by a continuing dialogue between Marxist socialists of this particular persuasion and democratic socialists' (ibid., p. 198). Implicitly, therefore, it was not worthwhile for democratic socialists to dialogue with the 'ultra-left' group who saw the emergence of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie and did not accept that the country was in transition to socialism. Nyerere, whom Pratt included in the group of democratic socialists, would have perhaps agreed with Pratt. No wonder that he castigated doctrinaire socialists whom Pratt called the 'ultra-left'. Most Tanzanian left like Nyelwa Kisenge, Henry Mapolu and Issa Shivji on the Campus and in the Party in Pratt's scheme were within the 'ultra-left' group while the more amenable Marxist socialists with whom democratic socialists

could dialogue comprised of mainly expatriate lecturers, like John Saul, Lionel Cliffe and Andrew Coulson. Who would give final verdict on this contestation but history?

## Conclusion: The Last Laugh

History has no respect for intellectuals' categorizations. By the end of 1970s, the so-called transition to socialism had exhausted itself and the country entered one of its most dire period. With the breakup of the East African community, the Uganda war and the hike in oil prices, the Tanzanian economy sunk into a deep crisis. Nyerere's last five years were his most critical. Not only the large majority braved commodity famine, long queues and shortages, but also the very legitimacy of the regime and Nyerere's hitherto unchallenged popularity came under strain. Corruption mounted, smugglers and racketeers proliferated, and Party and State leaders began to raise questions on the validity of the socialist path. The last ditch effort to rebrand the Party as a truly revolutionary and socialist, by adopting new Guidelines, *Mwongozo 1981*, failed.<sup>15</sup> *Mwongozo 1981* was one of the most critical and analytical documents produced by the Party. Again it was the erstwhile ideologue Ngombale who initiated and drafted it to the discomfiture of Nyerere (Ngombale-Mwiru, 2013). Among other things, *Mwongozo 1981* admitted that under the umbrella of the Arusha Declaration, a new class of bureaucrats had usurped power that was bold enough to challenge the Declaration.

In the section on 'self-criticism', after cataloguing some of the external factors, which contributed to the state of the crisis, *Mwongozo* admits that there are also significant internal factors that ought not be ignored; rather they need to be analysed:

The truth is that some of our economic problems are due to our laxity in implementing the policy of Socialism and Self-reliance in villages and the public sector. In addition, in the fourteen years since the Arusha Declaration, the Party, the State and its organs have been used to strengthen the capitalist sector in the country in industries, commerce, transport, construction etc. and this expansion of capitalism has undermined and weakened our public sector. (para. 35 reprinted in Ally et al., eds. 2013: pp. 55–115 at 66–67, author's translation)

It goes on to confess that the Party had failed to lead the struggle with clear ideology and theoretical depth. It had failed to inculcate in its

cadres a profound grasp of the socialist theory without which it is not possible to understand society:

Only such an analysis could enable the Party to understand the conflict of class interest which has emerged in the country. This conflict has its roots in the fundamental contradiction between socialism and capitalism, between the interests of the workers and peasants on the one hand, and bourgeois individualism and capitalism that has developed since the Arusha Declaration, on the other. (para. 50, *ibid.*, p. 72)

It emphasized that for the Party to lead the struggle to build socialism it was necessary for the Party leaders, cadres and members to be armed with the weapon of theory:

Building socialism is not a tea-party but a struggle, a permanent struggle against capitalism and exploitation, against reactionaries and political prevaricators, against economic saboteurs, charlatans, thieves, loiterers and the indolent. Correct stand in the struggle is an outcome of the correct socialist theory; and this would have enabled us to avoid decisions and actions which have facilitated the growth of capitalist roots, contrary to the outlook of struggle against capitalism. (para. 52, *ibid.*, p. 72)

The class analysis of the *Mwongozo* came too late. By this time, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie was already on the offensive aided by the erstwhile imperialist institutions like the World Bank and the IMF in the form of the Washington Consensus and structural adjustment programmes. Nyerere stepped down in 1985 and his successors successfully steered the country away from his nationalist socialism to neo-liberalism. By the end of 1980s, the Party had abandoned the leadership conditions, thus opening the doors to politicians and civil servants to use their state positions for private accumulation. Addressing the party, state and parastatal leaders in 1989, Nyerere warned them not to abandon the Arusha Declaration because it gave hope to the masses thereby giving them the necessary legitimacy to rule.

