Independent?
Tanzania’s Challenges Since *Uhuru*

*A second-generation nation in a globalized world*
Indexing terms:
- Political development
- Social change
- Governance
- Socialism
- Economic and social development
- Globalization
- Post-independence
- Tanzania

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Cover photo: Jytte Bertelsen
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P.O.Box 4460, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. E mail: ed@bol.co.tz
Printed in Mauritius by Book Printing Services, 2007

Published in Sweden by Nordiska Afrikainstitutet
P.O. Box 7103, 71 47 Uppsala, Sweden. www.nai.uu.se
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I have to keep on being hopeful for if, as a Christian, you lose hope then you are already dead. But the task is so formidable that it is next to impossible. We now live in a world where competition is incredibly hard and the rules are the same for everyone. Everybody has to run at the same speed and in the same direction: the young and the old, cripples and strong people, poor and rich, the illiterate and those with the very best education. The rule of the game today is that everybody has to compete. It’s a deeply unfair world based on enormous inequality in which people, whatever their conditions, have to compete in all fields. It’s a challenge that just not us but all mankind must face. The challenge determines the fate of both the good and the bad. We all face it.

Joseph Butiku, Director of the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation in Dar es Salaam. For 25 years Joseph Butiku was Nyerere’s private secretary

In 15–20 years will we have to fence off the whole area of the capital city to protect it against immigrants? If what is happening now continues then it will be incredibly difficult to put a brake on the flood of people from the rural areas to Dar es Salaam.

Mwesiga Baregu, Professor of Political Science, University of Dar es Salaam
Africa has moved up the world’s agenda. This is the continent where poverty grows and the AIDS epidemic plays havoc. Here it seems impossible to achieve the millennium goals of education, health, and fewer poor people. But after many years of declining foreign aid, aid to Africa is once again increasing. There is talk of better terms of trade for African countries and some of the debts are being cancelled. The realities lag behind the promises but something is happening. There’s a new focus on the continent.

This book is not especially about aid, trade or goals. Based on the reflections of Africans themselves, the book is an attempt to describe the actual history and the enormous challenges facing one single country, Tanzania. What has it been like to live in a completely new, extremely poor state and what does it really mean to be independent?

African states are formally states, yes, but this formal independence has only existed for two generations. These states were the newest and youngest states in the world until the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the formation of even younger states.

The basic premises for these new states were awful. Social structures were extremely weak and there was massive poverty. After the preliminary euphoria there were countless problems to contend with. The politicians who were to meet the challenges were young and inexperienced. All political systems are subject to the growing pains and the new African states were no exception. As yet, these states have hardly emerged from these growing pains.

Tanzania is one such state. Apart from the ravages of the AIDS epidemic Tanzania has not experienced major catastrophes. But all the same Tanzania has had a large number of social and political growing pains and today, forty-six years after formal independence, Tanzania is still extremely poor.

For quite a number of years I have been involved in trying to describe developments in Tanzania, from independence in 1961 until the present,
Dar es Salaam
on the basis of Tanzanians’ own recollections. What I try to do is not to present yet another history of Tanzania.

Nor is this a book about foreign aid, even though Tanzania has received a large share of Danish and Scandinavian aid. My ambition has been to present an account of how Tanzanians experienced these realities. This is not a book with a clear conclusion or moral. But hopefully this book can give an idea of the gigantic task that the new state faced and of the possibly greater challenges Tanzania faces today. The world has changed enormously since 1961 and it has not become easier to swim in. The challenges facing a poor and worn down country in the globalized world of today are even greater and more difficult than they were in 1961.

This book has always been my own project. But a journey to Tanzania in November 2003 was financed by a travel scholarship from DANIDA (the Danish International Development Assistance). A scholarship from the Danish Arts Foundation gave me the leisure time to carry out yet another trip in February 2005. There are many people I wish to thank for their support. I would particularly like to thank Steen Pedersen in Ukerewe and Jytte Bertelsen in Iringa as well as the Danish Embassy and (MS) Danish Association for International Cooperation (Mellemfølkeligt Samvirke) in Tanzania. All of them helped me with names and contacts that I otherwise would not have had. More than anybody else, however, I want to thank the very many Tanzanians from all spheres of life who gave me their time and shared their thoughts with me. It is my sincere hope that their reflections will benefit many other Tanzanians in their efforts to shape the future.

The original publication of this book in Danish was supported by the International Forum of the Danish Labour Movement. This organization also works to make the debate on Africa more comprehensive and nuanced. There is an increasing and more and more urgent need for this.

The translation and the publication of the English version in Tanzania and Sweden is supported by a grant from the Danish Embassy in Dar es Salaam. I want to thank the Embassy for the grant and the Nordic Africa Institute and Karl Eric Ericson from NAI for working tirelessly to make the publication possible. Thank you also to the Tanzanian publisher E & D Limited and to the translators, Roger Leys and Marie Bille, for catching the tone of the book very precisely.

Knud Vilby
January 2007
45 years of independence?

This book is about one of the most peaceful countries in the world. This is a country where Presidents always leave office after peaceful elections when their period of office terminates though they can continue to consult from the sidelines. This is a country with competing political parties that can debate and criticize the government. This is a country that, in recent years, has brought inflation under control and which has a growth rate of 5–6 percent a year. This is a country that is completely open to foreign investment and which gives investors many opportunities for repatriating their profits.

This sounds like a real success story. A new state, and an African country at that, which lives up to many of the donor countries well-intentioned and not so well-intentioned demands. Tanzania is a country that has fully accepted globalization and, economically, has become part of this global world. It’s a country that’s moving forward.

But this book is also a story about how hard the present and the future will be even for such a relatively successful poor country in Africa. It’s a story about problems that mount up and up. So maybe the pretty picture gets shattered and all-destructive conflicts emerge.

This is also a story that tells us that when it is so extremely difficult for such a peaceful, democratic and in many ways successful country like Tanzania how much more difficult it will be for so many countries for whom the preconditions for development are even worse. Yet these countries too have to enter the global arena and fight the fight of all against all, just as Joseph Butiku describes in the previous quotation.

One of the paradoxes that the Africa traveller has to explain is why he or she is so happy in Africa since, so often, there are far better reasons for being sad. There’s so much poverty and suffering. There’s so little development despite the foreign aid and the big plans. “How can you bear all that misery?” ask my well-intentioned and well-informed friends and colleagues. It’s easy to fall back on irrational answers and to pull out the old
clichés. Fifty years ago, the Danish journalist Henrik V. Ringsted wrote a book about Africa entitled “The Black Man Laughs” (Den sorte mand ler). I read it when I first travelled to Africa at the end of the sixties and I was disgusted but also fascinated. The book is about racially separated South Africa and the title is both prejudiced and patronizing. Africans have fought, suffered and cried. For generations they have fought against both external and internal oppression and exploitation. But the title of the book made me curious, even though I didn’t like it. There is an African desire to be optimistic, often despite all the odds. There is a warmth and friendliness, often side by side with cynicism and criminality. And often there is an attractive devil-may-care attitude. As a guest, you often travel back home smiling and in good humour.

In Europe, people still talk about Africa as though it was a single country with geographical variations on the themes of such miseries as war, famine and corruption. This simplification is just one of the problems since the differences between African countries are just as great as the similarities. There are countries that are stuck fast in the bog of misery, that have lived through decades of negative economic growth and generations of war and destruction. But there is also a country like Botswana that has been at peace for more than a generation and, despite the AIDS epidemic, has high annual economic growth rates. Or take a country like Mozambique that, after a generation of civil war, has also had good economic growth despite the catastrophe of floods.

And then there is Tanzania. On a day in 1961 Tanzania became an independent state and could take its seat in the UN. Since the First World War, Tanzania had been a British Mandate and, before the First World War Germany’s second most important colony. And now the first generation of African leaders took over.

To be sure, the Sub-Saharan African states have many similarities but there are also huge geographic, cultural and economic differences. This is a book about Tanzania and, specifically, about mainland Tanzania. It’s an attempt to delimit how Tanzanians who are old or getting old have experienced the 45 years of what is called independence.

The leaders of this generation are mostly gone. A second generation has taken over and a third generation is waiting on the sidelines. Tanzania is a second-generation nation but some of the first generation Tanzanians are still alive. They are not the first generation because they are new to the country. They know well where their roots are, and that is here. But the
independent and sovereign Tanzania “came to them”. They were the first generation to experience independence, but they had always lived there.

I first visited Tanzania in 1969. I criss-crossed the country by train, bus and ferry and met a smiling and friendly country full of happy, optimistic people full of hope for the future. The friendliness and the warmth is still there, 38 years later. Some people are also optimistic. All the same, one of the first paradoxes one has to face is that, in far too many ways, the Tanzania of today looks like the Tanzania of the sixties. I have been in Tanzania many times and there are lots of changes but nothing like as fundamental as those you find in Vietnam or Thailand and many other places in Asia. Tanzania resembles itself, and that’s one of the problems.

Change in Tanzania has been peaceful but Tanzania has never been through an economic or developmental Great Leap Forward. When Tanzania has attempted a Great Leap Forward it has stumbled and sometimes it’s been a case of one step forward and three steps back. Hence some of Tanzania’s basic problems are greater today than in 1961. Peace and harmony have always been characteristic of Tanzania. The regime has long been authoritarian but in spite of an army mutiny in 1964 there has been no military coup or real dictatorship even though the forced removal of peasants during the socialist experiment was a huge assault on people.

A one-party system was long ago replaced by a democracy with several parties. Democracy just about functions and it leads to peaceful rotations in the apparatus of government. In the opinion of donor organizations, and many Tanzanians, the opposition is too weak but it’s hard to see who is to blame for this. Everybody expected the old governing party (CCM) to win yet again at the 2005-election and it did. Not due to electoral fraud but because they got the most votes.

The OECD describes Tanzania as one of the politically most stable countries in Africa. In the now more than 45 years that have passed since independence Tanzania has been spared widespread starvation and violent natural catastrophes. Everybody knows the word drought. The weather gods are not to be trusted and there are often food shortages in parts of the country. But Tanzania has not been headline stuff with depressing accounts of starvation.

When Tanzania got its independence and freedom – Uhuru – 10 million people lived in this country. The population census in 2002 counted almost 35 million people. The growth in population has been dramatic
but less than was predicted 15 years ago. The UNDP then estimated that, in 2000 there would be 40 million Tanzanians. This figure had not even been reached in 2005. Women give birth to fewer children than before. Around 1970 the average Tanzania woman gave birth to 7 children in the course of her reproductive life. After the turn of the century she got just over 5 children.

There are about 40 people per square kilometre in Tanzania. In neighbouring Kenya and Uganda there are, respectively, 55 and 120 people per square kilometre. (This compares with about 125 people in Denmark and 120 in Germany). So there’s lots of room in Tanzania and there’s a lot of talk about the country’s unused natural resources.

Even though Tanzania’s economy is nothing to boast about, during the 1990s there was an annual rate of growth of just over 3 percent. Since 2000 the rate of growth has often been 5–6 percent. Most of this economic growth is swallowed up by the growth in population. But, in contrast to many other African countries, economic growth has been higher than population growth. So, statistically, the country has become a bit better off. Growth per capita has been approx. 1 percent annually.

There have been other quantifiable improvements. Around 1960, every fourth child died before the age of 15. According to UN statistics the infant mortality rate (deaths by the age of 5) was 248 children per 1,000 births. Today, only 1 in 7 children die, or, in total, 126 of every 1,000 new-born babies.
Statistically, the life expectancy of a child born in the year of *Uhuru* was 41 years, so the majority of the *Uhuru* children are now dead. I’ve talked to a large group of Tanzanians who are all more than 50 years old and several are over 80. But, statistically, these people are not representative, for the average first-generation Tanzanian is dead.

Tanzania was once the land of great expectations. Tanzania’s first president, Julius Nyerere, has gone down in history as the great teacher. Mwalimu is the name in Kiswahili and people still speak about the significance of the Mwalimu, for good and ill. He was an intellectual African nationalist and an unchallenged leader. He is often given the credit that a nation of 120 different ethnic groups became one single nation of peace, harmony and a political system that — in contrast to many African countries — has not been dominated by one or two power hungry tribes.

Mwalimu was good at explaining to his people the new times and the new challenges. He was also excellent at explaining these things in the United Nations and to the Western countries that, as in Denmark in the 60s, were beginning to think in terms of aid for the development of the new states. Nyerere argued for a political philosophy that could modernize traditional African communities. This philosophy was called African Socialism but the rhetoric was reminiscent of the Scandinavian mixed economies and, rapidly, close cooperation between the Scandinavian states and Tanzania emerged.

Nyerere was aware that, after independence, Tanzania would enter into a new dependency relationship with Western donors. But the needs were enormous and aid was needed. Hence Tanzania, early on, became a country with massive foreign aid and this is still true today. In 2003 Tanzania received $1,650 million in foreign support. This equalled DKK 250 per Tanzanian per year. In 2004 foreign aid amounted to 16 percent of the total national economy.

Just as other African countries, Tanzania was hit by the reduction in foreign aid from Western donors in the 1990s when total foreign aid to Africa declined massively. In 1990 aid amounted to over 27 percent of Tanzania’s gross national product but, today, this percentage has almost been halved. All the same, Tanzania is greatly dependent on foreign aid and, of total foreign aid to sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania is one of the countries that receives the most.

In the introductory quotation, Joseph Butiku is deeply worried about what the future will hold for a country that has, in many ways, behaved
well and orderly yet all the same has seen many problems mount up and up. Butiku has been involved in the whole development process. He was one of the first African fighters for *Uhuru* (Independence). He was born in the North-Western part of the country and comes from the same village as Julius Nyerere, though he is 19 years younger. Nyerere was the very first from that part of the country to receive a university education. That was in 1952. Joseph Butiku was the second and received his degree ten years later in 1962.

Today, Butiku is Director of the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation in Dar es Salaam and has been director since the institute was founded in 1996. The objective of the foundation is to continue Nyerere’s work for peace, unity and popular development. These are the same objectives from the time of *Uhuru*: the targets that people have worked for almost half a century and this task has been possible to carry out in conditions of relative peace and with significant support from the international community.

But, as the introductory quotation makes clear, why is Butiku so worried? Why does a catholic bishop on the island of Ukerewe on lake Victoria, say that unless something new and different happens, he fears a bleak future with more suffering, growing poverty, more malnutrition and greater and greater conflicts? And why does the former Prime Minister, Joseph Warioba, talk about a country affected by increasing polarization and increased poverty with the risk of the development of a new class struggle and new splits on the basis of, among other things, ethnicity?

In 1969 I celebrated Christmas in Kigoma, close to Ujiji where Stanley met Livingstone in 1891. I was entranced and just as ignorant as so many other foreigners coming from the North. Since then, I have come back many times. With interruptions, I followed development in the country. That is why I have felt that, before it is too late, it was important to talk with Tanzanians who could remember how the new state developed from *Uhuru* until today. What went wrong and what went right? How could things have been done differently and which problems were, perhaps, inevitable?

I have spoken to people in three very different regions of Tanzania: On the island of Ukerewe on lake Victoria and in the town of Mwanza close by; in and around the provincial town, Iringa, and in Dar es Salaam but only on the Tanzanian mainland. This book is not about Zanzibar that
has its own government and considerable autonomy, its own agenda and its own major conflicts.

My criteria were that those I talked to were old enough to have experienced the period from 1961 until the present. So this book is not about the contemporary prospects and conditions of the young even when the conversation is about youth unemployment. But the old have a strong eye for the conditions of the young. So, all the same, this book deals with the young and their future prospects.

The big question, that I seldom asked, could read: Have things gone well? Are people happy to be independent? But often the question was meaningless. Things have gone well and badly but who is independent? Life is influenced by many factors and there is an inevitability that individual people have no influence on. However, the answers did contribute to a general assessment. One of the most serious conclusions is that the preconditions for Tanzania’s development are, in some fields, worse now than they were in 1961. Despite what the statistics say about the economy and about investment some problems have exacerbated and it is difficult to see the solutions.

First and foremost, Tanzania is very run down. Although, statistically, the country is thinly populated, large agricultural areas are affected by the wearing down of the environment, falling productivity and increasing poverty. The densely populated rural areas are more worn down than before. There is no convincing agricultural policy that provides the answers to these problems. So the prospect is for greater attrition while, at the same time, the flight from agriculture increases. Despite the investment in the towns and in the modern sector this sector is still very small. Every year, almost a million young people enter the labour market. There are no jobs for them. There’s almost no industry and there is a dramatic increase in youth unemployment.

One of the big questions is whether the unity and harmony of Tanzanian society can survive these challenges. Professor Mwesiga Baregu from Dar es Salaam University smiles ironically but asks whether, in 15–20 years it will be necessary to build a wall around the city with guarded city gates where immigrants from the countryside can be controlled and stopped. Even the fact that the question is put illustrates the dramatic division between the country and the major towns. His colleague, Professor Rwekaza Mukandala, chairman of a major Danish-supported research programme (REDET), says that Dar es Salaam has become a city of two
totally different worlds. One that thinks, lives and relates to the Western cities and another that looks to Dubai and Saudi Arabia from where they get their information. This is not some abstract, theoretical split. It is to be found in the geography and daily practice of the city.

In Tanzania too, researchers, planners, economists and politicians talk about globalization, about the chances of getting foreign investment but they also talk about the jobs that are moving out and abroad and here they feel the competition from Asia. Here too, outsourcing is a reality and a threat.

What globalization means more specifically for a Tanzanian depends on which of Tanzania’s worlds he or she lives in. For there’s a huge difference between those who have a stake in the new market-led society and the constantly growing numbers of those that are doomed to poverty, unemployment and underemployment. Some of these problems are exacerbated by the market economy and, maybe by democracy too.

There is no clear answer as to whether unity and harmony can, despite everything, be maintained. This will depend both on international and domestic developments, on the economy, politics, religion and, a bit, on race. It’s about work and it’s about water.

It’s also about the visions and inheritance of Nyerere. But many say that today it is especially about the lack of visions as to the future. There are also those that emphasize that, in the zig-zag course and ups and downs that have affected Tanzania since Uhuru there’s now a feeling that things are going forward; at least among those that have the capacity to have these kinds of feelings.

