

THE DARK SIDE OF NYERERE'S LEGACY

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TO ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHO WERE, AND REMAIN INCARCERATED THROUGHOUT AFRICA, MY HEARTFELT THANKS FOR THEIR SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

AND

MY SON, MUSHOBOZI, WITH THE SINCERE WISH THAT HE WILL IN TIME, LIVE IN A HOMELAND GOVERNED WISELY AND WELL BY DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED LEADERS.

CONTENTS

Mbabane, Swaziland	1
Abduction	20
A Whiff of Prison	27
Inside Machava	33
Journey to Tanzania	45
Interrogation	49
Journey to Dar-es-Salaam	57
The Dark Side of Nyerere's Legacy	59
Life in the Camp	87
Release from Solitary Confinement	98
Banishment Order	111
Escape to Freedom	113
Leaving Portugal	119
The first multi-party election	131
Epilogue	134

Mbabane, Swaziland

It was a Wednesday, December 6, 1983. A friend and I had just finished a frugal lunch in a shed next to a butchery in Mbabane, Swaziland, opposite the Swazi Observer newspaper. We had bought meat from the butchery, roasted it, and then eaten it with hard porridge. It was a popular place where people would meet for a midday meal and chat.

I had just lunched with a Kenyan friend, John Cartridge, who had been in Swaziland for several days, stranded. His version of how he ended in this predicament was not entirely coherent, though it sounded circumstantial. He said he had been working in Lesotho, another Southern

African kingdom, as a motor mechanic and businessman. Cartridge even boasted of having repaired the official car of King Moshoeshoe II, the Lesotho monarch who died in 1996. He said he was stranded because his passport had been impounded by a local hotel where he and a Malawian business associate had failed to pay their bills from a previous visit.

Rumour had it that Cartridge's passport had indeed been impounded by the hotel, but only after a business deal with the hotel turned sour. Cartridge and his partner had apparently tried to sell petrol economisers to the hotel's manager. As it turned out, the economisers proved quite useless to the manager and, according to some sources, he then decided to keep Cartridge's passport in the hope of recovering his money. Cartridge strenuously denied this claim.

Whatever the truth, it was because Cartridge's passport had been impounded that he was unable to proceed home. It was at this time that I first got to know him, through another Kenyan expatriate who was then working with Posts and Telecommunications as an accountant in Mbabane.

I had come to Swaziland from Nairobi in April 1983 to seek refuge after a spate of arrests in Tanzania, my home country, in January. Julius Nyerere's government was arresting people it accused of dissension. I considered myself unsafe in Nairobi because of the proximity of Tanzania and because of threats I had received before the Kenyan authorities transferred me to Thika Refugee Reception Centre.

A benign German Catholic church minister at Thika town had given me 4200 Kenya shillings, enough to cover the price of a one-way air ticket out of Kenya to Khartoum, Sudan. But two of my fellow countrymen in a similar situation to mine were still traversing Uganda, short of cash and hoping to reach Juba, southern Sudan. Uganda was unsafe; there were still many Tanzanian security officials in the country after their invasion in 1979. I decided to divide the money between my two colleagues and sent it through a courier, to ensure they left Uganda at once. I then contacted friends in Europe to enable me to leave Kenya, where I had arrived on 28 February, 1983.

I had by now decided against going to Khartoum but had settled for Swaziland. Friends in the Nienburg Teachers' Union in the (then) Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) arranged to have my ticket paid and advised me where to collect it. After picking up the ticket at Lufthansa's offices in Nairobi, I returned to Thika Refugee Reception Centre to bid farewell to friends, all of them fellow African refugees. I also felt inclined to thank the authorities at the centre for the great kindness and courage they displayed in working with refugees.

I then went to Nairobi to thank the Tanzanian women's community who had hidden me from the day I crossed into the capital until I was transferred to Thika centre. In those early days in Kenya the Tanzanian women paid for my room at a guest-house they believed was safe; they also gave me money for small items. I was deeply moved by the love, care and concern they showed for me, and felt proud of this wonderful part of the African cultural heritage. Out of concern for own security, I bade farewell without saying when I was leaving Kenya and where I was going. I thought of the old African saying, "Never spill millet in the midst of hens", and believed my hostesses understood my behaviour and would forgive me.

I have always wondered how I managed to fly from Jomo Kenyatta international airport without arousing suspicion. I had no baggage; all I had was a paper bag containing a telex from Germany, several letters from Tanzanian friends, a toothbrush and a tube of toothpaste, and a singlet and change of underwear.

Having no baggage to claim, I proceeded through customs at Matsapha airport, Swaziland, without delays, thanks largely to holding a Commonwealth passport. I did not require a visa and had no cause to explain my situation to Swazi officials. I proceeded to Mbabane, the capital, taking a ride with an Eritrean UN official who had collected a relation from the same flight.

By the time I arrived in Mbabane it was late afternoon, and I noted that the following day was a public holiday. Finding accommodation was my main concern as I wandered aimlessly along Allister Miller Street, Mbabane's main road. As I passed Jabula Inn, a main road hotel, a lean man who looked to be in his late fifties or early sixties emerged. Apparently he had detached himself from a group of people he was conferring with in the hotel foyer. He wore a fez hat and was far too dark to be Swazi (most Swazis are light in complexion).

His right hand held a set of joined beads which he counted quickly and repeatedly, as if he was meditating or praying although he continued to talk with people as he did this. He gesticulated and looked at me as if he recognised me. I returned the look, thinking I recognised him from somewhere. We exchanged glances and it occurred to me that I knew the man, but I couldn't recall from where.

He made the first move, greeting me in Swahili. I returned his greeting, surging forward to shake his hand. There was no doubt the man I had just greeted was the renowned Nairobi-based Tanzanian astrologer, Sheikh Yahya Hussein. Now I remembered seeing his pictures in newspapers almost every day, advertising his trade, although I could never work out how he recognised someone like me he had never seen before.

Hussein invited me to his room, cutting through a long queue of people who had come to consult him. He was, as he frequently told the Swazi press, a prophet, faith-healer, palm-reader and fortune-teller, not merely an astrologer who could determine the influence of the planets on human affairs. He even told the local media that King Hussein of Jordan was one of his clients, and he provided them with a photograph of him shaking hands with the monarch. This, of course, generated more business for him.

Hussein led me into his room with quick, short strides, nodding at people in the queue. He was booked in Room 1 at Jabula Inn and had a room-within-a-room inside his quarters. This provided him with the space

he needed: one room for consultancy, the other for his private sleeping quarters.

He invited me into his private room; it seemed there was someone else in the consultation room. A beautiful woman, about half Hussein's age, sat on the unkept bed, seemingly vegetating. She held a can of Castle Beer which seemed empty. Hussein talked briefly to the man in the other room, then joined us.

Africans generally respect elders as sages of infinite wisdom. Hussein's professional standing and the trust others confided in him encouraged me to tell all. Moreover, he had the title of sheikh, which, with its spiritual overtones, projected a sense of moral purity and authority. To my surprise, he knew quite a bit about my situation.

Before I had finished my story Hussein telephoned the receptionist and asked her to come to his room. A tall, well-built woman with big eyes arrived and Hussein instructed her to give me a room for several nights at his expense. She agreed, but said the vacant room had to be tidied up. As we waited Hussein asked me to place my paper bag, which I still nursed on my lap, under his bed. He wanted me to go and buy some articles for him. On my return I picked up my paper bag and, being very tired, proceeded to the room Hussein had hired for me. It was there that I realised that some items were missing: the telex from Germany; the letter I had received from a friend, Amos Ole Chiwele, a refugee recognised by the UN; and the cover of my air ticket.

I hastily returned to Hussein's room hoping to retrieve these items, which I nevertheless doubted could have fallen out of the packet. A thorough check under Hussein's bed revealed no trace of the missing items. Hussein supervised as I searched the bed, all the time claiming that nobody had touched my bag during my absence. I did not at any time imply this might have occurred. The items had unfortunately disappeared, rather mysteriously.

Swaziland granted me political asylum within weeks. But due to other factors which I had overlooked in Kenya - Tanzanian troops were stationed next door in Mozambique - the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in Mbabane, was working hard to find a country in which I could be permanently settled. Indeed, on the day Cartridge and I lunched together I had only one and a half months in which to leave for resettlement in Canada.

Having completed our lunch, Cartridge glanced at his watch like someone about to miss an important appointment. I wondered aloud if he was pushed for time. He said he wasn't and suggested we go for a cold beer at the Mediterranean Restaurant. I considered it a reasonable idea.

The Mediterranean Restaurant is situated on Allister Miller Street, in uptown Mbabane, and was owned by people of Asian origin from what

was then the People's Republic of Mozambique. The restaurant offered well-grilled Mozambique prawns and generally had a superb menu. In a country like Tanzania, with its rampant poverty, the Mediterranean would have ranked as a restaurant unfit for second-class citizens. In Swaziland, where abject poverty is minimal, it was a place for everyone.

It was hot and sunny, typical of Mbabane at that time of year. We felt instantly relieved as we arranged ourselves on the raised bar seats. Cartridge ordered the first drinks, we sipped, then switched to East African politics. I forget who initiated the discussion, but recall that it continued for some time and attracted a lot of listeners.

We dwelt on Nyerere's popular thesis that black Africans are born socialists. Cartridge insisted that Nyerere, by introducing "Ujamaa", was trying to enhance our traditional roots and values. I replied that if Africans were naturally socialists, there was no point in trying to convert them to what they were already supposed to be. Cartridge listed what he thought was Nyerere's achievements: unity; leaps forward in literacy; the provision of rudimentary health services; water for rural areas, and so on. I replied that these were not necessarily achievements that could be attributed to "Ujamaa" or a political system which prohibited other parties. I cited countries such as Botswana, Mauritius, Senegal, and even Egypt as having achieved much the same, without declaring themselves socialists, and under democratic systems that allowed political parties to operate.

My contention was that no achievement could justify the existence of a dictatorial system of government: dictatorships deprive people of their liberty. I argued that Tanzania's achievements under Nyerere were in danger of being eroded because the system lacked permanent democratic institutions. No machinery existed for the smooth transfer of power from one group to another; nor was there any means for citizens to point out their leaders' mistakes before those mistakes assumed disastrous proportions.

I pointed out to Cartridge that the absence of democratic values in Tanzania and Africa generally would give the impression of a dangerous continent, perpetually unpredictable. Such an environment was not conducive to economic growth and social progress and would frighten investors and donors alike. A stable and relatively predictable Africa would be attractive to investors, who would be more willing to invest in industry. Africa would prosper, where now it suffers political and economic deprivation.

To drive my point even further, I told Cartridge that "Ujamaa" was Nyerere's single-minded ideology; Tanzanians would soon start wondering what the experiment was all about.

Cartridge and I then turned to the debt crisis facing Africa. I argued against always blaming external factors: donor nations, the international economic order, and even colonialism, although some of these arguments are valid. The fact is that when the colonialists left about thirty

years ago, Africans were left with the resources to develop themselves into nations at least as resilient as before colonialism. Unfortunately, this did not happen.

Moreover, the management of internal policies is just as important as how Sub-Saharan governments handle their external debt. It is not too late to develop Sub-Saharan countries into viable, mature nations. The primary task of governments is to create viable economies. Yet, with endless infighting and dependence on foreign subsidies, the assertions of African leaders that they control their countries and their futures is greatly diminished. Failed African economies do much to bolster the claim to credibility of South Africa's largely white-managed economy, which outshines any other on the continent.

As I expounded my ideas to Cartridge, I became quite oblivious of my surroundings. Suddenly I realised that a short, brown woman was standing in front of us, her eyes firmly set on us as if she was preparing to make a point.

The woman in the tight-fitting skirt introduced herself as Lindiwe (Years later, my efforts to find her proved futile). I was uncertain whether she had been there throughout our conversation; nor could I work out whether she had been serving us all along or if she had come to replace another staff member.

We exchanged greetings with Lindiwe, who promptly proposed to accompany us after she finished work at 4pm. Cartridge and I were caught off-guard by her proposal, and Lindiwe seemed reluctant to be turned down. Such behaviour is rare from African women, and is provocative and challenging. Cartridge and I probed each other's faces to try establish who Lindiwe had her eye on; her frequent smiles and flirty manner suggested I was the target.

After 4pm we proceeded with Lindiwe to Msunduzi township, where I had secured accommodation at a youth centre paid for by UNHCR. My room was tiny but neat, with a wooden double-decker bed, a small table and chair, and a reading light. We had some beers which we concealed in paper bags - the youth centre, run by a church organisation, did not allow the consumption of alcohol on its premises. Lindiwe did not drink at all that day. I obtained some cups from the matron, who later joined us with two seamstresses from the youth centre. As we talked and joked, I heard a knock on the door. I opened the door and there was Jo.

I had briefly known Jo, and he was something of an enigma to me. I had met him two days earlier in Manzini, Swaziland's second largest town. The events preceding that meeting with Jo, with the knowledge of hindsight, need repeating.

A friend of mine (at least I thought so then), Colonel Ahmed Mkindi, Tanzania's military attache in Zimbabwe, had persuaded me to move to Manzini, claiming that my security was threatened if I remained at one place for too long. I told him I would confer with UNHCR officials; he

objected, saying UNHCR lacked the resources to afford the comfortable abode he had in mind and was prepared to pay for. That day, Mkindi really looked concerned about my safety.

During his visits to Swaziland Mkindi would put forward various proposals to me, ranging from obtaining Libyan assistance in setting up a clandestine radio station, to reactivating the group of young Tanzanians clamouring for political and economic change. I always replied that he should sell those ideas to people in Tanzania. I also made clear my objection to obtaining any form of assistance from an idiosyncratic regime such as Libya.

Colonel Mkindi and I never felt free with each other. We did not talk like compatriots holding similar political opinions, let alone like comrades in arms. He contradicted himself constantly, and he had that perpetual worried look of a person of questionable character. He would introduce sensitive political topics about Tanzania, and then be unable to hold eye contact during the discussion. His eyes would rotate sideways, like someone in possession of stolen goods.

I remember one day when Mkindi jetted in from Harare and came directly to the youth centre to find out what progress had been made regarding my departure for Canada. He proposed that, because I received only a small allowance from UNHCR, we should go to the Swazi Plaza to buy some food and he would pay. Mkindi bought me so much food and other items that it looked almost as if I was going to open a retail store at the youth centre. Far from being happy, I was shocked. He had even offered to buy me a bottle of whisky; I talked him out of it, saying such luxuries were best forgotten in exile.

While we were loading the goods into his car, a Ugandan expatriate and friend of mine David Magumba Gwaita, suddenly appeared. I introduced Mkindi to my friend, but to my amazement Mkindi appeared in a panic. Even my Ugandan friend noticed that Mkindi had suddenly become disorientated, but we could not work out why. Magumba thanked Mkindi for his care and concern and offered to accompany us to the youth centre to help unload the items. As my Ugandan friend followed us, Mkindi explained his sudden change of mood: he said he did not wish to be seen in my company, as this could result in terrible consequences if it was reported to Tanzania.

I was not convinced. He had come to see me many times and had acted as "courier" between me and some people in Tanzania. Many Tanzanians in Swaziland, including some he might have had reason to fear, had seen us together. Mkindi was, for example, a friend of Ahmed Kombe, who at that time worked as a teacher at the Institute of Health Sciences in Mbabane. On one occasion Mkindi extended an invitation to me from Kombe to have dinner. For several hours after dinner at Kombe's house we discussed the political situation in Tanzania, critically analysing

the appalling economic conditions and growing poverty.

A week after that dinner a junior Tanzanian army officer stationed in Mozambique had brought a personal message from one of our compatriots in Maputo. This young army man was himself sympathetic to our cause. His message basically implied that Ahmed Kombe was the brother of the Director of Intelligence (DI) in Tanzania. On the day Mkindi purchased groceries for me, I asked him if this was true. He reacted without any astonishment. Ahmed Kombe's brother, Amran Kombe, then held the rank of brigadier. Since Mkindi himself held a high military rank, I would have expected he would know Amran Kombe well, even if he did not know or approve of his past activities. I also found it surprising that Mkindi was unaware that Ahmed Kombe was his colleague's brother.

"You don't seem surprised to know that Ahmed Kombe is Brigadier Kombe's brother?" I asked him as we silently headed towards the youth centre in Msunduzwa township. "Er... what? No... sure I am," he replied rather absent-mindedly. When I asked how much he knew of Brigadier Kombe, Mkindi replied that he knew him only in a "professional context." I made a note of that phrase.

"Professional context? Does it mean that you too work for the secret service?" I inquired. He seemed distressed and failed totally to maintain eye contact; his face had a guilt-ridden appearance. Finally, he attempted to ingratiate me by saying I was an "intelligent, perceptive young man". I cut him short before he could finish, as I thought he had resorted to this tactic to evade an important matter. His avoidance of the question prompted me to dwell on it.

Mkindi now said that by "professional context" he had meant that both he and Brigadier Kombe were in the army. "Amran and I are soldiers," he said, mopping his sweating face with his right palm. But he referred to the Director of Intelligence informally, by his first name, rather than by his rank or surname. To me, this suggested that Mkindi knew Brigadier Kombe better than he cared to admit. The alarm went off and, for the first time, I started to become worried.

The previous month the Attorney-General of Swaziland, Patrick Makanza, himself a Tanzanian, held a christening ceremony for his young son. Among those present were Mkindi, who sat next to me, and Ahmed Kombe, who was busy taking photographs. I soon realised that Kombe had taken more pictures of me and Mkindi than of anyone else. Yet this never seemed to bother Mkindi, in spite of his later claim in front of my Ugandan friend that he did not want to be seen with me. After all, my Ugandan friend had nothing to do with Tanzanian politics, and I told Mkindi he had no reason to worry.

But it was the day Mkindi bought me groceries that he finally persuaded me to move to Manzini. His argument was that he feared for my safety at the youth centre.

The next morning Mkindi arrived at the youth centre with a man he introduced as his friend a former white Rhodesian (now Zimbabwe) who had since moved to South Africa. We loaded most of my belongings into the Rhodesian man's truck. I was unsure I was doing the right thing, but for the security scare fed to me by Mkindi. For this reason I even refrained from informing the UNHCR of my move, since I wasn't sure I would stay very long in Manzini.

We stopped at many places on our way to Manzini. At each stop Mkindi would demand to eat something; he would also drink tea with a lot of sugar. He seemed unconcerned about controlling his eating, given that he was a fat man.

We pulled up at a boarding house in Manzini owned by a woman of mixed ancestry (coloured). It was situated on the left corner on the way to William Pitcher Teachers' College. It was a large room with two wide windows and good ventilation. Mkindi paid the full board for the month, and then demanded a receipt which he kept in his pocket. He had seemed particularly keen to retain the receipt; when I suggested that I should keep the receipt, he refused. No, he said, he wanted to keep it as a "souvenir". He might have thought he was making a joke, but I failed to buy his "souvenir" talk. My suspicion about his real intentions intensified. For instance, when I asked him how he had got to know of the guest house he wanted me to put up at, he answered that he had once spent a night there.

But that did not offer a direct answer to my question. The guest house was an isolated, quiet place with hardly any boarders - three at the most. Moreover, I was not convinced that a senior diplomat, in normal circumstances, would have spent a night at a guest house on the outskirts of town, rather than in a hotel in the town centre. Even if Mkindi's story was believable, it did not explain why he had spent so much money buying food and other items for me. After all, he should have known that the place he wanted me to book into offered full boarding facilities.

The next morning I decided to go to Mbabane to collect my mail, which came through the offices of UNHCR. I still thought it was premature to inform them I had moved to Manzini. As I waited for a bus in front of Uncle Charlie's Motel, a white Volkswagen Golf car stopped in front of me. The lone driver lowered his window and invited me in. He was short and wore an unruly beard, like a student of Marxism-Leninism. Noticing that I was hesitant, he introduced himself as he talked through the lowered window. He said he had seen me several times at the youth centre, where he claimed he went to visit a friend. He mentioned the name of a person I knew, a refugee from South Africa.

By mentioning the name of someone in the same boat as me, he established his credentials. I got into the car. "My name is Joshua. People call me Jo. It saves time." I told him my name. He said he recognised me,

and that was why he had stopped. He said he never stopped for people he did not know; I said that with crime on the increase he could lose his car at gunpoint.

"This is it," he said, and started driving aimlessly towards a local hospital. "But this is not the way to Mbabane," I thought. He asked me if I was in a hurry, and replied that I was. He excused himself, saying he wanted to talk to a friend "for a few minutes" before heading to Mbabane. As it turned out, it was not to be a few minutes. Jo kept driving aimlessly around the area known as Two Sticks, stopping at several houses before he finally decided to drive to Mbabane. He had offered to give me a ride in the afternoon and had told me he would be going back to Manzini. Later I decided to take a bus back to Manzini; I had forgotten about him altogether. But he did not seem to have forgotten me.

That night I did not sleep, wondering why I had come to Manzini. Suspicion centred not only on Colonel Mkindi, but also on Manzini's proximity to Mozambique. Manzini is closer to Maputo than Mbabane is. During the night I decided that the reasons Mkindi had given why I ought to move were flimsy. I decided this would be my last night in Manzini. Early next morning I called a taxi, packed my items, and headed for the bus rank. An hour later I was back in Mbabane, at the youth centre.

Now here was Jo standing at my door, barely twenty-four hours since I had left Manzini. I told the landlady in Manzini that I had decided to leave, but did not tell her where I was going. I did not even ask for a refund of the money Mkindi had paid for the accommodation.

The big question was: How did Jo know I had gone back to the youth centre? Unless, of course, he had gone to where I had briefly put up in Manzini and been told I had checked out. Possibly he had come to see if I had come back to the youth centre. But the questions persisted. How did he know where I had lived in Manzini? I had never mentioned it to him. Besides, we were not friends, and I did not know where he lived, nor did I wish to know. If he had gone to Manzini to look for me, what were his reasons? We were not friends and had nothing in common.

These thoughts raced through my mind when I opened the door and found myself facing Jo. I tried to dismiss my suspicions lest I should become paranoid. I invited him in and gave him my seat and a cup of beer I had in my hand. He greeted the others in the room, then blamed me for having left Manzini without telling him. He inquired: "My friend, why didn't you tell me you were leaving Manzini?"

"Did I have to?!", I replied in a sharp voice. Suddenly the room fell silent as everyone seemed to want to listen to the conversation. All eyes shifted to me; I immediately realised that the others in my room had not followed the exchange between Jo and myself. They had heard my question and it sounded impolite. I tried to correct their impression by saying that I did not mean to be rude to Jo; I had left Manzini for reasons of my own.

It was hot in Manzini, more so than in Mbabane, I told Jo. Lindiwe agreed. Jo said he had thought he would look me up to see how I was doing, and I replied that it was very kind of him. My attention then shifted to the three women who had been in my room; they stood up and made for the door.

Everybody was leaving. The two seamstresses and the matron said they had finished their work and were going to tend to family affairs. Jo claimed he was going back into town to collect photographs for a friend he said was at the University of Swaziland. I could not understand why he had not collected the photographs on his way to the youth centre; after all, the friend in question often passed through the youth centre. Jo then suggested that he would check the youth centre again before going back to Manzini. I declined to say he should not, since I had not asked him in the first instance to come and see me.

John Cartridge now excused himself, saying he needed to meet someone at Jabula Inn. I thought his departure was intended to be tactful, in order to give Lindiwe and myself a chance to speak freely and privately. I had persuaded him to stay until we could see Lindiwe off, but he refused. I also asked Cartridge to phone my girlfriend, Imelda Khumalo, who was due to finish work shortly and expected me to meet her in town. I had provided him with her telephone number and instructions that I would be meeting her in about one and a half hours. Imelda was pregnant at the time and it was imperative that I should spend some time with her. I was worried that if I was late in meeting her she would show up at the youth centre and wonder what Lindiwe was doing in my room. On the other hand, I did not want to hurt Lindiwe's feelings by asking her to leave before she wished to.

