

Contents

editorial		
Towards Self-Reliant Development	Mark Anikpo	1
articles		
Theories of Development: How Relevant to Africa?	Benedict Naanen	5
The Peasantry and the Dilemma of Nigerian Underdevelopment/Mark Anikpo		27
Self Reliance and Nation Building	Ikenna Nzimiro	49
Social Conditions of Technological Self-Reliance	K. L. S. Kodjo	63
Apartheid: The Highest Stage of Neo-Colonialism	P. F. Wilmot	73
The Crisis of Capitalism on a World Scale	Sorab Sadri	91
review article		
Self-Reliance and Self-Criticism: Tanzanian Debates	Victor Manfredi	101

SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-CRITICISM: TANZANIAN DEBATES

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Okwudiba Nnoli 1978 *Self Reliance and Foreign Policy in Tanzania: the Dynamics of the Diplomacy of a New State, 1961 - 1971.*
New York-London-Lagos: Nok Publishers.

Yash Tandon (ed.) 1982 *University of Dar es Salaam Debate on Class, State and Imperialism.* Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House.

Since the Arusha Declaration of 1967, when *ujamaa* and *kujitegemea* (socialism and self-reliance) became Tanzanian government policy, the concept of self-reliance has come to represent one of the major philosophical approaches to development. As a strategy, it is both cautious and progressive, seeking to avoid the extremes of (in Nnoli's words) "slavish dependence...[or] dignified martyrdom" (324; cf. also Ake 1972). Unfortunately, however, it is not clear that Tanzania has actually escaped either of these conditions in the past two decades. The situation has become clearer by comparison to the experience of Mozambique, which has overtaken Tanzania in breaking free of colonial dependency (cf. Lappé & Beccar-Varela 1980). As a whole, the Tanzanian experience places the issue of "African socialism" in a very critical light, as Mkumah (1965) forcefully pointed out. And it is undoubtedly true that Nyerere's theoretical position has been problematic from the start; quotations like the following are all too easy to seize upon and demolish:

For the nation self-reliance will come if the individuals and the different communities are self-reliant, and if the citizens together recognise that their way forward must be determined by their joint resources and their common efforts. ...In other words, we shall have an up-to-date, and larger version of the traditional African family, where the land was 'ours', crops were 'ours', and so on. (Nyerere 1967:152,172)

But such criticism is neither constructive nor illuminating, since development is more than a rhetorical exercise. The Tanzanian case study in political economy raises fundamental issues, especially the nature of imperialism and the relation of theory and practice, which call for committed scholarship of a kind that is all too rare. The two books under review are among the best full-length discussions, and are widely available on Nigerian university campuses (also in Tanzania?); a compact summary of the issues is found in Ake's 1981 textbook. As will be seen, there are many parallels between Tanzania and Nigeria which are obscured by differences in political rhetoric, and the Tanzanian debates are of pressing relevance to all African countries because of the broader similarities which derive from common history. This first issue of PASSR is an appropriate forum to take up the self-reliance question as it appears in the books at hand.

Nnoli's study is an extremely useful point of departure since it combines extensive empirical documentation with a style of analysis that is both sympathetic and dialectically criti-

cal. Yet it is a pre-Marxist Nnoli, writing in the pragmatic idiom of cost-benefit analysis (205) at the same time as he demolishes the Cold War rhetoric of Western pundits (1-6). His concern for periodisation gives the book a historical base which is disturbingly missing in many theoretical reviews (e.g. Saul 1975, 1977); numerous citations from rare primary sources are balanced by a command of the theoretical literature published in Africa as well as Western countries, up to the early 1970's. Nnoli's intention is to present the Tanzanian case fairly and concretely, a stance which will guarantee the book's enduring importance despite the fact that his optimism with regard to the impact of self-reliance policy has not been justified by events of the subsequent decade. This poses the first challenge to Nnoli's readers: to what extent is self-reliance an ideology which was forced on Nyerere by the political-economic context, as opposed to a strategy for changing that context which flowed from an analysis of the dynamics of Tanzanian society? Although he does not address the question directly, Nnoli builds a persuasive argument that both sides of self-reliance are real, suggesting that the essential ambiguity of self-reliance as ideology-cum-strategy derives from an undialectical division of government policy into two spheres, external and internal:

[I]n Tanzanian-type societies the role of foreign firms in the domestic economy is critical for their [= the societies'] general orientation to the external environment and their flexibility in external transactions (4).