Tanzania is, I repeat, one of the most peaceful, stable and democratic countries in Africa. Nevertheless, the country faces almost insoluble problems. The African continent is one of a huge variety of difficulties and potentials. The problems of Tanzania tell us something about the huge challenges facing many other countries that, in UN language, are called “underdeveloped”. Perhaps Tanzania and the Tanzanians could feel that in 1961 they were really independent. Today it is not possible to feel that way.
An agricultural island whose only export is people

On Ukerewe the elephants and the cotton fields are gone. There are fields of cassava and there are stones and rocks. And then there are far too many children and far too many worn down farms.

Ukerewe on Lake Victoria

“First we have to see a miracle” says the hospitable and smiling bishop as he leads us to the harbour and opens up a little shed. His guinea fowl have just laid about 25 eggs. The place is alive with the cheeps of one-day-old chicks and the hen-breeding bishop is as proud as the pope; a true miracle just outside the door to his own garden.

And his garden is another small miracle. Every kind of tropical fruit tree: papayas, mangoes, bananas and avocados. There’s also a mass of different vegetables. The soil on Ukerewe is fertile, when it is allowed to be and when the soil and the crops are looked after. But otherwise there are few miracles on the fertile island on the southern shores of Africa’s biggest lake, Lake Victoria.
This island was previously famous for cotton production that created rich peasant farmers and progress. But today tens of thousands of peasants cultivate cassava, a subsistence crop. There are cassava plots everywhere between the stones and the low hills look as if they have been painted or powdered white. The colour comes from the starchy cassava tubers that the women are drying and pounding. The tubers are pounded into flour for ugali. In other parts, maize is preferred as the basis for ugali and perhaps they also do so here but still it’s cassava they grow. Cassava is the porridge of the poor that can be grown almost everywhere and under every kind of condition. On Ukerewe they put the cassava in the ground and harvest the tubers two years later. It’s not a lot of work but the yield is small and the yield of this poor-man’s food is falling.

Lake Victoria is one-and-a-half times the size of Denmark. Ukerewe District is 640 square kilometres and consists of Ukerewe plus some small islands and has, according to the latest census from 2002, about 400 people per square kilometre. In all, the District’s population consists of 262,000 people. The results of the census show an increase of 90,000 since the last census of 1988: more than 3 percent more every year. Ukerewe is not a very big island, and as a farming community it is crowded. The average household consists of six people.

On Ukerewe there are masses of people, masses of cassava and masses of white-powdered cliffs and stones. But this is not the whole truth. There are oases such as the bishop’s and some of the huts have protective trees, sometimes fruit trees. In one corner of the island there’s a protected rainforest. But none of this changes the general picture of a sad place.

When the conversation turns to the economy many talk about fishing. The catch on the lake is big and the export goes to the European Union. Fishing is organized and rationalised: from the single individual’s fishing, via the industrial food chain to freezing down and filleting in the port of Mwanza, the nearest harbour to Ukerewe. The EU has endorsed the process and Europeans eat African freshwater fish from Lake Victoria. When money is earned on Ukerewe it’s first and foremost from fishing. But the old people are very unhappy about life in the fishing villages that bring together young men from a huge geographical area. There are small islands around Ukerewe that consist of young fishermen and easygoing young girls. The fishermen come from all over Tanzania. This is a kind of society that those who combat HIV/AIDS fear more than anything else. Unofficial statistics tell that about a quarter of the fishermen are HIV
positive. The HIV/AIDS infection route follows the fishermen, the long distance truckers and the soldiers along their transport routes.

Ukerewe was once different. This fertile land around Lake Victoria attracted missionaries and businessmen. There was an early Christian mission on Ukerewe. 1994 was the centenary of the arrival of the first missionaries. Because of the missionaries and their good schools, Ukerewe came to be considered a school island. Ukerewe has exported a great number of competent administrative and political leaders to the rest of the new independent Tanzania. The very first ordained Tanzanian priest, Father Celestine Kipanda came from Ukerewe.

Cotton production started at the very beginning of the twentieth century under the German colonial regime. Old Bernard Mkwanzabi, born in 1917, has no doubts as to what development is about:

"Without cotton there’s no development. Cotton brought progress to Ukerewe and was introduced by the colonial regime long, long ago. Today you can get better cotton seed for sowing but it requires chemicals and these we can’t afford to buy and, at the same time, cotton prices are low. That’s why we don’t cultivate cotton and that’s why there is no development. We are more people now and there is less land. We must have food and prices are bad. When I was a boy everybody had enough land but not today. That’s why there’s much less development."

But at that time, there weren’t just cotton fields on the island. Seventy-eight year old Anthony Musiba Muhikwa tells that, when he was seven he saw elephants:

"There were lots of forests and there were elephants, lions and leopards on Ukerewe. As late as 1936 there were 38 elephants and the British decided to get rid of them. For the peasants, they were a plague. They destroyed the crops and also killed people so they hired a European called Manson to shoot them. He got 36 of them but the last two managed to swim to the mainland and get away. People were happy for the peacefulness after the elephants were killed. There was ivory for the British and lots of meat for the Africans."

Today there’s no cotton and hardly any forest. The last cotton cultivation died out at the end of the 80s; the end of a long and sad story of rotten management of the parastatal cooperatives; of peasants who delivered the harvested cotton but received no payment and of the gradually increasing mistrust to the whole system. Bad prices were part of the explanation but
far from the whole explanation. The farmers would rather cultivate bad, poor man’s crops for their own use than cash crops that are not paid for.

The wild animals have gone. During my visit I sleep on the beach out to Lake Victoria protected by a Masai guard and a German shepherd dog. The wildest animal life are the fish hawks whose cries wake me at dawn and also the Siafu, the armies of ants that parade every morning but disappear during the day. They show up from underground and millions of them march to the giant trees with the sweet figs. They form 3–4 centimetre broad columns and the working ants are protected and controlled by the ant army soldiers that lead the columns across the open beach, past my protected tent into the trees and sweet figs. But otherwise you don’t visit Ukerewe to see African wildlife. There’s really nothing to see.

Bishop Fortunatus Lukanima knows that most miracles come from good ideas and hard work. The sixty-three-year-old Catholic Bishop has returned to his place of birth on Ukerewe after a period as Bishop of Arusha. He’s thrown himself into gardening and chicken breeding in the grounds of the church’s residence and he has contributed to discussions on the lack of development on Ukerewe with memoranda and articles on such different subjects as the need for institutions of higher education on the island, on the possibilities of growing fruit and on the great need for a huge change after years of decline and antiquated methods of production.

“Just as decay and obsolescence are natural parts of life and of human existence so are rebirth and renewal also” writes the bishop. He describes how Ukerewe had earlier been able to seize the opportunities of the times and that this must happen again in a major readjustment: “Over the years the soil has gradually lost its fertility and its productivity and it must be revitalized. The population has increased enormously and created an extra pressure on the land and other resources. In addition a form of moral decadence and a gradual dissolution of the social institutions have occurred. Ukerewe and its people must rise up and tackle these formidable obstacles. We must cope with the new and formidable challenges of stemming the tide of decline, obsolescence, moral decadence and decay in social institutions.”

This Episcopal riot act was printed and distributed without any big results. People don’t read much on Ukerewe but the bishop continues to give theoretical and practical advice. He is deeply worried:
“I wrote an article entitled “Ukerewe revisited” “ he says. There have been great changes. Some are for the better but some very much for the worse. There are new and better houses and that’s big progress. But the very foundation, the soil, has become poorer. Fertility has fallen. The same soil is cultivated year after year in the same way and this makes Ukerewe ever poorer. With traditional methods of cultivation the soil lay fallow for periods of at least three years and in some places six to seven years. Now the soil has no chance to regain its strength. There’s no change of seed, but the same crops year after year.”

Lukanima can see possibilities. New crops, better agricultural extension and better use of animal manure. Agricultural produce is ecological because pesticides and artificial fertilizers are not used. But what use is that if production falls? There’s practically no agricultural export from this agricultural island. In the season, oranges are sent by ferry from Ukerewe’s port, Nansio, to the mainland. But for most of the year the traffic goes the other way. The ferry even brings eggs, chickens and tomatoes from the mainland for the few who can afford to buy them. This is an agricultural island that isn’t self sufficient in agricultural produce. It’s hard to understand why agriculture goes so badly. And the bishop knows that this is hard to understand. He himself has problems understanding it. But, he says, despite the rhetoric Tanzania has never had a well-implemented agricultural policy:

“We talk about agriculture as the backbone of society but, fundamentally, we have never put emphasis on agriculture in our practical policies. We talk about agricultural extension but we see no extension officers. I don’t know whether they lack training, support or motivation but we don’t see them trying to help the farmers. Houses get built. People make bricks for building. People fish and they build canoes. In Mwanza they’ve made factories for processing the fish. But I hardly see anything happen in agriculture. We do not go hungry. We produce our own food but only cassava. And both the yield and the quality decline. Nutritional conditions are bad: not at all as they should be. We’re not at all alright.”

I give the bishop the just-published returns of the census and we talk about the frightening prospect of continued population growth and the continued pressure on the land of Ukerewe. He tells me how they used to have big banana plantations but now there’s nothing. There’s still a bit of rice in some areas, oranges here and there but surprisingly little and badly looked after.
“When I was a boy Ukerewe was fertile and green. Now there’s bush but no forest and hardly any trees. Then you couldn’t see the rocks on the island’s hills. They were hidden by the forest. Now that the trees have gone you can see how many stones and rocks there are. Now it’s all rocks. It wasn’t like this a few years ago.”

And what of the future?

“Unless we do something the future is very bleak: conflicts, suffering, growing poverty and increasing malnutrition. As a result of growing poverty and bad nutrition we will see more internal conflicts. Civil strife will increase. Already we have young men on the streets with no education, no jobs and with nothing to do. But they want to eat, they want clothes and they want a life. They could work in agriculture. They could do more and we have to find ways so that they can live and work here on the island. They can’t just go to Dar es Salaam and be millionaires. That’s an unrealistic dream. Their lives have to be here. If we can’t find solutions we’re facing enormous problems. First you’ll see a growth in crime. And thereafter a catastrophe will develop.”

The bishop has no problems talking about the population problem:

“There are lots and lots children on Ukerewe. I am the catholic bishop and my conscience is completely clear. Nobody should have a single child unless he or she is able to take care of it. We can disagree on the methods but I am completely convinced – and I say this with a clear conscience to God that it is a sin to have children that you cannot take care of. Let’s discuss family planning, condoms, birth control and so on. I’m no expert but let’s discuss it. But nobody should have children that they can’t take care of properly and responsibly. I keep a dog but I don’t have the right to keep a dog if I don’t look after it properly. And this is of course true to a far greater degree when it comes to children. God gave man intelligence and man has the duty to use his intelligence. In the past the more children you had the greater the economic security of your family. More children gave more labour and a woman had to give birth to many children because many children died. It’s not like that now and God gave mankind intelligence so he could change his actions.”

But children continue to be born.

The population map of Tanzania shows that, apart from the region around Dar es Salaam, the region around lake Victoria is the most densely populated in the whole country. Historically, the coasts and islands of lake
Victoria such as Ukerewe have been a population magnet. The chance to combine hunting, fishing and farming gave security. The colonial powers – first the Germans and then the British – and also the missionaries created a development potential. People were imported to these areas and good living conditions made it possible to have significant growth in population.

Today, Ukerewe exports people. And without that export, conditions on the island would be even more depressing. Many of the old people I talked to have been major children-producers. Eighty-six-year-old Bernard Mkanzabi and seventy-seven-year-old Anthony Busanda had each 18 children, Anthony with three different wives. Bernard’s children were born between 1938 and 1971 and 13 of them are still alive. Only three of them live on Ukerewe, the rest are spread over most of Tanzania. All went to school and had one or other form of education. Anthony still has five of his adult children living on Ukerewe. The rest are in Dar es Salaam and in Arusha. Even then, 18 children were a lot and the numbers tell us something about the families that have had a certain power over things. The old people say that none of their children have had more than ten children. Four children are now about standard and several have six or eight children. They have received an education and can manage themselves. One is a doctor, one a teacher and one works with computers.

My two translators, George Lujangi and John Mukama, are in their 60s and trained as teachers. They know more than most and have, respectively, 10 and 8 children:

“We hope our children and grandchildren can have better lives than we have had” say the old men without reflecting much on how much pressure they themselves have put on their local community by having such large numbers of offspring. The human export from Ukerewe has been absolutely necessary. Yet all the same, Ukerewe is worn down. Later, I see the young people in Mwanza on the other side of the water. They’re coming in the hope of a job. They’re looking for work in the harbour and it is not a big harbour. They become some of the innumerable poor street sellers that can be seen everywhere. The young unemployed are the standard export of Ukerewe. But there’s also a “finer” form of export. The then Speaker of Tanzania’s parliament comes from Ukerewe as do a large number of other prominent politicians, administrators and business people. Ukerewe has made a major contribution to Tanzania’s development.
Lukanima: “There are so many contradictions. If you ask me how Tanzania or Ukerewe are coping then the answer is riddled with contradictions. Yes, we have better houses on Ukerewe than we did before. People have better furniture. They’ve got decent mattresses. These things are important. Yes, it’s true that many more people have had an education but I have trouble seeing what the vision for the future is.

But we also have serious problems. For example, how can we accept lousy primary schools and bad teachers in a village on Ukerewe when, in the past, this same village has produced an engineer who works in Dar es Salaam and people now working in Europe and the United States, maybe even as professors. They’re teaching in other parts of the world but in the village of their childhood there’s nothing. These are living examples of people from Ukerewe who have done well, but the schools on the island are still terrible, forty years after some of their people got an education. I do emphasize that people are now better educated and, at one level, that’s true but all the same we now see children who at the end of 6th grade cannot even write their names. The quality of teaching is depressingly low.”

So, in the schools, things are going badly. The challenge is enormous. There are 92 schools on Ukerewe.

Later I spoke with Japhet Makongo (known as Jeff) in Dar es Salaam. He works for the educational organisation HakiElimu and knows Ukerewe where there is a big problem with children who do don’t go to school or who drop out. Jeff tells how parents are not very enthusiastic about the schools:

“We have a programme on Ukerewe and we try to find out why so many children stay away from school or quickly drop out. Some parents say that if you want to ensure a life for your children you must give them some skills. Ukerewe is about fishing. If a boy is to be a good fisherman he must start when he is about seven years old. He must start by doing all kinds of small jobs so that he can learn everything from the beginning. But if you send your child to school when he is seven then he must stay there until he’s fourteen and by then he’s too old to be trained up. He simply can’t match the competition from the children who’ve been handling fish since they were very small. The fourteen-year-old who has gone to school doesn’t have the necessary skills such as making nets, repairing boats and whatever else is required. He doesn’t know anything about farming and when he runs off to the towns he doesn’t have the skills to get a job there either.”
In Jeff’s view, what is on offer to the children and their parents in overcrowded schools with unmotivated and poorly educated teachers simply doesn’t meet the demands of everyday life. Of course there is a growing realization that the modern world requires knowledge and education but what use is this if a seven-year-old boy has better prospects in life by learning from the older fishermen in the villages than by being bored in overcrowded and bad schools?

Maybe there is only a choice between different evils. Fishing has given money. It’s because of the money from the fish exports that most houses have corrugated iron roofs rather than grass and money from fishing has financed the foam rubber mattresses. But at the same time, the fishing villages are mixtures of all kinds of people and places where anything can and will happen. There are families that have broken up and orphaned children. And how long can unregulated fishing survive? After some years of dramatic growth the authorities are nervous about over fishing.

Most schools are miserable but efforts are being made to improve them. And there are exceptions. Fortunatus Lukanima wants to show us
positive examples. Everything is not hopeless. Things are happening and when people are motivated and believe in results they want themselves to do something about it. We drive to a renovated village school that looks brand new after the work that the village parents have carried out. He is proud of them. The headmaster shares this pride and tells us about a simple school with 13 teachers and 1,116 pupils. This is Ukerewe’s primary school at its best:

“There are differences between schools and we can still do our part to make a difference. People want to take part if they can see the results of their efforts. But, far too often, people have been mobilized, expectations created and then they have been totally let down. It therefore becomes more and more difficult for them to have confidence in new ideas.”

Bishop Lukaniima still believes. Not just in God but also in the people of Ukerewe. He has mobilized the people to build a combined church and house of assembly. He has taken initiatives that are warmly received. The local inhabitants themselves blow up big rocks for the building. This is done in the traditional way by lighting a fire, heating the rocks until they are about to burst and then pouring cold water on them. It’s slow but it works. Things are happening and people take part. But Lukaniima recognizes that it’s difficult to create enthusiasm and belief after 40 years that have led to great disappointment, forty years during which the people, after great self-help efforts have often ended up with poorer lives than before.

On our way through the villages we came to one of the latest failed state project attempts to mobilize the people.

Today, market forces rule and the market makes it easier for people to produce, sell and earn money without the cash being eaten up by a corrupt bureaucracy. So a campaign was started on Ukerewe to cultivate coffee. Those who took the initiative had the good idea that they could use the land belonging to the public schools for this purpose. Teachers and students were mobilized. Coffee trees were planted and, in the beginning, tended and looked after so that, after a couple of years, the red coffee berries were ready to be harvested and sold. But coffee prices were terrible, there was overproduction of coffee and nobody wanted to buy the coffee. The buyers stayed away since they could buy plenty of coffee on the mainland and had no reason to spend the extra money to bring the coffee from Ukerewe. This year there was no coffee harvest. The coffee was dried out and not looked after. Once again the people felt cheated.
The old people have lots of stories about what has happened to the land over the years and how the crops have been. There’s a universal grumbling and complaints about how everything has become too expensive compared with the good old days. But there are also more concrete observations.

Bernard Mkanzabi, born in 1917, is one of the old people with 18 children and not dissatisfied with his long life. As positive example of change he cites more schools and health clinics and that the radios now provide access to news from all over the world. But he also says that today it is far too expensive to send children to school and today there are fewer children that go to school.

“Many of the people who have more than 2–3 children can no longer afford to keep them in school up to class four or class six. We old people hope that our children and grandchildren will have a better life, than we did but life has become harder and it’s no longer possible”. Even though, as one of the really old people, he doesn’t fully grasp the new campaign for schooling for all, he expresses a general worry.