Jo returned just as I prepared to see Lindiwe off. He offered to take us into town; on the way Lindiwe asked if I would buy her some Kentucky Friend Chicken. At Kentucky, after I had bought the chicken, I found to my surprise that Jo had paid for it before I could. I did not know whether Jo and Lindiwe knew each other, but a shrewd observer would have concluded they were at least familiar to each other. Why had Jo decided to entertain my visitor? Without unduly worrying further, I concluded that Jo was perhaps trying to catch her eye.

We dropped Lindiwe at her workplace. "Take care you guys," she said as she got out of the car waving at us.

By now Jo knew my timetable. With more than an hour left before my intended meeting with Imelda, he suggested I accompany him to the Swazi

Spa in Ezulwini valley a fifteen minute drive from Mbabane. He said he was going to meet an uncle who had been attending a business meeting. He

had established his credibility as an acquaintance, if not a friend, of a refugee like me, a stranger in a foreign country who would value any friendly act to fill the void left by the absence of loved ones from home. I now regarded Jo as someone who showed a touch of humanity;

perhaps he had taken his own precious time and the trouble to find out where I had moved to. I thought it would be unfair to let him down, and agreed to accompany him to the Swazi Spa.

We had agreed he would bring me back immediately he had seen his uncle. But once he got behind the wheel he changed his mind, stamping hard on the accelerator to increase speed. He had suddenly remembered his

girlfriend in Manzini who he claimed also wanted to see his uncle. He said it had been a long time since he last saw his uncle, who had gone to England some time ago and was now back in Swaziland for a business meeting with some executives from the UK. I found elements of his story

contradictory but dismissed them, thinking I had misunderstood the whole thing from the start. He was now silent, driving fast, possibly preoccupied with thoughts of his girlfriend in Manzini. Once there, he parked outside an elegant apartment, from which a small girl babbled something to him through a window. The words had no meaning for me; they seemed to mean something to Jo. When the girl attempted to come over to the car to see the visitor, Jo hurriedly retrieved her. Later I

believed this was an attempt to prevent her from blurting out something

to me that he would not have liked.

After waiting several minutes Jo's girlfriend got into the car beside him. She did not turn to look or greet me, though I did notice her studying me through the rearview mirror. Since she had found me in the car, I made no effort to initiate an exchange of greetings. More surprising, Jo, the friend who had requested that I accompany him, made

not the slightest attempt to introduce us. Again, I found this most unusual, but then thought they might have had a quarrel.

We hardly spoke as we drove back from Manzini to Ezulwini Valley. When Jo and his girlfriend spoke, it was in English, which I later discovered

was designed to hide their native tongue.

We pulled up at a parking lot reserved for guests of the Swazi Spa hotel. The hotel was big and luxurious, probably rating as Four Star.

A man in uniform, very likely a porter, greeted us with a slight bow at the hotel entrance. The hotel was packed with people, some rattling slot

machines in the casino, others buying tokens for roulette, and some sitting quietly drinking. I looked for a place to sit; Jo bought some tokens for the slot machine; his girlfriend had mingled with the crowd in the passageway and disappeared.

Jo joined me, his hands full of tokens for the machines. There was nothing gained without venturing, he said. I said that even if I wanted to gain, I was doubtful whether I would opt for this type of venture. I watched him rattling the slot machines with their musical sounds, but no money was ejected. As he lost his last coin he screamed, "damn it", and I knew he had lost his money.

I watched his reaction. He looked devastated, thought he tried to suppress the expression on his face. His mouth seemed to have turned dry.

I reminded him of what he had said - nothing ventured, nothing gained - but he seemed unprepared for cracks that teased him rather than showed sympathy for his loss. He thought I was being unnecessarily sarcastic. I then reminded him that he had come to see his uncle, not to venture. At the mention of his uncle he immediately moved away from the slot machines and said he was coming back shortly. He returned with two full glasses of what looked like gin. He invited me to take one from his outstretched hands, saying his uncle had given us gin.

"Where is your uncle?", I asked. "In the meeting," he replied, adding that his uncle would be joining us shortly. I found this strange: his uncle buys us drinks without first asking what we drink. Still, I did not want to hurt my friend Jo by refusing his uncle's drink. Perhaps this is due to the African mentality of doing something for the sake of appeasing someone you feel you ought to respect.

I accepted the drink from Jo. But as I lifted the glass to say "Cheers", I noticed the drink filled only about three-quarters of the glass. Did this include the dilution, I wondered. Maybe. Asking saves a lot of guesswork; strangely, on this occasion, I failed to ask.

Before I could swallow my first sip, Jo announced that his girlfriend was in a hurry and had decided to take his car. He promised to take me back to Mbabane with his uncle before they returned to Manzini. I wondered whether his girlfriend had even seen his uncle, which was the sole purpose of her coming to Ezulwini. If the uncle was going to return to Manzini, why had she even bothered to come to the Swazi Spa?

These questions, like all the others, seemed to have no satisfactory answers. Foolishly, I dismissed them as other people's private matters which should not concern me. What a poor judge of character I was. I lifted my glass containing "gin" and drank from it.

Abduction

I lay on my back in surroundings that looked wet with dew. It was dark and silent, with the occasional sound of frogs from nearby ponds. I tried to lift up my head but it was heavy; someone seemed to push me hard with a boot back to the ground. I thought I was dressed but couldn't be quite sure. I lifted an arm to mop my face, to detect if I still had my spectacles on. I seemed to be wearing them.

It seemed I was surrounded by people who spoke either Portuguese or English; I know both languages. The people around me looked like soldiers, with their guns pointed at me. But I could not figure out exactly what they were. Was this a dream, a vision, a nightmare. Perhaps a terrible nightmare, I concluded.

Again and again I had this vision of men, three of them, one brandishing a pistol as they dragged me into a white Toyota car. The one with the pistol looked vicious and overweight. A jungle hat sat on his head, and he wore an overcoat. Another held what looked like a bayonet from a G-3 rifle. He looked like Jo, my companion for much of the day. The third man, a short fellow, pretended to be drunk and held a large red spotlight. I closed my eyes, then opened them, unable to comprehend anything. Someone around me then ordered that I be lifted up.

Several pairs of hands held me and lifted me from the ground. I protested feebly that I should be left alone; the men hurled a barrage of insults at me. I now sat with my hands on my knees; soldiers cocked their guns, pointed them at me and surrounded me. Most of the soldiers had on worn-out boots from which their toes protruded; their combat fatigues also looked worn-out. Many smoked tobacco rolled in paper; their bodies reeked of sweat; their mouths stank whenever they opened them to speak. Most seemed to have had no contact with water for ages; they were dusty and clumsy in behaviour.

I was now sure this was no nightmare. I was being kicked by soldiers speaking Portuguese. I felt weak, perhaps a hangover from the gin I had consumed at the Swazi Spa hotel. As it became brighter I surveyed the area; I spotted a distinctive building on the right-hand side. It had a vivid copper inscription in capital letters that read "Banco De Mocambique." I stood for a few minutes, petrified. I had been abducted from Swaziland to Mozambique.

A soldier pushed me with a rifle butt, urging me to keep moving. He ordered me to put my hands above my head and obey all orders. I counted nine soldiers; they were joined by nine more as we started moving towards a nearby Frelimo camp. The new arrivals were harsh, kicking and hitting me with their rifle butts, shouting "bandido", a Portuguese word for bandit, the term used by Frelimo to describe Renamo rebels.

Jo suggested to the soldiers that they handcuff me as I was "too smart" and might try to escape. It is hard to describe how I felt towards Jo; revulsion is an understatement. I recall glaring at him with contempt, until Frelimo soldiers began to strike me with their rifle butts, ordering me to keep moving.

Humans are a mystery. They can charm you, put on a special type of character, all to achieve their own ends. Once done, they return to their true colours. I could not come to terms with what Jo had done: yesterday he pretended to be my caring friend, even entertaining my visitor, Lindiwe, whom I now thought might herself have been part of the abduction; now Jo was my kidnapper.

Frelimo soldiers now swarmed around Jo, congratulating him for his "hard work", though I doubt many of them understood what was really happening. One soldier in the new section that had arrived shouted "Jenarali (Jo), you have pulled a big job". Jeneralali, or Jo, simply smiled. The fact that he was known to Frelimo soldiers by his nom de guerra suggested this was not the first mission he had pulled off.

We turned off on the right-hand side of the Swaziland/Maputo road, into what looked like a mission school with a big cathedral. It was now clear that I had been abducted to the Mozambican border town of Namaacha. How we crossed Swaziland's fenced border remained a mystery at that stage.

I was led inside the mission school, now converted into a training camp, after sentries posted at the gate opened it for us. A once beautiful Catholic mission school was now a Frelimo army barracks, with the buildings falling apart. Classrooms had been turned into soldiers' sleeping quarters and Frelimo offices.

We entered one of the buildings overlooking the cathedral; it stank of urine and human excrement. Even as I was being led inside the building, three soldiers stood facing the wall urinating. I wondered how Frelimo soldiers managed to work in such an environment. I remember seeing a group of soldiers emerge from the cathedral with their uniforms wrinkled, almost as if they had slept in them. I doubted if the sanctity of the church was respected any longer.

The room I was taken to had a Frelimo soldier slumbering behind a manual typewriter. Next to the typewriter was a black telephone, one of the old types with a rolling handle for calling the operator. A set of bicycles was clumped together against the wall; above them, on a string, hung a dozen or so manacles. At the far end of the room there hung a picture of Samora Machel, the first president of Mozambique, with his beard and gap-toothed stare. The floor was unswept and smelt of fungus.

The room had now become crowded with Frelimo soldiers, many of whom had

emerged from the cathedral. Some of the soldiers knew nothing of what had transpired and wanted to know where I was "going for training." Apparently they thought I was a South African smuggled out of Swaziland for military training in a frontline state or elsewhere.

One of their number, probably the man in charge, ordered my pockets searched. They found some Emalangeni bank-notes (Emalangeni is Swaziland's currency), and from another pocket fished out my pocket diary and room key for the youth centre. I was particularly worried about my diary, which contained the names of several contacts in Tanzania who belonged to our group. I also recorded my daily activities; no doubt this would prove useful to the people who ordered my abduction.

Surprisingly, the Frelimo soldier merely flicked through the pages of my diary, then asked where my photograph was fixed - he thought it was a passport. The soldier was illiterate; he could not distinguish a diary from a passport. I told him in English that the book he held was a diary, but he did not understand. He flung it on the table, where my money and room key were. I was then ordered to sit down on the floor.

"Jenerali", or Jo as I knew him, entered the room, talking slowly with his friends and a group of soldiers we had left behind. Then, quite unexpectedly and to my amazement, the soldier who had ordered me searched promptly ordered the leader of the abduction team to step forward. Jo, like a soldier about to receive a medal for bravery stepped forward. The Frelimo soldier duly ordered him to be thoroughly searched.

For the man who had described himself as the "arresting officer", such treatment was demeaning; it diminished his status before the prisoner he had arrested. The Frelimo man was a no-nonsense soldier: from Jo's trouser back pocket he removed a Tanzanian alien Travel Document and threw it onto the table where my things were.

I was disturbed to see my country's travel document in the hands of an abductor, particularly my abductor. Over the years the Tanzanian government had indiscriminately issued Tanzanian passports to people not entitled to them, usually "freedom fighters" whose activities it supported. The Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) regime felt it was appropriate to issue our national passports to "freedom fighters", to provide them with cover from detection and to facilitate easy travel in the course of their "liberation" duties. Some Tanzanians who favoured a non-violent approach were unhappy about this.

Tanzania's ruling CCM party (and the only party) played host to "freedom fighters" it recognised from Southern Africa and elsewhere, including some of Dr Milton Obote's exiled entourage after Idi Amin had deposed Obote. Tanzanian opposition forces argue that CCM, which gave directives

of this nature without legislative approval, is by such action confirmed to be a state party and not a mass party, as CCM liked to claim.

Even more disgusting to me was the thought that people to whom Tanzanians had extended hospitality, and for whom we had made great sacrifices, particularly economically, were engaged in dirty activities and even spying on Tanzanians. That brings back memories of the first treason trial, in 1969, in which a South African exile, Potlake Reballo, featured prominently as a state witness. Remember, too, the involvement of another South African known as Dumisani in the mysterious death in a road accident in 1984 of Tanzania's only popular Prime Minister, Edward Moringe Sokoine. A strongly held view in Tanzania has it that Sokoine was "bumped off" for reasons of political expediency; moreover, it is claimed a South African was employed in order to avoid having to use a Tanzanian. After all, that might have provoked tribal sensitivities in a unitary country.

The next to undergo the Frelimo search after Jo was the fat man in an overcoat. From under his arm the Frelimo man retrieved a pistol contained in a green cotton holster. This explained why he continued to wear an overcoat in such hot temperatures. The fat man had no money, nor any identification, which was perhaps understandable for someone carrying out the type of assignments he did. Better to cover your trail in case things go wrong.

I was surprised that a man could leave his home with his pockets empty to carry out a mission such as this. It was almost as if he had set out to commit suicide. Was he perhaps Jo's uncle who had attended a "business meeting" at the Swazi Spa? Maybe he was the man who had offered the "gin" that caused me to black out, leading to my abduction.

The third man, who looked young and innocent, surrendered the red spotlight. Unlike his two compatriots, he had small pieces of paper in his pockets, something which suggested he was an amateur in the abduction business. His eyes and face lacked the zeal and portentousness so evident in his colleagues.

The Frelimo official proceeded to ask Jo about my abduction. He wanted to know from Jo how he brought me through from Swaziland. Jo replied that it was through "the normal route", his eyes darting from me to his interviewer. He seemed unsure about whether I understood Portuguese and refused to answer more questions; he told the Frelimo man he would do so once I was taken out of the room.

Two armed Frelimo soldiers then led me, handcuffed, out of the building. By now it was clear to me that the "normal route" Jo had referred to was the one used to smuggle ANC (African National Congress)

people out of Swaziland to Tanzania, via Mozambique, for military training. Once out of the room, I heard Jo speaking loudly, as if to someone far away; he said the "parcel" had been delivered to the border post at Namaacha. It seemed the Frelimo man spoke on the same line after Jo, but I could not work out whether they had spoken to the same person. I assumed they had spoken to someone in Maputo.

Later, I was returned to the same room. Jo and his group were leaving, saying they would return once they had recovered their car from the bush where they had left it. I assumed they would use the same route to return to Swaziland, since they did not have proper travel papers.

A Whiff of Prison

Early the next day, about 7 am, a short man in the dotted khaki uniform of Frelimo entered the room. The soldier who had ordered the body search the previous day called his juniors to attention. I considered that the order did not apply to me since I was handcuffed and could not come abruptly to attention. The short man was clearly in charge; he exuded an aura of authority and pride often associated with persons in authority approaching a stranger. He wore no shoulder identification to signify his rank; a small red belt across his shoulder suggested his seniority.

He spoke Portuguese fast and fluently and seemed to have no manners at all. He seemed intent on displaying his power, barking out orders to his juniors as if they were his personal servants. He demanded to know my name, but I had decided I wasn't going to speak Portuguese, which I knew, because I felt I had much to gain from learning what my captors were discussing.

"I'm sorry officer," I said in English. "I don't speak Portuguese." He stepped towards me, silent and unimpressed, took a white cloth from his pocket and tried to blindfold me, but it was too short for his purpose. He took a step back and in broken English asked me my name. Much to my surprise, after telling him who I was, he introduced himself as Comandante Mateus (pronounced Mateushi); he said I was being held at the request of some Tanzanian officials; he was awaiting further instructions from them on what to do with me.

Mateus also told me he had that morning telephoned Wilfred Kiondo, a Tanzanian diplomat at Ujamaa House, the Tanzanian embassy in Maputo. Kiondo, now retired, was a low-ranking police officer during colonial rule. He joined the Tanzanian Intelligence Service (TIS) after independence, serving in many places, and spent some time with TAZARA

(Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority) during construction of the railway line. Later he was transferred to Maputo as counsellor at the Tanzanian embassy. He was the man who coordinated the whole kidnap plan. Mateus said he could not do anything further about me until Kiondo contacted him.

Two young Frelimo men then removed my handcuffs after Mateus ordered this. At his behest, they were to take me for breakfast at Namaacha hotel; he warned me not to try escape, as his men had been ordered to shoot me in the legs if I did. The two soldiers escorted me to the hotel, where a waiter offered us a breakfast menu containing only scrambled eggs and sausages. It seemed there was nothing else to offer.

I tried a piece of sausage and some egg, but I could not taste anything. One of the Frelimo men gobbled up his meal in no time, then asked if I intended to finish my breakfast. When I replied that I had eaten enough, he drew my plate towards himself and devoured the contents.

Comandante Mateus arrived later and ordered his breakfast. The waiters reacted promptly and obediently; I could never work out whether this was because they held him in high esteem, or whether they feared and loathed him. Perhaps all three? As we sat, Mateus warmed to me; he said he had been to Havana, Cuba, for military training; Castro was a great "revolutionary" leader who had achieved much for his country. I listened without offering any comment.

Mateus said he returned to Africa from Cuba. His official car, by his own account, was a BMW which he frequently used on shopping trips to Swaziland. "You prefer shopping in Swaziland to Maputo?" I asked, smiling in order to encourage Mateus to talk. "Yes!" he replied, adding that this was because most consumer items were not obtainable in Mozambique. He blamed this on "imperialists" and the chronic shortage of foreign exchange in Mozambique. "It's a problem, a very big problem," he said, his pride visibly hurt.

"Then Mozambique is not like the Cuba you praise," I said. Mateus nodded his head as he pushed away his plate with the remnants of his breakfast. Cuba, he said, was already a socialist country; Mozambique would one day be a "truly socialist" country, given the guidance of "our vanguard Frelimo party." He wiped his mouth with a white cloth he drew from his pocket - the same cloth he had earlier tried to blindfold me with. He moved from topic to topic; my mind was far away, wondering what awaited me in Dar-es-Salaam.

Two cars and a Landrover had already arrived at the Namaacha Frelimo camp by the time we returned from breakfast. It was clear I was going to be taken to Maputo by road. One of Mateus' deputies beckoned to me to claim my personal effects from the table where they were mixed with those of my abductors. This particular officer seemed incapable of reading, or he just didn't care. He handed me Jo's passport, saying "take your passport with you." He knew I was the only Tanzanian around,

and might have thought that the first Tanzanian document he spotted was mine. I used the chance to identify my captor and to note some of his personal particulars (if indeed they were true).

His name was entered as Malcolm Zhugo and, according to the document, he was a mechanic by profession. Not wanting to raise the suspicion of the Frelimo man, I quickly turned to the visa pages of the passport. Jo had travelled quite extensively: there were several "entry" and "exit" endorsements, mostly for Swaziland, but also of other Southern African states. By having a Tanzanian passport, Malcolm Zhugo enjoyed relative freedom of movement in Commonwealth countries in Africa.

I returned Malcolm Zhugo's passport to the officer and told him my passport was that small black book on the table - my pocket diary containing my personal effects, including my room key and some money. I then pretended I had a sudden stomach ache and asked if I could be taken to the toilet; I needed to destroy several pages of the diary lest I incriminated people still in Tanzania.

The toilet was outside the camp's gate, which perhaps explained why the camp itself was littered with human excrement. Two armed Frelimo soldiers escorted me to a ramshackle latrine made of corrugated iron sheets. Inside, logs were placed on top of the pit, with a small, narrow space left in the middle for the user to position himself. One soldier, his AK-47 ready, stood in front of the latrine, the other behind. They seemed positioned to prevent my possible escape; to my relief, they were less interested in what I did inside the latrine.

My room key from the Youth Centre in Mbabane was the first item to find its way down the pit. I was afraid my abductors might use it to gain entry to my room, and remove documents that could be used against me. The next thing to go down the pit was my pocket diary, though only the pages which contained names and details of my contacts in Tanzania. I thought it unwise to dispose of the whole diary, yet I did not want to bring trouble for friends in Tanzania.

I tore out the relevant pages chewed them, then spat them into the latrine to ensure nothing could be retrieved. I satisfied myself that the diary now contained only names which could not be connected to me politically. I returned the diary to my pocket and left the latrine.

Commandante Mateus arranged us into two cars which had arrived from Maputo. Two plain-clothes men, possibly Tanzanians, hovered around but did not take an active role in the proceedings. I was put into a Landrover positioned between two white Rada cars with radio communication equipment. Again handcuffs were snapped on; four armed soldiers sat around

me at the back of the vehicle. Mateus sat in front, adjusting his military cap using the rearview mirror, then signalled the convoy to get moving.

We passed many road blocks on the way to Maputo; I worried about security on the road. Those were the days when Renamo, a guerrilla movement opposed to Frelimo's Marxist rule, had increased its rebel activities along this road, attacking convoys at random, whether of the military variety or otherwise. If that had happened on this day, I would probably have been a victim: unarmed and handcuffed, I would have been helpless in a normal road accident; how much more so in a rebel attack?

Somewhere in downtown Maputo we pulled up at what looked to be an ordinary flat. Inside was anything but normal: people, some handcuffed, others not, sat around apparently unaware of when they would be released, if at all. Opposite one of the male rooms I noticed a young woman taking a shower in a group. I was ordered to sit on an empty mattress cover, from where I watched the men in the crowded room sweating profusely.

Nearby me sat two young men who had been arrested for their religious activities, both clasping their bibles determinedly; they were not going to enter their graves without their bibles. I thought it rather poignant that someone should suffer so much just for a belief he holds. Frelimo had its own religion - Marxism - and seemed quite content to deny others their religious freedom in the name of Marxism. I wondered just how long it would take Frelimo to lose its own freedom, as they encroached on the freedom of others.

Comandante Mateus returned with the two plain-clothes men I had noticed at Namaacha. Having ditched any trace of courtesy and tact, he proceeded to rough-handle me, shouting in Portuguese as he pushed me towards the Landrover that had brought us. It seemed somebody had given him good reason to hate me, and he wasted no time in showing it. I was "intellectually arrogant", he said, but Machava would knock this arrogance out of me.

I wondered what on earth Machava was. The trip in the Landrover gave a foretaste of what it could be like: two soldiers lay me down on the back of the vehicle, pressed me down hard, and covered my face with a hat. The Landrover screeched off and moved fast for some time; then we came to an abrupt halt and the driver cut the engine. I was taken out and ordered to sit down until given further orders. As I looked around, I noticed I was inside a prison compound. I was at Machava maximum security prison.

Inside Machava

Thursday afternoon, December 7, 1983. I felt weak and dejected as Mateus and his men ordered me to accompany them to the prison offices. In the corridor we passed several prisoners awaiting interrogation, most of them handcuffed with their hands above their heads. One coloured prisoner had dropped asleep, or possibly collapsed from exhaustion, falling in the middle of the corridor. The Frelimo soldiers were unperturbed, scarcely noticing; some kicked him, demanding that he stand up, but none cared to lift him up. The man was perspiring profusely.

I was told to sit down on the floor facing my interviewer, a young Frelimo man flanked by two colleagues. The room was bare except for the chair the man sat on and a table containing only a scrap of paper with my particulars, or possibly for the Frelimo man to write on. There was nothing else, not even a pin. He studied me, then asked in English: "Are you Ludovick Mwachaje?" I replied that I wasn't, and his face was a mixture of bewilderment and anger.

"What do you mean?" he asked, frowning. I repeated that that was not my name; he looked at his colleagues, puzzled, then back at the paper. He studied it closer this time, then broke into a triumphant smile: "Your name is misspelt," he said, and I replied that I was not sure. He demanded I spell my name and, after some hesitation, I asked him whether he did not need to interview Ludovick Mwachaje before speaking to Ludovick Mwijage. I had wasted my time, and he was quite clear: "It's you we need," he said.