That this brilliant point of departure is couched in the vocabulary of behaviourist communication theory does not diminish its force in analysis. For Nnoli goes on to illustrate this thesis by showing that self-reliance originated as a self-conscious policy in foreign relations setbacks at the hands of Britain, West Germany and the U.S. over 1964-5 (chap. 4). Nyerere's aim to pursue justice in Southern Africa was repudiated by Britain's manipulation of the Commonwealth, and his desire to achieve an East African federation was also thwarted (chaps. 2-3). These crises forced Tanzania to reassess the basis of its sovereignty, and ultimately question the degree to which it had escaped from the constraints imposed by colonialism (chap. 5). Interwoven in this narrative is the issue of foreign aid: Tanzania was able to secure substantial assistance from China, Canada and the Scandinavian countries, none of which was deeply involved in Cold War rivalries. So when Nyerere and his Foreign Affairs minister A.M. Babu (who became, significantly, minister of Economic Affairs and Development Planning in 1971) concluded that Tanzania's internal weakness derived from internal contradictions especially the domination of the domestic economy by foreign monopoly capital, they also decided to use foreign aid to offset the loss of private capital which they knew would follow Arusha (chap. 6).

For the Arusha Declaration was first and foremost the start of phased nationalisation of the "commanding heights" of the Tanzanian economy to remove them from foreign control and thus capture the autonomy which was conspicuously absent before 1967. This took the form of a variety of arrangements from state ownership ("parastatals") to state-foreign partnership to simple regulation: not, in fact, different from other "mixed-economy" policies such as the 1972 Nigerian indigenisation decree (chap. 7). At the same time, foreign aid was categorised into

donor-initiated grants with the proverbial "strings attached" versus more "suitable" aid that was supposedly free of these contradictory entailments (205). No restriction was placed on the total amount of aid that would be accepted, however; according to Shivji (1976:161), the total aid in the six years after Arusha roughly tripled the amount of the prior six years. In the past fifteen years, Tanzania has accepted over US\$2 billion (Manchester Guardian Weekly vol. 131 no. 24 1984), primarily from the IMF and World Bank. Recently, between 60% - 80% of Tanzania's annual development budget is supplied by foreign sources (Mueller 1979). The aid issue was not overtly critical in the early 1970's when Nnoli finished his study, but the present-day reader is forced to ask: how consistent in theory and practice is a policy of self-reliance which permits a growing dependence on foreign aid such that, for example, urban food consumption today is said to be 80% food aid? This is another striking point of comparison with Nigeria, where the massive importation of the "oil boom" led to the decline of agriculture and the masses now lament their "oil doom". The reasons for this decline are beyond the scope of either book, except insofar as they touch on the peasant question. Interestingly while Nigeria seemed to lack any conscious rural policy in the 1970's, Tanzania was pursuing a massive experiment in "villageisation"; yet under the influence of massive capital importation, the result in the two cases has been objectively the same, at least as regards urban food supplies. For an insightful class analysis of the Tanzanian countryside along the lines suggested by Shivji, see Mueller (1979, 1980a,b). My point is not to fault Nnoli on an issue which came to prominence after he concluded his research (although it is most regrettable that four years passed between the book's completion and its publication date). Rather, I would like to suggest that his analysis of the Arusha declaration allows us with hindsight to understand some of the internal contradictions which led to Tanzania's deepening dependency.