Attitudes to what has occurred with health and education are nuanced. It is positive that houses and infrastructure are better. But on the other side there’s a negative side when we talk about farming that, together with fishing is the basis of the island’s economy. Mkanzabi was a kind of low level leader, a sub-chief in the long ago abolished chieftancy system. He was an active farmer for more than forty five years and knew the system both before and after uhuru.

“Agriculture got more support from the colonial government than it did from the independent government. We got very little support after uhuru. Four to five years after independence they began to establish cooperatives but the support they got was very little. There was no progress. The colonial government supported cotton cultivation because this created development. Cotton was cultivated everywhere and the palace of the chief was built in 1928 from the cash from cotton. But after independence things went downhill. After the Arusha Declaration ujamaa fields were introduced that we all cultivated together for the common good. This collective action should be for the benefit of the village and for us all but the profit disappeared or went to just a few people. People from Nansio town were also ordered to cultivate cotton but got neither money nor the crop. Nobody here got anything out of it.”
Since then, shortage of land has become a problem. The old people talk about the time when all had enough land and there were even reserves of uncultivated land. Today most plots are small and many islanders are landless. There are no accounts of improvements for farmers since uhuru but many negative accounts: about falling prices for agricultural produce while all other prices increase, about scarcity of land and of unchanged or decreasing support from the government. Some people remember the different types of state or parastatal purchase and marketing boards for agricultural produce. And everyone has stories about the results of the Arusha Declaration and the subsequent attempt to create a common African socialism by establishing ujamaa villages to help each other.

The old people cannot recall the precise years but the memories are still clear. Seventy-eight-year-old Anthony Musiba Muhikwa: “We grew cotton on credit. This was very technical. We got a receipt for cotton sales but we got no money. Sometimes the money came 2–3 months later. But some farmers were never paid. And then some started fishing instead. The fishing catch was paid for in cash. Today they’ve begun to pay for the cotton but people have lost courage. Today we no longer grow cotton on Ukerewe.”

Seventy-nine-year-old Bituro Ngando: “We had two hectares of land and we grew cotton and rice in addition to cassava for ourselves and some bananas. But with the collectivisation of villages after ujamaa we lost most of our land. Now we only grow cassava and bananas and a few sweet potatoes. We’ve tried with coffee but this year we didn’t even harvest it. We’ll dig up the coffee and plant cassava and sweet potatoes instead. Life has become hard.”

Eighty-one-year-old Sylvester Mazigo: “Before the Arusha Declaration things were divided: there were religious schools and not everybody could join them. And there were only a few schools. But we lived together in families and we helped each other. Neither the village programme nor ujamaa helped us. In the villages we were moved together with different tribes, both Christian and Muslim. It was good that we got more schools, but collectivization was not good.”

The programme of the ujamaa system was built on the idea to move together the spread out rural population in well-ordered community villages. This should make it easier to provide the inhabitants with schools, health clinics and wells with clean water. In the beginning collectivization was voluntary and in some of the poorer regions of Tanzania people
saw an advantage in moving together to *ujamaa* villages and to cultivate the soil together. But developments went too slowly and in the 1970s the government moved people by force. Many farmers lost their land. They got little or no compensation and, in some places, it became more difficult to get water. The administrative system simply couldn’t cope with the task. Instead of community feeling this created bitterness and discouragement.

Ukerewe’s District Commissioner, Kazi Mwibule is only 58 years old. He was a boy at the time of *Uhuru* and a young man when collectivisation started. As a young man he was also a member of the party’s youth league. He remembers well but he is also a cautious civil servant:

“It was a good policy. We should put together all our resources and together ensure that all could get what they needed. We all said Yes when it was decided. It was a good policy but it’s true that it was not carried out so well. We simply couldn’t manage all the different public institutions after independence. We thought we could do just like the Chinese who we’d heard about. It was almost the same policy we tried to follow but we had problems. Some people already at that time said that the involvement of the people in creating these new things was not good but I don’t know how we could have involved everybody.”

After *Uhuru* people wanted change. There was life and the power in the spirit of community that made it possible to motivate people. But District Commissioner Mwibule who claims he fights to recreate the old spirit realizes that it is very difficult:

“This special spirit disappeared and was absent for many many years. There were many self-help projects and a lot happened. But it went downhill in the 1980s. I don’t know why”, he says without appearing completely convincing.

The farmers sold their crops without being paid. They worked hard on the collective land and felt cheated. They lost their land and got nothing or poorer land in return. Today, they hear about agricultural extension advisers but don’t see them. They are lured to grow cash crops but the buyers don’t come or the prices are so low that it doesn’t pay to harvest and sell them.

Several places on the island we see small, empty warehouses that were built by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization in 1988–89. I’m told that they’ve never been used. They were built to store the cash crops after harvesting but the buildings were first finished when
the production of cash crops had declined so much that the buildings were not needed. Now they’re trying to rent them out.

So this brief resumé of the history of Ukerewe as a rundown agricultural island is the story of a system that could not maintain progress in the field of agriculture. Ukerewe became, first, part of a Tanzanian development that led to overblown state-run or parastatal cooperatives and state-run companies that were overmanned and ineffective and, as a result, their earnings barely covered the wages of their employees with nothing to the farmers who were the basis of these organizations. In reality the farmers were taxed by a small administrative and urban based elite.

Since then the system has been liberalized and privatised. Now the free market is lauded and the old, ineffective institutions have pretty much disappeared. But Ukerewe is just not interesting for those who play the market. There’s plenty of cotton and coffee in other places and, anyway, prices are extremely low. Why be interested in an island that, in terms of transportation, is expensive and difficult and that lies far away? Ukerewe is an overpopulated faraway place.

“We’re trying to create an environment that has a positive view of the future. We know that this has to be encouraged and helped. We also try to get support from the many from the island who today live away from the island” says the District Commissioner. He tells how they got an engineer back from Zanzibar and made him responsible for the building of a new school. School building has high priority but, adds the District Commissioner, most of the educated people have decided to live away from the island. “Almost all those that live here today are ordinary farmers.”

John Mukama and George Lujangi are retired school teachers. They help me by translating and they give their own opinions. They tell me that, in their opinion, it rains less on Ukerewe than it did before and they are sure this has to do with the felling of the forests. They say that, historically, Ukerewe had the reputation of being an incredibly fertile place. There was plenty of land and they could grow pretty much anything. This was quite different from conditions on the much smaller neighbouring island, Ukara. Ukara was, long before, densely populated and so the farmers became good at using the manure from their animals. This didn’t happen on Ukerewe where the people long thought it was not necessary. Now the island is worn down and, even if it’s possible, it would require a major effort to change conditions. And the agricultural advisers? “They have an office but we never see them. In the future, they say, “there won’t
be enough land to cultivate on the island. The government will have to move people off the island. It’s the only way.”

But what about the fishing that has financed the improved stone houses, the tin roofs and the mattresses? Fishing gives employment and incomes. In Mwanza there are many fish factories and the industrial processing of the fish provides many jobs. According to the journal “The East African” there are 25,000 employed in the region’s fish industry. On Ukerewe and the surrounding small islands, the fishermen primarily earn money from fishing themselves in nets from canoes and it is estimated that the living standard of the fishing families has risen from about a dollar a day ten years ago to 1.5 to 2 dollars today. The value of the export of fish has increased from almost 40 million dollars a year tens years ago to 140 million today. So there are many positive developments. But fishing has already boomed to such an extent that the East African governments, working with the EU, are trying to find out how to prevent the fish stock from over fishing and destruction. It is estimated that there are 125,000 fishermen from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania fishing in the lake. There are few trawlers and, according to the regulations, these can only be used for fishing research. Otherwise, the fish are caught from 40–45,000 canoes. In Tanzania alone, there are about 50,000 fishermen with about 15,000 canoes.

In 2003 the East African wrote: “The current level of exploitation is not considered sustainable and the long term perspective is increased poverty rather than a reduction in poverty because the fishermen compensate for the decrease in the fish stock by catching smaller fish in order to get a sufficiently big catch. This will make it even more difficult to maintain the catch in the future.” At the same time prices are also being squeezed. They are competing on a global market. In Europe, the Nile Perch from lake Victoria have to compete with cheaper fish from Thailand and there’s a trend towards over supply and falling prices. This makes the importers happy but not the fishermen.

The gigantic fishing boom has a surrealistic quality. The basis for the fishing boom is the Nile perch that was put into the lake half a century ago. This perch is a killer and a cannibal that eats and has almost eradicated the other species of fish in the lake. The biology of the lake is threatened, today perhaps also by over fishing the perch.
Export is based on air transport of the expensive frozen fish and gigantic cargo planes fly in and out from Mwanza’s little airfield. This is an energy-demanding luxury transport out of a poor region where many get too little or too poor nutrition. The social and health consequences are, among other things, an increase in HIV/AIDS, increased mortality and family breakdown. To be sure, fishing has brought money to Ukerewe, to Mwanza and to the whole area. Some call this development and the money from fishing has financed a lot of things. But the background to this is not positive.

In Mwanza I meet Eleather Epiphani Mahawi, a former government civil servant who knows the whole period from independence until today. He’s full of stories about progress and setbacks (see the chapter on corruption) but has a fundamental optimism:

“If we can keep the peace between people then things will work out” he says optimistically. But all the same, the warnings come too, about the fishing industry among other things. “The fishing industry has been very popular but crime and hooliganism have frightened many off. It’s no longer a safe place to work and now the catch is declining. In the beginning we put a lot of faith in the fishing industry but it makes only a limited contribution to development. It’s not going to solve the problems. The young people come to the towns anyway. At the harbour there are lots of young people. They go around with wheelbarrows, they carry boxes and packages, they work on the streets and they are unemployed and hope that something shows up. Many of them have come from Ukerewe and the other islands.”

It’s hard for Mahawi to see where employment is to come from in the future. “So the trend is for the young from the countryside to travel to the towns where they expect to find work. In the end we have an elderly rural population and I’m afraid that production in the countryside will be even lower than today. This isn’t just a complaint from here in Mwanza. The Masai say the same and complain that their traditions are disappearing. And when the young flood to the towns, then corruption gets more violent since there isn’t the work and they try to bribe themselves into a job. There’s going to be more problems with the young people. Most become unemployed with all that that entails and the government can’t cope with it. Right now this development seems inevitable but of course we hope we can create work in the cities. As President Mkapa says, we must
An agricultural island whose only export is people

make the rural areas attractive by creating mechanized farming that can employ people. Maybe this can attract the youth. In the future, people cannot reckon to be small farmers. They’ve got to find jobs and this will be difficult.”

I stay with Steen Petersen on Ukerewe. He’s a former Danish development worker and now, for several years, has run the ferry from Nansio on Ukerewe to Mwanza on the mainland. It’s a large and well-built ferry built entirely in Tanzania at a shipyard and equipped and crewed according to Danish environmental and security regulations. Steen’s ferry competes with the state-run ferries that have begun to be punctual since they have faced competition. Everybody agrees that the improved ferry traffic has given new prospects. Fish, cars and people are ferried from Ukerewe to Mwanza and, when the season’s right, some oranges. Coca cola and beer travel the other way, but also eggs, chickens and tomatoes. And numerous Africans are happy to use the transport.

Both the bishop and the district commissioner cite the ferry as an example that, despite everything, progress is being made. But half-a-year later Steen took the ferry off this route and put it on a more profitable route on the lake. There had been drought on Ukerewe and revenues were even lower than before. It was necessary to raise prices but then the rate of occupancy fell dramatically.

One reason for increasing costs was that the Danish loan for the ferry had to be paid back in Danish crowns while the income from the ferry came in Tanzanian shillings. The value of the shilling is linked to the US dollar but the tendency is that you need more and more shillings per dollar. The Danish crown is linked to the euro and if the shilling falls in relation to the dollar a fantastic number of shillings must be earned to repay the same sum in Danish crowns. The islanders have no influence on this but, in this way, international rates of exchange play a role for people who only grow cassava and catch fish.

The improvements in transport disappeared when the private ferry left but the state-owned ferries still sail the route. Now that there’s no competition there are major delays.

Ukerewe exports people and many will have to be exported in the years to come. It is forty five years since uhuru but the prospects for progress and development are significantly worse than in 1961. “Life was easy then but now it’s hard” say the old people.
Dar es Salaam is a totally different world, completely different from Ukerewe but also a different world from the Dar es Salaam of a few years ago. After some days in lake Victoria’s major town, Mwanza, I flew to Dar es Salaam with Air Tanzania, now partly owned by South African Airways and is completely punctual. I arrive at a well-functioning airport and was directed to an airport taxi with a fixed price. We drove on a broad avenue to the town via a modest industrial area and I felt it was a complete pleasure. There were green and clean sidewalks. On the centre strip a city worker collected rubbish if it were thrown out of the windows of the passing traffic. There were well-maintained and nearly newly painted...
industrial buildings and the traffic flowed smoothly. All this that was not the Dar es Salaam of a few years ago where the rubbish piled up and many buildings looked as if it would be dangerous to lean against them.

This impression was much the same during my next visit. There are ugly waste paper baskets that looked as if they were emptied when full up. Even though there are still old houses and new buildings where the cranes are not moving and construction seems to have stopped, the overall impression is that a lot has been done to give Dar a new image. The mosques are shining white. The fine old Lutheran church is newly painted and yellow. St. Joseph Cathedral has scaffolding on one of its towers.

Hotel New Africa on the harbour front has been undergoing renovation for fifteen years. Maybe this is the slowest and most often interrupted hotel renovation ever, but now it has re-opened. The old comfortable and cheap pavement cafés are gone. You have to go inside for refreshments and you have to be able to afford them. The buffet breakfast costs 65 Danish crowns or five times the price of the more humble places. Compared to Ukerewe this would mean that an unskilled worker could eat breakfast three or four times a month. New Africa is fashionable. The casino is on the same floor as the restaurant. The bar is between them.

There are other expensive new hotels. The former Sheraton is now called Royal Palm. It’s been taken over by an Arab prince and is operated by Mövenpick. And there are old places that have temporarily or permanently shut down: Hotel Kilimanjaro, the Agip Motel and Oyster Bay hotel.

The young and smart ones meet in the rich suburbs along the coast at Oyster Bay. These are the “in places” and it’s here that Dar es Salaam becomes really Western and international. Here is where the foreigners come, the wazungu: tourists, students, researchers, consultants, those doing evaluations and those hunting the latest thrills from near and far. And it’s here that you find part of the Tanzanian elite.

“The way I see Dar es Salaam today is that it’s a town consisting of two separate worlds” says Professor Rwakaza Mukandala of the University of Dar es Salaam. “There’s a world centred round Oyster Bay. This is the financial district that looks towards London and New York and Europe. And then we have another world with its centre around the market area of Kariakoo and this world has Dubai and Saudi Arabia as its centre of information. In the first world you go around in a suit, in the other one you go with a kanzu. In the first world you shop in New York, if you can afford it.
In the other world you shop in Dubai. The first world is overwhelmingly Christian and the other world is overwhelmingly Islamic. You can see these worlds visually and see them develop. The challenge is to tackle this so that a major divide, a cleavage, does not occur.” Mukandala is professor of political science and public administration and leader of a research project on Research and Education for Democracy (REDET). He’s a self-declared optimist but does see the major challenges. Even though there is more than one world in it does seem to work as a city. In both worlds there are signs of certain dynamism and obvious improvements.

But the Lonely Planet travel guide is not impressed. “Drop Dar es Salaam?” says the headline on a piece about the city. The piece concludes that Dar es Salaam has a certain charm but is definitely not a “must”. The travel guide emphasizes the rather lazy and relaxed atmosphere. But the author should have known how much more lazy it was in the past. In the East African Magazine, my Ugandan colleague, Charles Onyango-Obbo, in another context writes that development doesn’t start with big plans and unrealistic political promises but when the local authorities make sure that the grass is cut and the rubbish cleared away. If he’s right, and he is partly, then there is ongoing development in Dar es Salaam.

Tanzania’s jet set enjoys it but not just the jet set. There is activity in many places. While I write I can hear a group of people in the school alongside singing beautifully and in harmony about Jesus. A bit further away there is a relatively new Islamic secondary school for girls. The city sends out both old and new signals. The other day I eat at Shooting Grill where a Canadian-American duo sang 1960s type songs to an almost white public such as “The Answer My Friend is Blowing in the Wind”.

Dar es Salaam is a good place to dream about the old days. Shooting Grill is just one of the “in” places. Sweet Easy is another of the new ones. And on Slipway there are several. They are all part of that world that, according to Mukandala, has the West and Christianity as its point of reference. So there are limits to how exotic it is in this part of the world.

But it’s not just restaurants and modern shopping malls that are “in” in a capital city that is renewing and growing. Some say that the mosques are more “in” than they have been for a long time. There are certainly lots of new mosques being built and in other parts of the city the call to prayer from the minarets is impossible not to hear. The sound is loud and a bit over-bearing. But the inhabitants of Dar es Salaam are used to all kinds of songs and music. Just as in the countryside, people are used to
Here the new economy is booming! Marriages between Muslims and Christians, even though this may be a bit against the rules. Despite everything it doesn’t matter that much, and there are still people who believe that, despite the basic ideological difference, Allah and God are the same. Maybe a change is underway here too. Perhaps the distinction and the division of people on the basis of religion is getting deeper. Many people think and fear that this is happening and there have been some conflicts as, for example, when Muslims found out that pigs were being slaughtered too close to a mosque. But harmony is still predominant.

Dar es Salaam has changed. But one day in November was a time to remember what East Africa and Tanzania were once, long before independence, African socialism and neo-liberalism. On the outskirts of the city and close to the local open air museum lies the cemetery of the Commonwealth War Graves. The British High Commission and the German Embassy had, via the newspapers, jointly issued an invitation to remembrance for the soldiers who had died in British and German service. In both World Wars, British and German officers, each with their contingents of African soldiers had killed each other. It is a time for reconcili-
ation and the guests of honour in the most select seats are the German Ambassador and the British High Commissioner.

At eight o’clock on this Sunday morning the scene is dominated by the black suits of both black and white dignitaries. The exceptions are the women and those in uniform, with clinking medals. A Tanzanian army guard of honour parades with short red jackets, black caps and broad white belts. We are in the shade under a canopy. The guard of honour stands in the sun but it’s the morning and the temperature has not yet reached 30 degrees centigrade.