The Frelimo man took down my personal particulars, including my address in Tanzania and Swaziland. Then, pointing with his pen to a blue prison uniform, he ordered that I change into it as I was now going down to the cell. Since he spoke understandable English, I asked him about my legal status at the prison and whether the Frelimo government had any charges against me. He said I was being detained on the orders of the Tanzanian government. Some Tanzanian officials would soon be coming to speak to me, but he didn't know when.

After changing into the prison uniform, the Frelimo man ordered that I be handcuffed again. I protested, arguing that since I would be in a prison cell there was no purpose in having me handcuffed. The Frelimo man said they had their own modus operandi; besides, he insisted, I was being held in Machava on the express orders of Tanzanian officials representing their government in Maputo.

Machava contained about seven blocks which were known to the inmates as "pavilions." I think it is one of the best fortified prisons in Africa. The high walls surrounding the prison were manned around the clock by a sentry armed with a machine gun.

Machava's "pavilions" contained cells on either side, separated by a large passageway. The cells were overcrowded: in "pavilion" no 7, where I was held, some cells had as many as six prisoners. Prison seemed to be the only nationalised industry in Mozambique that was functioning. Prisoners who were not confined to their cells during the day would cling to the bars of the "pavilion", to breathe fresh air, and even this was a special privilege.

I estimated my cell was about 11ft by 13ft. There was no toilet, not even a bucket to urinate or pass motion; the floor was bare, without any blankets; there was nothing to read, and strict instructions were issued that I should be locked in solitary confinement; I was only allowed to go to the collective toilet; at night the mosquitoes feasted on me, and I could not scare them off because of my handcuffs.

My diet consisted of boiled rice and fried fish; sometimes there was simply no lunch or dinner because, as I was told later, there was a food shortage in Mozambique. In the mornings I would get black tea with a doughnut, sometimes nothing at all. Every morning for ten minutes I was allowed out of my cell to pass water and wash my face; but washing my face proved difficult with handcuffs. Lights blazed day and night, their controllers oblivious to the lack of electricity elsewhere in Mozambique. I felt as if I was in a grave, buried alive.

This was the second time I had been in detention, the first going back to August 1971 when I was a student teacher at Morogoro.

I was detained at Morogoro merely for expressing a political opinion. I had been appointed editor-in-chief of Mhonda college's newsletter, which, as it turned out, never got off the ground anyway. Basically, the newsletter intended to reflect the thinking of the college community, using articles from students and staff. But an English lecturer had insisted that all articles be censored before publication. I strongly disagreed, setting him and myself on a collision course.

When Idi Amin deposed Dr Milton Obote in a Ugandan military coup in 1971, I took the liberty of writing an editorial comment on political developments in Uganda and the effect on neighbouring states. I had studied at secondary school in Uganda and took a keen interest in developments in that country. I held the view that Obote, whom the Tanzanian government chose to support, was his own worst enemy: he initiated a dictatorial trend in Uganda, abolishing opposition parties and declaring himself executive president. His Uganda People's Congress (UPC)

had become the only "legitimate" party; Obote himself, some observers believed, was trying to emulate Tanzania's style of leadership.

So, in my yet unpublished editorial, I argued that Obote had actually allowed Amin to rise to power. After all, it was Obote who appointed Amin Chief of Defence Staff; yet he had the opportunity to give the post to someone better equipped than Amin. The editorial also touched on

Nyerere's frequent condemnation of the new Uganda regime; many students felt Nyerere was doing this merely to deflect attention from his own domestic problems and failures.

Though the editorial was never published, government had gotten wind of it; they did not like it. I was roughed up in my dormitory one day by three plain-clothes security men who had arrived in the company of the college principal and the English lecturer who was acting as censor. I was taken to Morogoro for detention, and the college was shut. The student government was dissolved because, in the words of the college authorities, I had "great influence" over it.

After being heavily interrogated for several days by the Tanzanian Intelligence Service (TIS), it was decided that I should be charged in a court of law with "common assault and causing actual bodily harm." With this as the so-called holding charge, investigations into my actual political activities could continue.

By now, new allegations started to emerge. Claims were being made by the security services that I had been communicating with Amin, and that at the time of my arrest I had tried to destroy a letter which supported this claim. Elements in the state then tried every trick they could to bolster their claim that I had tried to communicate with Amin. I was now being charged with political activities, not just common assault; bail became harder to get.

The case dragged on for many months, until I was able to convince Ndugu Kisesa, then government regional security officer of Morogoro, that I had nothing to do with Amin. He ultimately recommended to the President's Office that the case be withdrawn, which it was. During the several weeks I spent in detention at that time I was often threatened with my life; my friends and parents were harassed by the security police. I believe I became a marked man, one to be closely watched, ever since then.

Even after the case was dismissed, I remained rusticated. It was only in the following academic year that I was conditionally reinstated, and transferred to Monduli College of National Education in Arusha. I lost a whole year of my studies, the sort of price one had to pay then for expressing an opinion that annoyed the Tanzanian government.

My immediate neighbour in the 7th pavilion of Machava prison was a

Mulatto woman called Renete. She was on Death Row, allegedly for spying for Renamo. She spoke some English and, surprisingly, when I could briefly see her during my 10 minutes for washing and passing water, she was always in good spirits despite the death sentence hanging over her head. She spoke of an Italian boyfriend whom she seemed to have lost touch with since her incarceration. She was short and small, but beautiful.

One day, after being let out of her cell for a few minutes to use the toilet and wash, she refused to get back into the cell, demanding a mattress and blanket. Renete was totally determined that she would not enter her cell until her demands had been met. A prison guard tried to push her into the cell but she would not budge; in the end she got her mattress and blanket. I greatly admired her courage; if Renete could be so resolute facing a death sentence, what about me? She became my inspiration.

Another foreign prisoner in our pavilion was a British citizen, Finlay Dion Hamilton. He was a director of Manica Freight Services and, according to him, had lived in Mozambique for more than two decades. Frelimo's "Revolutionary Military Tribunal" had sentenced him to twenty years in prison for allegedly aiding Renamo (an anti-Frelimo group) to blow up a fuel depot in Beira, Mozambique's second largest town. I saw him on several occasions in the morning when he was allowed out of his cell, and he seemed to be in low spirits. Once the Frelimo guards noticed that we conversed freely in English, he was transferred to pavilion No. 4.

Among the other prisoners were Renamo rebels who had accepted the Frelimo government's offer of amnesty if they surrendered. Instead of receiving amnesty, some were im-prisoned in Machava. One such rebel was a young Zimbabwean man who had worked as a radio technician for Renamo. He claimed he had been trained in radio communications in South Africa. He said he had learnt of the government's amnesty offer from a leaflet he had picked up; he gave himself up and after interrogation was brought to Machava. He believed Frelimo had not honoured its promise. When I left Machava, his fate was still uncertain.

On the fifth day of my incarceration in Machava, a prison guard rattled the padlock outside my cell; he called me out. I walked lamely ahead of him towards the prison offices. I had definitely lost weight due to the harsh prison conditions. A young man dressed in a white-sleeved shirt with a Nikon camera dangling over his chest stood next to the prison offices. He ordered me to sit on a stool in front of him. His incisors were sharpened; I thought he might be from Musoma, Julius Nyerere's home place. The man studied me for a while, then started questioning me in Swahili.

"Who are you?" He asked vaguely. "Whom did you send for?" I retorted. He stopped questioning me and instead asked me to pose for pictures. That done, I asked him if he was aware of my prison conditions and demanded to know if I was already serving sentence; I also demanded to know what crime I had committed in Mozambique. He replied that he knew nothing about prison conditions; and even if he did, it was outside his power to do anything about it. His reply sounded very boastful.

I understood him; after all, he was not a prison guard at Machava and probably did not understand what I was talking about. His job suggested he was a privileged person, and I had no reason to believe he had ever been in prison, certainly not as a political prisoner. I thus seized the opportunity to warn him that prison was like an infirmary. "You should not think you're immune from going where you send others," I told him. Briefly, I was telling him that what was happening to me today could happen to him tomorrow. Then I added, seriously, that I wished I was the last to endure such treatment.

He looked at me with disbelief. "Why are you saying all this," he demanded of me. "Well", I replied, "just to remind you that what we black Africans live under is like a tinderbox of frustration." I reminded him that as long as African countries continued to follow one-party political systems, every African was a potential prisoner of conscience if not a refugee. He seemed momentarily stunned, condensing what I had told him. I was returned to my cell, convinced that he had got the message.

That evening, December 11, 1983, a miracle happened; a Frelimo guard opened my cell door and commanded that I follow him. In front of the prison offices a group of men dressed in civilian clothes stood conversing in Portuguese. They seemed in jovial mood, slapping each other playfully, laughing and shaking hands frequently. One of them, a short man dressed in a crimplene tailored trouser, held out his hand to greet me; the others watched silently. As we shook hands, I had the sudden feeling that my status was about to change, possibly for the better; this was, after all, the first time since I was incarcerated in Machava that I had shaken hands with a prison official. And the man whose hand I had just shaken seemed to be a senior official; he spoke to the rest of the group with authority. As it later turned out, the man was in fact the head of Machava Prison.

He instructed one of his juniors to remove my handcuffs and ordered that my civilian clothes be given back to me. However, the prison official in charge of prisoners was nowhere to be found. The chief of Machava decided that we go anyway, in my prison outfit. I was taken to a waiting Rada car fitted out with radio equipment. In front and behind were two army jeeps, their machine guns pointed at the Rada car. I sat in the back, my hands buried between my thighs to allay any fears that I might try to escape by overpowering my guards. Heavily armed Frelimo men sat on

either side of me.

The head of Machava sat behind the steering wheel; beside him sat a short man in plain clothes, his face marked with Makonde tribal marks. We moved in a convoy, one military jeep leading, the other trailing us. We moved in silence; nobody cared to tell me where we were going; I did not bother to ask. I had resolved that whatever my fate, I would face it with a smile. The bottom line, as far as I was concerned, was that my suffering was for something I wholly believed in: democratic values and social justice.

We pulled up in front of an elegant multi-storey building in downtown Maputo. Opposite it were houses surrounded by a nice garden, from which the Mozambican flag was hoisted. I assumed this was the house of a senior state official. More than a dozen Frelimo soldiers armed with AK-47s stood in front of the multi-storey building. The head of Machava disappeared into the building, leaving his lieutenant and two armed men with me in the car. Minutes later a soldier beckoned us into the building.

I was led into a large room on the first floor; it had a thick, expensive carpet, with walls decorated with paintings of various kinds. It was a self-contained double-room. An armed Frelimo soldier sat on a chair facing me; beside him was a table with a telephone. The soldier stood to attention whenever I entered or left the room; he seemed unaware of my status.

Before leaving, the head of Machava, speaking in fluent Swahili - he learnt the language in Tanzania when he was a refugee during the liberation war - introduced me to his proxy, the head of Matola Prison. The Matola Prison chief was to stay with me in my new quarters. He too spoke Swahili very well and was de facto commander of the troops deployed at the building.

The head of Matola prison told me he was surprised at my sudden change of status. He admitted it was the first time in his career that a prisoner had been brought from prison to a state lodge. The room I was in, he informed me, was where president Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire had slept during his last visit to Mozambique. Having established where I was now being held, I concluded that it was too good to be true.

Paradoxically, the Frelimo people seemed not to trust each other, despite their shared hardship and supposed solidarity. Perhaps it is characteristic of guerrillas not to trust each other: for example, the head of Machava kept his opposite number, the chief of Matola prison, in the dark about my name, the reasons for my imprisonment, and indeed the reasons for my transfer from prison to a state lodge. Yet the Matola Prison chief was part of my guard and overall commander of the unit guarding me. Additionally, extra troops were deployed at the lodge without advance warning being given to the Matola prison chief. He later

told me that when he was called from Matola Prison, he thought it was to collect a prisoner from Machava Prison who had not first been "processed", as he termed it, at Matola Prison.

He was genuinely astounded that I had been brought directly to a state lodge, and that nobody in authority was prepared to explain why. This situation worked enormously to my advantage: I, the captive, had to explain my ordeal to my uninformed captor. I have never been able to establish the reasons for my sudden transfer from prison to state house:

was it the result of my calculated lecture to the official who had taken my photograph, or was it mere coincidence?

Life at the state lodge was a far cry from the harsh realities of life in the streets of Maputo. The closet in my room contained perfumed soaps, Russian toothbrushes and toothpaste, electric shavers and expensive after-shave lotions; such items were then hard to come by in Maputo. Staff at the lodge were all dressed in white uniforms and were highly disciplined. A Goan woman, or Portuguese woman of Goan origin, seemed to be in charge of the chefs in the kitchen. Downstairs in the dining-room, four armed soldiers stood to attention every time we had our meals. Even when we had finished eating and I decided to remain seated, the soldiers would remain at attention until I had left. I realised then that African leaders were captives themselves: these soldiers were rehearsing what they were inevitably required to do whenever there was a state visit.

My new quarters also had a balcony overlooking the sea; often I sat there with the Matola prison chief after meals or a siesta. Whenever I would move to the balcony a staff member would ask me what I wanted to drink. To my surprise, when I ordered double whisky on the rocks, it was brought promptly; and it was pure Scotch whisky. This contrasted sharply with Machava prison, where prisoners did not even have adequate food; or with the streets of Maputo, where consumer goods were in short supply, if not impossible to obtain. From the comfort of my new quarters, Mozambique seemed to be a country with two divergent economies.

Because of his assigned duties, the Matola prison chief slept in a room next to mine. As I settled in at the state lodge, we developed a good understanding of each other. He looked much poorer than his post suggested: on days that he guarded me, he never changed his clothes. Perhaps this was because he had been summoned at short notice for his new duties and had not had time to bring spare clothes. His clothing was virtually worn out: the shirt had patches on the sleeves and collar,

and his trousers were patched between the thighs.

Despite his shoddy appearance, he was an affable and sociable official. Frequently he praised the kindness of the Swazi people, recalling a trip he had made to Swaziland as part of an advance party for a visit by the late Samora Machel. He said he had enjoyed the pleasure of seeing King Sobhuza, the revered Swazi king who died in 1982. "And all the shops were full of consumer goods," he kept on saying. His frequent references to Swaziland and its relative economic success suggested that he yearned for political and economic change in his own country. He gave the impression that he was disillusioned with Mozambique's malfunctioning centrally-planned economy.

The Matola Prison chief was anxious to know what had happened to me, and was deeply touched and sympathetic when I told him. He believed that my abduction was known to only a select few top Frelimo officials, because the act itself was a transgression of international law. He wondered if there was anything he could do for me apart from setting me free, which was not possible.

I grasped the chance; I asked him if he could mail a note to Mbabane, Swaziland, notifying the UNHCR that I had been abducted. He agreed, and said I should write the note in the toilet in my room and leave it above the cistern, where he would pick it up later. He had access to my room and occasionally used the toilet when we were on the balcony, because of its proximity.

Thereafter, I went to the toilet, tore a piece of paper from my pocket diary, which had been returned to me after I left Machava, and wrote a short note for UNHCR in Mbabane. I decided to address it to an official I remembered, for fear that the Mozambicans might be censoring mail destined for abroad and addressed to international organisations. I flushed the toilet to fool the guards into thinking I was using it.

After returning to the balcony, the Matola prison chief went to the toilet and retrieved the note. He stayed there a short while, then flushed when he came out. Later, when I asked why I could not give him the note on the balcony since it was only us there, he replied with a smile: "This is Frelimo, where anybody spies on everybody."

Journey to Tanzania

Early one morning, on December 16, 1983, a squad of eight Frelimo men in civilian clothes arrived at the state lodge. I could clearly detect their revolvers, hidden under their jackets. The head of Machava prison,

dressed in a tailored crimplene suit with a badge of Samora Machel pinned on a lapel, was their commander. This time the convoy of three Rada cars, all fitted out with radio equipment, headed for Mavalane airport, at the air force base. Some civilians, mostly women (possibly wives of Frelimo soldiers), embarked with us on a military aircraft through an opening at the tail end. So far, no one had formally told me where we were going. However, the chief of Matola Prison had informed me the previous night that Samora Machel, on his return to Maputo from a tour of the provinces, had approved my repatriation to Tanzania, as requested.

A tall, stout, vicious looking man dressed in camouflage fatigues - I later established he was Mozambique's head of intelligence - boarded the plane to arrange our seating. He removed me from a window seat to one some distance from the emergency door, probably for security purposes. During the flight the Frelimo men spoke nothing of their mission; I thought this might be due to the presence of women and their children, or possibly because they had been tipped by their seniors that I understood some Portuguese.

The women passengers disembarked at Pemba, south of the border town of Mtwara. We lunched there on boiled rice and fried fish; it seemed this was a readily available Mozambican dish; I recalled Machava Prison, where it was fairly common. The rest of the journey to southern Tanzania was short. I remember how some of the Frelimo men kept fingering some US dollar bills, checking for the security line; it seemed most of them had never seen a dollar bill before.

Throughout the flight from Maputo to Pemba and onwards I had not been handcuffed. Now, as the military plane began descending, the head of the escort team went to the cockpit; when he returned, he ordered that I should be handcuffed. I immediately realised that I was already in Tanzania, my country.

The aircraft touched down on the airfield. A lone fire-fighter, a young man in khaki uniform, stood motionless as he gazed at the taxing plane. The pilot cut the engines and five men came through from the cockpit, pistols in their hands. I recognised the one wearing spectacles as a senior employee of the government-owned Air Tanzania airline; I knew him only as Luvena.

Luvena took off my spectacles and blindfolded me; the other two men held me tightly and led me from the plane to a Landrover parked nearby. They laid me back downwards on the back of the Landrover, pressing hard on me. Though I had never met them before, they treated me as if they had a

score to settle: they hurled insults at me; I was a "swine", "traitor", "bastard", and common criminal. Whatever derogatory terms they could think of, they used quite generously.

The Landrover sped off at terrific speed, like an ambulance transporting a casualty to hospital; it cut several corners before the driver abruptly stopped. The two men who had been pressing me against the floor of the vehicle marched me into a building; again they laid me on my back, blindfolded. An hour later the blindfold was removed; the tiny room contained a small portable fan, which my two guards used to cool themselves. They sat against the only door, which was shut, facing me; the only glass window was sealed with old newspapers, keeping out fresh air and preventing detainees from seeing outside. The walls were bare but for one CCM poster with a picture of Julius Nyerere, fist clenched, urging his subjects not to waste for fear of an impending food crisis in Tanzania.

Later, a man I was to get to know as Mlawa entered the room; he ordered me stripped and took my clothes for a through search; I was left in my underpants only. When I inquired from my guards why I was being stripped, one snapped that I should "shut up". He said if I uttered another word, they would "teach me a lesson". Out of reach of the fan's cool breeze, and with the door and only window shut, I began to sweat profusely as I awaited my fate.

At about midnight, Mlawa ordered the guards to blindfold me again and take me to a larger room next door for interrogation. I was paraded in only my underwear before the five men, my interrogators, including the man who had blindfolded me on the aircraft, Luvena. I realised for the first time that people can respect institutional authorities only if those authorities respect an individual's rights; people cease to respect those same authorities when they use their power to erode an individual's inherent rights. The fact that men from the President's Office paraded me before them in only my underwear removed any semblance of the belief I once held that such people were noble, aristocratic servants of my land. I believed they did this to political detainees to dehumanise and demoralise them.

I was later to establish that I was being held at the offices of the government's Regional Security officer (RSO). At that time the RSO for Mtwara was a man called Brighton; he was present during my underwear parade. Unfortunately, I failed to establish the identity of the remaining two interrogators.

I also quickly noticed that four of my interrogators referred to their fifth colleague, Mlawa, as "chief", from their headquarters in Dar-es-Salaam. And Mlawa addressed his colleagues with a noticeable measure of authority. He sat at a separate table, which was covered

with a green flannel table-cloth, making notes on a writing pad like a magistrate recording court proceedings. In front of him was a black attache case containing a myriad of papers; sometimes he would refer to the papers and make a note. It seemed he had not shaved for more than two days; his tailored black safari jacket was a poor fit and did not match the trousers. He had an expensive Rado wrist watch, which he looked at frequently; his Italian shoes also looked expensive; and he had a solar calculator which he had trouble operating.

On the wall above Mlawa hung a picture of Julius Nyerere in a safari jacket, smiling. I could not reconcile his smile with the behaviour of his men, parading me around almost naked and handcuffed. This contrast seemed to vindicate a saying of my community: "It is usually people of fabulous beauty who stink in the mouth". Rolled up manilla cards were plastered on the rest of the walls, apparently to conceal what was written from the captive's eyes. a large air-conditioner built into the wall frequently malfunctioned; the window curtains were usually drawn; and the power often failed.

Interrogation

When God shuts the door, he opens a window. One thing that worked immensely to my advantage was that Mlawa, my chief interrogator, was scarcely literate. Perhaps it was this that made him overzealous; and his over-enthusiasm might explain his rapid rise to the upper echelons of the Tanzanian Intelligence Service, over the heads of his better educated colleagues. I later established that the man had built himself a large house by Tanzanian standards, one that a medical doctor or university lecturer could only dream of, no matter how hard he worked. With so much to lose if the system changed, Mlawa had a vested interest in ruthlessly flushing out dissenting elements.

Mlawa often asked unintelligible questions during interrogation; some of his better educated juniors posed sharper questions. He blindly gave away his own organisation's sources, as well as names of operatives who had gathered some of the information before him. He was convinced that what his organisation claimed to know about our political activities was true, and that I should accept this as the case and tell more. He consequently closed all avenues of obtaining anything new from me, and would order that the two police guards assault me if he thought I was being "uncooperative".

This lack of "cooperation" was to implicate innocent people; people whom the intelligence service perceived as government opponents. Included among these unfortunates were Dr Vedastus Kyaruzi, a former Secretary General of the Commonwealth Health Secretariat; an Assistant Commissioner of Police called Swebe, who was then Staff Officer at the Ministry of

Home Affairs; a prominent Nairobi-based Tanzanian herbalist known as Mushobozi; and many others whom I knew nothing about, let alone shared political views with.

Despite being forced to implicate people I did not even know, Mlawa's "leading questions" served a useful purpose: they betrayed his own informers and colleagues. For example, he would ask me a question on a particular subject. To find out how much he knew about the subject, I would initially hesitate, then simply reply that I knew nothing.

This

would prompt him to shout angrily that I had been heard saying certain things. His "You were heard saying" replies eventually served to remind

me whom I had actually talked with about that subject; this helped me form my own defence, given that I had obtained some idea of how much they knew of our activities. This strategy worked for me.

Mlawa's "leading questions" helped me to identify people who had spied on us in Tanzania and in exile. A leading figure in this respect was Colonel Ahmed Mkindi. Not only did Mkindi report back on activities he thought one was involved in, he also implicated innocent people who had nothing at all to do with our political activities.

Mkindi's favourite tactic was entrapment: presenting himself as one being persecuted by the system. I remember that he had come to see me in Swaziland around mid-April, 1983, a few weeks after the Tanzanian government had sealed off its eight borders in order to catch

"economic

saboteurs". The real purpose, of course, was to prevent perceived government opponents from fleeing the country, and also to manufacture a scapegoat for Tanzania's ailing economy: the government had already established, from interrogating several dissidents it had arrested in January that year, that the main cause of growing dissent was economic hardship and corruption.

Mkindi had approached me in an agitated mood that day: he implied that his own brother had been arrested in Arusha in possession of one US dollar, during the so-called corruption purge. We agreed that it was terribly unfair to arrest and detain a citizen for possessing a US dollar, while the real thieves in the government hierarchy who siphoned off hoards of money and deposited it in foreign banks were walking scot-free. Mkindi then asked me if I knew anyone in the police in Dar-es-salaam whom he could approach about his brother's unfair detention. In good faith, I recommended that he speak to Swebe, whom I said I had known as an impartial law enforcer when he was based in Kagera region as a Regional Staff Officer. I had recommended Swebe to Mkindi believing that, in the pursuit of justice, Swebe would help him. Instead, Mkindi had listed Swebe as a government opponent; during my interrogation I was being forced to implicate Swebe.

