

Peasants and Bureaucrats

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Andrew Coulson

This account of the sequence of Ujamaa policy implementation from 1968 to 1974 is the second half of an article prepared in Tanzania which asked: ‘Can a government bureaucracy bring about development?’ It traces chronologically the rise and decline of the strategy of Ujamaa and self-reliance, and complements Raikes’ analysis, and Tabari’s review.

President Nyerere has often argued that development cannot come from outsiders, that people can only develop themselves:

The ujamaa village is a new conception, based on the post-Arusha Declaration understanding that what we need to develop is people, not things, and that people can only develop themselves. . . No-one can be forced into an ujamaa village. . . For if these things happen—that is if an outsider gives such instructions and enforces them—then it will no longer be an ujamaa village.

In the same policy paper *Freedom and Development* he also explained that many mistakes had been made and that it was very important that the right lessons should be learnt from these mistakes:

When we tried to promote rural development in the past we sometimes spent huge sums of money on establishing a settlement. . . In other cases we just encouraged young men to leave the towns for a rural area and then left them to their own devices. . . We acted on the assumption that there was a short cut to rural development in these rural areas. All too often, therefore, we persuaded people to go to the new settlements by promising them that they could quickly grow rich there, or that Government would give them services and equipment which they could not hope to receive either in the towns or in their traditional farming places. In very few cases was any ideology involved; we thought and talked in terms of greatly increased output, and of things being provided for the settlers.

He also emphasised that ujamaa living would have to start—as in

China—with small groups of people rather than large villages:

The policy is, in fact, the result from learning from the failures which we have had and from the successes of those small groups which began and grew on a different basis.

And he writes about a possible village with only 7 members:

. . . the decision to start must be made by the people themselves—and it must be made by each individual. For if a group of 20 people discuss the idea and only 7 decide to go ahead, then that ujamaa village will consist of 7 people at the beginning. If 15 decide to start, then it will begin with 15. . . There is no other way forward, because. . . 5 who come in unwillingly can destroy the efforts of 15 who want to work out a new pattern for themselves.

Such statements as these coming out in a Presidential paper will amaze anyone who reads the newspapers in 1974. For by then the approved size of a village was 300-500 families, more than a million people had moved to new villages in one Region alone (and similar movements had occurred in most other regions) and most of them had moved within the space of a few months, and the newspaper reports proved that many of these moves were not voluntary.

How was such a complete change from the 1968 statements possible? The only way to understand this is to examine historically how the ujamaa programme developed. The following is a summary of the most important changes in the way ujamaa approached:

April, 1962. Publications of the President's pamphlet *Ujamaa—The Basis of African Socialism*, proposing that all development must be based on the attitude of mind (Ujamaa) of the 'traditional' African extended family.

December, 1962. Nyerere's inaugural address as President: 'The first and absolutely essential thing to do, therefore, if we want to be able to start using tractors for cultivation, is to begin living in proper villages. . . For the next few years the Government will be doing all it can to enable the farmers of Tanganyika to come together in village communities'.

1962 and 1963. A mass (about 1000) of spontaneous settlement schemes sprang up all over Tanzania. About half of these were under the leadership of the TANU Youth League, and about a third of the total tried to grow sisal. They had the enthusiasm of pioneers. The Ruvuma Development Association which inspired many of the ideas in the President's 1967 papers dates from this period.

1963–1965. Problems of the spontaneous schemes led to a belief that change must be planned. The bureaucracy could not supervise so many projects, and agriculture proved tougher than many settlers had expected. So the Government abandoned the spontaneous schemes, and concentrated on supervised settlement schemes of which there were never more than 40.

1966. The Ross Report (presented to the Government in late 1965

but never published) had made it clear that the 40 settlement schemes had been a disastrous waste of resources, being over-capitalised, badly planned, and through spoon-feeding the settlers (e.g. by providing them with too much free food).

January, 1967. The Arusha Declaration put the emphasis on self-reliance, at a national level (gifts and loans will endanger our independence), and at a local level (hard work is the root of development).