“Their names liveth for evermore” is written on a black cross at the centre of the British part of the cemetery with gravestones in symmetric military order and large monuments to the many dead who were never discovered. These are English, Indian and African members of the British units. Biblical texts are read aloud in English, German and Kiswahili. The Tanzanian trumpeters blow the Last Post and the Reveille and, as named in the programme, a Scot in a kilt blows a lament on the bagpipes. It’s absurd, unreal and outmoded, but it is also beautiful.

During two minutes silence the guard of honour presents arms and the rifles are turned very slowly until the muzzles are pointing straight down at the ground. This must symbolize peace and the prayers are not just about those that were killed in the past but also about peace for all today. Texts from the Book of Isiah speak of the day when peace will make it possible to forge all the swords into ploughshares and the spears to gardening knives.

When the programme is over the party wanders from the British part of the cemetery to the German graves and memorials, and the procedure is repeated. At eight forty a.m. the diplomatic cars drive up again and the embassy and government representatives disappear. In a second there is only the Tanzanian guard of honour left. A bus is waiting for them. This little intermezzo for the past is over. An attempt has been made to keep a bit of ancient history in a society where more than 45 percent are under fifteen years old and where Tanzania’s socialist experiments in the 60s and 70s are ancient history for many. The hundreds of thousands of young people who have never been allowed to go to school have probably not even heard about all this. A new Tanzania is growing up. It’s new in relation to a time when European officers could order Africans to kill each other because there was war in Europe and it’s also new in relation to attempts to create an independent African political-economic ideology.
Much of what occurs today happens in a quiet revolt against these attempts but without the illusion that Tanzania can follow an independent path.

On one of my visits to Dar es Salaam I stay on the first floor of the guest house of MS (The Danish Association for International Cooperation). In the evening a Vietnamese economist sits with us in the living room. Do Duc Dinh is one of the leaders of a research project that analyses the differences between the political and market developments in Tanzania and Vietnam. In his leisure time he often sits on the sofa in front of the 27 inch TV screen with access to a large choice of satellite aired American films and series. In the daytime he researches into developments in the two countries that have had socialism and one-party systems in common but otherwise are totally different. One of his soundly based arguments is that in Vietnam the development of the economic market is way in front of political developments but that in Tanzania it is the other way round. Politically, Tanzania has changed dramatically while the changes in the economy are disappointing and to some degree stagnant. At the same time, quite unlike Vietnam, the government of Tanzania has abandoned attempt to steer and to regulate the market. In Tanzania, it is the liberal market that steers policy while, in Vietnam, the government still, to a considerable degree, steers the market. The results, in economic terms, are far more convincing in Vietnam than in Tanzania (see Chapters 13 and 14).

I travelled many times to Dar es Salaam while working on this book. The first time I came by plane from Mwanza and the second time with the Scandinavia Express bus from Iringa. From the bus too, one could see growth and development. The roads were broader and the traffic faster. But there were also the old well-known problems. The closer we came to the city the more often we could see long rows of empty, coloured plastic buckets drawn up in queues before the water pumps that didn’t provide water. Water is a precondition for development but there’s a permanent shortage of water in this booming, large city. The rich install their own water tanks and buy a tankful of water for 80 USdollars a time. You see such tanks everywhere in the suburbs of the well-to-do. The poor pay a completely different price when they buy just a few litres of water.

Despite some improvements, not everything is under control in Dar es Salaam and it would be surprising if it were. The Danish Embassy says
that there’s not just control of the rubbish heaps but that the Tanzanian government has more check on the economy than before. Inflation is low and the state does not use more money than what comes in. There’s some openness as to what public revenue is used for. In the aid jargon they call this “transparency” and this is something that the aid donors have long demanded. So they’re fairly happy. The Ministry of Finance has offered the donors courses in the administrative control processes they have developed. They are also developing the tax system. In the past, business people of all kinds simply ignored the tax authorities. They are now a bit afraid of them. This is progress. Tax income from both VAT and income tax is growing and, in 2004, grew even faster than had been predicted.

But the really big problem is that income and expenditure still don’t match and that the difference is covered by lots of foreign aid. So Tanzania does not itself finance the resources required for development and this has been so ever since the Tanzanian government in the Arusha Declaration of 1967 declared that “He who pays the piper calls the tune”. The Arusha Declaration underscored the point that Tanzania will never achieve real independence as long as the money for development comes from outside the country. The ideology of independent development, of self help and self reliance, grew to a great extent while aid-dependency were at the same time growing in the real Tanzania, but it remains true that he who pays the piper decides which tune is to be played.

But whatever the circumstances, better control over the use of foreign aid is an important progress. Many optimists say that the improvement in control of foreign aid by the Ministry of Finance is a positive step. Far less aid money now goes to finance corruption. Whoever you talk to agrees that corruption is a scourge. Even though Transparency International’s annual review has moved Tanzania away from the list of the most corrupt elites hardly anyone believes that corruption has seriously declined. Many believe that corruption is still growing. It’s a disease that reaches every corner of society. In Kenya, in 2005, the fight against corruption was, once again, failing. Once again, the donor countries were threatening to withhold aid if the effort does not improve. In Tanzania, one advisor says, cautiously, that there are indications that corruption eats up a larger share of the national cake than it does in Kenya. Tanzania has simply been more cautious to not provoke the donors and there haven’t been as many cases of corruption that have hit the headlines.
Most people think that corruption is destructive even though a few think that corruption can provide a certain dynamic and create progress in a bureaucratic society. Everybody admires the high rate of growth in China even though it is considered one of the most corrupt societies in the world. What if one could make growth and corruption also go hand in hand as in China?

On most fronts it is as though the fight against corruption has halted. So the announcement that the Ministry of Finance now has better control over corruption is grounds for optimism in the debate among the donors. Perhaps there’s some hope and optimism is sorely needed. All are agreed on that.

Signals are important. The sense of dynamism, the clean roadsides and pavements give a sense of optimism and provide some employment. This is positive even though it doesn’t make a serious dent in unemployment. But these signs are important in creating a belief that something is possible, a belief that just a few years ago was considered impossible.

But it’s important to penetrate beneath this shiny surface. I talked about development, corruption, polarization and poverty with Tanzania’s former prime minister, Joseph Warioba. In 1996 he charted the degree of corruption in a commission appointed by the president. Warioba has been involved in the development of Tanzania since independence and, at the end of the conversation he talks about poverty and the growing gap between rich and poor as the key problem. I give my positive impression of the new dynamic in Dar es Salaam. It is he that says that parts of Dar es Salaam are in a terrible condition, far worse than ten or twenty years ago. “Go to Manzese, to Kinondoni, to Kariakoo”, he says, “Where the people live in slums and there you’ll get a different picture. Part of that picture is, of course, that whereas about half-a-million people lived in Dar es Salaam before uhuru, there are now three million.”

It’s not easy to be an optimist but, despite everything, some of the big neighbourhoods have been cleaned up. The roads are broader and there are far more cars than before. The traffic flows until, as it does in other major cities, it crawls along during the rush hour. There are more police to direct traffic when the traffic lights fail. There are traffic wardens with easily recognisable smart vests to note down the illegally parked cars of which there are more and more in a city full of new cars. Most are four-wheel drives and there are lots of minibuses, called “daladala”. At the
University, Rwekaza Mukandala, tells about how, at the end of the 80s, having come back to the university after some years abroad, the parking lots were virtually empty. Now everyone complains about how hard it is to find a parking place. But a European adviser draws my attention to something I hadn’t thought about. “Notice that you hardly ever see big trucks” he says. And I see that he’s right.

The shops are bulging with goods. Lots of them bear the insignia “UAE”, they’re from the United Arabian Emirates whose capital is Dubai and, just as the European, American and Japanese goods, they come in via the harbour. But most new shops don’t need big resources from outside. There are lots of internet cafés. There are lots of stalls and shops that sell time cards and everything to do with mobile phones. There are also many foreign exchange shops where currency exchange is free and there is competition on exchange rates. One of my African friends says that Indians control most of this market. They are also dominant in the compact disk and DVD market and the supply of films and music indicates who has purchasing power. There’s a lot of standard pop music and a great deal with Asian titles.

Indians and Asians control this part of the life of the city but it is the South Africans who have taken over a large chunk of everything else: from supermarkets to factories, restaurants and hotels, even though Europeans and Africans are also in the hotel trade. A third field of big business is education and teaching. The city teems with new schools and academies and perhaps, in reality, this is the growth area number one.

There are many new business opportunities and there are many business people eying them. But there are not so many businesses that need really big and heavy transport. There’s really not that much production. Of course, there are trucks with Coca Cola and with beer. There’s also a lot of heavy transport, some in transit to Zambia but there’s surprisingly few large, heavy trucks to be seen on the streets. There are no big amounts of industrial and agricultural commodities. That the amount of fresh Nile perch for air freight has grown greatly in recent years and that the gold mines have increased production, doesn’t really change the overall picture. Tanzania does not have that much to export and there’s no great amount of transport between the centre and the distant rural areas. Ukerewe sends fish to Europe but only people to other parts of Tanzania.
There’s a lot of travelling in Tanzania but, all the same, the distance between Tanzania’s different worlds is huge. When I take a trip around the poor areas that Joseph Warioba has suggested I visit, I don’t think I see evidence that things are worse than before. But it’s true that the poor suburbs have become infinitely bigger. There are more and more people who have too little. Just as, in the rich suburbs, there are a lot more people who have too many possessions to guard. But there are no city ghettos with houses built of cardboard boxes, paper and plastic as can be found in other cities. There must still be some mechanisms whereby families and groups provide some form of security for the very worst off.

In 2001, according to the OECD’s and the African Development Bank’s “African Economic Outlook”, unemployment in Dar es Salaam was 46.5 percent. This is a Tanzanian record. When you wander round the city, everywhere you see people without work waiting patiently, most of them young men. They stand or lie on all the pavements, street corners, the squares and in especially large numbers around the small and bigger marketplaces where small jobs are to be found. And they’re also on the streets in the hundreds of places where the traffic stands still. They’re like moving one-man-stores, machingas, offering road-users quite ordinary things like newspapers, water and juice and more out of the ordinary things like blankets and TV antennas.

Urban unemployment is much greater than unemployment in the countryside. In the country, people are poor, there’s too little work and for most people it’s impossible to get an income. But there they are not registered as unemployed. Average national urban unemployment is said to be over 25 percent. Officially, rural unemployment is 8–9 percent. Despite this the towns have to absorb the rural population for whom there’s no longer room in the countryside.

New jobs are created, but not nearly enough. It’s likely that the biggest boom in employment has been in the countless number of security firms and security guards that have emerged in and around Dar es Salaam. Rich Europeans, Asians and Africans won’t pin their faith on the police when they have to protect themselves and their property but prefer to rely on private security guards and subscribe to security firms that patrol twenty-four hours a day. There’s “Ultimate Security Unlimited” and there’s “Knights Support” and other companies with exotic names. They’re fast, effective and hard-hitting. All in all, they give jobs to lots of people in a
massive effort to ensure security and peace for the rich. Dar es Salaam means “harbour of peace”. The security companies ensure the peace.

Many of the rich live in the Oyster Bay area but also further north. One day I asked a taxi to drive me 75 kilometres north to the old port of Bagamoyo, once the port of embarkation for slaves and later the centre from where David Livingstone and a whole army of missionaries started their journey upcountry. For many kilometres we drive in rush hour traffic even though it’s Saturday morning but gradually the countryside appears. We’re no longer in the city but out in the country and some of the land is cultivated. When I ask my driver about the chances of buying land he replies that you can still buy land in Tanzania. Then he adds that all the land in the area between the road and the sea in the whole stretch between Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo is sold out. “It’s the ministers and their friends that own all that” he says. One should always be careful about accepting taxi driver information but those with more insight into who owns what in the Tanzanian capital say he’s right enough.

Mwesiga Baregu is also professor of political science at the University of Dar es Salaam. He tells how development theorists talk about dual economies that don’t hang together or work together. Development is constrained if different economic activities in society don’t hang together and many developing countries have a traditional and a modern sector without much mutual connection. The idea of development has, among other things, been to merge these two economies or at least to get them to work together.

“We see this dualism today” says Baregu. “The centre, Dar es Salaam, is not just separate from the periphery upcountry but is moving further and further away from this periphery. If this trend continues for the next ten, or 15 or 20 years we’ll have something that looks like two different countries. The one country will be a peaceful, fairly secure country but ripe with crime as the seat of the bourgeoisie and of international finance and its representatives. The other country will be the rural areas where marginalization gradually leads to polarization.” Then he adds the terrifying picture of the future that I quoted in the introduction. It is a nightmare scenario of a hinterland of conflict and a centre that defends itself behind a security fence. “Will we have to surround Dar es Salaam with a huge barrier with gates that are guarded to prevent the flood of people from the countryside from coming to the city?”
Tanzania has a strategy for fighting poverty and reducing the number of poor, and there is a monitoring programme to check on the progress of the programme. During the last few years the economic growth rate has been 4–6 percent a year but this is not enough to really reduce poverty. There are two main features of poverty. The one concerns the population’s access to food and here 18 percent of the population are below the poverty line. The second factor looks at income and basic necessities of life and here one third of the population (36 percent) are below the poverty line. The latest monitoring report says that the percentage of the poor has, in the last decade, decreased slightly but that the total population in the same period has increased by 25 percent so that, all in all, there are more people below the poverty line. Inequality too has grown. There are more rich people and more poor people.

It’s out in the countryside that the problems are worst. Things are better in the towns and best of all in Dar es Salaam. So it’s true that there have been real improvements in Tanzania’s capital. Maybe that’s because it needs so many people to protect the living conditions of the rich. But, all the same, it’s in Dar es Salaam that the level of unemployment is highest.

So it won’t really work to create security in Dar es Salaam by fencing off and protecting the city against “refugees” from the countryside. Hundreds of thousands of poor people are already inside the fence.

Huge advertising signs along the access roads extol all the wonderful things you can get with money in the new Tanzania and only those who don’t have money can not get them. They’re all there. Advertisements for cars, mobile phones and their providers, for beer, for condoms (against AIDS) and for the usual soap powders. Then there are huge placards that advertise shoe polish. One placard reads that you get more shoe polish for your money with Kiwi. I’ve never anywhere else seen such resplendent shoe polish advertisements. But Tanzania is still a country with lots of well-polished shoes. If the way from the bottom of society to the top is longer than ever then perhaps the need for shoes that shine is even greater.

The advertisements reflect globalization and the way that the market forces have taken over. Everywhere in the world, the global market tries to increase the same forms of consumption. But all the same there are differences since we don’t all have the same priorities. So placards, TV
Advertisements, newspaper ads and ads on the rear windows of cars all tell their stories.

In Bagamoyo I visited an old church, named after Livingstone ever since he used it. “Livingstone passed this door” is written above the door we all have to go through. The church is about a quarter full and the church service is going on. A couple of times, mobile phones ring and nobody is upset by this. When the phone calls are for the churchgoers they do, however, leave through the vestry and out through the Livingstone door before they talk really loud. The many mobile phones are some of the status symbols as are, of course, the big cars. In front of the church door there are four-wheel drives. And the back window ad of the biggest says “This car is protected by the blood of Jesus Christ.” The ability to combine the divine with the earthly and the old with new is well developed.
“If only people could die in a sustainable way…”

… says Iringa’s regional commissioner. The extended family is under pressure since so many are dying of AIDS. But in spite of everything Iringa is a city of hope, development and potential. To the South and South-West there are still unexploited resources. If only there was enough water.

Iringa

Outside Dar es Salaam there are still gigantic sisal plantations and there are endless views across a landscape that stretches towards eternity. As far as the eye can see there are no people. Sisal was once an important export crop. There were all kinds of uses to which this strong fibre plant could be put and Tanzania was one of the biggest exporters in the world. But then sisal was almost beaten out by plastic and other manmade fibres. The epoch of sisal was almost over and exports plummeted. In the year 2000 or thereabouts production was 30,000 tons a year but when Tanzania’s flag was raised for the first time the country produced 240,000 tons a year.
To be sure, the sisal plantations are still large but they don’t stretch to the horizon. It is, however, not all finished. There are still attempts to find new uses and, to some extent, export has stabilized. But the value of Tanzania’s sisal export has, in recent years, been only $6–7 million a year and that’s less than one percent of total exports. Sisal doesn’t figure large in the economy and the statistics but the plantations still seem large when you drive through them.

Tanzania is incredibly rich in resources and land. The road I’m on is good and it’s long and here, in fact, there are many trucks. The road to Iringa is the main road upcountry and it’s also the transport corridor to neighbouring Zambia that lies far from the coast.

We divide the trip in two because we could only leave in the afternoon and we arrive a bit late at Mikumi National Park. It’s already getting dark. On the way to Vuma Hills Lodge we see three lion cubs run across the tarred road that cuts right through the national park. The next morning, even though it’s extremely dry and most watering holes have dried up, we see warthogs, buffalos, giraffes, elephants, zebras and impala. The hippopotamuses have moved away. Some people believe that the crocodiles have buried themselves in the encrusted mud and there’s a lot of talk about the risk that the animals will sneak out of the park in search of water.

There are many bigger parks than Mikumi in Tanzania. A bit disparagingly, it’s called the weekend park because it’s in easy reach of Dar es Salaam. But all the same it’s about 3,000 square kilometres or almost five times the size of Ukerewe. From the Vuma Hills it’s hard to work out whether it’s infinite or it just goes to the end of the world. That night, out in the blackness, there’s a fire. It’s frightening but it’s also big and beautiful in the shape of a flaming slash in the unbelievable darkness. The precise boundaries of the shape indicate that it’s not a wild fire but controlled burning. The fire is too far away to hear. The constant sound of the night is of cicadas but occasionally there are rustling sounds down below the tent that lies on a raised terrace. In the morning we can see fresh elephant dung outside. But when I searched for the sound in the night I could see nothing.