Nestor Rweyemamu, a former athlete and Regional Commercial and Industrial Officer in Arusha, was another man whose innocence I tried to

defend. Mkindi had told me that he (Mkindi) wanted to go into business full-time, because he was becoming disillusioned with his employer - the

government. He claimed that each time he tried to get a business licence

he was forced to walk a bureaucratic minefield; consequently he could not

get his import-export business going. Thus he wanted to know if I knew

anyone in commerce who could show him how best to obtain his licence.

I replied, quite forthrightly, that if a senior diplomat based in Harare had no contacts in commerce, it was ridiculous to expect a Tanzanian refugee in Swaziland to have such contacts. He pleaded with me, offering the excuse that his long absence from Tanzania had put him out of touch with people at home. I mentioned the name of Nestor Rweyemamu, unaware that I was being recorded. I told Mkindi I was unsure if Rweyemamu could help, and that I didn't know where he had been transferred to. Moreover, I said this was a simple matter to worry about, unlike someone unfairly imprisoned for possessing a US dollar. I had asked him to just forget about the business licence.

During my interrogation Rweyemamu's name cropped up, in the context of what I had discussed with Mkindi. This clearly gave away Mlawa's source. Another rude shock came in the name of Yahya Hussein, the so-called Tanzanian astrologer who had invited me to his room and paid for my accommodation the day I arrived in Mbabane. My telex message, Amos Chiwele's letter and my air ticket cover, all of which disappeared from my bag in Hussein's room, lay open in front of Mlawa and his men. Mlawa also had information on the conversation Hussein and I had had.

As for Dr Kyaruzi, I was reported to have been seen entering his clinic in Bukoba before I took flight; Mlawa claimed that I had delayed there too long to have just gone for medication. When I denied I knew the doctor, Mlawa stood up in a fit of hurt pride and shouted that I had been seen in Swaziland "grieving" after being told that Kyaruzi's wife had died. He also claimed that I was heard to remark that the doctor's wife had been ill for some time - and indeed she had been ill for a while.

Then Mlawa fired his question: Why would I grieve for someone I did not know? And why did I remark that Kyaruzi's wife had been ill for some time if I did not know the doctor? Once again this could be traced to a conversation between Yahya Hussein and myself. Indeed, it was Hussein who gave me news of the death of Dr. Kyaruzi's wife.

Mlawa was also given to fabricate information in order to intimidate or perhaps to create the impression he knew a lot. One such claim dated back to December 1982 when, according to my interrogators, myself and certain unnamed people were "heard" talking about issues that could "endanger" the life of the former party chairman, Julius Nyerere. Yet, if there was any truth to that, Mlawa could not say why we were not apprehended immediately, especially since what we were supposed to have discussed was extremely serious. Given the arbitrary powers of detention vested in the intelligence service, it is absurd to believe we would not have been arrested there and then.

Mlawa had his men also torture me when I was "uncooperative": they would tighten my handcuffs and refuse to allow me to wash for up to a week. On one occasion they wanted me to implicate the prominent Nairobi-based Tanzanian herbalist Mushobozi. Mlawa claimed that Mushobozi had been seen driving me to the offices of the then Kenyan Vice President, Mwai Kibaki, and that he had been seen handing me a huge envelope, presumably containing money. In short, Mushobozi stood accused of supplying money for furthering dissident activities in Tanzania.

Of all the people mentioned during my first three weeks of interrogation at Mtwara, Mushobozi was the most puzzling. I had never seen the man nor heard of him before my abduction; nobody had even mentioned his name to me before. Where his name came from and why the Tanzanian Intelligence Service seemed so keen to implicate him I will never know. But after a week of torture, with my left arm already festering from the tightened handcuffs, I gave in and implicated him.

I now admitted that the envelope Mushobozi was supposed to have handed me did indeed contain money to sponsor dissident activities. It was a nightmare that was to live with me, perhaps forever. Mlawa seemed pleased that day; he allowed that I be taken blindfolded to the bathroom for a shower, the first since my abduction. Guards, their pistols pointing at me, watched as I bathed. I was also given medicine for my festering arm wound, and my handcuffs were later loosened.

"I will order them to treat you better if you keep cooperating like this," Mlawa said. Later he boasted that his men operated in Nairobi as they did in Dar-es-Salaam, apparently with a free hand, and that they would be going for Mushobozi at once. My "fellow traitor", as Mlawa termed Mushobozi, would be joining me at any time. Poor Mushobozi - I didn't even know his first name.

Two weeks later, after I had been transferred to Dar-es-Salaam, Mlawa returned looking visibly annoyed. "Mushobozi's house was searched," he told me in an agitated mood, adding that nothing had been found to incriminate him. If this was true, I wondered how the Tanzanian security police could enter another state unless they were working closely with their colleagues there - in this case, the Kenyan special branch.

Mlawa repeatedly asked me in a frustrated tone why no exhibits had been found on Mushobozi. I wanted to tell him that I had implicated an innocent man because I was under duress; I decided against that, not wanting to endure another torture session. Instead, I suppressed my sense of guilt and told Mlawa that perhaps Mushobozi had been smart enough to cover his trail.

Had Mlawa been an intelligent man in search of the truth, rather than trying to force acceptance of what he wanted, he would have concluded from my face that it was untrue Mushobozi had been involved in any political activity. Instead, Mlawa kept on saying that Mushobozi "is using you... people". Mlawa then rattled off some speculative talk that

Mushobozi was one of the principal figures opposed to Nyerere's Ujamaa system, and that he was using us as "loudspeakers" for his paymasters in the CIA and other anti-socialist forces.

I listened and watched as he lapsed into an abyss of hypothesis and false assumptions. "We will get the bastard," Mlawa said. I prayed they didn't. It was nightmarish for me to think I had implicated an innocent person I had never even seen or heard of before. I could not even describe his appearance: during interrogation Mlawa would describe him and I would simply reply "exactly" or "sure" to the description. It was an unfortunate incident that I will have to live with all my life. Later, after my release and escape, while I was living in Portugal, I named my son Mushobozi, after the man I was forced to implicate in a serious case. My son was born in Swaziland while I was in detention.

It was now three weeks since I had arrived at Mtwara from Mozambique and Mlawa had concluded that the initial interrogation was over. "I am trying to beat the deadline," he said sardonically. But the nightmare was not yet over; conditions of my detention remained harsh and I had no outside contact. Finally, Mlawa brought me a sixty-page statement, urging me to sign it without even reading the contents. Even if I had signed, it would have made no difference since the entire statement had been extracted from me under duress and nearly all of it was false.

Nevertheless, I had assumed that when the statement was presented to senior officials in the Ikulu (State House), they would read it thoroughly and evaluate it. I strongly believed that because the statement showed I had said "yes" to everything, State House officials would be compelled to raise some doubts. I expected they would send an evaluator, a better educated person than Mlawa, to come and talk to me, without using coercion or intimidation. The idea, I speculated, would be to try and establish the truth.

It was at that hoped-for moment that I intended to tell the senior authorities exactly what had happened. But to my complete surprise, nobody else ever came to interview me again. This meant that my statement had not been properly evaluated at the Ikulu; or if it had, they clearly took it to be the truth.

Mlawa came to see me several days after I had been transferred to Dar-es-Salaam from Mtwara, to extract more confessions using his familiar cowboy tactics. Throughout my captivity I wondered how many more victims of Nyerere's regime had been forced to sign statements obtained under duress and through physical torture. I wondered then if anybody would put together a book describing their plight, in order to give the world community a glimpse of human rights' abuses under Nyerere's leadership.

Journey to Dar-es-Salaam

Around midnight, December 27, 1983, I heard strange movements outside my cell; the movements of people, security personnel and cars. They seemed to be moving heavy items in trucks outside; it sounded like petrol tanks and Jerry cans.

Although as a captive I was unable to see the outside world, I had managed to work out the impending moves against me, by observing the sights and sounds of the building and my interrogators. On this particular night the movements outside convinced me I was about to be moved, though I couldn't work out where to. I had also worked out how to interpret the foot movements of my interrogators: from the way someone paced the floor, I could tell not only who it was but also what he might be up to.

So it was that after midnight I was blindfolded again and led to a Landrover, once again by the same two guards who had watched me since I arrived back in Tanzania. I was laid down on the back of the vehicle, back downwards, in the middle of two petrol tanks and some Jerry cans. I still wonder today what would have happened had we been involved in an accident, with me blindfolded and handcuffed stuck between containers of volatile liquid.

The Landrover zigzagged as it rounded corners, possibly to confuse me about where we were heading. After a short drive on the tar, we joined a dirt road and travelled for many hours until we stopped somewhere - my escort party wanted to buy mangoes. Outside, I could hear people speaking Swahili; some asked for a lift but were told there was no room in the vehicle. The Landrover was apparently covered with a tarpaulin; those innocent people requesting a ride could not have imagined what "cargo" lay underneath, nor who owned the vehicle.

We pulled off again on yet another long journey, this time until about midnight, when we pulled up at an intelligence branch house (better described as a detention centre). We had a short sleep, until about four o'clock, when we took to the road again. Our journey lasted three days, and we slept at various detention centres on the road to Dar-es-Salaam, all of which were run by the political (or secret) police.

We arrived in Dar-es-Salaam on the fourth day, but it seemed we were early. I was taken to yet another detention camp in the capital for an evening meal. By now I was completely exhausted and in physical pain as a result of the rough road we had been driving (and because of the manner in which I had been transported). For four consecutive days I had been blindfolded and in handcuffs, lying back down on the hard floor of a Landrover, stuck between petrol cans, and travelling on bumpy

roads. The blindfold was so tight that whenever I tried to move my eyes,
I would see only green stars twinkling.

At about midnight on the day of my arrival in Dar-es-Salaam, my police escort once again headed towards the city. Before reaching my next detention centre, they did the usual zigzagging and confusing U-turns, then reversed the Landrover close to the building I was being taken into. I climbed down from the Landrover; two secret police guards, pistols ever-ready, led me inside; there we found Mlawa waiting.

I was at the notorious Oysterbay detention camp, otherwise known in opposition circles as "Gestapo headquarters". It was here that my ordeal
of being held incommunicado for 478 days began.

The dark side of Nyerere's legacy

As usual, Mlawa ordered his men to strip me; they left me in my underwear. I was put into a room containing a wooden bed with a foam mattress and a stool. Apart from its obvious purpose, the stool was also used by prisoners to alert guards that they wanted to use the toilet: you banged it until the guards came to attend to you. The two large windows were sealed with a heavy cloth material; the door was permanently closed, surprisingly for a room with no other inlet for fresh air. The lights blazed day and night. I was not allowed anything to read; visitors were never allowed at Tanzanian detention camps, Oysterbay included; I was virtually cut off from the outside world.

Next to my room was a toilet; next to it a bathroom. Whenever I used the
bathroom, a guard kept a close watch; it was claimed that some detainees
had previously tried to commit suicide by drowning themselves in a basin
full of water. Next to the bathroom was another room for a detainee; beside it was a small torture chamber, directly opposite my room.

Detainees being held in the rooms never saw each other, although we all used the same toilet and bathroom. If two internees banged their stools simultaneously, signalling that they wanted to use the toilet, one would be told to wait until the other had finished and been returned
to his room. Only then would the second detainee be permitted to go to the toilet.

Almost every week I could hear the screams of internees being subjected
to electric shock torture and beatings; sometimes their pitiful screams
carried on throughout the entire night. I could never sleep with torture
victims' cries for mercy piercing the night.

Experience is life's best teacher. What I was enduring at one of Nyerere's detention camps was a nasty experience, but it taught me more about the man so much revered the world over as the most "enlightened" and liberal African leader; one who upheld the rule of law and propagated the principles of human rights and equality for

black South Africans. Nyerere often lambasted the white minority South African government for its scant regard for the rights of the black majority. I now started to wonder if the world was aware that Nyerere's frequent condemnation of South Africa's excesses were designed, in part, to deflect attention from his own human rights abuses.

Perhaps it will never be known how a man of Nyerere's intellect and stature could regard criticism of his policies by his usually docile subjects as a personal threat, and not just as a bona fide challenge. The British, mandated by the League of Nations to administer Tanganyika (now Tanzania), never erected a single detention camp like Oysterbay. On the contrary, they showed remarkable tolerance, even towards subjects who demanded independence. Tanzania had no political prisoners during British rule; nor were there any political refugees. In fact, the British left behind the very best they had: a fine infrastructure, and a political system which worked well in England and elsewhere that Her Majesty was revered.

From the perspective of a young Tanzanian contemporary, the problem with the British was not that they held on too tightly or for too long, or even that they removed mineral and other resources; rather, the problem was that they let go too suddenly, without adequate planning for the transfer of power. There was no mass education, no awareness of the machinery involved in self government. Tanganyikans, as we were known then, knew nothing of other countries' mistakes and successes; were unfamiliar with the concept of being able to defend one's own freedom and the idea of democracy; what they knew was the despondency and apathy that had been a necessary ingredient in colonialism. In short, we did not have a gradual transition to independence.

Furthermore, no precautions were taken or agreements initiated to ensure Nyerere could not impose his will on the people as easily as he did; or to prevent him abrogating the constitution with the ease he did. No precautions were taken to ensure the survival of democracy; as a consequence, it was snuffed out before it could take off. If Tanzania is owed a debt by anyone, it is best measured in terms of what we lost against what we got in return - and I am not referring to mineral resources, but to our loss of liberty and self-esteem. To phrase it aptly: we attained political independence and lost our freedom!

The human rights situation in Nyerere's Tanzania was compounded by the ambivalence of Western donor countries: they propped up a failed experiment (Ujamaa) with billions of dollars, believing it might work; yet they failed to condemn unequivocally the human rights abuses in Tanzania. Financial support, notably from the Scandinavian countries, ensured the survival of Nyerere's regime; survival which ultimately gave rise to rampant corruption and oppression.

It is difficult to understand how the world community could so readily condemn South Africa's human rights abuses while keeping ominously silent when African leaders committed similar excesses on their black subjects. South Africa's minority whites refused to grant political rights to the black majority, and they were persistently denounced by

the world for that. But when Nyerere's sole ruling party, with less than three million members in a country of twenty-four million, outlawed all other political groups, that was fine. There was no denunciation of this injustice!

It must be understood that justice does not simply mean arresting an individual and bringing him before court to answer for his alleged offence. Justice, being a major component of democracy, embodies the concepts of human rights and civil liberties. The detention of government critics was the order of the day under Nyerere, who exercised power not through institutions but as a single man. Clearly, no one could expect justice to prevail in such a system.

Freedom and justice are interlocked; justice derives from freedom; you can't have justice without freedom first. Similarly for equality, for a person denied equality will not enjoy much freedom; the reverse is also true. Justice is therefore founded upon the recognition of all humanity, in the inherent dignity of each individual and in the recognition of the rights of all mankind to protection of life, liberty and property; it also rests on the recognition of freedom of conscience and expression, and, more importantly, freedom of association. These precepts form the basis of genuine democracy and justice.

In the final analysis, we know there is freedom in any given society only if those who dissent are free to do so. Selective freedom - that which applies only to supporters of a given regime and members of a single privileged political party - can't be regarded as freedom by any stretch of the imagination. The four freedoms expounded by the former US President, Franklin Roosevelt, in 1945, have particular relevance at this point, especially for African countries where police tyranny substitutes for the due process of the law. The result of this tyranny is the elimination of the ideals of freedom and equality, a characteristic of regimes like Nyerere's in which personal power predominates.

Nyerere often presented cogent arguments for "freedom" and "liberation" in the Third World, even making Tanzania's resources available to support such causes: the Liberation Committee of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) has its headquarters in Tanzania; yet this was no more than a charade that had nothing to do with the way he ran Tanzania, virtually single-handedly through a system of his own making, to the ultimate impoverishment of the nation.

This might surprise some, but it is true that terrible human rights violations blot Nyerere's supposed impeccable record: the torture of political detainees; the mayhem in his detention camps; harassment of perceived political enemies; all were daily occurrences under his rule. But Nyerere's much vaunted Ujamaa, through which the regime exercised near absolute control over the populace and media, ensured that few of these abuses ever came to light.

From my own experience of detention in Tanzania, and the experiences of hundreds of others who endured similar and worse abuse - unsung heroes who suffered silently - I feel duty bound to provide a detailed picture of what occurred under Nyerere.

I haven't listed these events in chronological order, but in order of importance and on the basis of unbiased documentability. As mentioned earlier, these incidents were not widely talked about when they occurred, but they are well documented. They represent not all, but some of the documented cases; the suffering of scores of lesser known people has yet to be documented and made public.

It is paradoxical that in most black African nations, Tanzania included, it is sometimes as dangerous to be a friend of the regime as its enemy. A Tanzanian example: On October 19, 1968, Nyerere, then president, ordered several members of his parliament expelled, and detained others without trial. Their crime: criticising his policies during a budget debate. Among the victims were Eli Anangisye and a one-time friend of Nyerere, Joseph Kasella-Bantu; the others were former trade union leader Christopher Kassanga Tumbo, Ndugu Choga, Ndugu Bakampenja, and Ndugu Kaneno. Several hundred people were detained without trial that same month, up to sixty in the Kilimanjaro region alone. When a report about these detentions appeared on October 2, 1968, in the widely circulating Daily Nation, a Kenyan newspaper, the government promptly ordered the arrest of Tanzanian journalist Melek Mzirai Kangero, for filing the report. Thereafter, repression of real or imaginary opponents of Nyerere's regime intensified.

Prior to this incident, in December 1967, Nyerere ordered the arrest of the former vice president of Zanzibar, Abdallah Kassim Hanga. Nyerere then had Hanga paraded before a mass rally at the national stadium in Dar-es-Salaam, criticising him publicly in the most virulent terms. Hanga stood before Nyerere handcuffed like a prisoner, unable to defend himself. Hanga's crime: opposition to Nyerere's policies.

An even greater shock to the public than the mass mockery of Hanga was the fact that he had returned from exile in Guinea, after being assured by Guinea's President Ahmed Sekou Toure and Nyerere himself that he would be welcome and "free" at home. Hanga, of course, was never to be "free": three years after being humiliated in public, Hanga, and his former education minister and ambassador to the United States, Sheikh Othman Sharrif, were killed in Zanzibar by the Karume regime, in circumstances that the mainland authorities, and indeed Nyerere himself have yet to explain.

Before their murder, a group of elders from Iringa region, where Sheikh

Sharrif had worked as a veterinary officer, pleaded with Nyerere not to return the two men to Zanzibar. Nyerere refused, insisting that the men would have a "fair" trial in Zanzibar. The Swahili weekly Ulimwengu

(The World) demanded in its editorial of November 19, 1967 that, in view of the fact that Tanzania had a freely elected parliament and a

legal and judicial system, the detainees should be charged with specific offences and brought before the competent courts of the land. Moreover, the newspaper said this was especially important in view of Nyerere's own declared devotion to the concept of human rights. Nyerere's government responded by detaining the editor, Otini Kambona, holding him for a decade without charge or trial. Otini Kambona's brother, Mathias, was also detained without charge.

In a move designed to curtail on the independence of the judiciary, Nyerere ordered that a learned magistrate, A. Ngitami, be detained for acquitting a defendant the government wanted convicted and imprisoned. Magistrate Ngitami was later released after members of the bar, led by the Chief Justice, then a foreign expatriate, had protested. From this point on, courts of law in Tanzania gradually witnessed the erosion of judicial independence.

Then came the iniquitous legislation of 1970 in which an amendment to the colonial-inherited penal code was rushed through parliament, to make provision for the death penalty for persons convicted of treason. The new legislation was retrospective, which meant it would apply to the persons it had apparently been designed to punish. This was done after the arrests of Bibi Titi Mohamed, Michael Kamaliza, Gray Likungu Mattaka, Dunstan Lifa Chipaka and his brother Elia, and Philip Milinga. The government accused them of treason, and in October 1969 Nyerere announced they would stand trial for crimes against the state. In March 1970 a bill was passed (Act No 2, 1970) amending section 39 of the former penal code. Sentences handed down under the new act could be applied retrospectively, thus making the six defendants who had been arrested six months before the legislation was changed, liable for the new penalties. In a legal sense, this action was not consistent with the principles of natural justice.

All but three of the accused, together with a former newspaper editor, Gray Mattaka, were acquitted due to insufficient evidence. But the Nyerere regime was not satisfied: it had them held in detention for more than eight years, without bringing any additional charges.

Nyerere's regime also persistently absolved itself of any involvement in events in Zanzibar during the brutal reign of the fanatical nationalist, Sheikh Abeid Aman Karume. Torture of political opponents was widespread; some opposition figures mysteriously disappeared. Yet it was Nyerere's regime which, in 1969 and 1970, consigned Bibi Titi Mohamed, the Chipaka brothers, Gray Likungu Mattaka and Michael Kamaliza, among others, to Zanzibar, specifically for torture. At some stage they were held at Zanzibar's most notorious torture chamber, Kwa Bamkwe, otherwise known as Kwa Manderu, which was within Zanzibar city centre prison. For more than five months these detainees rotated among Zanzibar's prisons;

other Zanzibari political detainees suffered the same fate, though some survived Karume's reign of terror.

Why would a revered figure like Nyerere allow his own political detainees to be taken to Zanzibar for torture if his government truly loathed Karume's excesses? How can we believe that Nyerere and Karume's regime were not partners in brutality when today Karume's minions, the perpetrators of terror, are walking scot-free in Tanzania? Some even hold senior government posts offered them by Nyerere, or obtained on his recommendation. Why did Nyerere's government close its ears when the call went out for the perpetrators of crimes against humanity to be brought to trial?

And what of those in senior party positions and top government posts who were involved in the forced marriages scandal? Salmin Amour, current president of Zanzibar, is known to have taken part in a forced marriage in May 1970. Amour's "wife", a woman of Persian origin, remarried later in Copenhagen, Denmark, after she finally succeeded in breaking free from the man she was forced to marry against her will and that of her parents.

How many more minor government officials and CCM members who committed similar crimes against minority groups in Zanzibar still hold public office? What of the young women whose lives they ruined? Will the government compensate the victims? What of the parents of young virgins who were jailed and caned because they refused to allow their daughters to enter forced marriages with indigenous Zanzibaris? Ironically, almost every member of the Zanzibar Revolutionary Council ended up grabbing as "wives" women of Persian, Indian and Arab origin, the very groups that were supposed to be oppressors of the indigenous Zanzibaris.

Yet even today the CCM government remains reluctant to purge its ranks of elements ordinary Tanzanians claim were involved in the mysterious disappearance in Zanzibar of political opponents. Many of the culprits are secure in their positions today, thanks to the CCM policy of "kulindana" - protecting each other. Brigadiers Abdallah Natepe and Seif Bakari, as well as other members of the "committee of fourteen", walk the streets of Dar-es-Salaam as free men; so does Juma Ameir, an intelligence official at the Tanzanian High Commission in the United Kingdom. These men may well be innocent of the crimes they are alleged to have committed; but as long as the CCM party and its government continues to protect them, thereby denying their constitutional right to defend themselves before a court, the public will believe they are indeed guilty.

The CCM government still owes the world an explanation for the disappearance of people like Abdulaziz Twala, Saleh Sadala Akida, Jimmy Ringo, Amour Zahour, Hemed Said, M Makame Hatibu, Idrissa Majura, Seif A. Nassor, Aboud Nadhif, Khamis Masoud, Jaha Ubwa, Mdungi Usi, and others. Many Tanzanians believe the government had a hand in their unexplained disappearance. All were known to be staunch supporters

of the government and the union, but they had annoyed a few people in power by demanding the introduction of democracy, social justice and accountability. The authorities had them arrested; to date, no explanation has been forthcoming about their mysterious disappearance from prison.