[The Arusha Declaration] did not do away with poverty but it has given you all in this hall, capitalists [sic!] and socialists alike, an opportunity to build a country which holds out a future of hopes to the many. ...

To be sure, you few Waswahili [a colloquial for, in this case, 'people'], do you really expect to rule Tanzanians through coercion, when there is no hope, and then expect that they will sit quiet in peace? Peace is born of hope, when hope is gone there will be social upheavals. I'd be surprised if these Tanzanians refuse to rebel, why?

When the majority doesn't have any hope you are building a volcano. It is bound to erupt one day. (*Mzalendo*, 21 May 1989, translation by the author)

In 1967, when the Party adopted the Arusha Declaration Nyerere called it a *statement of intention* to build a society based on equality, equity and democracy. He had vigorously ridiculed the possibility of the emergence of a new class. Some two decades later it had become a *charter of hope* to provide a veneer of legitimacy to the 'new class'. The bureaucratic bourgeoisie was in no mood to listen. It fully and mindlessly embraced neo-liberalism. It went ahead full-throttle to dismantle the Arusha Declaration, sell off public assets to venture and vulture capitalists, and ditch the leadership code thus throwing open doors to rapacious politicians and public servants to use state positions for private accumulation (Havnevik & Isinika, 2010; Shivji, 2006).

The last word belongs to Tamás Szentes, a Hungarian Marxist, who, while being sympathetic to Nyerere's venture to opt for a non-capitalist path for his country, was critical enough to posit a different trajectory than the one intended by its author:

The process of the 'elite' turning into a bourgeoisie in conjunction with the state capitalist sector being reprivatized (but only if these two processes go hand in hand!), should be conceived of as an exceptional road of the formation of the bourgeois class and power. (Szentes, 1976, p. 318n)

Is post-Nyerere Tanzania now on this exceptional road? That is the question that the new generation of Marxist scholars need to grapple with. With the end of neo-liberal triumphalism, and the worldwide resurgence of Marxism, history has once again given the present generation of Tanzanian and African intellectuals an opportunity to resurrect the emancipatory thought in the tradition of Marx's ruthless science and Nyerere's uncompromising spirit.

## Notes

1. This is a revised version of the Paper first presented to 'The First World Congress on Marxism' held in Peking University, Beijing, People's Republic of China, 10–11 October 2015.
2. Interview with Father Francois Houtart, 29/08/2013.
3. *Daily News*, September 29, 1972.
4. <http://appliedgandhi.blogspot.com/2008/02/gandhi-on-soclaim-capitalism-and.html>.
5. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKjxgpuymVo>.

6. See, for instance, his address to the TANU Study Group (13/06/1967) on 'Kazi' (labour). (In author's possession).
7. Based on Coulson (2013), p. 269 et. seq.
8. The full story of this magazine has been told in graphic details in Hirji (2010).
9. The essay together with some comments on it has been reprinted in Cliffe and Saul (1973, pp. 304–358). Later a booklet was published by Shivji (1972).
10. The argument on a 'new class' arising in the period of transition to socialism was not as new among Marxists as it sounded in Tanzania. Milovan Djilas, the former Vice-President of Yugoslavia under Tito made a similar argument (Djilas, 1957). Just after a month of the Arusha Declaration, Ngombale-Mwiru, then a young lecturer at the party college, Kivukoni, had argued that there were three conditions which must be met before the country can embark on socialism and one of these conditions was that "the parasitic politico-bureaucratic bourgeoisie, the ally of imperialism, must be eliminated from political power." (Cliffe & Saul, 1973, p. 57). Unlike Shivji whose argument was that it is the very socialist measures like nationalization which create conditions for the birth of a new class, (the bureaucratic bourgeoisie), Ngombale seems to posit its existence even before nationalizations.
11. "...[I]n underdeveloped countries State capitalism substitutes for the non-existing capitalists, performing actually the function of 'collective capitalism'." Quoted in Szentes (1976), p. 312 <sup>fn25</sup>.
12. In SHC/PF/23/A, State House Files held by the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation.
13. It is true that later the so-called debate among Marxists on the Campus degenerated into demagoguery for reasons that cannot be gone into here. (see Tandon, 1982).
14. Wicken to Pratt, 24 February 1976 in SHC/P/PF.4, held at Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation.
15. For analysis of the two Mwongozs, 1971 and 1981, see Shivji (2013).

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