

# Two shocking events trigger unity

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**T**wo dramatic events, which caused considerable shock at the time, accelerated the move towards unity between the separate Tanganyikan and Zanzibar nations.

The morning of January 20 1964 was much like any other day in Tanganyika. It was warm and the sun shone brightly. I was Principal of the oldest agricultural training institution in the country at Ukiriguru, near Lake Victoria. I decided to take my car to Mwanza for servicing and left it in a garage. I walked into the town to do some shopping but there was something wrong. The shops were not opening- they were closing in the middle of the morning. I was told that the army, the Tanganyika Rifles, had mutinied and that its 2nd Battalion in Tabora was “marching on Mwanza”. I ran back to the garage to get my car and, as I drove back to Ukiriguru. I had time to contemplate a short visit to Uganda which was not too far away and still at peace.

At the Institute, life was proceeding normally. The students told me that the mutiny was not important and would soon be over. They were proved correct following the government’s request to Britain for military help and the arrival of Royal Marines. My plans for a short stay in Uganda had become less attractive as, on January 22, the Ugandan army mutinied too!

Not long afterwards, I left Tanganyika by ship for leave in India. We stopped in Zanzibar and to my surprise I was told that I was free to go ashore, in spite of the fact that there had just been a very violent revolution there. I couldn’t resist the temptation to go and see. On the shore, an Indian transport manager I met offered to take me to see what had happened. There were fresh bullet holes in the walls of the police station and a large secondary school was being used as a detention centre; it was packed with Arabs, many hanging out of the windows. They called out to me to “save them”. My Indian guide explained how his fleet of trucks had been commandeered during the revolution to carry dead bodies for burial.

The late Presidents of Tanganyika and Zanzibar could hardly have been more different. President Nyerere was an intellectual, rapidly establishing himself as an international statesman and Sheik Abeid Karume was a seaman and trade unionist who had become leader of most of the African population of Zanzibar. Both professed a belief in socialism but Nyerere was thinking of the European model and, later the Chinese model,

whereas Karume was widely suspected of wanting to turn Zanzibar into a Soviet-style People’s Republic. Zanzibar provided a wonderful opportunity for the East European communists to establish a base in East Africa. It was at a time when the Cold War between East and West was at its coldest. Western Europe and America did not want a communist state like Cuba to be established in East Africa. Thus, the subsequent union was established under heavy pressure from the main powers. Eastern European diplomats became a common sight in both Tanganyika and Zanzibar and foreign aid projects from the Eastern bloc also proliferated in Zanzibar. East Germany financed the construction of a huge block of modern flats which still dominate the skyline in Zanzibar’s capital.

The Union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar was officially born on April 26 1964 and the United Republic of Tanzania on October 29 the same year. Over the years it has been buffeted by frequent differences between the leaders of its two main components. Those of us who witnessed successive Zanzibar elections, as I did, saw plenty of evidence of fraud in the counting of votes, aimed at ensuring that the ruling party always won. The Union has been much criticised for the illogicality of its two-government constitution when a logical solution would have been to have three-Tanganyika, Zanzibar and a Federal-type government for Tanzania.

However, the United Republic has provided strong government, has offered gradually increasing democracy and allows a largely free press. It has kept the country peaceful and free of violent internal dissent of the kind faced by most of its neighbouring countries.

Above all, it has lasted for 50 years and its founding fathers, Nyerere and Karume, deserve much praise for this. There are many solid grounds for anniversary celebrations.

However, in 2014, the Union is under pressure as never before. A Constituent Assembly struggles to find agreement on a future constitution for the country. Julius Nyerere warned repeatedly that changing the governmental structure would be dangerous and that a three-government system would destroy the Union. But the two-government structure seems no longer to be acceptable to many of the people and those trying to devise a new constitution, acceptable to all, face formidable obstacles as the final draft has to be approved in a national referendum.

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