Another heinous abuse of Nyerere's power occurred with the collapse of the government of Mohamed Shamte, the former Zanzibar prime minister, after only one month in power. Nyerere had Shamte jailed without trial for ten years, together with his foreign minister, Sheikh Ali Muhsin, and Juma Aley, Dr A. Idarus Baalawy, Maulid Mshagama, Salim Kombo, Rashid Hamad, Abadhar Juma, Amirali Abdul Rasul and several other of Shamte's ministers. Justice-minded Tanzanians, and the world at large, would have preferred that they were brought before a court of law to answer for alleged crimes committed during their one month in office. Many Tanzanians remain unconvinced today that these politicians

could have committed such serious crimes in only one month to put them behind bars for ten years. It is widely believed they were persecuted because of their Arab origin. By the way, if we were to apply a similar

mathematical equation of one month in office results in ten years in prison, how many years would CCM leaders get who have been in power for over thirty years and who now overtly admit that "we made mistakes"

and surprisingly continue to make them despite public protestations.

It is difficult to see how justice could exist in a country where the law does not provide legal safeguards against arbitrary arrest. This is particularly so in a situation where the president is asked to sign blank detention orders allowing police officials to fill in the names of the people they want to detain; this was a common practice under Nyerere. Under those circumstances, it is difficult to imagine how the liberty of the individual can be safeguarded; or how to prevent detention motivated by vengeance or jealousy.

The death by torture of detainees at the notorious detention camp in Kigoto, in Mwanza region, serves as a reminder of how Nyerere used his prerogative powers corruptly. In 1977 the government ordered villagers in Mwanza and neighbouring Shinyanga region rounded up and detained for interrogation. The victims were apparently taken in for practising witchcraft, a charge with no scientific or legal basis and which the government does not even recognise. Moreover, witchcraft does

not constitute a danger to the security of the state. Alhaj Ali Hassan Mwinyi, former union president, then minister of home affairs, resigned

from the government accepting "political responsibility". Surely in a society where leaders are accountable to the people they govern, that would have been the end of Mwinyi's political career? Not in Tanzania,

where leaders are answerable only to those who appoint them; and where

the populace lack the power to replace leaders because of one-party authoritarianism.

Nyerere reacted swiftly to Mwinyi's resignation: he rewarded him with an ambassadorial post in Cairo. Only after the outrage over the barbaric Kigoto murders started to fade from Tanzanians' collective memory did

Nyerere recall his old crony, this time placing him right at the centre of Tanzanian politics. In 1985 Nyerere hand picked Mwinyi to succeed him.

Old habits die hard; Mwinyi was quick to show that he was no exception. On July 26, 1986, President Mwinyi's regime unleashed its trigger-happy soldiers on cane-cutters at Kilombero sugar estate. The cutters had gathered peacefully at the factory's offices to demand their rightful emolument; several were shot dead and scores permanently maimed. Public calls for the perpetrators to be brought to book went unheeded. In keeping with the CCM party's policy of "kulindana" (protecting each other), the officials who ordered the massacre will never be brought to justice. Much to the disgust of ordinary Tanzanians, there was no outcry from the international community, as would surely have been the case had it been South Africa.

President Mwinyi continued to sanction military campaigns against perceived troublemakers. On May 13, 1988, troops fired on peaceful demonstrators in Zanzibar, leaving two people dead from bullet wounds; eye-witnesses claim the victims were hit from the back. Several other demonstrators were maimed and scores more detained, allegedly for attending an illegal gathering.

Independent version of what happened that day contradict the official account. These version insist that Mwinyi's troops opened fire on the demonstrators after they had passed the state house, quite peacefully, and not before. It was only after the demonstrators had been fired on by the troops that property was damaged by angry demonstrators; yet the government used the damage to property as a pretext for the shootings.

The scene was set for another bloodbath, this time at the main campus of the University of Dar-es-Salaam during the crisis there in 1990. President Mwinyi is known to have wanted to use the Field Force Unit (FFU) to quell the disturbances; but Nyerere, then still CCM chairman and head of its Defence Commission, talked him out of it. However, the witch-hunt of students suspected of involvement in the disturbances continued long after the matter had been mutually resolved.

Mwinyi also used the death penalty quite liberally, in sharp contrast with Nyerere, who seemed reluctant to have condemned prisoners executed. People advocating an end to the death penalty were shocked when they learnt that since assuming office in 1985, Mwinyi had assented to the execution of more than twenty-four condemned prisoners, and that more executions could be expected in the 1990s. This is the highest number of prisoner executions in Tanzania's history.

Critics now blame Nyerere for failing to abolish the death penalty while he was still in office, although he never himself assented to prisoner executions - perhaps as a public relations move for the international community. But the constitution tailored by Nyerere could be ruthlessly exploited by a man, say, like Idi Amin, should such a person ever emerge in Tanzania; and there is no guarantee this cannot happen, given that

Tanzanians are constitutionally impotent.

Perhaps one of the best known instances of mass brutality , at least to the many thousands of peasants who suffered as a result, was the infamous "Opereisheni Vijiji Vya Ujamaa" - Operation Communal Villages - when Nyerere's government uprooted peasants from their ancestral homes and herded them like cattle into collectives - part of the failed Ujamaa experiment. Scores of unarmed peasants died during this operation as a result of brutality by the Field Force Unit (FFU), a paramilitary unit under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Sometimes ordinary criminal matters provoked horrific torture. Take the case of James Magoti, a former Dar-es-Salaam bank manager who was detained for alleged theft together with his brother Adam in November 1979, under a presidential decree. Theft is a matter for the police to investigate and the courts to adjudicate. Magoti was severely tortured while in what was described as administrative detention, suffering permanent damage to important parts of his body. Since then rumours have circulated that Magoti's torture was ordered from Ikulu (State House) by one of two senior officials, Joseph Butiku or Bhoke Mnanka, the men who were directing the activities of Nyerere's six-odd political police organisations. This accusation is based on claims that one of the two security big shots was in love with a women banker working with Magoti.

Another case that springs to mind is that of Said Seif, a prominent Bukoba businessman who was detained for several years on unspecified charges, and who later died shortly after his release, allegedly in a shoot-out with police. There is also the case of a Major Kato, a member of the Tanzanian People's Defence Force (TPDF), who was detained for more than six years at Bukoba Prison without charge or trial, after the war with Uganda had ended. Sam Bakera, a Canadian-trained Ugandan engineer working at Kilembe mine in Uganda, was picked up in his own country and held for several years without trial at Lwamulumba prison camp in Bukoba, allegedly for blowing up the Kyaka bridge during the war with Uganda.

Much of this abuse of civil liberties can be blamed on the Arusha Declaration of 1967, the blueprint for socialism in Tanzania. It provided the basis for officials to dispense justice without reference to civilised legal tenets; in short, it allowed Nyerere to ride roughshod over court decisions and the will of his own cabinet. Under Nyerere, Tanzania welcomed political refugees from all parts of Africa, mainly Southern Africa. On arrival, these refugees discovered that Nyerere's government wanted them to espouse certain beliefs in exchange for a place to hide, something which is morally wrong. Many refugees who were outspokenly critical of their political movements and armed wings were locked up in Nyerere's detention camps. One of the best known instances is that of Andreas Shipanga, former information secretary of the South

West Africa People's Organisation (Swapo). Shipanga and Andreas Nuukwao, together with nine others, were brought from Zambia in 1976 to Tanzania, where they were placed in detention. They were released some years later, following a protracted campaign for their freedom by Amnesty International.

South African refugees who became disillusioned with the African National Congress (ANC) and its armed wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK), were left to languish at the notorious Dakawa detention camp, near Morogoro. Some never came out alive; others who were last seen at this hell-camp are still unaccounted for. Dakawa detention camp, otherwise known as the Ruth First Re-orientation School, is one among several such camps in Tanzania where South African refugees were brutally tortured. In April 1990 several detainees escaped from Mazimbu detention camp to Nairobi; there they told the world of the plight of scores of detainees still incarcerated, of conditions in the camp, and of compatriots who had died as a result of starvation and torture.

None of the South African refugees detained in Tanzania, many of whom were brought regularly by bus from Zambia and other frontline states, or by the Soviet Aeroflot airline, were ever brought to court. All were held under the so-called Refugee Control Act, which covers virtually anything under the sun. This act empowers the president to detain a refugee without trial for up to seven years, even for alleged political crimes committed outside Tanzania's territory. Torture and physical abuse of these detainees was further confirmed to the international media by several people freed by the ANC in August 1991. The ANC had detained them ostensibly because they were South African spies. Dakawa and Mazimbu camps, which Tanzania set aside for the ANC to rehabilitate and re-educate so-called enemy agents, turned out to be a scandal for Tanzania, given the brutal treatment meted out to internees, with Tanzania's approval.

Refugees from other African countries also suffered in detention in Tanzania. In 1990 Remi Gahutu, a Burundian exile and leader of Pelipe-hutu, a movement opposed to Tutsi domination of the government in Burundi, died inside Ukonga security prison in Dar-es-Salaam. He had been held there, together with fourteen other Burundian exiles, since 1989, for allegedly participating in activities considered detrimental to Tanzania's relations with Burundi. The government insisted Gahutu died of a heart attack.

However, when the UNHCR branch office in Dar-es-Salaam requested that Gahutu's autopsy be performed by an independent doctor, the Government Chemical Laboratory (GCL) suddenly issued a new version of the death report. It now claimed, in its post-mortem report dated 23 November, 1990, that Gahutu's death had been caused by the constant inhaling of farm chemicals when he had worked as a farmer. But the US State Department, in its 1990 human rights report on Tanzania, concluded its paragraph on Remi Gahutu's death with the following statement: "...clinical information released at the end of November (1990) indicated the death may have been the result of poisoning".

But it was only after the death of Mousa Membar, who had been held in the same prison cell that once housed Gahutu, that the conditions under which political detainees were being held in Tanzania came to light. Membar, leader of the underground opposition Tanzania Democratic Movement, died in Muhimbili Medical Centre in Dar-es-Salaam on May 25, 1991, his face bloated. The government claimed he died of a known disease, but did not provide details.

Membar had returned to Tanzania from exile in Britain on September 14, 1990, after government agents had enticed him to return to take part in the political process. On his arrival, Membar was promptly detained without charge. The conditions in which he was being held were appalling:

his solitary confinement cell was filthy and lacked adequate light; it was also poorly ventilated and infested with stinging mosquitoes.

Membar

died as a result of protracted torture; the government's refusal to perform an autopsy or to hold a public inquest, not just into his death

but into the treatment of detainees generally, lends weight to the claim

that the state killed him. Even calls from the respected London-based human rights organisation, Amnesty International, for an inquest into Membar's death were ignored.

Tanzania's government has also adopted the policy of involuntary repatriation of refugees to countries where they face persecution. Yet Tanzania is a signatory to the Geneva Convention, which includes clauses

related to the treatment of refugees. The UNHCR has even given Nyerere the prestigious Nansen Award in recognition of his "good" work for refugees.

His work for refugees was not always up to standard. In 1984 Tanzania secretly returned to Kenya fifteen political exiles, including two young

Kenya Air Force serviceman who had fled their country fearing for their

lives after the 1982 coup attempt. It is widely believed that the two servicemen, Senior private Hezekiah Ochuka and Pancras Oteyo Okumu, were hanged after being forcibly returned. Yet they had been granted refugee status by Tanzania and should therefore have been immune to extradition.

At a public meeting in Nachingwea, southern Tanzania, on March 16, 1975,

Nyerere's government and Frelimo put on show trial some 240 Mozambican political dissidents, including former Frelimo leaders, for their alleged

"crimes" against Frelimo. They included, among others, former Frelimo vice-president Uria Simango, Lazaro Nkavandame, Mateus Gwenjere and Joana Simiao. It has since been established beyond doubt that the four were summarily executed along with others by Frelimo after their show trial at Nachingwea. No external pressure was ever brought on Nyerere's

regime to prevent the handover of these politicians to Frelimo.

None of these abuses by Nyerere's regime sparked worldwide condemnation, unlike, for example, the Steve Biko case in South Africa. Yet Biko and, to take just one example, Tanzania's own Mousa Membar, died in similar circumstances and for much the same principles. Why no world outcry against Tanzania's abuses, you might ask. Again, it could be that in the cases I have cited, the principle actors are all black - both the victims and their persecutors. Isn't it time a black African "Cry Freedom" was filmed? This time the setting could be Tanzania - after all, we have the material.

In 1977 in Zanzibar thirty-seven defendants received varying sentences in a treason trial. Thirteen others, including a prominent cabinet minister in the union government, Abdulrahaman Mohamed Babu, were held on the mainland without formally being charged. The strange part of this trial drama was that the former attorney-general of Zanzibar, Wolfgango Dourado, assumed the roles of both prosecutor and defence council, a legal anomaly at odds with the principles of natural justice. Apparently this practice became law during Dourado's tenure as attorney-general under the murderous rule of Sheikh Karume. Dourado later became an outspoken Zanzibar dissident, but only after the regime he faithfully served gave him a taste of life in a Tanzanian detention centre.

In another treason trial, in 1983 on the mainland, many of the accused had in fact been granted asylum in Kenya, which should have rendered them immune from extradition. How they were repatriated to Tanzania is unclear; what is clear is that whoever was involved infringed their rights to asylum. Among the victims of this violation of international law were an airline pilot called McGhee, alias Hatib Gandhi (who died suspiciously shortly after being released from prison, January 1996), and Christopher Kadego, a charismatic officer in the Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF), Capts. Suleiman Kamando, Vitalis Mapunda, Zacharia Hanspope, Rodrick Roberts, Lt. Col. Protas Muchwampaka, Lt. Badru Rwechungura, Capt. Harry Hanspope as well as others from all walks of life.

Nyerere tolerated no opposition, or even the thought of it, as James Mapalala and Mwinijuma Othman Upindo found out in September 1984. They had called on Nyerere to repeal the 1965 law forbidding political opposition; he promptly had them locked up. Amnesty International relentlessly pressed for their release; four years later (yes, four years) Mapalala was freed from prison, but banished to the island of Mafia until very recently.

The all-embracing powers given Nyerere under the 1962 Preventive Detention Act achieved their desired steady effect, cowing the opposition and confining the finest political minds into a fortress of fear. Mass fear and docility enable regimes based on personal power to present themselves as enjoying popularity. Personality cults are built around demi-god characters like Nyerere; yet he remains a fearful figure even to this day. Articulate and eloquent, Nyerere was able to move churchmen and tycoons with his simplicity of ideas; when it came to human rights abuses, he shrewdly ducked the question by raising non-issues - if the north (richer countries) respected human rights, they should not "squeeze" poorer countries. Then the old man would sob:

"our children are dying because we have to pay debt" (Although his own

children, it was noted, remained remarkably well nourished).

In making his pathetic plea, Nyerere was probably referring to the more than US\$9.5 billion his government received from the West between 1970 and 1989, most of which was squandered through mismanagement, corruption and lack of accountability. For a government which for 20 years crooned "socialism and self-reliance", Nyerere's "achievement" was quite the opposite: dependence on imports and foreign aid. But Nyerere operated an efficient public relations machinery abroad, through which he projected himself as a respectable figure in international circles.

One glaring example was the funding by Nyerere's political police organisation of the London-based political magazine Africa (now defunct). As if that was not enough, the organisation even sent one of its senior operatives, one Marcelino Komba, to work on the magazine as a senior writer. Komba who remained in the UK after the demise of the magazine, has since described himself as "self-employed" and an "economic refugee" in the UK. Since the magazine's demise there have been claims that Tanzania's political police had actually been dipping into their own slush fund to pay individuals to write letters to the magazine praising "mwalimu" and his regime. Hard-pressed Tanzanian taxpayers, who ultimately had to foot the bill, are yet to be told how much misinformation and distortion of the truth was spread as a result of this wasteful propaganda campaign.

It makes very little difference in Africa whether a ruler is educated or uneducated: active oppression of the masses, economic failure, and undemocratic practises occur regardless of leaders' educational background. Sometimes, the more educated leaders are, the more often policy failures occur; many of them appear reluctant to seek advice from local technocrats, believing they are themselves sufficiently well educated. They end up formulating policy single-handedly, as Nyerere was wont to do. Nyerere would usually present an idea to his cabinet for endorsement, not for criticism or debate. When Benjamin Mkapa, a former minister of foreign affairs (now president), contradicted Nyerere at a cabinet meeting, Nyerere scolded him. Mkapa was subsequently demoted and sent to Canada as ambassador; later he pleaded for clemency from the "father-of-the-nation", Nyerere; Mkapa then returned to Tanzania, where he took up a different - and peripheral - Cabinet post.

Nyerere introduced single-candidate presidential elections in 1970, 1975 and 1980 which were a complete sham: the electorate was only allowed to vote for or against Nyerere - the take-it-or-leave-it attitude so typical of the man. In Tanzania today, his critics contend that Nyerere surrounded himself with mediocre advisers to ensure he upheld a pliable ruling class. Others claim Nyerere did not want anyone around him who would eclipse his own political star. He would make a public issue of "correcting" the supposed mistakes of his deputies; apparently this reinforced his political fortunes and created the impression, quite wrongly, that he was the only capable man in Tanzania. Many critics

claim that Rashid Mfaume Kawawa, an unpopular politician, was used for this purpose - as a willing political pawn. Similarly, the handpicking of President Mwinyi, whom many Tanzanians regarded as unsuitable for the post, is viewed in much the same light.

Through the OAU and Frontline states, Nyerere advocated the recognition of only one political movement in various countries, always a movement whose ideology corresponded with that of his own party (CCM). In Angola, for example, he insisted on recognition of the MPLA as the only legitimate party. The result was that other political groups, including UNITA, took to the bush to fight a costly war that has ravaged the country, when the issue could have been settled, as it should have been, through the ballot box. Had a celebrated African leader of Nyerere's co-called wisdom removed his single-vision optic, and instead used his influence to encourage a diversity of opinion, Angola might have been spared the horror of the current civil war.

As in Angola, so in Mozambique: there, Nyerere favoured Frelimo as the sole legitimate party. The result was the same: a devastating civil war that caused, enormous damage. The hard pressed Tanzanian tax-payer was not excluded from the cost of Mozambique's war: for more than a decade Tanzania stationed troops in Mozambique to assist Frelimo in the fight against Renamo rebels.

The mess which many countries find themselves in is the result of the failure of democracy; a progression from repression by an alien (colonial) government to repression by one's own government (though not an elected one). The cost to the affected countries is enormous, not just in terms of life and property, but in every aspect of human existence. In the case of Mozambique and Angola in particular, these have not been cheap wars: peasants, for example, have little choice but to abandon their farms when bomb craters rip furrows through their fields; the peasants go hungry and ultimately become refugees. A whole generation of children loses its childhood: there is no room for play in a war zone. And the "great" Nyerere is not blameless: he cared little for the politics of common sense and diverse opinions; ultimately his myopic vision encouraged confrontation.

Then there was the creation of the Frontline states, which seemed to assume the duties and responsibilities of the whole African continent. Surely a vulnerable country such as Tanzania, a key player in the Frontline, could ill afford this new role? Then there is the issue of sanctions against South Africa, to which Nyerere committed himself fully (with, it must be admitted, good intentions). Morally justifiable as they were, sanctions struck a double blow for Tanzania: there was no spin-off from companies pulling out of South Africa, not least because our own investment climate was not conducive to private capital; and we gained little from the Good Samaritans, the "Wafadhili" or donors, who had promised financial help to overcome the drawbacks of backing sanctions. Oddly, many of the very European countries which promised Tanzania financial assistance were themselves reluctant to impose economic sanctions on Pretoria.

Tanzanians can't be blamed for thinking, rightly or wrongly, that these developed nations possessed financial clout to force South Africa to dismantle apartheid. As a staunch sanctions supporter, Tanzania today

finds itself way behind some of the African countries which traded with South Africa, some quite openly, and established connections in that country's lucrative markets. Tanzania was more concerned with external political matters than its own development. As it has turned out, Nyerere's ideas are largely discredited, leading to economic and social despair wherever anything similar has been tried.

Nyerere's government and Frelimo, which enjoyed Nyerere's wholehearted support, have still to answer about human rights violations in the pre-independence days. It is widely believed that Frelimo worked closely with Tanzania's secret police, and that between the two they conducted several heavy-handed recruitment campaigns for Frelimo inside Mozambique, in the region bordering Mtwara, southern Tanzania. Sources claim that people of the Makonde community in Mozambique were forcibly enlisted to fight for Frelimo, regardless of whether they subscribed to Frelimo's ideals or not. It must be noted that although every Mozambican wanted independence as much as any other African, most did not believe Frelimo had the exclusive right to lead after independence.

Extremely harmful allegations have been made concerning the conduct of security agents recruiting for Frelimo: according to these allegations, people who resisted enlistment were tortured to death. Reports of this nature were sent to Dar-es-Salaam, but the government failed to take any action. Forced recruitment into Frelimo resulted in 1965 in the emergence of several factions in the organisation. In October 1966 a critical stage was reached with the assassination of Frelimo's first armed forces commander, the charismatic Filipe Samwel Magaia. Along with some other senior Frelimo officers, Magaia represented a faction opposed to the one which owed allegiance to the Mozambican politicians based in Tanzania headed by Dr Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane, Frelimo's founder president who was himself the victim of a parcel bomb in Dar-es-Salaam.

The bomb that killed Mondlane was, as expected, blamed on PIDE, the Portuguese secret police. Indeed, in order to clear the air, Nyerere, then Tanzanian president, invited Interpol to conduct an investigation into the assassination. Unfortunately, and perhaps predictably, the Interpol report was never made public, leaving a host of questions unanswered: what type of explosive was used, and what area of his body took the brunt of the blast, for example.

Well informed Tanzanians dismiss both their own government's version and that of Frelimo - that Portuguese secret police in Portugal did the job. Rather, they believe that Dr Mondlane was killed by dissidents in Frelimo, which was plagued by factionalism at that time. Had Frelimo been democratic, and been encouraged to be so by its Tanzanian backers, the current conflict in Mozambique might have been averted. Instead, Tanzania's government helped Frelimo persecute those who opposed its

ideas; that culture persists today within Frelimo (though they are being forced into democratic ways). In fact, the four Mozambican politicians handed over by Tanzania to Mozambique (referred to earlier) backed the faction of the assassinated commander Magaia.

Allegations of forced recruitment, with Tanzania's blessing, have been made against Uganda's Dr Milton Obote, who, with assistance from Tanzanian security agents, mounted a recruitment campaign inside Uganda in the 1970s, when Obote was exiled in Tanzania. These allegations were fueled by the detention of Ugandan conscientious objectors by Tanzania. Those objectors were held without charge or trial; the presumption was that Tanzania wanted them to fight for Obote.

Most of these Ugandans were unemployed in their own country; recruiting agents lured them to Tanzania with promises of jobs on the Tazara railway line, which was then being constructed. The jobless Ugandans soon found they had been lined up for work of another sort: soldiers in Dr Obote's guerrilla army. With no means of earning a living, and under pressure from the Tanzanian government, some volunteered to join Obote's forces, rather than be stranded; those who refused were detained at various Tanzanian prisons, some for many years. Nyerere's regime never specified what crimes they were alleged to have committed; similarly, their legal status was never clarified, nor the grounds for detention. Most Tanzanians still want to know why Nyerere approved of forced recruitment into armies of his liking, and why objectors were jailed.

There also remains the question of Tanzania's military intervention in Uganda's internal affairs, a costly exercise which depleted our finances. Every Tanzanian believes in the right to self-defence and defence of our sovereignty; most, however, deplored the expensive war of 1978-79, undertaken to restore Nyerere's friend Obote to power. For all the material and human cost to Tanzania, Obote went on to rule Uganda even more oppressively than his forerunner, Idi Amin. Respected human rights groups estimate that more than 300,000 people were killed during the time Nyerere's troops were stationed in Uganda; deaths which occurred under a regime over which Nyerere had enormous influence.