The Minister of Agriculture has held his annual speech on the budget to the national assembly. It’s a fifty page report on Tanzania’s agricultural situation, marked by drought and, after a couple of years of enough food production, now once again not enough food is being produced. But the report is not just about a single year’s drought. In a section on the correct
use of agricultural land, the Minister says that there are now cases of soil erosion in every region of mainland Tanzania but that the nature of the problem varies. After that he names the regions that suffer the worst soil erosion, an account that comprises 19 of the 21 mainland regions including, of course, Mwanza and its Ukerewe, and also Iringa that we’re heading for. The minister says:

“Unless this trend gets under control many parts of the country will become deserts and we’ve already seen signs of that in Mombo in Tanga region and in part of the Kilimanjaro region.” It is 2003, and the then minister of agriculture is Charles N. Keenja.

Many people talk about declining yields per acre. Most agricultural reports conclude that to the extent that agricultural production increases it is due mostly to the cultivation of more and more land and not because the land yields more, rather the contrary. So the agricultural population is vulnerable. When the rains don’t come and the harvest fails, there are no reserves. This happens often.

In Iringa too, there are signs of attrition and soil exhaustion and yet we’re on our way to an area that gives grounds for certain optimism in the field of agriculture. Yes, everybody says, there are big problems here too but in the South there is “masses of land”. And in Iringa too there’s land that is cultivable. It’s not the shortage of land that’s the real problem: at least in theory.

Iringa region has had lots of aid donors and it is a focal region for Danish support for Tanzania’s agriculture. The results are there and they can be measured. There’s a difference between the villages that have taken part in the Danish-financed programme and those that haven’t. Here, agricultural advisers have got motorbikes so they can get around and sometimes they even get out to the farmers themselves. Here the lives of the farmers are better. But for the agricultural advisers, as for all other government employees, there’s an important concept called “nights out”. It’s about the expenses (per diem) for spending the nights out at seminars, courses, workshops and visits to district and regional towns. An average salary for a middle-level public employee is 150,000 to 200,000 shillings (about 1,000 Danish crowns). You can just about live off that but no more. It isn’t enough to pay for private schools for the children or other luxuries. So civil servants need “Nights out”. It’s not unusual to get 30,000 to 40,000 shillings for staying overnight and the payment is tax free: this in a country that’s begun to take taxation seriously. It’s important to have a
The President says that fewer courses and workshops should be held. Yet the aid donors compete to hold meetings that last several days. The World Bank sometimes offers extra money for “overnights” in order to get the best participants to the bank’s training courses. Government employees earn less than employees in the private sector (partly because, according to one regional commissioner, they are less effective). But partly because they earn less they are more often absent from their offices. They constantly have to go to headquarters and to meetings in different places in order to earn their “overnights”.

The go-ahead Director for Iringa district in the much bigger Iringa region, Gabriel Benedict Fuime, confirms that agricultural extension workers are a special problem. It’s not just on Ukerewe and in Mwanza and its surroundings that the farmers don’t see the agricultural advisers. The people who are active in the Danish-supported area are positive exceptions even though here too there are certain problems:

“It’s a big fundamental problem with the extension service throughout Tanzania. In reality, many of these agricultural technicians have been forgotten by the system. Other government employees have been promoted but not the agricultural extension workers, the bwana shambas. They’ve made their own quiet revolt by stopping working. Now we’re beginning to tackle this and many have been given the promotion that they were not given before but in some cases it’s too late. They’ve been too long in the system without any training or inspiration and when the conditions and the problems in their fieldwork have changed they no longer have anything to offer the farmers. Some of them have lived ten years or more in the same place without new inspiration or training and now they’re almost scared of being dragged to meetings. Others can still be activated. We visited a village where a female agricultural extension worker was incredibly active, with a new water project in progress. She’d been accused by a neighbouring village of being completely passive but she had received new inspiration and challenges. Some of them are not lazy but lack recognition and support.”

Generally speaking, Iringa is a dynamic place. People move there from the Northern part of Tanzania. Traditionally, people have envied the lush and fertile areas around Arusha and Moshi and lake Victoria. This is
where coffee, cotton and a large number of other agricultural products have been cultivated. Here, historically, people gathered together because the land was good and they could combine hunting, fishing and farming along the second largest lake in the world. But now it’s primarily these places where the forests have gone, population density is highest and soil erosion worst.

The Regional Commissioner until 2006, James Luhanga, is during my visit the highest government representative in Iringa. Between 1995 and 1999 he held the same position in the Mwanza Region:

“I moved many people away from Ukerewe and from the neighbouring island, Ukara” he says. “They were of course voluntary removals. We offered people a future in other places and many moved.”

So while the population of Ukerewe has increased by 2.9 percent a year and there are 400 people per square kilometre this has happened despite some people moving out in the 1990s. Population density in the Iringa area is far less than further north. Large areas have been appropriated as national parks and are protected from cultivation.

James Luhanga is a former air force major general. He was one of the first Tanzanian officers to be trained in Britain at Sandhurst, the officer training school. He was later trained as a fighter pilot in China but, before that, had been in command of an infantry division taking part in the war with Uganda that, in 1978–1979 led to the dictator Idi Amin being thrown out of the country. It was a successful war. James Luhanga speaks out directly without many reservations. He gives three reasons why population growth in Iringa is much less than in the areas around Lake Victoria.

“Firstly, a lot of people moved here from areas further away where they can still cultivate the land without fertilizers. Here it’s a waste of time and effort to try to cultivate without applying fertilizers. If you do so you get nothing. Secondly, we have to recognise that HIV/AIDS has put a major brake on the growth of population. There are many that are dead and many die. But, finally, UNICEF had an extremely good programme on reproductive health and control. It’s been a success. Today, if you ask a man about his family life he’ll often say that he has a wife and three children. Previously, he had maybe four wives and fifteen children. In this field something really positive has happened.”
I talk to old men and women in the village of Mbigili, close to the main road and about 25 kilometres from Iringa. They do not have many positive things to say. The women, particularly, think that things were much better in the old days. But all confirm that in this area the soil needs fertilizer if maize and tomatoes are to grow. With a totally different choice of words than the regional commissioner they also say that it’s a waste of time to cultivate the soil without fertilizer.

But this is precisely their main problem. In the old days the villagers had much cattle, the maize got the cattle dung and flourished. Now they have almost no cows. There have been big problems with cattle theft and there’s been a lot of cattle disease. They tell me that in the really old days the government came with medicine for the animals. They think that this was before uhuru but, anyway, this doesn’t happen anymore. They have to buy very expensive medicine and they can’t afford it. That’s why most of the cows are dead. So now they have no cow dung. So the maize they continue to grow year after year yields less and less. They don’t say that they’re wasting their time growing it but it’s a gloomy picture they paint. There’s no shortage of land, they say. Yet their situation is miserable.

Later I also talk with James Luhanga about the extended family. I’ve long thought that without the strong social responsibility of the African extended family then the social and economic collapse caused by the AIDS epidemic would be far worse. Many Tanzanians talk of the extended family in the same positive way, but not all agree.

In Mwanza, the leader of the Children’s Human Rights Association Alphonse Mutaboyerwa, says that developments are going in the direction of an African nuclear family where one only feels responsible for one’s nearest kin.

James Luhanga hesitates just a fraction before saying: “The extended family could still cope if only people died in a sustainable way. But when a father and mother die and leave behind 4–5 children, and when that happens frequently, then the family system is stretched so far that it can hardly manage. So we end up by talking about placing the orphaned children outside the family even though we usually say that the idea of an orphan just doesn’t exist among the Wahehe (the ethnic group around Iringa).”

It’s not easy to get people to die in a “sustainable” way. The government and the National Assembly have just decided to put lots of extra resources into the educational system. A system of free education for all
children has been reintroduced and it’s been decided that teachers must have better qualifications. In the old days the young were taken out of seventh grade, given a short course and then sent out as teachers. Today a teacher has to have completed Form Four (eleven years schooling) and two years teacher training on top of that. There are great hopes for these improvements that are due to be carried out in the course of the next five to ten years.

A sceptical District Director, Gabriel Benedict Fuime, loyally explains this enterprise and emphasizes that he has no doubts that it will lead to dramatic improvements. But he adds that he’s afraid that the enterprise will, once again, be fruitless since the teachers are dying of AIDS. There are 2,000 teachers in Iringa District and, in November, when I spoke to Fuime, 20 of them had died of AIDS just that year.

“There are improvements in the pipeline. We try to fill the gaps in the system because of bad teachers and the shortage of teachers but there’s a risk that we don’t succeed. It’s as though our manpower gets eaten up from the inside. And this is especially serious with the teachers. The health staff know more about AIDS and are themselves more nervous. There are lots of teachers. They collect their salaries at the district headquarters each month. It’s like an army coming to town. Many know each other from the old days. This leads to promiscuity and infection. And out in the villages where they teach there’s only a short time from when the girls are the older students of the teachers and the time when they’re the young women of the village and some of the teachers want to go to bed with them.”

My thinking was that the teachers were part of the solution to the problem of HIV/AIDS but, from Gabriel Fiume, I learn that they’re a major part of the problem. I ask him whether one can’t reach the teachers through education, information and reason. But, he says, it is not easy to reach 2,000 teachers in a district. And if you don’t reach the teachers then their students do not get proper information about HIV/AIDS.

Teachers do not have that much prestige but in the villages they do have a certain status. They earn a small salary, they have cash and maybe they can offer the girls a coca cola. For a young girl it’s hard to say no to a teacher and not all teachers wait until the girls have left school. If teachers are part of the problem rather than part of the solution then things look really bad.

The gloomy women in Mbigili indirectly confirm this: “In the past, girls were fifteen before they became pregnant but now they’re often only
twelve or thirteen. It’s a problem that many of them get pregnant because they’ve been sent to school. Then we can’t look after them. It’s true that the girls have a better life if they go to school. But what is the use if they get pregnant? Then they’re thrown out of school anyway.”

There are many truths. Luhanga’s comment that the UN’s children’s organization UNICEF has helped to bring down the number of births is true. But it is also a truth, when the women tell that though it is good that the girls go to school it increases the risk that they get pregnant. “There’s also more sickness today than in the old days” say the old women. They do not elaborate or talk about HIV/AIDS but are just saying that they think that their daughters have a more difficult life than they did when they were young.

Iringa is one district in a region consisting of 21 regions (plus Zanzibar). A typical region has 5–8 districts. Tanzania is not a country in which the conditions for development are the same in each region. In the Iringa area the prospects are better than in many other places.

There’s quite a view from Iringa. The town was established on the top of a mountain by the Germans as a defence redoubt. In the 1890s, the Germans fought a hard war against the Wahehé in this area. The Hehe chief, Mkwawa, is still a local hero even though he shot himself through the forehead when the Germans got the upper hand. Until then many Germans had died.

The road snakes up to the town and the top of the mountain. In the lowlands below lies the industrial area. There are huge, flat industrial buildings that everybody says are pretty much empty. Despite privatisation and liberalization the new industrial era has not reached Iringa to any sizeable degree. But at the top, trade and handicrafts are flourishing in lots of small businesses. The vast majority are in African hands. In this field the new African spirit of enterprise has taken over from both the former Asian dominance and the socialist economy.

For a time, on the road to Iringa, we passed wide valleys alongside the huge Ruaha river. There were valleys filled with Baobab trees: huge, ancient and fascinating giant trunks with strange little crowns. These trees are full of stories and myths. It’s claimed that the biggest trees, 8–10 metres in diameter, can be up to 3,000 years old. They’re alive and they blossom. They blossom at night and flower for less than a day. We photographed them in full flower. The river Ruaha flows through the countryside and gives life. The river traces a broad green swathe even now when,
before the rains, it’s at its driest. But many stretches of the river run dry for several months each year. It never did this in the past. Even though there are variations in the period of drought from year to year the tendency is clear. The drought lasts longer and longer. Among other things, this gives problems for the animals in the Mikumi National Park and this threatens both nature and tourism. There are many explanations for this and the truth is complex.

Tanzania’s agricultural experts say that the country’s water resources must be used much more effectively for irrigation though there are lots of people who already use water from the Ruaha. Irrigation channels have been dug and, even in the good years, less water remains in the river than before. Many people think that it rains less than before. They’re not just talking about climate change but also about changes in the rate of national rain patterns caused by man. All over the country people tell me that when the forests have gone it rains less. And a whole lot of forests have now gone.

While I’m in Iringa there’s a leading article in Tanzania’s newspaper, The Guardian, saying that the shortage of water is threatening Tanzania’s electricity supply. “Water Shortage. Stop environmental destruction” is the headline. The Ruaha river supplies water to the Mtera Dam that lies between Iringa and Dodoma but the dam has been dry for three months every year in the last 10 years and some of Ruaha’s tributaries already run
Independent? Tanzania’s Challenges Since Uhuru

dry one month after the rains. According to the experts the main reason for this is the environmental destruction in the Usangu area that supplies the Ruaha with water. “Intensive agriculture, far too large herds of cattle and human activity have deprived the soil of its capacity to store water and release it in the dry season.” There’s a similar report about the Ruvu river. Drought is one factor but, in addition, there’s bush fires, logging and intensive farming. When there’s not enough water behind the dams then Tanzania cannot produce enough water-powered electricity. So then begins an enormous waste of resources when thousands of diesel-driven electric generators start up to keep industry and the machinery of society going. So then the very industries on which so much hope is based are threatened. Investors will have to budget for extra costs for electricity if they’re going to do business in Tanzania.

Despite tree-planting programmes (some of them very successful) Tanzania is losing major forest resources, and therefore water resources, every year. There are many cars loaded with sacks of charcoal on the roads from the countryside to the towns. The old people in Mbigili say that, in their youth, there were lots of trees and forests around the town. Now you have to go to the other side of the mountains to find real forests. Some of these have been created with foreign aid, among others, the Danish HIMA project.

Many needs are urgent and obvious. But there are major contradictions. Tanzania must irrigate much more than today in order to increase and intensify agricultural production. Tanzania must protect its water resources to ensure clean water for all and Tanzania must have sufficient water in the rivers and behind the dams in order to continue to base electricity production on water power. Tanzania also has to ensure that there’s enough water in the rivers in the national parks to ensure a decent life for the animals; without that tourism will suffer. But can the planners get all these, partly conflicting requirements into a concerted plan?

– Water for farming and irrigation.
– Water for energy supply to the growing large towns and, increasingly, the countryside too.
– Water for wells and lakes.
– Water for cattle and other livestock.
– Water for the wild life in the national parks.
In 2005, within the same week, Tanzanian and East African newspapers had articles about two dying lakes. The one is Lake Nakuru in Kenya, the other Lake Manyara in Tanzania. Both lakes are extremely important for East Africa’s biological diversity and for tourist income. In both these lakes one of the biggest attractions are the flamingos. Lake Manyara is thought to be home to 2–3 million flamingos and 200 hippopotamuses. At the end of 2004, Lake Manyara was only half its normal size. Ten thousand flamingos died because the reduction in water supply led to a concentration of poisonous algae. In the rainy season the water level rises again but nowhere near to its normal level. The trend is clear. The lakes are getting smaller and smaller and animal life in all the game parks is affected. The reasons for this are clear enough. Uncontrolled logging and farming in the upland areas that supply the lakes use too much water and make the lakes silt up.

The article on Lake Manyara appears in The East African and on the same page there’s an article on the most recent analyses of global warming. Now the predictions are that Africa will be the continent most nega-
tively affected by global warming. It is assessed that the average temperature in Africa south of the Sahara will be two degrees higher in 2050. The prognoses are also that there will be 10 percent less rain.

The first Danish book about Tanzania was written and published in 1967. The Danish title was “Tanzania vil selv” (Self-reliant Tanzania), and it described the huge country, more than 20 times the size of Denmark but with only 13 inhabitants per square kilometre as compared to 110 in Denmark. Back then, only a tenth of the land was cultivated. And though large areas are far too dry and only one third was estimated to receive sufficient rainfall for ordinary farming, one section of the book is entitled “The Great Unexploited Nature”.

Today, the average population density is 40 people per square kilometre but both ordinary Tanzanians and government representatives still talk about the huge untapped resources. They’re talking about uncultivated land and water that has to be used more effectively. The statistics are surely right. There is still development potential to the South and South-West. But how do you transfer people there from the overcrowded and worn down – formerly fertile – areas in the North? How can one ensure that the erosion and degradation of land is not repeated or does not continue in these areas? How is the water problem to be solved? And what will be the result of the new struggle between the big investors in agriculture and the small farmers that seek new land just to have a place to be and for themselves to get a basis on which to survive?
Dreams and fear

Perhaps the most important thing about Uhuru was that the humiliation of Africans ceased. The young intellectuals had dreamed of independence but peasants were afraid and said “We can do nothing”.

Uhuru

“Self-reliant Tanzania” (Tanzania vil selv) was the title of a surprising bestseller on the Danish book market in 1967. The book was about this newly independent country that had its own visions and its own philosophy about independence and harmony to be based on the traditional African sense of community. It was an exciting book, full of facts and it sold well in a Denmark that was still concerned with the winds of change that went round the world after the Second World War and created a number of new independent states and new members of the United Nations. The book was a catalogue of facts but also about dreams for the future. Colonial rule was reaching an end. A new world was taking shape and the new states faced choices. They could choose between the Western and the Eastern model of development or perhaps they could choose a local model inspired by their own culture and history. Tanzania was one of the most exciting of these new countries. For Tanzania, “self-reliance” had positive connotations. It was a new country that was not to be put in a category but wanted to shape its own development. Others could help but they would never be allowed to determine.

The book was somewhere between factual information and the aspirations of the new Tanzania. It was also about the dream of both Danes and Europeans that it was possible to create a new and better world. The book was one of the reasons that I went to Tanzania on my first trip to Africa. I made a number of the dreams in this book to my own dreams of freedom and the future. Here was a country to believe in and to dream about.

Naturally, during the former British Protectorate of Tanzania, Tanzanians had their own dreams. The oldest people had not only experienced forty years as a British Protectorate but could also remember German rule until the end of the First World War. Now they had to have both the will and knowledge to be self-reliant. Now was the time for freedom, Uhuru.
There were, to be sure, dreams. But the first thing I hear when I drive around the villages of Ukerewe and meet the old white haired men on the terraces in front of their huts is that, in 1961, many feared the freedom that their leaders talked so much about. They were concerned and afraid that their lives would be worse. The people I meet are old farmers. The women have always carried the heaviest load, both then and now, but now like then it’s only the men that interpret the world and its changes. They remember the uncertainty of their parents and themselves. The old people of that time lived through both German and British rule. They had seen major changes, some of them for the better. What was this thing called *Uhuru* and how would it affect their lives?