At a pre-theoretical level of approximation, it seems that self-reliance acquired mystifying ideological dimensions in the course of its "translation" from the foreign policy context to domestic political discourse, which amounts to a passage from strategy to ideology. The enduring theoretical interest of Nnoli's book is to have demonstrated the process by which this translation was made, largely without the actors being aware of it, culminating in the Arusha Declaration. In this process, Tanzanian leaders reified the "self" in self-reliance as equivalent to the nation, as if the nation could be the subject of accumulation. Much more remains to be said about this, especially as it relates to the internal dynamics of TANU in which Nyerere struggled against party officials at the same time as he led them. The notion of a "subject of history" which is implied by the term self-reliance raises the problematic of class analysis. Amin (1980) has criticised "slogans for autocentered development and collective autonomy" as class-based agendas which generally "satisfy [both] the peripheral bourgeoisies and the monopolies in the center" (142, 148), but which fail to meaningfully address "the obstacle to socialism today...the difficulty with disengagement [from the world imperialist system]" (243). In other words, we must ask which class stood to gain from the practice of

self-reliance, disregarding as ideological the conceptual assertion that the beneficiary would be the whole Tanzanian nation.

In practice, self-reliance was directed as much against Tanzanian capitalists as it was against foreign monopoly capital, so goes the class analysis developed by Shivji which is the primary focus of the Dar debates. The bulk of the book is actually filled with attacks on this view, led by Nabudere, and oriented to the classic texts of Marxism more than the concrete Tanzanian situation. The debates cannot be read in isolation, for this reason, but they are essential in pointing up (unintentionally for the most part) the weakness of our practical knowledge of political economy in Africa. In my view, as someone who has no first-hand knowledge of Tanzania, Shivji's critique of Arusha is extremely forceful, linked as it is to the dynamics of workers opposition to TANU activities, and to Nyerere's efforts to reform TANU by the Mvungozo of 1971. In the debate, Shivji is tarred with the brush of 'neo-Trotskyist' or 'Maoist' 'adventurism', because of his support for these opposition struggles; yet the reality of these struggles cannot be denied.

Shivji regards Arusha as an attack on Tanzanian commercial capitalists by a nascent "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" which was installed into power by Uhuru without, however, an economic base of its own. This analysis raises important comparative issues regarding the different paths to power followed by nationalist elites in other African countries (especially Kenya and Uganda). There is no doubt that local commercial capitalists were the partners of foreign monopoly capital after independence, and the foreign policy setbacks described above could easily suggest that the former group was as dangerous as the latter to Tanzanian autonomy. R.H. Green, who advised the Tanzanian Treasury during the Arusha period, characterised official policy as

propos[ing] to insulate the African private and public sectors from each other, and to channel development support to public-sector or joint ventures, including cooperatives (1970:322 quoted in Seidman ms.:13).

Apart from the startling fact that a Briton retained such influence during Arusha, the quotation suggests an antagonistic relationship between the "class" of public administrators and the indigenous commercial bourgeoisie, since the latter was being (a) cut off from access to foreign capital and (b) squeezed out of the distribution business (Shivji chap. 8). Shivji's further, and more controversial, claim is that in permitting the massive importation of capital as "aid", mystified as "development support", the bureaucrats acquired an "economic class base" and hence deserve to be considered a competing, national bourgeoisie (chap. 7). The Arusha nationalisations, therefore, amount to a carving-out of this base. The concept of self-reliance masked the underlying significance of Arusha as a bourgeois-nationalist economic coup, and in saying this I mean that it was masked from all the social actors, Nyerere included. But a critique such as Shivji's leaves open the question of how this mystification took place; we can assume that everyone acts in his or her self-interest, or even class-interest, but how do these interests form and how do they shift? How did the nationalist elite become a bureaucra-

tic bourgeoisie? To refer this question back to "the class struggle" is not satisfying, because we have no set of principles which will predict how the class struggle develops in the short run, at least. Why, for example, is the bureaucratic bourgeoisie not equally powerful in Kenya? Part of the answer undoubtedly reflects internal differences between the two countries, but another dimension of the answer relates to the external context and imperialism. Nholi's book gives us enough background to glimpse the dialectic of these two sectors, so as to avoid a dualistic class analysis (i.e. two separate determinations of class position, based on internal and external relationships respectively). It may not be too bold to suggest here that many of the objections to class analyses of the "dependency" school stem from a dualist conception of the sectors. In terms of the impact of the parastatals on Tanzanian political economy, Ake importantly notes their dual, contradictory significance: as competition to the foreign monopoly firms, they represent a step towards diversified, autocentred industrialisation; while at the same time they constitute a bid for economic power by the nationalist elite (1981:96-7). In practice, the parastatals are still between 50% - 80% dependent on foreign capital, under the name of aid (1981:120).