Currently it is being debated that if Nyerere was truly committed to ridding Africa of brutal dictators, by whatever means, he should have looked no further than neighbouring Zanzibar, over which he had legitimate constitutional powers. Sheikh Karume was a ruthless dictator whose reign of terror will never be forgotten by Zanzibaris. The argument that Nyerere's intervention would have jeopardised the union he so much cherished cannot be entertained; principles cannot be compromised. It must be remembered that the East African Community, created by the British along EU lines during colonial rule, was much cherished by East Africans. Yet its collapse was in part due to Nyerere's refusal to sit at the same table as the "murderer" Amin, to discuss community affairs.

Events in Zanzibar from 1964 followed a similar pattern to Amin's Uganda, with atrocities committed against the local people. As in Amin's Uganda, Karume's regime disrupted economic life in Zanzibar, turning what might have been the Hong Kong of Africa into a totalitarian dungeon where freedom and justice were non-existent. Nyerere had no qualms about offering military assistance to dissidents of nearby countries (Seychelles, for example) opposing democratically elected governments; yet in neighbouring Zanzibar, a tyrant embarrassed the entire black race.

In 1976/7 Nyerere offered military training to dissidents from Seychelles, in order to overthrow by force the democratic administration of Sir James Mancham. Having succeeded, Nyerere then assisted a one-party regime cling to power, by despatching Tanzanian troops there for a decade. Not only did Tanzania overturn the wishes of the Seychelles electorate, but Nyerere also helped root out the ideals of freedom, justice and equality - he snuffed out democracy in Seychelles. On the other hand, the retention of Tanzanian troops in the capital Mahe was a pointless burden on the shoulders of the hard-pressed Tanzanian taxpayer.

Nyerere's interference in the internal affairs of other states does not end there. In 1974/5 Tanzania trained dissidents to depose the government of Ahmed Abdallah of the Comoros. Tanzanians could not fathom why they had to foot the bill for installing a government of Nyerere's liking in the Comoros, at a time when our own economy was in tatters. Observers now argue that Tanzania's intervention in the internal affairs of the Comoros actually destabilised the otherwise peaceful Indian Ocean islands, and precipitated the presence of a mercenary force under the Frenchman Bob Denard, who took control shortly after Tanzanian troops pulled out.

Tanzania's involvement in the Comoros and Seychelles are testimony to Nyerere's hegemonic dreams for the region in the end, he bled his own economy. Nyerere's Tanzania bears a direct moral responsibility for the suffering inflicted on Comorans and Seychellois many of whom fled their countries after Nyerere-sponsored regimes forced their way to power. Nyerere was one of the founder-fathers of the OAU; indeed, he stood for its ideals of pan-Africanism. Yet, he revealed a secessionist streak when he supported the breakaway of Biafra from Nigeria in 1967, and supported Biafra's secessionist leader, Lieutenant-Colonel (later General) Odumegwu Ojukwu. By recognising the breakaway state of Biafra, Nyerere countenanced the disintegration of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a violation of the OAU charter.

And, nearer the present, Zanzibaris calling for a referendum to determine the future of their country's union with the Tanzanian mainland have been harassed by Nyerere's secret police, and continue to be systematically

harassed. Many have been detained without charge or trial: Seif Sharif Hamad, a dynamic former chief minister of Zanzibar, was detained for a long time for calling on the mainland government to review the articles

of the union. So too were Shabaan Mlozi, Ali Haji Pandu, a former Chief Justice of Zanzibar, and others. This latter group was only released after Amnesty International's relentless efforts to get them freed. If Biafrans could be listened to, why not Zanzibaris?

Solitary confinement had sharpened my mind, turned me into a deep thinker

covering a wide range of issues, with Nyerere and his one-party rule central features. The more time I spent thinking in detention, the more I

became convinced that Nyerere's policies, both internal and external, had

had a negative impact on the lives of millions of black Africans; where

his "Ujamaa" had spread, there was suffering and unwarranted hardship to be found. When historians - including many who still hold him in high

esteem - reassess his role as "respected" statesman and visionary leader,

many will conclude what ordinary Tanzanians already know: the man is an

undemocratic tyrant, with no respect for ordinary human values (though he conned the world into believing otherwise). His contribution to the betterment of mankind has, by and large, been negative. But it won't readily be forgotten by those who suffered under his regime.

Life in the camp

Meals were terrible and the diet largely unbalanced. Breakfast consisted

of tea without milk, a doughnut, scones, and two boiled eggs, and was a

routine. Normally I don't eat boiled eggs; when I suggested to one of the guards I knew as Mashaka that I preferred scrambled eggs, he flew into a fit of anger. What I had suggested, he said, was tantamount to calling the guards my "wives".

"Do you think we are your wives to cook for you?," he asked angrily, surging forward as if he wanted to punch me. To cool him off, I flashed

a smile and asked whether it was women's role in our society to cook for

men. "Naturally," he replied, breathing easier now; it seemed his anger

had subsided. He added that his wife cooked for him, not him for her, wagging his finger as he said so; he wanted it to be clear who was in control - him, not me. I wanted to drop the discussion, but before doing

so I had one further suggestion: a wife was an equal partner in marriage,

I said. He exploded; it was too late for me to escape punishment. From now on, Mashaka said, I was forbidden to turn on my bed without his prior

permission. But even when I asked him if I could turn from one side to

another he refused. He relented two days later, after the intervention of his colleagues.

Evening meals usually consisted of hard porridge (ugali) with beans boiled in salt. Occasionally I would get "ugali" with two pieces of meat, the most decent meal they could provide. The guards received money each week to buy food, but consumer goods were virtually unobtainable except on the black market, where prices were exorbitant; the guards did most of their food purchases there.

In Tanzania, the informal sector mushroomed and then grew stronger shortly after Nyerere enunciated his "Ujamaa" in 1967, his doctrine of bootstrap, do-it-yourself socialism. This sudden growth of informal sector was a clear sign of the people's opposition to the system Nyerere had imposed on them.

Since the black market provided no receipts, the guards were afforded the opportunity to falsify accounts so they could pocket some of the money themselves. Indeed, it was considered a privilege, in economic terms, for a guard to be brought to the camp from other duties; conversely, it was considered a loss of perks if one was transferred. Not surprisingly, almost every guard used the chance to buy expensive new shoes, tailored trousers and safari suits, the latter considered during Nyerere's rule as a sign of importance in the party or government. In Tanzania, one could tell a member of the secret police by his expensive clothing. As for internees at the camp, our monotonous, unbalanced diet was partly due to the lavish lifestyle of our guards, made affordable largely by their own wheeler-dealing. I remember, for example, that I never once received fruit or vegetables throughout my incarceration, although they were grown locally.

The guards were also involved in blackmail: they would spy on the local population, for whatever purpose; many residents ended up serving long terms of imprisonment for "undermining" Tanzania's economy. The guards also had an eye for a deal. They could, for example, place orders for bicycles using letterheads of the President's Office, under which their organisation fell. They would receive the bicycles at the official government price, then resell them in the black market at three times the price. Apparently the money used for such shady deals was intended for the weekly purchase of detainees' food. On one occasion a row erupted at the camp after one member of the secret police had double-crossed another in a dodgy deal involving several sacks of sugar and rice. The two almost came

to blows, but an outside guard saved the situation by acting as arbiter.

Spying created a vicious circle: the guards spied on the local population, sometimes even on persons they had cut deals with, in turn, the guards were being spied on, and, of course, they were spying on each other. A guard called Kabululu was immediately transferred after one of his colleagues reported to his superiors that he had been trying to make a small ventilation in the tightly sealed window of my room, to allow some fresh air in. Since Kabululu was from Bukoba, my hometown, his seniors thought his alleged action might have something to do with a natural tribal bond. He never returned to the camp during the rest of my detention there.

In another incident, a guard was sent packing after it was discovered (probably from a colleague who had spied on him) that he had attempted to solicit a bribe from an elderly detainee, a Dar-es-Salaam hotelier who had been arrested by the secret police for allegedly giving money to his son-in-law, who was an officer in the Tanzanian People's Defence Force (TPDF). The son-in-law was being held with others at Ukonga security prison, on charges of "inciting people to riot" - the official euphemism for a 1983 coup plot.

Mlawa showed up at the detention camp several days after I had arrived there, dressed in his usual ill-fitting safari jacket. He carried a black attache case containing papers related to my case; I was in for yet another interrogation which lasted two and a half weeks this time. Mlawa got me to sign the statement he had prepared after using his now familiar cavalier tactics; this time, though, he also subjected me to psychological torture. He would come at night, wanting me to sign the statement, which he would never allow me to read. Another detainee was being subjected to electric shock torture in the small room facing mine; he screamed continuously. Once during his screaming Mlawa opened my door and said it was my turn next. I entreated him, saying that I had been "cooperative" and did not wish to be tortured. "Then sign this statement," he commanded, handing me a pen. I signed. He tossed the statement into his attache case, closed it, and left without informing me of my legal status. He did not return to see me for the next nine months.

There was nobody apart from Mlawa who could define my legal status. Detainees held at detention camps had no access to legal advice: those held in administrative detention, that is, in normal prisons, could expect three visits a year from a justice of the peace (a magistrate, for example); but if you were held by the secret police at one of their camps, you were not covered by this practice.

Similar, under Nyerere's rule the names of political detainees were

never published in local newspapers or the official gazette. Nyerere's government never even answered enquiries about political detainees; detention orders signed by Nyerere were never even challenged in court; nor was there any means of challenging a presidential order, since Nyerere was the creator of all institutions in the land and was above the law anyway.

Power resided exclusively in him and he exercised it alone. The system he imposed on the nation did not contain democratic checks and balances against any possible assumption of sovereign authority by a single individual. Institutions such as parliament, the judiciary and the administration, under which sovereignty could have, and should have, been shared, were rendered toothless. Seen in this light, democracy, which Nyerere often spoke of in his many essays and on many international platforms, never existed in Tanzania. Democracy cannot prevail where parliament and the judiciary do not exist as sovereign entities, but are controlled by a single-party dictator.

As the months passed, and many more detainees were brought to the camp, I started to realise just how oppressive Nyerere's regime was. For Tanzanian detainees, the ordeal would begin with a knock on their home door at about two o'clock in the morning; members of the secret police, armed with pistols, would search for implicating political material, while the manacled victim would be abused in front of his family, presumably to demoralise him. He would then be whisked away to a waiting car; if he was in Dar-es-Salaam, he would be driven to the national stadium, blindfolded, and taken to a detention centre.

As an alternative, the secret police could arrest a suspect and hand him over to the local police station, promising to collect him after midnight. Tanzania's secret police have never been answerable to anybody in the country but the President's Office; they enjoyed quasi-immunity from any legal action and punishment of any sort. During the more than twenty-five years of authoritarian rule by Nyerere, thousands of Tanzanians (and other nationalities as well) have become victims of the secret police. Since detention camp conditions were never checked, they were appalling; nearly all freed detainees had contracted some disease such as pulmonary tuberculosis, due to lack of sufficient fresh air and a balanced diet, and because of inadequate sanitation. I doubt whether detention camp conditions were anywhere near required international standards for persons being held over an extended period.

After two months in captivity I fell ill. The illness seemed to be exacerbated by the poor conditions in which I was being held. Yet I could not be taken to a normal hospital, since I was not being held in a government prison but at a secret location. The secret police therefore had to arrange for a doctor to come and attend to me.

The doctor, a tall, heavily-built man with a thick Saddam-Hussein-type moustache, seemed to take more pride in working for Tanzania's secret police than in his own profession. For several minutes he stood in the doorway, flashing his ignition key in the familiar fashion of the Third World social status show-offs, while staring at me contemptuously. He did not say a word. I was unsure if his stare was a psychological tactic to determine if I was really ill, or if it was simply a hard gaze. Finally he introduced himself: "I am a doctor, what's the problem?" I politely inquired what sort of doctor he was: of philosophy, medicine, or what. He managed a forced smile, nodding his head: "No wonder you are here," he muttered. He repeated his introduction and said he had been contacted to come and treat me.

I grabbed the opportunity to express my misgivings about being treated by a medical doctor associated with the political police. I told him I was unsure if he was himself a member of the secret police; and if he was, what guarantee could he give that he would not harm me through injection, if he needed to inject me at all. He dismissed this, saying that if the secret police had wanted to get rid of me they could have done so without having to use the methods I now mentioned. He insisted he was a doctor by profession, which I already knew.

"But doctor," I said, "this is supposedly a secret detention camp operated exclusively by the secret police. No one else comes here except members of the same organisation." I continued: "Your presence here could scare even the least educated person in the street who has looked upon a medical doctor just like a justice of the peace. How can anyone in my shoes reconcile the fact that a public servant of such calibre, held in such reverence, turns out to be working for the political police.

"It clashes with the moral authority of your profession," I said finally. To my complete amazement, he was really taken in by my lecture on the ethics of his profession, which admittedly I knew very little about. At this point the doctor, absent-mindedly fingering a button on his white shirt, sat himself down, with great relief, on my wooden bed. He seemed disoriented, and his face continually changed expression; he kept drumming his fingers on his thigh. I now stared at him, sort of returning his earlier stare. He struggled for something to say.

"Look," he said, "I don't work for the secret police. No way!" Continuing to defend himself, he said he had been "borrowed from Muhimbili Medical Centre" in Dar-es-Salaam, to treat internees. He insisted that his appointment was purely on a professional basis and again said he did not work for the secret police. I believed him, if only because of his spontaneous disorientation after my accusation. But the question remained:

Why was he considered suitable for the job ahead of his colleagues?

Did

it not prick his conscience treating badly bruised detainees, when he knew they had sustained the injuries as a result of physical torture?

I

decided against following this line of questioning; after all, I had already taken away much of his authority by having him explain he had no links with the secret police. I thought it better that I left him with some authority, rather than to continue to humiliate him with a barrage of questions. After that, we became friendly, and he would drop

by to pass greetings whenever he was required to treat other detainees at the camp.

Sometime in late February 1984 a guard nicknamed

Wasiwasi came to remove my handcuffs, because of Mlawa's

"compassionate

consideration." On orders of Mlawa, I had been in handcuffs ever since being transferred from Mtwara; it was part of my punishment. Wasiwasi could not tell me why Mlawa had not shown compassion at Mtwara, when my left hand had built up pus, or at Oysterbay immediately after my arrival. Wasiwasi would only say he was obeying orders; he was withholding something.

The next day a sympathetic guard gave me a clue as to what had happened. He told me the British news agency Reuters had filed a report

about my abduction from Swaziland. Apparently Tanzania's local news agency, Shihata, had followed up the story and called on the principal secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, A. Malamia, to clarify the report. Of course, Malamia denied any knowledge of my abduction and referred Shihata to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which declined comment. No doubt Mlawa's sudden show of compassion had been prompted by

the Reuters report.

Generally, I was now being treated better, although

occasionally a guard would accuse me of being a capitalist lackey, acting

on my master's orders and out to wreck the advances made by Tanzania.

I

was now allowed an hour daily to exercise in my room; minor restrictions,

such as not being allowed to sit up on my bed when I was tired of lying,

were lifted; the guards, including the particularly nasty ones, started to

care a little more, even asking me what I needed to eat. I realised that

coverage of my abduction by an international news agency, and its later

circulation to a wider audience, had eased my plight.

Around June 1984

I developed insomnia. The exercises I was permitted to perform were not

heavy enough to enable the body to sweat and get tired; they were light

exercises, such as walking back and forth for an hour. At this stage a benign guard, Edward Kalibete, at great risk to himself, volunteered to smuggle in some sleeping pills for me. This was well beyond the call of his duty, but I supposed his humanity got the better of him. I soon realised that reliance on sleeping pills was not a viable option: first, there was the danger of developing a perpetual reliance on them, which I did not want; and second, I would regularly need to increase the dosage to induce sleep. I feared I might become immune to the tablets.

But before I could tell Kalibete that I no longer needed the sleeping tablets, he was unceremoniously fired, allegedly for trying to obtain a bribe from an elderly Dar-es-Salaam hotelier held at the camp. Kalibete's arrival at the camp, which was about the time of the Reuters' report, had brought improvements in my own treatment. Kalibete was at pains to preach to other guards not to mistreat detainees who resisted their authority. He told me that orders to torture detainees came directly from Brigadier Kombe, the Director of Intelligence, or from Mlawa. Now that he had been fired, I could no longer get my sleeping pills.

Oysterbay now suddenly experienced an influx of detainees. Several reasons accounted for this, the first being the deliberate torching by unknown persons of the Bank of Tanzania (BoT). Several bank employees were regularly being brought at midnight for interrogation; some were tortured in order to extract confessions. I wondered why on earth the political police needed to become involved in an arson case, which should have been the responsibility of the normal police department or criminal investigation division. Were the police so incompetent that their work had to be handed over to the torture specialists? Of course, the political police never had to prove anything: once a suspect admitted, usually under duress and after torture, that he had been party to a certain criminal act, he was consigned straight to Ukonga security prison. There he could serve an indefinite sentence under presidential decree. Those thought to be innocent would be freed after spending two to three months at the camp.

About the same time, calls for a referendum on Zanzibar's future in the union were gathering momentum. Dar-es-Salaam responded in its usual manner - repressively - cracking down harshly on supposed agitators and enemies of the union. Many of them were brought to Oysterbay, where they endured extensive questioning about their activities; many were physically abused.

While the Zanzibar debate ensued, its impact brought about some changes on the mainland and in its prisons. Members of Zanzibar's secret police started being posted to the mainland; one of them, a short man who looked to be in his late forties or early fifties, landed up at Oysterbay. A staunch Muslim and likeable man, he offered

to buy me a rosary for praying, something that even fellow Christian guards had refused to do.

My Zanzibari guard lost no time in falling in love with the wife of one of the outside guards who were subordinate to the inside guards, at least in this case. The woman, tiny and with a small, beautiful voice, was clearly half her lover's age. She often came inside with her new boyfriend; since my door was now always open, I could get a glimpse of her. Soon she had started to cook food for her new boyfriend; when my Zanzibari guard explained my plight to her and asked if she could include some food for me, she was happy to do so. That man was a godsend, though I did not approve of his affair with a junior colleague's wife. Not only was he risking his career, he was risking detention if his colleagues even got wind of what he was up to. During the first days of this romance, I was able to get hold of old newspapers, often from other empty rooms inside the camp. I read absolutely everything that was printed, including advertisements for Sheikh Yahya Hussein, the so-called astrologer who had nicked items from my bag in Swaziland and given them to Tanzanian intelligence.

By February 1985, after more than one year at Oysterbay, I started to become despondent. I began to lose hope that I would ever come out alive; as if to reinforce those fears, I developed a dry cough (coughing without producing sputum), which the camp doctor treated, but he failed to establish the cause. Having spent a whole year in a poorly ventilated environment, without having seen the sun at all, I was not surprised I had developed that cough. By mid-March my health began to worsen, and my legs started swelling as a result of poor circulation. The guards telephoned Mlawu to inform him of my failing health, but he seemed unconcerned and did not show up. The guards summoned their doctor, but his locum came. The doctor I was used to was in the regions, visiting other detention camps. His assistant, a short, thin man, prescribed some chloroquine pills, assuming that I was afflicted with malaria. Two weeks later, on March 24, 1985, I started to vomit blood. Then I lost consciousness.

Release from Solitary Confinement

Early in the morning of March 26, 1985 I regained consciousness and realised I was being fed intravenously. I was in a small room, with the curtains of the only window fully drawn; two armed secret police guards, both familiar faces to me, sat against the only door, which was shut, facing me. My bed was small and had a reddish rubber cover, almost like

an operating bed. A beautiful nurse sat on the floor next to the guards, fixing me with her gaze. It was the first time I had seen a woman since my abduction in 1983 and subsequent detention. My face lit up; she smiled and told me in English that I was "off danger". From her distinguishable accent I could tell she was a Chagga from Kilimanjaro. She had a light complexion and a natural smile, enough to melt any bachelor like me. She was very intelligent, but I could not figure out how she was connected to the secret police. Nevertheless, her mere presence in the room made me feel relieved; her smile soothed much of my pain and dejection; she addressed me with great nobility.

I soon found out that I was being held at a special clinic where political policemen and their families received treatment. The next day the doctor in charge, the one with whom I was familiar, recommended I go on a special diet which included bananas, my tribal staple food; the nurse offered to prepare them. Mlawa arrived that day, accompanied by three of his senior colleagues, carrying a roast chicken wrapped in old newspapers. I could hardly believe it. My chief interrogator and torturer of yesterday, the man who had forced me to implicate innocent people, was now offering me an olive branch - a roast chicken.

How strange humans can be, I thought. Mlawa looked so different that day from the person I had known during my interrogation. I would have eaten Mlawa's chicken, if only in observance of my Christian faith: when someone slaps you on the left cheek, turn the right cheek to receive the same. Unfortunately I could not eat Mlawa's chicken as it was no longer warm.

My illness turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Fearing that I might die in police custody, the government set me free conditionally. The decision was first communicated to me by the doctor in charge on March 26, 1985, and later confirmed by Mlawa at about midnight on March 27, 1985, when I was blindfolded and taken from the hospital back to the camp. I was to be released the following day.

Things now started to move faster. Mlawa, claiming that the Tanzanian government was very kind, gave me underwear (mine was already worn out), an ill-fitting pair of trousers, a T-shirt and a pair of carpet slippers. Mlawa issued several verbal threats to dissuade me from telling anyone about my experiences at one of their secret detention camps. If I dared to talk, he told me, they would not hold me in "luxury" next time but would send me to Sumbawanga or Kigoto. Both places are well known in Tanzania as the "killing fields". I told Mlawa I would not be

talking at all.

At about 10am on March 28, 1985, I heard Mlawa's car, an old Saab with a defective exhaust pipe, pull up outside the camp. I was blindfolded again and led to his car by two armed members of the secret police. We zigzagged several times as we drove from the camp, then Mlawa drove straight on before suddenly braking and stopping. The blindfold was removed; it was time for another lecture on the code of silence.

"You don't have to say what happened to you to anyone," Mlawa said, "not even to the police". "Do you expect me to see the police?" I asked, and he replied that that was where we were going. "Then I am not free," I said. "You will never be free as long as you remain a political nuisance," he snapped back as the car pulled off again.

I was unable to adjust myself to the outside environment. I couldn't face the sun; I reacted to it with sensitivity of an albino. On the way, I noticed police stopping people everywhere, demanding to see proof of their having paid "development tax"; many people were being loaded into police vans. It was hot as usual in Dar-es-Salaam when Mlawa finally pulled up outside the central police station, which also houses the offices of the Regional Police Commander (RPC)

Minutes later I was at the counter, handing in the few belongings I had. A nervous police officer, who looked like a probationary sub-inspector judging from his shoulder pips, instructed a desk sergeant to lock me up in the cells. When the sergeant asked what charge he should indicate in the charge book, the officer replied nervously that he should write it was on Swai's (his name) instructions. That done, I was led down to the underground cells and pushed into a cell with common criminals. The cells were overcrowded, filthy and stinking; some of the internees urinated right in their cells. There were three juveniles in my cell who had been locked up for nearly two weeks on suspicion of having stolen an outboard engine from Dar-es-Salaam harbour. They claimed they had been held for so long because they did not have money to buy their freedom. The cell also contained two elderly citizens: one had been held for more than three days for violating a traffic law; the other had been held for a week on unspecified charges. They claimed some people being held for serious crimes had been released; but they had no money to bribe their way to freedom and had been forgotten. I suggested to them that Tanzania should provide an alternative to custody for elderly people, juveniles and minor offenders, in order to avoid congestion in police cells. One replied that this would not be possible because people were being arrested simply

so that police could extract bribes from them. "Police here, my son," he said, "arrest people to make money."