“People had heard about *Uhuru* but they didn’t know what it really was” says Sylvester Mazigo. “They were nervous about what would happen”. It was the British who brought security and were the authorities, on Ukerewe too, even though there weren’t many of them. We had nothing and we felt that we could do nothing. So people asked how can we get *Uhuru* when we have nothing and can do nothing? We cannot even make a safety pin so how can we be independent?”

Sylvester Mazigo is the first I hear tell the story of peoples’ lack of belief that Tanzanians cannot even produce the simplest things. Sylvester Mazigo was almost forty years old in 1961 and says that he was an active man and one of those that put the question even to the tireless teacher, Julius Nyerere, who travelled round the whole country with his message of freedom. Nyerere came to Ukerewe and Sylvester asked him what *Uhuru* would lead to:

“Mwalimu told us that after *Uhuru* we would develop. We didn’t know what this meant but he told us that we would get schools and industries and hospitals and health clinics. At that time there was only one primary school in Ukerewe, now there are 92 schools on the island. I was happy. Now I knew what freedom would give us.”

Later, in other parts of the country, I heard again and again the standard question put to Julius Nyerere: “How can we get independence when we can’t even find out how to produce a needle or a syringe?” There were variations in the story about the production of matches, of cars and even of planes since colonial Tanzania prior to 1961 didn’t produce industrial goods. There are different accounts of how Nyerere responded to the question but many recount his answer when he stood alongside the British District Commissioner. Nyerere then asked the British civil serv-
ant: ”Does the Queen of England make pins?” and when the surprised commissioner answered ‘no’ Nyerere said it would be the same here. “We won’t produce everything ourselves. Nobody does that. But we will create our own industries and our own development.” And then he added the other part of the freedom message: “Uhuru na kazi” (freedom and work). The message of freedom was always linked to the message that development required hard work.

Despite Nyerere’s zeal and countless pedagogical lectures, not everyone who tells the story about the Queen of England who cannot make pins could possibly have heard Nyerere’s reply. But the story has become a kind of public property. And this is only one of the countless stories about the teacher, Julius Nyerere who, throughout his life, explained and argued and taught his people.

There were times when opponents were suppressed. Nyerere was not as kind and patient as he appeared to be. But to this day he has an almost mythical status because he was tireless in his attempts to get his people to understand and accept change and to work actively for that change. Hardly anybody blames him for what went wrong. Teaching and explain-
ing were decisive in everything he did. People had to be taught to be free.

Bernard Mkanzabi: “We expected nothing. It was only as we began to get education that we began to have expectations. Since our leaders were educated they began to push to get independence from the British and gradually we too began to understand what it was about.” And Sylvester Mazigo says: “There was a small group of educated people on Ukerewe who had some hopes but most had only fear. Some people had heard about Nkrumah in Ghana and knew that, after Uhuru we had to stand on our own feet and that we couldn’t expect help. This created a lot of anxiety. But Mwalimu came here many times and explained and explained.”

Anthony Musiba Muhikwa is one of those with education who had six years schooling. At the time of independence he was 35 years old and he has lived in many different places. He was a businessman and had, among other things, exported dried fish to Uganda. Previously he was a member of TANU’s (Tanganyika African National Union) youth league and had felt it one of his duties to teach the people prior to independence. He met Nyerere many times and talks about the incredible inspiration that Nyerere imparted. Now that he’s really old he raises an issue that so many of the older people come back to: “Maybe the most important thing was that Uhuru put a stop to the humiliation of us as Africans.” He tells me a particular story.

In many areas there was just a handful of British people but there were many Asian businessmen who always felt they were better than the blacks. Many of the elderly Tanzanians talk more about the Asians than about the British. “At the personal level the only thing that the poor certainly got out of independence was that they were safe from humiliation”, Anthony says. “Before Uhuru you never felt safe. You could almost get beaten for scratching your nose going past an Indian shop. We had no rights and the Indians had their own nickname for Africans. They called us gologolo, monkeys”

Bishop Lukanima puts this more diplomatically. “The Asians were first and foremost business people. For them, business always came first. It was business at any cost and that explains many things, also the way that they sometimes treated people.”

Sylvester Mazigo thinks that, in many ways, life before Uhuru was good but he too says that ordinary Africans were often humiliated. After Uhuru life got tougher but humiliation stopped.
Africans could also humiliate each other. After *Uhuru* the chieftancy system was abolished. “The chief could order pretty much what he wanted. He could say that he wanted a cow brought to his house and he got it. The chiefs were happy but the people were deeply frustrated about the injustice.”

At the time of independence the political slogans were about the creation of one nation for all and so these slogans were also about “dignity for all”. Maybe greater human respect was the greatest and first result of *Uhuru*. Both the well educated and those without any education talk about respect.

Mostly they’re talking about Asians; but not entirely. Mwesiga Baregu of Dar es Salaam University was 17 years old in 1961 and near his exams. Some time before *Uhuru* he experienced being expelled from school for a month. “In school, we had to sing “God Save our Gracious Queen” but, feeling devilish, I sang loud and clear “God Save our Gracious Nyerere”. So I was quarantined for a month and sent home. For us who were young, it was primarily about who should decide, about not being intimidated and under the yoke of the British. I have a memory that is still fresh about my father once having spread out his coffee beans on the soil to dry. When I came from school I saw my father and the coffee being inspected by a British district officer dressed in short trousers and white socks. Nothing happened but I felt humiliated on behalf of my father. But the idea of development came later on.”

In 1961 there were about ten million Tanzanians. Almost 99 percent were Africans. In the 1960s there were estimated to be 86,000 Asians, 26,000 Arabs and 17,000 Europeans. Dar es Salaam had 300,000 inhabitants. Primarily, Tanzania was a thinly populated agricultural country. While whites and Asians could be a rare sight in the countryside it was different in the towns. Here there was a British administration and here the Asians occupied an intermediary position between the Europeans and the Africans. Many Asians are the descendents of Indian workers that were imported to build the East African railway network. Many of them settled down as traders and small businessmen in the British Empire and this created a new divide.

In Dar es Salaam I met Selemany Mchongo, a retired construction worker and a Muslim. At the time of *Uhuru* he was 25 years old and he had no doubts that freedom and independence brought him a better life. “I worked for Asians in Dar es Salaam and was trained in the building
trade but relationships between the Asians and us were not good. We were in a “take it or leave it” situation. They looked down on us. We should just work our guts out. We got a few cents but had no rights. The way Asians considered us infected their children. Asians earned much more than us and thought that we stole from them. They raised their children to think the same. I have heard young Asians shout “There goes a thief!” when an African child went by their house. We listened to Nyerere who told us about independence and the new prospects and we paid 50 cents to be a member of the party. And things got better after independence. When independence got close you could notice that the Asians began to fear that they had been too rude. It became easier to work for them. Later I worked for the British. That was when we were building Dar es Salaam University and things were much better. It was good working for them. We could tell jokes. There was a quite different atmosphere. And after Uhuru we could say whatever we wanted to without fear. That was new.”

Independence and Selemany’s job as a construction worker at the new university brought other advantages. Selemany was grown up but had only been to a Koran school. Now a huge new adult education programme was his big chance. University teachers taught adult Tanzanians in their spare time and he learnt to read and write in his late twenties. Later there were disappointments but there’s no doubt in Selemany’s mind that independence gave him a better and more dignified life.

In Iringa, the Regional Commissioner James Luhanga told how he as a young well educated and onrushing African eager for freedom experienced the colour bar before independence as one of the biggest humiliations, even though the race barrier was not as bad as in the “real” colonies, Kenya, Rhodesia and South Africa. “There were no “no black” signs but, as black Africans, we could not go to, for example, the hotel New Africa in Dar es Salaam. We were furious and it was deeply humiliating. We felt degraded as human beings.”

As in so many other places, the racial divide had absurd results. In Iringa I also met the former teacher, Eli Yohana Nyagawa. He graduated in the 50s and was employed in the British Department of Education in Dar es Salaam. He was a language teacher and his job was to teach new British and Indian police officers the common language, Kiswahili. To get a permanent job, the police had to learn Kiswahili and Nyagawa enjoyed his teaching job. He had many friends among the British and Indian policemen but also experienced opposition to independence.
“They were greatly opposed to the independence project. They certainly did not like Julius Nyerere. We talked about independence and they said that with all the illiterates we could do nothing. We had no factories and we couldn’t cope. Some of the British understood us but the Indians did not. Even though India had got its independence a few years before, and even though there were an incredible number of illiterates, the Indians didn’t believe in us. Most of the Indians were hypocritical. They didn’t care about African nationalism and it was very important for most of them to take the side of the British. Only a very small minority supported our struggle. The Indians quickly changed their attitude when independence finally came. We others went to big rallies with Julius Nyerere and other leaders. But, before independence, you never saw Indians.”

Despite his status as a teacher of Europeans and Indians, Nyagawa also himself experienced humiliation, most violently on a trip three years before independence: “This was in 1958 and I had to go by train from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma and then on by railway bus to Iringa. When I woke up in the morning and went to the bus station I was told that there were 3 buses but all of them had to take European students to schools in Iringa and Mbeya. There was no room on the buses for Africans and this meant that I had to stay yet another night in Dodoma. Since I knew some British people I went into one of the buses but had to leave fast. I was not only thrown off the bus I was also thrown in prison in the police station. When, later in the day, I was ordered to write an explanation the District Police Assistant came by and was shocked to see me. He knew me and was one of my former students. “But teacher” he asked “What are you doing here? Have you been arrested?” I told him I was in prison and this upset him a lot. The head of the station was an Indian and he was told to take me home so that I could have a bath. Then he got hold of a Landrover and I was driven to Iringa. There were many people who respected me. But, of course, this was an example of how Africans were often badly treated.”

“What was your dream before Uhuru?” I asked people and even though there were different answers once again I heard that the small elite of well educated and politically conscious Africans had political visions and ideas. The farmers were more sceptical and afraid about what would happen. But they were also curious and, perhaps, hopeful.

Joseph Butiku who is now leader of the Nyerere Foundation in Dar es Salaam, was Julius Nyerere’s private secretary for many years. He was 24 years old at independence:
“It’s true that ordinary Africans considered the British to be the “colonial masters.” They were associated with everything that came from abroad, everything we were not able to produce like clothes, watches, shoes, bicycles, cars, needles. Everything that was part of modern technology. People associated independence with modern technology; with the gun rather than the bow and arrow. People felt that all these things were to come about and that they were part of development. They knew Nyerere, they knew that he came from a village called Butiama and that he could not make a single one of these things. So how could he lead them to the new independence? The fear was real and people were confused. This was a challenge that the leaders had to understand.”

Alphonse Mutaboyerwa from the Kuleana Children’s Rights Association recounts his childhood in a village in Western Tanzania near Bukoba. He was the son of a schoolteacher who had his own motorbike and was the senior public employee in the village. This gave him a certain status. “We saw very few white faces. Very occasionally a white missionary but, as a child, I didn’t get the feeling that I grew up under a form of foreign rule. I remember that the first time I came to think about this was when a British Governor came to Bukoba and we went in to have a look. For the first time I saw the British flag, the Union Jack, being raised and the police orchestra, most of them Europeans. I got the feeling that, symbolically, we were under foreign rule.”

Even though Alphonse grew up in a high status family nobody spoke about this foreign rule to his parents: “This kind of thing was not discussed. They told us about discipline, about going to church, being good at school and that sort of thing; not about politics. After my father died I went through some of his papers and only then discovered that he was involved in discussion about the people’s right to be free. I was surprised to see that he wrote about the teachers’ movement and complained about how degrading it was to be under foreign rule. So there were discussions going on and he and others were conscious of their destiny. But we children were not involved in this. I do, however, remember that when we were quite young we talked about Julius and how he was sent to liberate our country from foreign rule. I remember that there were people in the village who named their children Julius. He was a symbol of the future and gradually there came to be faith that we could have a different future. He chrystallized our desires and created a movement. It’s true that when people are very uncertain then they prefer things to remain as they are.
We had learnt to sing the British national anthem and to honour the queen. So this was part of the way we thought and, in the beginning, the alternative was unclear. But the aim of Nyerere’s movement was to make people brave enough to face the future, despite the risks and uncertainties.”

Joseph Warioba is former prime minister but today he’s mostly known and respected for having been chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission that, in 1996, revealed that corruption had spread to every corner of Tanzanian society. He was born in 1940 and was, early on, involved:

“I was active in the student movement from 1958 to 1966 and I was one of the young people who were active in the freedom movement. But when I left University in 1966 I would not go into politics. I would concentrate on my career. But all the same I did come into politics through the back door because I was both a lawyer and a solicitor and ended up as State Attorney. In the student movement we knew well what we were struggling for but it’s true that a lot of people were scared. They didn’t believe we had the power to overthrow the British and they feared we would end in jail. But there were also many who were tired of the humiliation and we young people had experienced this. For example, we used to travel by steamer from Musoma to Mwanza and there were three classes. First class was reserved for whites, second class was for Asians and third class for us Africans. Third class was open air. We suffered from heat and we suffered when it rained. We learnt how particularly the Asians looked down on us. Many Africans were rebellious and reacted. Even though it was forbidden, the students and the African employees went ahead. We took the risk.”

*What was the most important?*

“That we would be free. We read about other people. We heard about Nkrumah in Ghana. We wanted the same freedom. That was our first demand.”

*Was freedom more important than development?*

“Yes. But from the start development was important, especially for Nyerere. And from the start he made it clear that freedom is not the same as the right to do nothing. It’s hard work. It’s true that, for many people, it was just about freedom and to get the jobs that foreigners had. But from the very start we knew that development was important.”
**Unity and harmony**

The language and clichés of the times can tell us a lot about the ideas of the times. In 1999, one of the veterans, Heriel Naftal Kida, former trade union leader and member of parliament, published a book entitled “Tanzanians: Arise and Get Rich”. I think Nyerere would have approved of much of the contents since the message of the book was that Tanzania is a country rich in resources and by cooperation and joint efforts the people of Tanzania could be rich. But Nyerere would never have dreamed of sending such a “get-going-and-get-rich-message”. Nyerere spoke about unity and harmony, about hard work and equality and about “ujamaa”, the Kiswahili word for brotherhood and the extended family. In an article written in the 1960s about *ujamaa* and the basis of African socialism he also writes that, as he has said, a millionaire can be a good socialist “But he can hardly be the product of a socialist society.” In the beginning he was quite open in his account of how a socialist society would develop but he emphasized that “Essentially socialism is about distribution.” “Socialism in which each feathers his own nest does not exist. It’s a contradiction.”

It’s not just a question of the distribution of economic resources or of the difference between the rich and the poor. It’s also about the difference in access to schools and the health service and about the differences related to prejudices about race, religion and prospects, to ethnicity and to the differences between the town and the countryside. *Uhuru* must give opportunities to everybody.

Maduha Salum is the Regional Head of schools in the Iringa area. In appearance he’s a worthy and respected man and public employee who, on an ordinary day, sits behind his desk in jacket and tie in the regional
headquarter. Essentially, he says what one would expect of a public servant. To be sure, he admits there are problems with poor schools and poor teachers, but that Tanzania, after the reintroduction of free education for all after the turn of the century and new investment in schools and teachers will soon live up to the dream of education for all. A dream that the country has had since Uhuru in 1961.

For many years, school fees were an obstacle to development and kept many children home but now things should work out despite overfilled classrooms and underpaid, poorly qualified teachers.

“Everything will soon be better,” says the loyal civil servant. Maduhu Salum is less formal when he talks about his own childhood and youth. He was about 10 years old at Uhuru. He is Muslim and has vivid memories of the inequality that was widespread in society.

“In effect, Muslims had no schools. It was very difficult to get even a little schooling. Generally, we could only go to a few government schools. Most of the schools were built by Christians and Christian children had completely different chances. If this had continued it would have led to enormous dissatisfaction. So the decision of the government to take over the religious schools was a good one. It was vital to unite the people. Today, as Muslims, we are very close to the Christians. Christians marry Muslims and Muslims marry Christians. As the common language, Kiswahili unites us. We no longer ask which tribe people come from and tribalism doesn’t mean much any longer. When I was a boy, Muslims took Christian names to be allowed into school. Now we are getting a national culture. Even though there are still differences, people are more flexible. You no longer just keep to your ethnic group. There’s no conflict of cultures. And this is a result of the policy that Nyerere pursued.”

Some people predict that inequality will increase in a society with more rich people and a great number of poor.

“It’s true that Mwalimu fought against the differences between rich and poor. He was afraid that politicians and others with high positions would become too rich. The gap between rich and poor has become bigger and bigger and I’m certain that, if Mwalimu were here, he would criticize this violently. Nor was he very happy about all the privatisations, though they have been useful. Maybe, now, people can not see the advantages of this, but today many of the big companies pay tax and they didn’t do this before. This is an advantage. Society has changed. In a way, we are still convinced about socialism, but the world has changed. They no
longer talk about socialism in Russia. The times are different. But we still think that we need taxes to ensure water and roads to the villages. There are many rich people but economic progress must also benefit the villages. That is also a kind of socialism.”

This attitude is typical of the official Tanzania. Mwalimu is praised for creating a single nation and harmony between different ethnic and religious groups. He’s forgiven for the things that went wrong. And it’s recognized that, in practice, even though he would hardly be satisfied with the trends of present times, that times have changed.

Today the message is “Inequality and growth is better than poverty for all.” It’s part of the special Tanzanian artistry to oppose the former socialist economic policy but in the same breath to praise the undisputed father of that policy, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. This message comes from all corners of society. Almost everybody agrees that the first efforts to produce unity were incredibly important. To a large degree, it is still these efforts that make the country stick together in relative harmony. Few doubt this. Forty years on, everybody thinks it was a masterly move, by a variety of measures, to succeed in uniting a country with 120 different ethnic groups and almost the same number of Muslims and Christians.

The Catholic bishop, Lukania, tells about the worries the bishops then had when the government took over the religious schools. He says that, non-Christians too had access to the Catholic schools but admits that these schools were primarily good schools for the elite. A few people got a really good education but the rest got nothing. As a Christian leader, Nyerere was tireless in arguing that the few institutions that the country had must be nationalised for the benefit of all.