September, 1967. The President's Paper, *Socialism and Rural Development* made Ujamaa the official policy of the country (Tanzanian socialism must be firmly based on the land and its workers. We shall achieve the goals we have set ourselves if the basis of Tanzanian life consists of rural economic and social communities where people live together and work together for the good of all). It was implied that the peasants themselves would start the villages.

1968. A few villages were started, but often (as in Handeni and West Lake) they were started by enthusiastic local politicians using force or threats of force. In October, therefore, the President issued the paper *Freedom and Development*. (No one can be forced into an Ujamaa village).

1969. In March Presidential Circular No. 1 of 1969 directed that 'All Government policies, and the activities and decisions of all Government officials, must therefore be geared towards emphasising the advantages of living together and working together for the good of all'. This policy change was fully reflected in the Second Five Year Plan for Tanzania which started in July 1969. From this time on all Government Departments started placing as many of their projects as they could in ujamaa villages.

The Regional Development Fund was made available for financing small projects in ujamaa villages. Government staff could therefore promise provision of services to any group willing to work together and call itself an ujamaa village. The Government staff thus became the main initiators of ujamaa villages. But this method of starting villages broke any link that might have existed between success in production and receipts of aid—many unproductive and rather uncommitted villages received lots of aid. 1969 also saw the start of Operation Rufiji, whose idea was to move the whole population of the lower Rufiji floodplain into higher ground not so near the river, and the banning of the Ruvuma Development Association by the Central Committee of TANU, ostensibly for acting as a focus of opposition to the Party but perhaps for being too self-reliant and acting independently of the Government and the Party bureaucracy.

1970. Concerned about the number of new villages, and their apparent lack of organisation and planning, the President sent Presidential Planning Teams to the areas where there were many villages. Many members of these teams lacked local experience (though they were all Tanzanian), and they only had time to stay for a few days at most in each village. The plans they produced therefore consisted (mainly) of over-enthusiastic targets, and long lists of 'aids'

to be given to the villages by Government departments. Three of the planning teams were sent to Dodoma where Operation Dodoma was conceived to solve the problems of Dodoma Region by moving all the people in the region into planned villages near water supplies. Under the dynamic (but somewhat authoritarian) leadership of the Regional Commissioner, Dr. Klerruu, 750 villages were started in Mtwara Region.

1971. Over 30,000 Gogo families moved into 190 villages in Dodoma. The villages were very large, two villages having more than 500 families. The Government ploughed 21,000 acres for them by tractor, but cultivation and harvesting were to be individual. Dr. Klerruu, was transferred from Mtwara to Iringa, where, by the end of the year, 629 new villages had been started (there were only 22 in December 1970). He attempted to confront the African capitalist maize farmers of Ismani, and one of them shot him on Christmas Day, 1971.

1972. More Operations were launched in Chunya and Kigoma, and decentralisation measures implemented in July 1972 put many of the most able and experienced Government staff into the regions, where one of their main tasks was to organise Operations. However, there were problems with communal production—in some of the Rufiji villages which had been registered as Producer Cooperatives (the most advanced type of ujamaa village) there was in fact no communal cultivation at all. The tendency in such places was to emphasise block-farming and no longer to attempt communal agriculture. These trends, were re-enforced by the Iringa Declaration (Siasi ni Kilimo) of May 1972 which was heavily technocratic in orientation—stressed the need to raise productivity and how this could be done using simple technology, but it put little emphasis on communal work.

1973. Operations were implemented over all the low-density areas of the country, with de-emphasis of ujamaa and emphasis on Development Villages or Songambe Villages (after the Regional Commissioner who started Operation Rufiji and was by then starting villages in Shinyanga). Mwalimu announced that village should have up to 500 families, and then on November 6 that 'To live in Villages is an Order'—to be carried out by the end of 1976. Meanwhile in 1973 Tanzania imported over 25,000 tons of maize. This was partly a consequence of drought, but also caused by loss of marketed production from such areas as Ismani where the operations had been implemented.