Thus self-reliance was paradoxical in practice: subjectively anti-capitalist, as any "socialising" nationalisation of capital is by definition; but objectively anti-imperialist? Shivji and Ake say no. Nabudere, in disagreeing so violently with Shivji in the debates, appears to say yes. Nabudere denies that the managers constitute a class distinct from the national petty bourgeoisie as a whole (87), a denial implicit in his larger thesis that the ruling class of a neo-colony is not local (112). For Nabudere, a bourgeoisie is defined by its own capital, and yet:

How can 'national capital' arise in a [neo-colony] while it is even negated in the centre by finance capital - a capital that can only exist internationally (113 - emphasis in original).

For Nabudere, the agents of international finance capital, including IMF, World Bank and all the individual aid donors, function as a block dominated by U.S. capital (134). For Shivji, on the other hand,

[I]n a neo-colonial situation, the inter-imperialist rivalries come to have a full weight because the various factions and classes in the local state power forge alliances with different imperialist powers in line with their own interests. ...The various neo-colonial ruling classes exhibit different degrees of independence from particular imperialist powers, in line with the conjuncture of class alliances and struggle at particular times (180).

Shivji's concept of imperialism may seem vague, but for our purposes what is interesting is his emphasis on the ambiguity of the situation as captured in the term "conjuncture": concrete situations represent different potentials. Unfortunately, Nabudere has not written a concrete analysis of the Tanzanian class situation; his role in the debate is therefore restricted to negative appraisals of Shivji's thesis and like-minded writers including Mamdani.

We can never decisively judge between Shivji and Nabudere (as Banaji remarks in his

"footnote" (310)), apart from the field of practice. In concluding this review, however, I would like to emphasise a significant difference between them in their own intellectual practice (as opposed to the practice meant by Banaji, the leadership of class struggle as a whole). In criticising Arusha, Shivji has performed self-criticism, insofar as he is identified with the nationalist petty bourgeoisie a segment of which launched a bid for class power in 1967. Shivji has, for our analysis, exposed a contradiction in the meaning and practice of self-reliance whose implications extend to nationalist transitions throughout Africa. Nzimiro (in press) has developed a similar critique of the Nigerian indigenization decree, in the broader framework contrasting cases like Nigeria and Tanzania with armed national liberation as in Guinea and Mozambique. In another book, Nzimiro tellingly characterises Zikism as an "Unfinished Revolution", and in yet another book he relates this revolution to the Nigerian Civil War. It is especially disappointing that these books have not yet been published, given their relevance to Nigeria's present contradictions. Tanzania Publishing House has performed a signal task in the service of self-reliance (this time intellectual), by making the Dar debates available throughout Africa. Self-criticism is more than debate: it is the evaluation of debate in a wider audience. If Nabudere's position in the debates strikes us as dogmatic and lacking in self-criticism, the publication of the debates may change that. PASSR has made a hopeful beginning in raising the level of critical, Pan-Africanist discourse; may it long continue! Another encouraging development which could not be reviewed here for space reasons is the Codesria series from Dakar. The following quotation from Nnoli et al. 1981 represents a step in self-criticism which was missing from Arusha, and which may have come too late in Mwongozo:

Nationalisation for socialist development must go hand-in-hand with an egalitarian democratic policy in the nationalised enterprises, the political system, and social life in general in order to reverse the existing neo-colonial relationship between labour and capital, ensure national economic independence, and engender the growth of the productive forces on a self-sustained basis. Far from being passive in this process the masses must participate actively in these national tasks, serving at least to hold the fort against any attempt by the leaders to shrink back from their accomplishment (1981:262 - emphasis added).

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