“I think the idea was good and right, even though the nationalization led to a big drop in quality. Yet there were positive results. Recently, I met an excellent medical doctor who told me that had it not been for the nationalization of schools he would never have been a doctor. In the old system, his parents had no chance of giving him an education.”

The bishop says that non-Christians could attend the catholic schools. But there were conditions. Martha Mvungi is today, after a long career in the government administration, director of a big private school, the ESACS academy in Dar es Salaam. She is the daughter of a Lutheran priest from Kidugala near Njombe. Previously she was a teacher and, when only twenty two years old she became the principal of Kidugala Upper Primary School.
“I was very young. It was a boarding school with 300 pupils, a mission school for girls and, in the first year, I cried with the girls when they got sick but, afterwards, I got this under control. It was a school with both Christian and non-Christian pupils. The Muslim children had to go to church with the others but we didn’t force them to be baptised. They couldn’t say “We won’t do this and we won’t do that because we are Muslims”. But when they came home they of course practised their own religion.

This didn’t make problems. The parents wanted a school that gave the best possible teaching, whether the school was a government school or a mission school. And I remember that we had one pupil who was the child of a Muslim District Commissioner. We never had a complaint.”

“I was lucky and went to a government school long before Uhuru” says Mwana Hatibu Lweno, a Muslim and widow of one of Tanzania’s first black medical doctors. She says that the government schools were both for Christians and Muslims and the Muslims naturally preferred government schools.

But, nevertheless, there were problems. She herself came from a good Muslim family that never doubted that she should go to school. “But many Muslims didn’t send their children to school. This was often due to ignorance but there were not enough schools and many parents were afraid to send their children to Christian schools even if they could. The missionaries gave their pupils clothes and small presents to tempt them into the schools and when they were there they taught them Christianity. The Muslim children came home with small crosses and began to talk about Jesus. So the Muslims were afraid that the schools made their children Christians. My parents had Muslim friends that warned them and said that I would be made a Christian even though I went to a government school. It was the British who had ruled and they were Christians. So some Muslims feared the government schools. The changes after Uhuru made some Muslims send their children to school. They still had to learn the Koran but the parents realised that that was not enough. So it was incredibly important that the new government took over the schools.”

Hamsa Njozi is head of the Faculty of Literature at the University of Dar es Salaam. He was born in 1953 and was as a child himself a Muslim in a catholic school in Songea in the southern part of the country.
At the time I didn’t think about it but later I worked with a Canadian researcher on Muslim-Christian relations in Songea. He described the systematic discrimination and I could recognise that when I looked back. On one side of the river lived the Muslims. On the other side they were almost all Christians. The Christians had tried to get Muslims to convert but when they failed they made sure there were no schools or hospitals on the Muslim side of the river. I could also recognise another form of discrimination. As a child we made small things for the missionaries but when it came to payment they always asked us what we were called. The name decided whether you were Christian or Muslim and the Christian children always got more money. It wasn’t hard to be admitted to school but it was incredibly hard to continue to secondary school. I was intelligent and always praised by my teachers so I was surprised when I was told that I hadn’t passed. My Christian teacher even came to my home and said how sorry he was. This in itself was very unusual. Only later did I understand that it was a deliberate discrimination. You were chosen by your name, not by the results of the tests.”

Hamsa left school and began to help out at home. Among other things, he helped bake bread for the school he couldn’t get into. Yet later on he managed to continue in the educational system. He took a correspondence course and when, due to a big shortage of teachers, candidates were sought for teacher training, he succeeded in getting in and, later, went to university.

There was discrimination and differential treatment. But the period after Uhuru created new opportunities for making it possible to put a stop to everything that had been wrong before.

“I was 16 years old at Uhuru and I remember how we listened to Nyerere on the radio and at public meetings and how, for all of us, he was the man that could make things happen” says Mwana Hatibu Lweno, who has been programme assistant at MS (Danish Association for International Cooperation) in Dar es Salaam. “We were ready to follow Nyerere without question. He had a moral authority above everybody else and the way we related to him was a bit of God worship. Maybe that’s the wrong word. But he could make us understand what it was all about and get us to work for it. We understood that, all together, we had to go together in the same direction and to work for this. Even old people began to learn to read and write. They had to learn so that they wouldn’t
be backward. It was a powerful vision. We had a leader who could speak on behalf of the people and people could understand what he said. Today politicians say one thing today and another tomorrow. They don’t stand for anything and that’s hard to understand.”

Professor Issa Shivji of the University of Dar es Salaam has a social scientist’s analytical approach to the discussion of how a sense of community was created across all the divides in the 1960s.

“It’s not possible to develop a poor society without making sacrifices. All development demands sacrifice from the people. You can mobilize people to make such sacrifices if they can see that it’s in their own interest. If development is only for the elite – as it is now with the rule of the market and liberalization and increasing inequality – then of course you cannot mobilize the people. But when the Arusha Declaration was proclaimed, people were ready. They believed in the vision that a better society could be created for all. Even though today many people have forgotten, it is important to remember that, despite all the problems in the 70s and 80s. And even though there were from the beginning big differences in income there was nothing like the violent polarization that has developed due to the liberalization of the last ten to fifteen years. Polarized society is something new in Tanzania.”

Issa Shivji, a Muslim, talks about the uniting of the nation, political stability and the hope of those early days. The early years of independence under Nyerere were a success. In his opinion, this was also the basis of the
In contrast to Butiku, many people describe the subsequent economic policy as a disaster, a period in which almost everything went wrong. But given this, the achievement in unifying the different religions and ethnic groups was even greater. The feeling of community is so strong, that Tanzania has been an oasis of peace and harmony on a continent of internal and external conflicts. The sense of community holds, despite economic decline and despite periods of greatly increasing poverty and a certain feeling of hopelessness.

The government’s takeover of schools and many health clinics and hospitals was the first step. The message that schools and health were now for everybody was heard and even though standards fell, there emerged in the first years after *Uhuru* a sense of a popular ownership of these developments as part of this community. Furthermore, almost everybody with higher education had to apply for schools far from where they were born. A generation of young Tanzanians were sent to boarding schools in all parts of the country to get their education. This helped strengthen their knowledge of the country and the feeling of national unity. Perhaps it also lessened ethnic identities.
The message of one nation, the common circumstances of the many different ethnic groups and the necessity of a common course of action was another key theme. The introduction of the language of the coast, Kiswahili, as the national language was a third unifying factor that strengthened the sense of community. The common language was the language of the people and not that of former colonial masters.

Iringa’s Regional Commissioner, James Luhanga, describes with humour how Nyerere, in the years after the first major changes was so prominent despite whatever went wrong, that people supported him unquestionably. “It was not him that forcibly moved the peasants, it wasn’t him that shut the shops. It was always somebody at a lower level who was blamed when things went wrong. So then a district commissioner or some other scapegoat was fired. Nyerere had this way of getting out, finding a scapegoat and punishing him when the problems were serious. He could do this because, in relation to the people, it was he that always treated them as his equals. Nothing could threaten his reputation. He had given them free education and he gave all kinds of things for free. The people loved him. When, later, it was necessary to take money from people to finance these plans, because otherwise they couldn’t be financed, it was never his fault or what he himself wanted. It was always somebody else. Despite all the problems and the tendency of finding scapegoats for what went wrong, it is without question that Nyerere knew he had to unite the country and therefore he had to remove religion and tribe from public debate. As early as 1963 he dissolved the whole system of chieftancy and he did it very cleverly. He gave the former chiefs jobs. Some of them who were well educated became ambassadors, some became heads of departments others became district and regional commissioners or got jobs in the party. Their sons were well trained. So nobody complained. In this way he killed off the system of chiefs. The next job was to kill off religion. But this was done in a subtle way, via the schools. Catholics, Lutherans and Anglicans all used the schools to promote their own cause. So he let the government take over the schools. The expense was tremendous but he did it and we got an educational system without Muslim or Christian schools. And finally there was Kiswahili. We didn’t require that meetings be translated. Everything became much easier. With Kiswahili you can get by everywhere in society. All in all, when things went wrong it was not Nyerere’s fault. The blame was always put somewhere else” says Luhanga.
Tanzanians have many kinds of excuses and explanations when it comes to accounts of Nyerere’s responsibility for what went wrong, when reality collided with the dreams. At the University of Dar es Salaam in 2005, Professor Rwakaza Mukandala’s simple explanation is that “to this day people are convinced that he wanted the very best and everything he did was done in good faith. He didn’t do it for himself and he didn’t enrich himself and his family. Nobody got special treatment. People also know well that when one of Nyereres sons failed at university he in fact left the university and joined the army. So the reason is simple. What he did he did in good faith.”

Mukandala was born in 1954 and he adds “Think how young the leaders were then. The big decisions were made by people who had never held a government job. They experimented. They wanted to revolutionize society and they dreamed of rapid changes. When I think of myself at that age…..”

Alphonce Mutaboyerwa from Kuleana in Mwanza relates: “There are snags about most things in this world but I think it is important to keep remembering that there are still things we can be proud of in those early years. We got a cadre of Tanzanians with experience of leadership and education. When the government took over the schools and all the other institutions a brake was put on the tendencies that already existed then to make Tanzania a society divided between the haves and the have nots. There were enormous problems with shortages of this and that but there was also a consciousness of justice, a sense of community and a feeling of brotherhood that resulted from this policy. It’s not possible to put an economic figure on what this meant but if we can still talk about peace, harmony and stability then the explanation lies in what happened then. Despite all the changes, despite the orientation towards the market and the chances to earn a lot of money people still put critical questions. They question this development because they once believed in this sense of community. This consciousness is one of the reasons why there are still people in the government that do business in other people’s names. They dare not put their own name to what they’re doing and they know it is their duty to serve the people. It may be that this attitude and this consciousness will be thrown overboard. But the consciousness is still there and with it the need for a certain humility and modesty.”

“It’s hard to know what will happen but one can’t help speculating” says Mutaboyerwa. ”Nyerere always took the trouble to try to explain
what was happening. He wrote about it and it was discussed. The guidelines were set out but only after meetings had been held and people had learnt about the way things were going. It’s not like that today. The government now works far more secretly. They are far more technocratic. People are discussing the sale of public property to private and foreign investors and the whole privatization programme but politicians do not explain. In his monthly speech the president describes what is happening but he only defends his own opinions. There’s no discussion with the people. The political system doesn’t work anymore. Today we only have a system of government. At the time of the nationalizations there were decisions by the party that explained the idea and the purpose. Today there’s nothing. If people are not given a proper explanation then they do not feel that they are part of development. People will say that the political leaders just did what they did because it benefited themselves. If this isn’t taken care of it could erupt in violent opposition and maybe actual political upheaval.”

Eli Yohana Nyagawa remembers how, as a young man, he had enormous expectations about Uhuru. People expected rapid changes. They thought that, in the course of a few years, the country would be a better place to live in when the British left and young Tanzanians took over their jobs. Of course, these expectations were not realized and the problems started. The trade unions were in revolt. There was a mutiny in the army where the soldiers wanted all the British officers out. There were huge social problems everywhere and, for a time, a real fear of the re-colonization of the country.

There were disappointments and society began to go wrong. New people were suddenly in power. There’s a British saying that “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” From 1961 to 1967 many Tanzanians forgot where they came from. They had the chance to create small islands of wealth in the society. They built houses, bought big cars, they went into business and they bought shares in companies. But ordinary people lived the life they had always lived. People were deeply frustrated that some people became rich through political deals and government posts. They felt that Mwalimu was isolated. The leaders did not at all behave as they had expected. Already when Nyerere was appointed he had spoken about doing something for the isolated villages. But nothing much happened.
But then came the Arusha Declaration and it came because Mwalimu reacted against a trend by which we got a group of rich people while others stayed poor. Ordinary people, who had been totally united in the struggle for independence had been greatly confused that Mwalimu had allowed a development by which there arose powerful and rich individuals in the party. When the Arusha Declaration came they were again filled with enthusiasm and went on demonstration to support this change. There were people with very important government posts that had to resign. But ordinary people were happy. New moral and ethical standards for leadership were set out. A leader could only have one salary, a leader must represent the people and the differences between salaries must not become large. Some people were furious. I had friends who certainly didn’t like the Arusha Declaration but the man on the street loved it and it was only first in 1967 that the real journey towards progress started.”

James Luhanga was one of the young officers in the army in the years after Uhuru and the army also got a role in connection with the Arusha Declaration:

“We in the army were the first to support the Arusha Declaration. We marched to State House to show the army’s support and to send a clear signal to everybody who considered opposing it. We showed our strength. The Arusha Declaration was an experiment. It had lots of enemies, especially in the West. The CIA and others didn’t like it so it had to be defended. There were also internal enemies but the support was so strong, that the most and the biggest, fled. A few who made a lot of noise were interned. Everybody could see the “get rich fast” attitude that the country had experienced. It was very noticeable that some people were getting rich very fast. This deeply disturbed Mwalimu. There were lots of poor people, lots of illiterates but, at the same time, there were a few who were incredibly rich. The country was simply getting on the wrong track. In reality, Mwalimu was not a socialist. I think he was pushed into socialism. He was what the British call a Fabian socialist (a kind of social democrat) and not a socialist of the French kind. I myself think he would have preferred a mixed economy but it was very hard to choose a middle road in the circumstances. It was either total capitalism like Kenya or complete socialism. But I am sure he would have preferred something in between.”

I asked Joseph Butiku, President Nyerere’s secretary for many years, whether he had expected the Arusha Declaration and the development which followed the declaration:
“We followed Nyerere without question…”

“To me it didn’t come as a sudden change. But it’s true that I had not thought of something on the lines of the Arusha Declaration before 1967. Even though we had talked about socialism we were not clear as to what it was and what direction we should take. But I had travelled throughout the whole country with Mwalimu. I had seen the way it was with the economy. The idea emerged that the economy should be in our hands. So when the declaration came it had a kind of logic and in that sense it was not a surprise.”

Was it basically the work of a single man, Nyerere?

“As the leader of the country, as a writer and a philosopher then yes it was. But it was also an attempt to translate and crystallize what was necessary and to create institutions to manage the African way of life better in an organized way. To shape the country so that it could move forwards. Maybe life was not static before Uhuru. It wasn’t. But now we faced a new demand to organize and to promote development and to take our place in the world. It was a matter of organizing a Tanzanian way to join the world with a new and united nation.”

Did the Arusha Declaration come too early? Should one first have trained more administrators, more teachers and leaders?

“Remember that the Arusha Declaration was basically a declaration of intent that said three things. First, about work relations. The message was that everybody must work, everybody must contribute. At the same time, the message to everybody was: All the time keep an eye on how great inequality has become, look after the gap between the rich and the poor. Secondly, it said that progress must be created by us through self-reliance. There’s nobody else to do what has to be done. Thirdly, the declaration laid down ethical guidelines for the country’s political and administrative leadership. The declaration itself was a leadership code everything else was about what to do in practice. It’s important to remember the demands to the leaders for they are still remembered and discussed. Today the leaders no longer feel bound by a code that people can understand. Today the leaders think they are a group by themselves and they seek personal wealth rather than concentrating on real leadership. There are other areas and themes in the pamphlet that altogether made up the Arusha Declaration and TANU’s policy for socialism and self help. But the ethics are the key. There are many people who sympathize with capitalism and want some wealth. That is understandable. But today we have leaders that grab
huge fortunes because that key element, the ethical dimension, has been lost. That is what is being discussed all over Tanzania.”

Was agriculture very affected by what happened because of the Arusha Declaration?

“Yes, and basically even today there’s no alternative to agriculture. It is in the agricultural sector that it will be determined whether we sink or swim. But agriculture is also the most difficult sector. It’s the yardstick. If agriculture in a society is well developed it is evidence that people are well developed. You start with the nature that God gave us. Development is a matter of technology and education in agriculture. It is a question of creating income and jobs and production. Nature is an ecosystem. People are part of this system and it requires purpose and training to change and develop it. This development has not occurred sufficiently in Tanzania, and it does not occur today either. We have not had the necessary and relevant educational input that could have made it possible for the vast majority in the country to create by themselves the development that is required in agriculture. Technologically and educationally, Tanzania was poorly prepared and Mwalimu could do nothing. The minds of the people were not ready. In their minds they were not prepared for this big change.

You can see this on Ukerewe. One kind of definition of poverty is that people have enough land but they don’t know what to do to get out of poverty. The greatest failure is that we have not reached that change. And it’s an admission of failure that we have got an elite that views education as a way of getting away from the problems in the rural areas and to leave agriculture to the donors. Basically, they have not used their education to do something about the basic problems of society. That’s the biggest failure for President Nyerere, for me and for President Mkapa. It will also be the biggest defeat for the next president. We’re getting a private sector that is basically dominated by foreigners, not by Tanzanians. We rejoice about South African capital and investments in breweries which are OK. It’s fine as a motor for growth. But this is not what will make a difference for millions of newly born Tanzanians. It’s only agriculture that can create the incomes and the taxes we need to fight AIDS, to create an educational system for ever more children and to finance the maintenance of the road network. It’s only agriculture that can provide the answer to the basic problems of society.”
Nationalization and villagisation

Maybe, deep in his heart, Julius Nyerere was not a real socialist. But the party (TANU) in 1967 published “The Arusha Declaration and TANU’s Policy for Socialism and Self-Reliance” containing the declaration in the standard socialist phraseology. All of the important means of production should come under the control of the workers and peasants. Every party or government leader should either be a peasant or a worker and must in no way be connected with capitalism or feudalism. But despite all the clichés the message was quite specific. Party and government leaders must not have more than one job or earn more than one salary. They must not own shares they must not own a house for renting out, and who these rules applied to, was carefully set out. Everybody could read and understand to whom this ethical code applied. In principle, people could judge their leaders and see whether they followed the rules.

The declaration also set out guidelines for the development of African socialism. Already in February of that year the major economic nationalizations were carried out and in September 1967 the development of villagisation – ujamaa villages – became official policy. In the course of nine months the basis for decision making for the socialization of the agricultural and industrial economy was laid out. It was emphasized that this required hard work and great emphasis was put on agriculture. Peasants and the land were the natural basis for development and economic growth. “Tanzanians can live well without being dependent on foreign aid if the land and the soil are exploited properly”.