1974. The order was carried out with great speed (by October the Mwanza leaders were able to announce that in their region more than one million peasants had moved into planned villages). There were cases of destruction of property and use of force. One of the main requirements for the new villages was to be along main roads—and this was implemented regardless of the consequences for agriculture—in Karagwe where the roads run along the tops of hills people were moved from the fertile valleys where they cultivated to the tops of hills, while in nearby Kibondo where the road ran at the bottom of fertile hills people were moved from the hills to the valleys. In Mwanza houses were built on the most fertile cotton lands, and in many areas (Sumbawanga) people were moved to land around

missions or water supplies which was of poor fertility and away from the distant areas where the soil was better and from where most of surplus production came. The Rufiji move was also liable to upset the effective use of parts of the flood-plain—some of the potentially most productive land in the country. Meanwhile the country was importing 1,200 million/Shs worth of food for the period March 1974—September 1975 and on 15 August the President warned that food imports would be impossible the next year as there would not be enough foreign exchange. As food plantings fell most districts re-activated colonial bye-laws to enforce minimum acreages (in Dodoma farmers were to have identity cards issued by TANU to show that they had cultivated 6 acres for each wife and nobody would be allowed to use buses, trains or planes without the identity card). In the Western regions plans were made for ‘Runaway Villagers to be sent Home’. The foreign exchange situation was deteriorating. In October the National Executive Committee members went to the Regions to assess the moves, and their likely effect on food supplies.

The conclusions from this are very simple:

1. For most of the period the initiative to start villages did not come from the villagers. It came from the politicians and from the staff. The exceptions to this were the 1962-63 period of spontaneous settlement schemes, and (to a lesser extent) the 1968-69 period after the publication of *Freedom and Development*. But in each the spontaneous movements were taken over by ‘planning’—in 1964 by planned settlement schemes and in 1970 by the Government’s ujamaa planning teams.
2. From 1968 onwards there were instances of the use of force to start villages. But between 1969 and 1971 it was largely replaced by the bait of social services. After 1971 the main thrust of villagization was threats of force.
3. The original aim was (a) to provide a happier life for people by living together and (b) to increase production by working together. But many peasants were hesitant about the first, and the second did not work (as can be seen conclusively by the fact that the Government had to pass minimum acreage laws to compel farmers to cultivate *individually*—if communal production had succeeded they would instead have been passing laws to *limit* individual production instead of expanding it).
4. But we have seen that individual peasant production has no dynamic to transform the economy. The use of force is therefore bound to fail. It will never lead to the sort of enthusiasm among the peasantry that for example has led Chinese and North Vietnamese peasants to transform their environments while waiting for the products from industry to change their techniques and uplift their standards of living. It is much more likely to lead to the sort of passive resistance which characterised the Soviet forced collectivisation from the top. (The Soviet Union with some of the best wheat land in the world is importing food to this day, 57

years after its revolution and 40 years after collectivisation was complete.)

5. The use of promises of aid or provision of social services is also bound to fail, since production will not rise fast enough to pay for the social services.
6. Increased prices paid to the producers of agricultural crops (especially food crops) have a role to play. But in the 1974 situation they cannot succeed alone, because they could only transfer a substantial amount of purchasing power to the peasants by taking it away from the non-productive classes and the workers, and these classes will not allow this. If purchasing power is given to the peasants without taking it away from somewhere else the only result will be shortages of everything that the peasants want to buy, more and faster inflation, and even more disillusionment among the peasants. This is in addition to the well-established argument that it would mean encouraging rural capitalism and class formation, and would therefore be self-defeating in the long run.

There is, therefore, inevitably a struggle ahead. The peasants have to liberate themselves—or to be liberated. This struggle may be directed in the first instance against their most obvious exploiters in the co-operatives, in order to get higher incomes for the rural producers, but also against the bureaucratic class which continues to use up the surplus unproductively. It might lead to yet another attempt to establish capitalist development, but this development would not be independent, nor could it possibly succeed, as Nyerere himself has pointed out in *The Rational Choice*. The alternative is to build socialism from below, which means starting with small groups of politicised peasants who will have to march largely on their own. The groups of cooperating farmers have to be small enough to trust and discipline each other. The bureaucracy will have to be drastically reduced in size, and rural development will *not* be seen as coming about by Government staff or Government money, but by people who combine together to build a new life. Even this cannot succeed without sensible industrialisation plans. But the logic of the present situation is that the only immediate hope for socialism in Tanzania is a cultural revolution.