He was soon proved right. As the underground cells received more occupants, the police above would go through the wallets deposited with them by the unfortunate offenders; those with thick wallets would be called upstairs, one by one. Soon the cells would be half-empty, only to be filled again in minutes with new faces; and so it would go on. This seemed to be a common practice at central police station in Dar-es-Salaam.

Meals were provided once a day, at about three o'clock in the afternoon. The usual menu was semi-cooked maize porridge with boiled beans, which contained weevils.

After I had been in the cell for several hours, a police officer called out my name. I identified myself as he opened the cell; he asked me to accompany him upstairs. He led me into a large office; there, a fat man in full police regalia sat at a large table cluttered with piles of files; flanking him were four junior colleagues, all in uniform. From his epaulettes, I guessed he was a senior superintendent or a similar rank. He lifted his eyes from the file he was reading and looked straight at me; his face showed kindness and sympathy. He asked if I was Mwijage, and I replied that I was.

"I am John," he said, "the officer commanding the station here." He said he had called his colleagues so that he could advise me of my legal and constitutional rights in their presence. It was the first time since my abduction that someone, a Tanzanian policeman at that, had said anything of legal and constitutional rights. I was amazed. He said I had no police record and, as far as the police were concerned, they therefore had nothing against me. I listened attentively, like a student attending a talk by a visiting lecturer. "Then why am I here, Sir?," I asked politely. He replied that I was being held at his station in "protective custody" on instructions from the President's Office, and that they would hold me until further instructions were received from the same office.

John and his colleagues looked genuinely surprised when I told them that I had been held by the secret police for more than a year at Oysterbay detention camp. I had, of course, breached Mlawa's warning, but I didn't care in the least, John nodded his head; he was puzzled. The four other police officers, in the presence of their commander John said "pole" to me, a Swahili word for sorry. I was then taken back to the underground cells.

As we sweltered at night, detainees would exchange stories about how they had gotten themselves locked up. Some criminals had been caught red-handed trying to pick-pocket passengers on an upcountry train; others described how easy it was to rob from women passengers who had

small children with them; some were simply locked up because they did not have train tickets; others again told of how they had stolen office stationery, then sold it on the streets. It seemed petty crime was the leading functional sector of Tanzania's economy; so many people, out of a need to survive, were involved one way or the other. I thought it sad that our citizens were being forced into crime as a result of the failed "Ujamaa" policies being followed by Nyerere. I wondered that if the state saw it fit to punish the children of its own failed policies, what sort of punishment would be appropriate for the parent, the creator of policies that had driven its children to despair.

Every morning John and his entourage would do their rounds of the underground cells, counting the inmates one by one. He would listen to everybody's complaints but did nothing about them, or lacked the means to do anything. Some inmates complained of being held for more than two weeks without being charged; others moaned about poor sanitation and bad food, some even spoke of being victimised by the officers who had arrested them or by members of the people's militia.

Two days later a police corporal who introduced himself as Anthony came to see me. Anthony, a short brown man who appeared to be in his forties, said he had come to see me because he had been told he would be escorting me to my home in Bukoba the next day. He was very excited and asked if I was Tanzania's ambassador to Swaziland. I did not thank him for that compliment but laughed instead; I wondered aloud if I looked more like an ambassador than a prisoner. Anthony replied no, adding that he had asked because he was normally assigned to duties at the High Court. He had usually escorted judges; now he had been assigned to escort a prisoner. "I always escort big people," he said confidently, almost as if working at the High Court was the top achievement of his career.

I told Anthony I was a detainee, not an ambassador. Besides, I said, Tanzania did not even have a resident ambassador in Swaziland but was represented in the kingdom by its Mozambique ambassador. His geography was poor: he spoke of Swaziland and Lesotho as if they were millions of miles away. Yet Anthony was very friendly; when he left we shook hands, promising to see each other the next day.

Corporal Anthony and I took our seats in an overcrowded third-class compartment in the upcountry train. Anthony, kit bag under his feet, nursed his semi-automatic rifle throughout the journey. Surprisingly, he bought no meals throughout the trip. I thought that maybe he had not been given sufficient funds, or that he was simply exercising frugality. Two men in plain-clothes, probably members of the secret police, followed

us wherever we went, even when I went to the toilet.

The train derailed often, creating fear among passengers that an accident was likely. The railway line between Dar-es-Salaam and Mwanza, a major link, was constructed during the time of German East Africa. Since independence from the British in 1961, the line had never had any major repair work done on it; consequently it has claimed the lives of many passengers as a result of accidents and derailments. Maintenance is very poor, certainly not anything like it was during colonial times. The big shots in State House seemed not to care in the least; instead, Nyerere's government pursued wasteful policies, allocating vast sums to projects which turned out to be white elephants. The transfer of the capital from Dar-es-Salaam to Dodoma springs to mind: the construction of Dar-es-Salaam international airport is another. Nyerere himself was wont to waste: in 1984 he used US\$88 million of French aid funds to refurbish his large private jet. Critics thought the money should have been used to improve the country's railway system, in order to reduce the number of accidents. As it turned out, the jet of the "father-of-the-nation" became a financial burden to the poor Tanzanian tax-payer.

After a tiresome two-day journey we arrived in Mwanza, where we caught an evening boat to Bukoba, arriving the next morning. Corporal Anthony, in the presence of the two plain-clothes men who had been tailing us throughout the trip, handed me over to the Police in Bukoba. Unfortunately, the Regional Police Commander (RPC), a gentleman called Mgema, had gone to Rusumo, the region's border post with Rwanda, on a "goodwill mission." His deputy refused to open and read the letter delivered to him by Anthony. The officer deputising for Mgema said he had not been given the power to open letters from the President's Office. I understood only too well; since my ordeal began, I noticed that mere mention of the President's office frightened people. The officer in charge said he had no alternative but to place me in protective custody, pending the return of Mgema.

Bukoba police station's cells were not underground. They had adequate ventilation, but the toilet was badly flooded, with human excrement floating around. Meals were served once a day; it was the usual "ugali" (hard porridge) with beans containing weevils. It seemed the police had only one supplier of beans in the country. Friends and relatives who could have brought me food were scared; orders from the office of Nsaka Kansi, Bukoba's Regional Commissioner and a former member of the secret police, were that people bringing me anything should have their names and addresses taken.

I slept on a hard, bare floor in an overcrowded cell with ordinary

criminals for two days; thereafter I was transferred to a less crowded cell known as the V.I.P. cell. It had only two inmates: the principal of Gera Rural Development College in Bukoba, and his bursar. The two were being held on charges of fraud and theft; it was claimed they had siphoned off several million shillings of the college's funds, a charge both denied. The police treated them like dignified people, providing them with everything they required - it is probable they had bought off the police. They received meals from one of Bukoba's best hotels, the Mbuni Hotel, and a police courier regularly brought them beers and whisky; the men also had their own bedding. "Money speaks in Tanzania," one repeatedly said one night when he got drunk.

By contrast, petty criminals had it rough. The cell next to ours held a middle-aged man who had been caught brewing the illicit drink "gongo", a locally brewed gin, at his home, in order to generate income. The people's militia, Mgambo, and the notorious traditional defence group, Sungusungu, had caught him, they beat him badly before handing him over to the police who beat him still more. I heard him scream and beg the police for mercy, but to no avail.

Another victim of police brutality was a man called Mutunzi, a rural intellectual from Ibwera, Kianja, Bukoba district. Police allegedly caught him selling a stolen cow to a man in the neighbouring village; he was tied with rope and so badly beaten that his body was swollen. Another case involved an elderly man from Bukoba rural district who had been arrested and severely beaten by police, allegedly for possessing a cow hide which police claimed was from a beast that had earlier been reported stolen. The cow hide had in fact been found buried in the old man's banana groves. Like Mutunzi, the old man faced more than eight years in prison if found guilty.

Another young suspect, who was allegedly found in possession of some ampicillin capsules, anti-malaria pills and two vials for a syringe, was also badly beaten while in police custody. His case was regarded as particularly serious as it fell under the so-called Economic and Organised Crime Control Act; his case was to be heard by the Mahakama Maalum (special court). He faced up to fifteen years imprisonment if convicted, for "undermining" Tanzania's economy.

Ironically, the men who had allegedly emptied the coffers of an educational institute did not have even a scratch on their bodies; in fact, they seemed to be highly respected by the police, who even allowed them to drink in their VIP cell. I wouldn't be surprised if they were actually later acquitted, for their wealth would have worked in their favour before Tanzania's courts.

When Mgema returned from his "goodwill mission" he proved equally unhelpful. He said there was little he could do about my case unless he received new orders from higher authorities. In my third week at Bukoba police station Nsa Kaisi sent some of his men down to interrogate me. Nine people from the party's regional office, as they described themselves,

paraded me for yet another spell of interrogation. I was tired of being interrogated and simply told them what Mlawa had instructed me: that I had strict orders not to talk to anyone about my case. I told them I would not budge unless they could produce proof that this presidential order had been revoked. In addressing them, I made it sound as if the president was akin to God the Creator. The strategy worked. They did not know what next to do; finally, they resorted to pursuing a routine line of questioning - my age, interests, and to my surprise, where I had travelled before my abduction.

Nyerere's secret police had failed to find out anything about my travels; I did not want them to, and was able to keep them away from that line of questioning. But I had travelled, and my travels had been precipitated by my resignation from the post of head teacher at a school in Masai Steppe, Arusha. I had resigned to protest victimisation and injustice; but, as I was later to find out, my resignation was not accepted.

The perpetrator of this victimisation was a school inspector from Monduli district, a bachelor aged about thirty-eight at the time. He had an insatiable sexual lust and used his position to have sexual intercourse with women teachers, whom he would promise a good report. One day he asked me if I could arrange for him to have sex with any of the Arab women in my district. I personally knew most of these women; they were the wives and daughters of men who operated shops in the area. When I inquired why he was so keen on Arab women or women of mixed race, he smilingly said this was because he had never had intercourse with one before. He said he had confidence in me and had therefore assigned me this task.

It is hard to describe how I felt after that. First, the office in Monduli had not appointed me head teacher because I had the ability to find women for my superiors; my appointment was based on merit, on my ability to teach. I felt affronted. Moreover, his insistence on women of other races (Arab and coloured women in this case) debased him. I could not believe that an educator, and my own boss at that could be so afflicted with an inferiority complex. Nevertheless, I told him that matters of sex should be mutually resolved between the parties involved and should not involve third parties. In order to have me change my position, he attempted to blackmail me: he claimed I was in love with one of my ex-students and that I had impregnated her. The girl he was referring to had completed school years earlier, long before I had been transferred to the area. He restated his demand that I should do my utmost to get him an Arab woman; again I reiterated my unwavering position.

A week later he returned with the same demand; I restated my position

and told him bluntly that I thought he was abusing public trust and his own office. He stormed off and showed up the following morning at my school in the company of the adult education coordinator of the area. He demanded to inspect my school, without having given prior warning; it was clear he had decided to get back at me for not organising an Arab woman for him. Thereafter, he wrote a terrible report on my school, refusing to acknowledge even the visible achievements made during my time: I had, for example, persuaded Masai elders to build their "manyatas" (huts made of dry cow dung) near the school in order to contain truancy among Masai pupils. And I had gone to the school on promotion and to revive it after a bribery scandal involving my predecessor, who later fled to Kenya, and the ward party secretary.

I was deeply angered at being victimised in this manner and resolved that I would continue to fight for the truth and justice. I decided it was time I gave up teaching, albeit temporarily, and made up my mind to visit other countries to see how their societies were managed; I always believed education through personal experience was invaluable, perhaps equal to the knowledge gained from books and institutions. To ensure that Tanzania's political police were kept off my trail, I fooled them into thinking I was ill and had gone on sick leave. Oddly enough, they bought the story and did not make any follow up. I quietly slipped out of the country for Mozambique, where I worked for some time immediately after independence. Later I worked in Seychelles as well, and managed during this time out of Tanzania to visit Japan, Belgium and what was then West Germany.

When I returned to Tanzania I found that the education office had rejected my resignation, which I mailed to them together with one month's salary, the latter in lieu of three months notice. I had purposely mailed my resignation because I did not want my superiors trying to talk me out of it. Subsequently the office refunded my one month's salary and treated my long absence as leave-without-pay. I was then transferred to Bukoba, my hometown, in accordance with my own request. In Bukoba, the struggle to campaign for a more open society had lately been gathering momentum.

So when Kaisi's men tried to find out about my travels when they visited me at Bukoba police station, I was quite firm in my response: I was never to talk about my case without written consent from the President's Office. Kaisi's men did not press me any further on my travels - I am not sure they even knew that I had travelled. They simply backpedalled and ordered me to return to my cell.

The next morning four plain-clothes officers escorted me to my mother's home at Kyaka. To my surprise, the men had no transport of their own and had to rely on public transport. On the way to Kyaka one of the men insisted that I give him money for transport; otherwise, he threatened to return me to the police cell. I was apprehensive, but then thought it better to give him the money he demanded. I discovered later that he had deliberately played this card because he had seen friends in Bukoba giving me money.

Banishment Order

We congregated in the tiny, dusty office of the officer commanding Bukoba rural district, a man of impeccable character called Mwakatume who originated from Mbeya region. Detective senior superintendent Mwakatume was flanked by his immediate lieutenant, a young, balding sub-inspector in uniform. The ten-house cell leader (a government watchdog for every ten houses) of our area, my mother and her friend were summoned to Mwakatume's office; also present were the four officials who had brought me home. Mwakatume wasted no time in reading to me the banishment order from the President's Office, which had been sent to the Kagera police commander, Mgema, who in turn passed on details of the order to Mwakatume.

The banishment order was clear: I was not allowed to leave my village without first obtaining permission from Mwakatume's office. "But I will have to leave my village in coming to ask for permission," I pointed out - the police station was in fact not in my village but in Kyaka township. Mwakatume replied that I would have to seek permission to leave the village from the ten-cell leader. Permission to travel to Bukoba, he said, would have to be obtained from the President's Office, through his office. An application to travel to Bukoba would have to be lodged three weeks before the intended departure date. The police would also visit me often, as part of the banishment order.

After being detained without trial for nearly two years, I was now forbidden to travel freely in my own country, to engage in gainful employment or to indulge in any income-generating activity. Worse still, I was not allowed to resume teaching, my profession. So I was not free, and there was no guarantee I would not be returned to detention once I had recovered and the authorities thought it fit to lock me up again. I resolved that I had to walk to freedom, just as soon as the possibilities allowed me to.

Escape to Freedom

From Kyaka I could have easily made it to Uganda; but there was a war going on in Uganda between government troops and Yoweri Museveni's fighters. Besides, there were still some Tanzanian military and intelligence personnel in Uganda, and I could never be sure that they would not recognise me. I was not prepared to take any chances this time;

I had learnt from bitter experience; if I had any doubts, I would simply not take the chance. An alternative escape route was via Ngara to Rwanda, although this would mean going through Bukoba district. I opted for this route.

A woman friend working in a "socialist shop" at Kyaka gave me some money, enough to cover my basic requirements for the journey. As luck had it, a Catholic priest, who was on his way to deliver the holy sacrament to a patient, unwittingly assisted in my escape. Since there was no transport, he volunteered to drop me beyond the place where he was going. I considered the place where he dropped me to be safe. Once there, I flagged down a lorry and climbed in the back, heading for Biharamulo. From there I hired a young man with a bicycle who took me halfway to Ngara. I could have asked him to take me straight to Ngara, but that would have been risky. I walked the rest of the distance to Ngara, using footpaths wherever possible to avoid the main road; just one more security precaution.

It was dark when I reached Ngara. Going to the guest-house was out of the question: I had no party membership card, which was essential to carry when travelling; nor did I have a letter from my ten-cell leader authorising me to travel, a government requirement then for all bona fide travellers; and I didn't have any form of identity at all. Still, I could not be walking at night through an area teeming with wild animals.

As I sat under a huge tree contemplating my next move, a young man pushing a bicycle with a flat wheel recognised me and approached me. I did not recognise him; there was no way I could, as my memory took time to recollect faces after my detention. The young man introduced himself by his first name, and I politely asked him to remind me where we had met. He replied that it was at the regional educational offices in Bukoba. I did not ask him what he was doing there; in my own interest, I wanted the issue of introductions to be over quickly.

I did mention to him that I was going to Rusumo border post to buy some essentials, adding that I had missed my transport. Without hesitation, the fellow invited me to spend the night at his home. His parent's home was a well-built, modern house, and I sensed they must be middle-class people; renewed fear built up that I might be recognised and identified.

The young man used his spare key to open the front door; his father emerged from an inner room to greet the visitor; there was a rude shock awaiting me. The father was in fact Twalib Songoro, former party

chairman in Kagera region and a staunch Nyerere supporter. I was briefly disorientated while the young man introduced me to his father; I even had difficulty remembering my false name I had given to his son. I could not tell if they noticed anything odd.

I was shown to a seat close to a bundle of newspapers written in Arabic or Farsi - I couldn't distinguish which. There was also some copies of Uhuru (Freedom), the party newspaper; in front of me hung a picture of Nyerere displaying his sharpened teeth in a broad smile. After staring at the portrait for a while, I realised that Nyerere and Hitler had similar moustaches.

I was offered a cup of coffee, then thought it wise if I tried to remove any suspicion from my host's mind. I praised the "advances" the Kagera region had made under his leadership and under the guidance of "our beloved party" of peasants and workers. As I rambled on, I wondered if the old man believed me, since we both knew in our hearts that the opposite was true. Bukoba was on the brink of social and economic ruin: the government seemed to deliberately neglect the region, perhaps because it felt most of the people there had not fully supported "Ujamaa", in the belief that it would never work. And "Ujamaa" did not work. Bukoba region contributed to foreign exchange earnings through its cash crop, coffee, but the region's infrastructure was in a shambles. The road network was appalling, pot-holed and battered, and the telephone system had for years been very poor. The once prosperous Bukoba cooperative Union (BCU) had been disbanded, some say deliberately by the government to reduce its financial clout and to punish the people for opposing government policy. Nyerere never offered a senior cabinet post to any politician from the region, because of their "anti-Ujamaa" tendencies. Nyerere then sent Nsa Kaisi to take over as Regional Commissioner; his job was to "discipline" local people and to revive the fortunes of the party. The former army lieutenant-colonel went about his job with enthusiasm, locking up people and arbitrarily confiscating their property.

On the other hand, Musoma, Nyerere's region, enjoyed prosperity unmatched by any other region, not even those which are major producers of cash crops. Peasants in Musoma received payment for their crops in one or other form; in other regions crops were left rotting because poor roads rendered it difficult to reach remote areas. Now look at the road between Mwanza and Musoma: it is the best maintained in the whole country. Compare that to Dar-es-Salaam's pot-holed roads which claim lives almost everyday. Tanzanians from the northern parts, from the shores of Lake Victoria, became successful business people. These "true Northerners", as they were sometimes known, dominated government institutions, the security agencies and the army. When the deprived people of the rest of Tanzania complained, Nyerere accused them of tribalism; thereafter, they preferred to remain silent.

To obtain financial support from the developed nations, Nyerere's government pumped money into a select few "Ujamaa" villages, including, of course, his own Butiama village. Butiama is the only village in Tanzania where peasants enjoy life insurance, which is especially desirable in the Tanzania of today. Several villages received preferential treatment, so they could be held up to potential donors as models of success.

The former regional party chairman, Songoro, in whose house I now sat, knew that as much as I did. He likened Nyerere to former US President John Kennedy, and described him as a "gift to Tanzania from God." It is perfectly possible that Songoro was laying the praise on thick for his visitor, whom he did not know. He had to play it safe.

Songoro, his son, and I had the evening meal; the son then showed me to the guest's room. I did not see Songoro's wife at all, if indeed he was still married. Songoro, perhaps in recognition of the praise I had for Nyerere, instructed his son to take me early the next morning to a truck driver in the next village who travelled every day to Rusumo border post. I noted that he used his former title, chairman, when he gave instructions to his son about what to tell the driver. He used the words "mgeni wa mwenyekiti" - the chairman's visitor - whom the driver was to give a ride to Rusumo. I appreciated his kindness.

The next morning, after their five o'clock prayers, the son took me to the truck owner. By about 10 am I was at the border post. Before crossing the border, you have to go through customs as there is only one bridge linking the two sides. If I was to get past customs, I would have to perform well; moreover, I hoped nobody would recognise me.

I surprised myself with my composure and self-confidence. The truck driver had introduced me to the immigration officials as the "chairman's visitor", which automatically cleared me of any suspicion and enhanced my credentials. After exchanging greetings with the officials I asked if there was a restaurant on the Tanzanian side where I could have breakfast - I knew there was none.

"Oh no, we don't have any restaurants here," a senior official replied. He advised that I cross the bridge to the Rwandan side, where there were plenty of restaurants. I did not waste any time. I descended the hill across the bridge and entered Rwanda. I was not in the least concerned about what happened behind me. I was well on my way to freedom.

It was on 12th May, 1985 that I finally managed to reach international agencies in Kigali, the capital. The delegation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees took extraordinary, urgent measures to protect me. They accommodated me at various places - I cannot name them since these facilities may still be being used to protect refugees -

during my three-months stay in Kigali. In this time, the UNHCR looked for a country of resettlement for me. As for me, I had no identification, no national passport and no baggage; I had simply left Tanzania the way I was dressed on that day.

Because Rwanda is so close to Tanzania, and because relations between the two countries were warm, I feared I would become a political football and end up back in detention in Dar-es-Salaam. Fortunately, that did not happen, thanks largely to the UNHCR in Kigali and particularly to Anthony Verwe, the resident representative, and Phillip Hesser, the UNHCR protection officer at that time, who on a number of occasions physically protected me. Indeed, at one point I had to take refuge in his residence when I felt my security threatened.

By the beginning of August 1985 my Red Cross passport had arrived from Geneva. On 5 August, 1985, Phillip Hesser saw me off at Kanombe airport, on my way to Lisbon, Portugal, where I had been accepted as an invited refugee.

Leaving Portugal

I had to leave Portugal several months later after failing to achieve means of self-support. You see, life has meaning when the individual assumes responsibility for himself. I was no longer in charge of my life, other forces were. Sadly, when one is not in control of one's life, those in charge take on the status of mini-gods who can dispense favour or withhold it as they wish. I considered it imperative that I assumed responsibility for my own life. As the adage goes: "It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees".

After roaming around central Europe in search of gainful employment I landed a job as a Swahili teacher, in Bad Honnef, at the German Foundation for International Development (DSE), and later on at the Cologne-based Association for Development Cooperation (AGEH), the volunteer Service of the Catholic Church in Germany. But I had to terminate full time teaching several months later because the German immigration authorities could not grant me a residence and work permit. I had been allowed to teach while the authorities at the institute filled in the application for my work permit, apparently with no guarantee that it would be successful.

After termination of full time teaching, the former institute (DSE), permitted me to give the occasional one-hour lecture on political topics such as "East Africa": Thirty years of political independence", or the collapse of the East African Community (EAC) and its impact on the

ordinary people of the region. Since some of these were well publicised, and Tanzania was therefore able to send some of its people to hear what I said, I strictly confined myself to the general failures of the East Africa Community without specifically singling out Tanzania. Most of the participants were going either to Tanzania or East Africa as experts of some sort. I didn't doubt that they would be able to see for themselves how the high priest of "African Socialism", Nyerere, had "succeeded" in "developing" (impoverishing) his country through his much celebrated "Azimio la Arusha" (Arusha declaration) now dubbed "Angamizo la Arusha" (meaning the Arusha declaration of 1967, which devastated the lives of many Tanzanians).

One significant aspect was the way black African participants felt about their continent's woes. Once during one of these discussions one African participant blurted out ruefully, his Rastafarian plaits flowing wildly, "these colonialists should be punished for what they have done to us." He did not say who should punish them. But he thought every problem facing black Africa today - starvation, corruption, economic mismanagement and so on - all stemmed from the white man's imperialism. Sadly, many African rulers (even the most enlightened) perpetuated this view, today held by many Africans, that blame for our own problems should be placed elsewhere. Everything is blamed on the white colonisers: clan and brutal tribal wars, economic stagnation, the lot. True, whites have committed grave injustices against blacks - from slavery to colonialism - but it is this very "victim" attitude that enslaves black Africans more than anything else.

Most black Africans seem to be prisoners of their imagined past. In this regard they are not unlike their black counterparts in the United States who suffer from the malaise known as "plantationism". Some American blacks often say they are not doing well because their forefathers were slaves on the cotton plantations. By contrast, African leaders seem eager to evoke memories of their own people's imagined past hardship, and of course by constantly referring to unseen "enemies". To suggest that the new generation of Europeans should be held to account for the doings of their forebears is unrealistic. Black Africa can do its best to attract the interest of the developed nations for financial and other support; but to suppose that Europe can solve all Africa's problems, as this participant did, is pure fantasy. Enslavement of blacks is something

whites would prefer to forget, much as black African leaders like to forget how they bungled their new-found independence.

I went to Iceland because I thought chances of being granted a work permit looked brighter than in Europe. Efforts to obtain a work permit so that I could continue teaching, by both institutes in Germany which employed me, had proved futile. At one point the Association for Development Cooperation (AGEH), had appointed a senior staff member to accompany me to the immigration authorities in Siegburg to fill in a new application for a work permit and permission to stay in Germany. But the senior immigration official we spoke to was doubtful I would be granted one.

However, it was on our way back from Siegburg to Cologne that I realised how efficient Nyerere's public relations machinery abroad was. On the autobahn, the staff member who had accompanied me broke the silence by eulogizing Nyerere, the "revered" leader whose victim I was. The official thought Nyerere was a fine christian gentleman who could not harm a fly, let alone a human being. He believed Nyerere was a successful democratic leader who had united Tanzania, which he considered to be the most peaceful country south of the Sahara. The official had apparently read some of the books Nyerere had written and believed he was one of the greatest thinkers of our time. But "democratic leader"? I wondered what the official would think if a one-party system was imposed on his country. Would the German people accept that as a democratic system of government? If it was unacceptable to the Germans, why then should Tanzanians accept it? I told the official that I recognised some of Nyerere's achievements, such as moulding national unity, adding that the inability to give credit for someone's achievements made it difficult to spot that person's failures. Still, I personally had no doubt that Nyerere's failures outweighed his successes.

As the official rambled on about Nyerere, I interjected to remind him that Nyerere was, after all, not the German Chancellor but the Tanzanian president. "It is the wearer of the shoes who knows where they pinch", I said looking directly at him. As of Nyerere's "great" ideas, I reminded the official of the old saying that "the end justifies the means". If in the end Tanzania went down the drain because of Nyerere's ideas, few people would then remain convinced that the ideas were so "great" after all. The official dropped the subject until we left the autobahn and stopped, when we shook hands and I thanked him for his encouragement.

We became more politically active during the following years and we had

been responsible for publishing pamphlets regarding Tanzania. The purpose of the pamphlets was to inform the world of the extent of the violation of human rights in Tanzania, to press for political and economic reform and to mobilise supportive Tanzanians to propagate and promote principles of human rights. For their part the Zanzibaris in exile in Britain were publishing a newsletter known as "Free Zanzibar Voice" which started in 1964, edited by a Zanzibari dissident, Ahmed Seif Kharusi of the Zanzibar Organisation. When Kharusi died in 1985 the editorship passed on to another staunch dissident who previously had spent three years in Zanzibar jails, Suleiman Sultan Malik. He later transformed "Free Zanzibar voice" into the Zanzibar newsletter. Encouraging events occurred on the world scene in 1990: communism collapsed in Eastern Europe, as did Tanzania's ideological bedfellow, Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu, followed by the fall of the Berlin wall. Around this period our group NUNA (National Union of nationalist Activists) an underground group calling for political change, had launched a newspaper, TANZANIA ARGUS, in its campaign for democratic freedom. I was the group's publicity secretary and one of its founder-members, and the brain behind the publishing of the Argus. "Tanzania Argus" began to appear on newspaper stands in Europe and Africa; even at a time when press freedom in Tanzania was severely restricted. The group's honorary chairman was Joseph Kasella-Bantu, a former Member of Parliament and the first publicity secretary of TANU (Tanganyika African national Union), the party which had successfully campaigned for Tanganyika's independence from Britain, leading to Independence in 1961. Kasella-Bantu's penchant for collective leadership and democracy had apparently upset Nyerere's autocratic rule. As a result, Kasella-Bantu was placed under lock and key, without any charge for more than eight years, by courtesy of the state. He was essentially a non-violent person, the sort who was ready to die for a cause but never, as others wrongly do, kill for one.

It brings to mind the saying that "a brave man is ready to die in a war, but he should not start a fight simply to show his bravery". That saying was most appropriate regarding Kasella-Bantu. Unfortunately, and not unexpectedly, detention had left its mark on his health, and he was prone to repeat himself or sometimes completely forget what he had said earlier. Despite that, he remained wholly committed to political change and economic reform, and he made a positive contribution to that end.

I remember how we used to sign clandestine letters and mail our underground publications to senior government officials and Members of Parliament, appealing to them to take the interests of their constituents to heart and to end one-party rule. Although most of our publications were confiscated by the Tanzanian Secret Service, Kasella-Bantu persisted with the exercise. Abroad meanwhile, as our campaign for political

freedom and human rights shifted to top gear, Dar-es-Salaam reacted by complaining to some African governments where the "Argus" was widely read that we were using their countries as a "launching pad" to "attack"

the CCM regime. Some countries which bothered, such as Swaziland, put out an official order in 1991, signed by the then minister for Home Affairs Senzenjani Tshabalala, that (due to my political activities) I was barred to enter the Kingdom of Swaziland. Well, I thought, that was part of the struggle. You know, a struggle is not cricket, snooker or African reed dance. Ironically, Tanzania feels it has the exclusive legitimate right to welcome and protect opposition forces from all over

Africa - including Swaziland - but those it perceives as its own opponents

should not enjoy this right in other African countries. Ah... yes... do

unto others what you would hate them to do unto you!

In April 1991, I left Iceland briefly to participate in an interview on

a Swahili programme broadcast by Radio Deutsch Welle, and later to be interviewed on an English language programme on Third World Voice in Denmark. By now we had changed the format of our newspaper to that of a magazine. Again I needed to approach subscribers to see if they could

offer financial support for our magazine, as we planned to produce the magazine every month. Unfortunately my Convention Travel Document (CTD)

was about to expire soon and I had appointments with potential subscribers

after the expiry date. (Although I had moved to Iceland I was still holding a CTD issued by the Portuguese authorities, and I was required to

return to Portugal every two years to get the extension). After asking the

Portuguese authorities if I could send the CTD to Lisbon for extension through their embassy, they agreed and instructed me to send the CTD to

the honorary Portuguese representative in Reykjavik, who would send the

CTD to the appropriate Portuguese authorities for extension.

But instead of getting an extension, I received a letter dated August 6, 1991, from the Portuguese embassy in Copenhagen notifying me of the cessation of my asylum rights in Portugal. I was bewildered and the news

was bad, bad enough to ruin my lunch. I thought I had better visit the embassy in person to find out what was happening. "A foreigner," said the

woman diplomat who attended me, "who has had the rights of a refugee in

Portugal, loses this right when taking up permanent residence in another

country," she concluded smiling. In fact she was simply repeating what was written in their letter to me. I wondered if it wasn't possible for

the Portuguese authorities to transfer my status to Iceland the moment they learned I had been granted a work permit there, having sanctioned

my being in Iceland, since I could not get work in Portugal. The diplomat shared my bewilderment. All she could say was that it was all part of the bureaucratic procedure and that these were the regulations that control it. Bureaucracy! A familiar word, I thought. The religion of bureaucracy has its own manner of working, not usually understandable to ordinary minds. Perhaps bureaucracy is a necessary thorn in the side of any large administration; even successful governments have it, and administrations such as Portugal's, limp from the abyss of dictatorship, would probably be lost without it. I often tend to think that the wheels of bureaucracy often get jammed with sand, and if they ever roll, they take time to do so. Indeed, this situation could perhaps be explained by Portugal's recent experiences of dictatorship: when a dictator (Salazar) goes, it does not necessarily mean the end of dictatorial traits in his country.

For more than six months I remained stranded in Copenhagen without a fixed income or Travel Document. Projects I was engaged in suffered including the production of a new political journal, the Argus. I believe anti-democratic forces in Dar-es-Salaam uncorked champagne to celebrate the Argus' demise, since they considered it too critical.

It was not until one afternoon towards the end of November 1991 that I received a phone call from the Icelandic Red Cross. The Red Cross official, a woman, informed me that the Icelandic government had decided to grant me permanent residence and to issue me with a new CTD to enable me to leave Denmark. It was one of the best pieces of news I had received since my abduction in 1983, and I thanked the official profoundly. "Thank you, thank you very much indeed", I repeated into the telephone.

Misfortune has its positive side, and my experience was no exception. I had faced hardship and uncertainty for many years, some of it in Portugal, but now I had no reason to return to Portugal as that country had nothing more to do with my refugee status. Looking back, I am amazed that I managed to persevere for so long in the face of so much difficulty. I never lost hope, even when it seemed there was no cause for hope. People live by hope: the hope that things will improve; the belief that no matter what happens, something good will come of any situation in the end. Hope sustains one, and it certainly did that for me.

As I regathered my composure and reflected on my new future with its remarkable turn for the better, my mind turned, as always to Tanzania. Concerted pressure from donor countries had dragged Tanzania,

squirming as ever in the face of the slightest criticism, down the road to multi-party democracy. But Nyerere's CCM-ruled country moved grudgingly, howling, kicking and squealing down the track. CCM - the "mother party", the sole party, the everything in Tanzania - decided, on its own as usual, that it should be referee in the multi-party game, and that it would set out the conditions for the eventual multi-party poll. Not surprisingly, these conditions are restrictive, and have been identified as such by many Tanzanians. There is little doubt that with such restrictive rules, Tanzania's CCM rulers wished to have a tame opposition.

One of the most notorious restrictive rules remains unchanged in the statute book from the days when Nyerere's ever-present Intelligence Service had unlimited powers to lock up even the mildest critics: the Preventive Detention Act (PDA), under which myself and many other Tanzanians were detained for advocating political change and economic reform. The retention of this dreadful law could prove detrimental to opposition parties in the future. I say this because I know that the forces of democracy in Tanzania, and perhaps in most of Africa, have been talking democracy to undemocratic rulers, who will not hesitate to seize the slightest opportunity to revert to their old authoritarian ways. If democracy is to succeed, then the people implementing it should have faith in it and believe in it. Already we have heard of black African leaders complaining they were "blackmailed" by "external forces" (those vague, overworked expressions that African despots so often hide behind). Others are saying that multi-partyism is un-African, thus implying that dictatorship is African. African leaders seem to be insinuating that to be an African is to be evil, and the people they rule will just have to stomach that. Again, it is said that some African leaders complain that "you can't import democracy to Africa from America like Coca-cola", and that the whole thing is a western concept. Oddly enough these leaders never mention what is wrong with this Western concept; and if multi-partyism is indeed a Western concept, why can it not be accepted with grace? After all, we all borrow knowledge from each other - East from West, Africa from Europe, reader from writer, teacher from pupil and so on - in order to develop. Many Africans have been schooled in western communities under western systems, using books written by western scholars; and today black Africans cannot do away with such education just because it is Western. In fact, African leaders usually make sure their children get a Western-type education, usually in a Western country. Black Africans are part of a global village and are affected by global changes. Being African is an identity, and one that we should like to be proud of one day, but it doesn't mean we should want to live in medieval times and revert to primitive ways just because "we are African". We have to move with the times. Some of the pronouncements

of African leaders on multi-party democracy are ominous and show that many are reluctant participants in the move towards democracy.

Two recent examples are those of Nigeria's Ibrahim Babangida who reversed the wishes of the Nigerian people by annulling the election results (mid 1993) as he precariously clung to power and the subsequent bloody military coup in Burundi (late 1993) which deposed the three months old, democratically elected government of assassinated President Melchior Ndadaye.

The West and supporting nations can do more to prevent African nations, who are now moving towards democracy, from relapsing into one-party rule or military dictatorship at a later date. Supporting nations which started the wheels of democracy moving in Africa should use their financial muscle to ensure that the ruling regime hands over power, say, at least for 120 days prior to elections, to a transitional/custodian administration. Such an administration could be headed by, say, the country's Chief Justice (CJ), and the interim administration, made up of technocrats appointed by the Chief Justice, should not be allowed to join the race for political office. During this transitional period, the ruling party should campaign on equal terms with other parties and should not enjoy any advantages that would enable it to engage in intimidation and subterfuge, or rig the process in its favour. The interim administration should lay down conditions that would ensure all contending parties have equal access to the media, facilities for public meetings, and so on. A neutral transitional administration is imperative for African countries emerging from active dictatorship to democratic rule. To allow the ruling parties, which in most cases have shown no liking for democratic rule, to dictate the conditions under which multi-party politics should operate, is like placing the rights of a goat in the hands of a lion.

Black Africa seems to be on the brink of disintegration - Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Togo, Sudan and Zaire provide some examples and even in Tanzania, one of the most peaceful countries on the continent, religious tension is rising high; threatening stability. Simultaneously, in South Africa, despite majority rule, black on black violence continues, unabated, threatening to plunge the country into civil war. Black South Africans blame the "third force" - unruly white elements in the South African Security Services, - for instigating carnage, but do not blame themselves for this unbridled slaughter. Such a situation provokes serious doubts. If the people who are to be masters of their

own destiny are susceptible to manipulation by their white enemies, then what will happen in the future? After all, the whites and other forces will still be there to manipulate them. Isn't the victim's mind the cardinal tool in the hands of the victimiser? Surely, serious African thinkers have begun to wonder: if black on black violence proliferates on this scale, then, at the turn of the century the whites could have become the majority race in South Africa. The day is not far off when the international community, through the United Nations, may be morally obliged to place some African nations under trusteeship, if only for as long as it takes to end the carnage and restore order. Perhaps the UN should only remove its presence once such nations show they are capable of governing themselves in accordance with internationally acceptable standards. No doubt this notion of UN trusteeship over African countries in perennial turmoil will sound ridiculous to many, as it evokes memories of colonialism. However, the fact remains that when a neighbour's house is on fire, one's own house also feels the heat; and if the wind blows in your direction, your house could also catch fire. The task of defining Africa's new democracies is a more daunting one than was the simple demand for the introduction of democracy. The task of building a better, just, democratic and prosperous Africa has only now begun.

I stared out of the window onto the road in Copenhagen, thinking of Africa and the phone call I had just received from Reykjavik. It had been a good day. I gathered my thoughts, shook myself out of my daydream, and retreated from the window to a sofa next to the telephone that had brought the good news of my CTD. I curled up and for the first time since my abduction and subsequent release and exile, I enjoyed a really peaceful, uninterrupted nap.

The First Multi-Party Election of October 1995

It was supposed to be "free and fair". However, the supposedly retired ex-president, Julius Nyerere, seemed intent on influencing the election results. Armed with the now familiar black ceremonial baton and dark glasses, he embarked on a nation-wide helicopter tour campaigning for the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) presidential candidate (best described as "his" preferential candidate), Benjamin William Mkapa. The majority of Tanzanians were left wondering whether this was the role befitting the "father-of-the-nation", the title Nyerere so dearly relishes, although he was no more than the "father-of-the-CCM", "his" party.

For this election the benevolent international donor community gave the

government 21 million dollars. For its part the government appointed an "Electoral Commission", headed by Judge Lewis Makame, refusing categorically to include any member of the opposition. Judge Makame was empowered by the government to do anything he pleased concerning the election. He could, for instance, disqualify candidates, appoint election supervisors, order ballot papers sent to a particular polling station and decide how many could be sent. He could also declare the election in one region null and void, whilst in other regions polling continued as usual. As the chairman of the "Electoral Commission", Judge Makame, could, without taking into consideration the impact of the overall election results, order a certain part of the country to go to the poll one week ahead of another part, provided this was in the best interests of the incumbent party, which appointed him Commissioner.

Indeed, Zanzibar held its first multi-party election on October 20th, while the mainland held its own election on October 29th. What followed, according to many neutral observers, was "deliberately organised chaos". Already, the commonwealth, and many donor countries, including Denmark, Belgium, Ireland, Sweden and the Netherlands, amongst others, have concluded that the election result in Zanzibar did not reflect the true wishes of the electorate.

However, Dr. Salmin Amour, the CCM presidential candidate for Zanzibar, who claims to have won by a disputed narrow margin of 0,4%, after four days of counting the 333,899 votes cast in the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, has become more dictatorial, than he ever was before the introduction of multi-partyism, since being hastily sworn in as president.

Innocent people are routinely harassed and physically abused for being perceived as sympathisers of the rival party, Civic United Front (CUF) which many observers believe was robbed of its election victory.

People

from Pemba island, where not a single seat was won by the ruling Chama cha Mapinduzi party, are discriminated against at the instigation of Dr. Salmin Amour's Government. People have been, and continue to be dismissed from their jobs, on suspicion that they sympathise with the opposition.

In early 1996, MAJIRA, a mainland based popular newspaper, was banned in Zanzibar for reporting the truth about the ongoing violation of human rights.

The Zanzibar president refuses to form a Government of National Unity (GNU) with the main political rival CUF, if only to mould the unity of Zanzibar and that way avert the imminent split of the two islands.

The mainland election which took place nine days after Zanzibar's election was equally marred by massive irregularities and vote rigging thereby prompting the "Electoral Commission" to nullify the election results in Dar es Salaam, which was the opposition's strong base. The election in the capital was repeated several days later. Many polling stations did not have ballot papers for the presidential candidate, voters were asked to return later to vote for president. Many voters, feeling a sense of frustration and anger, never came back.

It is terrifyingly disturbing that so many irregularities could occur

in such a well-funded election and with so many foreign observers. If this could occur in the city where so many of these observers were based, then what about the rural areas where vigilance was less stringent? Then there is the crucial factor of "nyumba kumi" (ten-households), a political system reminiscent of the now defunct soviet style of collectivization of i.e. one person (party cadre) speaking for ten-households (not very democratic); through which the single party exercised its notorious suppressive powers over the rural peasantry, for thirty years.

Once the CCM candidate, Benjamin W. Mkapa, had been declared winner and sworn into office, it was not long before the office of the Chama cha Mapinduzi Secretary General, Lawrence Gama, himself a former director of Nyerere's political police organisation, issued a letter directing all CCM officials country-wide to begin "dealing accordingly" with Tanzanians who manifested support for CCM's "foes" (contending opposition parties which participated in the election).

Not surprisingly, Nyerere, having openly campaigned for the CCM, failed to even add his voice of disapproval to what happened during the election and after. Instead the "teacher" who used his valuable talent to teach his nation to beg, vowed he would never let "his" country go "to the dogs" i.e. members of the opposition.

Epilogue

Throughout the chapters of this book, I have made critical observations on matters such as human rights and other issues ultimately affecting the future and well-being of our society.

My objectives were, and are, to increase the awareness of Tanzanians and general Africans of the true meaning of human rights and democratic freedom, and to realise that with self-analysis and self-criticism the methods of achieving these essentials of society are within our grasp. This is providing we accept that the responsibility for our lives, our society and specifically our government is our own and we must begin now to help ourselves.

This self recognition and acceptance of responsibility is essential if we are to rationalise and fulfil our aspirations for social and economic progress and also to foster new and trusting links with developed nations and attract local and international investment.

The current practice of most African nations to seek growth solely through foreign aid and investments is a short-term measure with no future guarantees. The onus is on we, the Africans, and our governments, to drag ourselves out of the poverty trap and improve our quality of life by immediate and long term planning to exploit our vast natural resources.

How we can expect the Danish Minister of Finance, or for that matter, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer to spend sleepless nights in their offices, over endless cups of coffee, initiating plans for the development of irrigation schemes, agricultural expansion and economic growth for Tanzania and other African nations when the leaders of those nations are apathetic, is beyond belief. Sub-Saharan Africa is not in the sorry state it is today because its people are incompetent and lazy. On the contrary, black Africans are industrious, intelligent, versatile and receptive to new ideas. A Belgian missionary, who was running a parish next to my village organised the villagers to build three classrooms and a teacher's house. Bricks were made by the local people and the houses were finished within the wink of an eye. They are still standing, although they have not received a lick of paint since the minister returned home. Lazy people would never have achieved such a feat. However, what is disturbing is that the African people who built these brick houses under the supervision of a Belgian minister were themselves living in squalid mud huts. How can such a paradox occur? Is it lack of enterprise and ability, or bad leadership and organisation? Even within the black 'diaspora' from North America to Haiti, few seem to manage to sustain a useful, satisfying and progressive existence compared with their paler neighbours. Whilst their past and current plight could be attributed to racial prejudice and economic deprivation, the question of their future remains. Who will release them from their poverty trap? Will they expect those whom they believe responsible for their plight to originate the escape; or will they decide that the solution will be realised through their own efforts? Regarding African nations; have over sympathetic Europeans worsened and prolonged our plight by diminishing our self-reliance?

These issues might seem sensitive ones to many, but they must be addressed by we black Africans ourselves with complete self-awareness and honesty; as inevitably we must reverse this miserable situation immediately and for our lasting future. We must examine our perpetual reliance on foreign aid, and the effect of this on our ability to survive unaided and on our international status.

Few African leaders have accepted the fact and responsibility that the vast natural resources of our country; fertile soil, an enormous water supply, rich mineral resources and a labour force for all levels

of employment; if managed skilfully could produce a high degree of independence within a decade.

It must be difficult for those outside Africa to understand how a continent with such potential can fail with such a basic need as feeding its people, the responsibility of each individual African country.

Africans should decide what type of aid is required, whether projects are conducive to the country's needs, and whether the donor nations' motive is to help the people or the current government. Governments come and go, the people, the land, and their mutual needs remain. How is it possible to best assist the indigent rural peasantry, which comprises over ninety percent of the entire African populace? How can they be led into deciding and organising their future, and by whom?

It is clear that the younger generation of politicians was marginalised by their older predecessors, who had failed to provide vision and hope for Tanzania's youth and future. The challenge is now with this younger generation of politicians, whose education and knowledge of the past should have prepared them for it. There are the new needs, the new aspirations and the new responsibility.

Those who have accepted trust and leadership must take up the challenge, to ensure the future prosperity and progress of their country and their people.

THE DARK SIDE OF NYERERE'S LEGACY

Ludovick S Mwijage

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Five years after the destruction of the so-called rehabilitation camps that imprisoned her and countless other Psi kids, seventeen-year-old Suzume "Zu" Kimura has assumed the role of spokesperson for the interim government, fighting for the rights of Psi kids against a growing tide of misinformation and prejudice. But when she is accused of committing a horrifying act, she is forced to go on the run once more in order to stay alive. The dark side of nyerere's legacy. Ludovick S Mwijage. To all those people who were, and remain incarcerated throughout africa, my heartfelt thanks for their support for democratic freedom and human rights. And. My son, mushobozi, with the sincere wish that he will in time, live in a homeland governed wisely and well by democratically elected leaders. Contents. Mbabane, Swaziland. Mwijage, Ludovick S. The Dark Side of Nyerere's Legacy. London: Adelphi Press, 1994. Mwijage, Ludovick S. Of Magic and Mutiny.Â The invocation of Nyerere as a paragon of an endangered ideal of virtue in public office indicates widespread anxieties towards a state that often disappoints but occasionally delivers, in unpredictable turns, and the limits of the government's ability to shut down dissent. View. Show abstract. See more of Legacy - The Voice From The Dark Side on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Legacy - The Voice From The Dark Side on Facebook. Log In. Forgot account?