The nationalization of industry and a large part of trade took place rapidly and without much debate. The declaration was published in January and by February was steaming ahead. The government took over most
industries, all the banks and a large part of trade. Despite the shortage of well-educated Tanzanians they began the huge task of finding a new leadership. Either you nationalize or you don’t. Tanzania did so and this laid the groundwork for many subsequent problems because there were not sufficient competent leaders and because state management quickly led to many more employees in almost every company while the economy and efficiency declined. This had not been predicted but the new Tanzania was too busy to wait.

The former prime minister, Joseph Warioba says that one of the problems was, of course, the country’s lack of capacity to take over but that the nationalizations led to a crucial and necessary training task for the new Tanzania. A mass of young Tanzanians received training through this new system. As to the reason why so many things went wrong he adds that, in addition to the problems of capacity, many of the people that got or already had the posts didn’t really believe in what was happening. “It was socialism, but after socialism was proclaimed, things continued as before without any real belief in it. Many used their capitalist attitudes to enrich themselves through the socialist system. The ethical norms of the Arusha Declaration were generally respected by the real political leadership and a number of former political leaders even today live a life that is if not of poverty but very modest. It was not the politicians but the leaders of the institutions and company managers that enriched themselves.

Take as an example the former vice president Rashid Kawawa. Kawawa has a single house. He lives a simple life and if it was not for the funds he receives from the state his life would be difficult. But today we have political leaders who have been at the top for less than ten years but are already millionaires.”

Eli Yohana Nyagawa finished his civil service career as District Commissioner in the Arusha area and went on a pension in 1991. He followed the nationalizations closely:

“We did not do particularly well due to poor administration, over employment and poor control of finances. Above all we didn’t succeed in getting companies and industries to make a profit. The nationalized companies made losses and were greatly dependent on the government. There were huge subsidies from the government which in turn were subsidized by foreign donors. Only in one field, the banks, did things actually succeed. I’m surprised that the banks have been privatised again for they did well. When there were problems they were usually the fault of
the politicians. The politicians wanted the peasants to get money so they allowed the big cooperative societies to get money from the banks to pay the peasants. When the banks wanted their money back they got no help from the politicians. This weakened the banks. But otherwise they managed well.”

In retrospect, most people can see that the rapid nationalization of almost all the economy was hazardous for a new state with few educated leaders and no administrative and management experience. But at that time most people agreed that the new state had to quickly get control of the economy, cost what it will. Forced nationalization was necessary.

Agriculture was part of the basic plan since it was in the countryside that African socialism had a community tradition to build on. But the indisputable father of the country, the leader and the teacher, Mwalimu, knew that the solidarity of the peasants had to be based on forms of cooperation they themselves chose. In his speeches Nyerere stressed that the peasants move into ujamaa villages must be voluntary. The idea was that the old tradition of community could be used in a practical attempt to get people to move closer together so that it would be easier to assist them.

A condition for this was that they were in favour of the idea. The message was that this move must be voluntary and based on the traditional sense of community.

The start was slow and even five years after the first proclamation in 1967 when Nyerere in 1971 reported on developments a decade after uhuru he emphasized that the villagisation programme, which was now 4 years old, had to be voluntary.

“All such villages must be established voluntarily and the members must themselves decide at any one time how much they are willing to do co-operatively, and how much they want to continue on an individual basis. For an ujamaa village can only come into being in its full sense when it has the wholehearted support and commitment of the people involved; it will inevitably, therefore, come into being by stages” he said.

The educational programme had been introduced gradually but quickly after Uhuru in 1961. The racial and religious divides were also rapidly removed but in the changes different types of reforms had to support each other. The villagisation programme made it easier to build new schools close to the houses of the people and the idea of self-reliance was the basis for a new philosophy of working together. In 1971 a programme for “Education for Self-reliance” was adopted. The idea was that since the shortage
of funds in the new state did not permit a major state-funded expansion of the school system, the peasants had to participate themselves. The method was the principle of self-reliance. A part of expenditure on schools was to be financed from the profits from cultivating common land around the schools. The people in the villages, voluntarily and together, would farm this land. But this over time was forced through. The ground was laid for the Great Leap Forward not least in relation to the vast majority of the people, the peasants, and according to the party and government, villagisation was essential.

The Regional Commissioner, James Luhanga: “Already in 1966–67, primary schools were taken over by the government and that was a good and right thing to do. The takeover of secondary schools followed and, in principle, that was right too, if we could maintain standards. But it’s true that the quality of teaching greatly declined. After this came the real nationalization policy. It went too far. At one point even the butchers’ jobs were taken over by government. Some of the things that happened were ridiculous. The idea of a new agricultural policy was fine but the way it developed was sad and a bad joke. It’s true that it was necessary to make people move together to get them health clinics, schools, clean water and all the other services. That’s part of development. The problem was the way it was carried out. There were no guidelines, no plans and no time frame. Some coercion was necessary. People are conservative and didn’t want to move. But the way it was done….! In some places people were moved from areas with water to areas where, even 30 years later, there is no water. Of course, it was an incredibly difficult task to provide water to 10,000 villages. But a lot of it was just hope and wishful thinking. Had we chosen the villages with care and had we been prepared to spend 10 years organizing 10,000 new villages then we could have done it in an orderly fashion. But everything was to be done in one year. We even used the army to carry out this policy. I’m a soldier and I can live with a certain amount of force. But it should have been planned. They should have made surveys. Is the soil good? Is there access to water? Is the area properly accessible? This should have been examined in advance and we should have had ten years to do it. Here in Iringa, where we have, in all, 500 villages we could have created 50 new villages a year, ten villages in each district. This would have been manageable. But they set up 500 villages in one year, 10,000 nationwide. It was a joke and it was useless. Later it was said
that, if mistakes had been made, they could be put right later. But then it was too late.”

Everything did not happen in one year. The official statistics tell another story. But the soldiers’ and the regional commissioners’ memories show how the project was viewed and how the fragile civil service staff felt pressured to provide results in no time at all. It was the “system” that got tired of waiting for the voluntary villagisation that had been planned.

During the first phase there were areas where the farmers moved together of their own free will. For they could see advantages. This was especially the case in poor areas with poor soil. So they didn’t have so much to lose. But many farmers felt pressed and lured into it. The right to farm the land of their kin and their ancestors was no longer a matter of course. There were justified feelings and frustrations that freedom and independence had now lead to force and coercion.

The brutal forcible removals started when it proved impossible to get further voluntarily; the way that Nyerere had claimed was a precondition for the project. The vast majority of peasants resisted. They doubted the advantages they had been promised. They weren’t to be lured into it. and so the policy changed.

The Africanist Göran Hydén in his book “Beyond Ujamaa” refers to a radio-transmitted speech that Nyerere held in November 1973. In contrast to many other of the president’s speeches it was never printed or published. According to Hydén the president could hardly control his anger when he told the people that his patience was at an end. Before the end of 1976 the whole rural population were to be moved together in villages. One no longer spoke of community and ujamaa but only of removals. It was a catastrophe and many of the older people still feel bitter, even though this is not directed at Nyerere, but at the civil servants that carried out the order and the forcible removals without planning or knowledge of the consequences.

It’s often the small details that remain powerful memories. Professor Mwesiga Baregu tells that he did his national military service in Dodoma at the beginning of the 70s. He was older than most of the others for his national service had been postponed because of his studies. So it was perhaps a lot harder for him as a soldier to be involved in moving people to the new villages.

“I remember very clearly a single incident that made me dreadfully upset. There are very few trees in the Dodoma area and many huts are made
of soil pasted on posts. The villagers had to tear down their houses and take everything with them for building materials to where they had been given new land. But it was impossible for them to dig the posts out of the ground so they had to break them off at the surface. This meant that they were shorter than before and that all the new huts were smaller and lower. They were extremely poor people so they had no other choice.”

To this day Tanzanians ask themselves how so many mistakes were made. What was it that went wrong? Professor Haroub Othman says that one of the real problems was that Julius Nyerere wanted to lead and carry out a socialist revolution in a society without socialists. He thought he could create a socialist economy without seriously changing the state he had inherited from the British. The changes he wanted required that a strong key group really believed in the changes. It wouldn’t work unless the vision was a shared one. But it was not, and when Nyerere retired in 1985 there were suddenly many party leaders who revealed their true colours. The lack of real support was a problem. And some people were, at the time, aware that the speed with which it was carried out was a huge problem. There were limits to what the system could cope with.

President Nyerere’s private secretary Joseph Butiku recalls the Danish economist, Knud Erik Svendsen who, after a period as professor at the University of Dar es Salaam became economic adviser to Julius Nyerere:

“Svendsen came to State House as economic adviser just at the time of the nationalizations and he worked extremely well with Nyerere in these very difficult years. But Svendsen and Mwalimu also disagreed. I remember that Svendsen said to Mwalimu: “You are going too fast. There’s a danger that the economy will break down.” But Nyerere answered: “Too fast in relation to what? We will change this country and we have to do it now.” They didn’t agree. Svendsen was a socialist but he was worried about the speed and whether the system was capable of managing this huge revolution they were carrying out. And people really didn’t know what a socialist system was. Nor did we here in the State House, including me, know a lot about it. So we tried to build this new thing up with Nyerere as the brain and with support from people like Svendsen. We tried to create a new system in the way that Nyerere imagined. It should be based on the African sense of community and that too was an experiment. Nyerere was a philosopher, thinker and an African. First and foremost, he wanted to be recognised as an African. He believed in the diversity of mankind and
that every group could contribute to the development of humanity. He wanted to create an African nation based on African roots and traditions. He tried to focus on what was central in that tradition. Traditionally, we lived in small societies based on cooperation and love. The old society provided work for everybody and there were tendencies towards democracy and popular participation. He wanted to use this traditional basis as the groundwork for a modern state.”

In 2004 I asked Knud Erik Svendsen about the disagreements of that time and he explained why there were such important reasons for the change of speed:

“For Nyerere socialism was really about equality, community and roots in traditional society. He wrote and spoke about this. Even though his writings were edited and published they were not seriously used in the discussion of economic development. He himself thought that socialist development has to build on the active work of socialists to prevent the capitalist development that found expression in the new class of politicians who were ready to take over all the resources after independence. They were the new Wabenzi (named after the big Mercedes Benz cars). Nyerere was worried and very concerned about how he could increase the socialist consciousness of the new politicians before it was too late. He reacted very violently when the university students demonstrated against military service. These egoistic young people who would not contribute to the community were dismissed and sent home.

When he went to the party congress in 1967 he prepared, without telling others, the part of the Arusha Declaration on the participation of political leaders in the private economy. The charter was approved and the nationalizations were very popular and the people went on the streets. In the foreign aid community too, the charter caused quite a stir because it talked about priorities in the use of foreign aid and much else. It became a central issue in the subsequent debate on aid. It was reminiscent of the British Labour party’s debate at that time….In the Arusha package not much was said about agriculture but Nyerere was under pressure to present his ideas. Generally speaking, the state (or the party) supported the creation of ujamaa villages. They were to be supplied with public services for health and education while the villagers themselves should administer these and contribute to teachers’ salaries etc. It was a bit unclear as to how big these communities should be but peasant agriculture on small plots should be changed to a mixture of state farms, ujamaa villages and private
farms; these often to be taken over from white farmers. All this rapidly became big operations that removed people by force and burnt their houses down so they couldn’t move back,” says Knud Erik Svendsen.

Enthusiasm about Tanzania was for a long time great among the donors, not least in the Scandinavian countries. It was true that some thought that the government went too far with the nationalizations. But basically they supported the idea of the villagisation programme and of African socialism that was reminiscent of the co-operative movements and the social democratic welfare state in their countries. This attitude was influenced by the Scandinavian idea of an egalitarian society where “few have too much and even fewer too little.”

For a long time foreign observers chose to believe the official line that villagisation was voluntary. The nationalization of industry and trade was not voluntary, and maybe not wise. But, on the other hand, Tanzania’s industrial sector was very small so the risks were small. The nationalization of the banks and credit institutions went well and for this policy there was a great deal of sympathy among the donors. The banks in Tanzania were foreign-owned, nearly all British. It didn’t seem fair that a new state should be so heavily dependent on the capitalist bank sector whose shareholders and whose loyalties were a long way from Tanzania.

But for the peasants who experienced forced removals, the burning of their huts and forced labour these were down to earth matters and far less theoretical. Jeff Makongo was a big boy when the *ujamaa* order came to his village, Majitu.

“I lived in a little village and we lived here and there, just as you do in Denmark. But suddenly we had to live in a village where the streets were laid out in even lines. We only had to move about 600 metres but, all the same, we had to tear our houses down and do it all ourselves. Many of the older people pretty much gave up. Even though I was still almost a child I had my own little hut and I remember when I was forced to pull it down. Everybody had to move. Some people had the roofs of their houses pulled down without getting new ones. There was not much choice. In our village some people kept their fields but they had to go a much longer distance to farm them. It became more difficult to guard them from wild animals. There was no planning, and the technology that could have solved some of the problems wasn’t there either. People were fed up with everything to do with *ujamaa* and they were tired of the self-help projects
that only benefited a few. I think that, even today, this is the reason for the terrible situation in agriculture.

There were still positive things after 1967 and right up to 1972–73 there were examples of progress. When I shut my eyes and think back to my own village I can see smiling faces in front of me, in the months of June and July. This was the time of the cotton harvest and it was hectic, colourful and people were happy. You could see with your own eyes that some people got more money and improved their lives. They could buy clothes. Small businesses started up and even if there weren’t many roads, most of them were well maintained. But then came the decline and it was especially bad in the 1980s. When you visit the villages today you meet sad and worried people. Life has got more difficult. The peasants are unhappy and poor. They experience drought and miserable prices for their cash crops. For example, trends in cotton prices have been catastrophical. They do not have much to do and there is not much hope. There is a huge difference between the mood today and what it was then. When we talk about changes in the countryside we’re talking about decline.”

The ujamaa villages didn’t come at the same time everywhere. After a time there was less sense of community and more force. You couldn’t force people to be socialists but you could force them to move together. A serious estimate is that 9 million people moved together in ujamaa villages. Alone between 1973 and 1976 it is thought that 5 million people, or almost half the total rural population, were moved into the new villages. This was after Nyerere’s angry speech on the radio.”

Development is a funny thing. On Ukerewe, over eighty-years-old Sylvester Mazigo says that people now live as in the old days. “People have now moved back to the old system before the new villages and before they were forced to harvest together, even though we got almost nothing out of it. Ujamaa villages didn’t help us” he says. He lost about half of his land and his house and only got compensation for the house. The police “helped” with the move.

Tanzanian peasants are quiet people that try to take life as it comes. But they were forced to move to new villages, they became poorer when cotton prices were falling, they experienced overblown marketing boards and cotton cooperatives and many had to sell their harvest on credit without ever receiving their money. Many just gave up. When Mazigo compares the time before uhuru and thinks about it he names three of the major problems of today that they didn’t have then.
“In the past there was lots of food and a lot of variation in farms. Now there is less food and less land and all of the crops are cassava and maize. That’s the one thing. The second thing is that we now have to pay for medicine and treatment. In the past there were few places you could go but you didn’t have to pay. Today they only treat people who have money. Those that don’t have money can just die. The third thing is corruption. There was no corruption when I was young. Corruption started slowly after uhuru. But today you can’t go anywhere without paying. This happens in the district and at the hospital. It happens everywhere.”

Sylvester Mazigo is happy about the multi-party system. He thinks it’s one of the good things that have happened. We will come back to this and to corruption and payment (officially or under the table) for all public services.

Ole Meisha from Dar es Salaam recounts his enthusiasm in the time around uhuru. He was a young Masai that had the chance to study in Dar es Salaam and he was there when, in December 1961, people celebrated the new freedom all night. Above all, he was curious about all the new things. He didn’t have precise expectations but he and everybody else were happy. Nor was he disappointed for, when he was still studying in Tanzania he succeeded in getting a German government scholarship that gave him the chance to travel and to study to be a pharmaceutical chemist in Germany.

“Nyerere was a fine man” he says and tells how he succeeded in getting a meeting with Nyerere. He was unsure whether he could get a passport because his scholarship was from the German government and not from the party or the Tanzanian government. He was surprised that, without great difficulty, he could get through to Mwalimu himself and he explains that the president reassured him and promised that there would be no problems as long as he promised to return and work in Tanzania after his studies. He did that. He was employed by one of the big international pharmaceutical companies. The company was only indirectly hit by the subsequent nationalizations but things got worse for them when cheaper Asian medical products came on the market. It became harder to sell their trademarks and the company withdrew. This was his first negative experience after Uhuru. Ole Meisha managed since then and he has done well. When he thinks back, his major criticism is not about the government’s intervention in trade and industry. He kept in touch with his village and it is the ujamaa policy that still makes him feel angry.
“After independence, things happened that people were happy about. Local taxes, that the British had introduced, were abolished. Education and access to the health clinics was free. Everybody should have access and fast so people were happy even though things were very difficult. People didn’t understand that taxes helped pay to keep up schools and roads. But there was still a lot of happiness. Only later came the time when people were forced to get together in villages. This was a very big thing and affected everybody. Socialism was to get out to the villages. But people didn’t understand it and, if they did understand it, it was hard for them to see how it could be carried out. Later, but maybe only first 15 years later, the government realized that it had not been a good idea and the policy was changed again. Now people could live wherever they wanted to and, if they could afford it, they could buy land. But even at the time I didn’t think it was a good idea. Even the youngest child says instinctively “This is mine. This is mine”. This instinct is deep in us all. But our leaders didn’t see it. There were many things that were affected. In some places, people have known for generations that here the soil was good. Their forefathers knew it and the young knew it. But suddenly people were moved without wanting to and without their agreement. Their houses were pulled down.
and they were taken to places where there were no roads or water; without anything. This led to the collapse of the whole system. Fifteen years later many returned to their former villages and started again. And those that stayed now only did so because they wanted to. People wanted to decide themselves and they wanted freedom. It was a catastrophe. I still don’t like talking about it. It was terrible. There were people who died because of it. They died, among other things, of illness because they were moved to places without clinics even though the idea was that the new villages should do more for the people. To this day I can not completely understand why it all went so wrong. Maybe the project was all too big. Perhaps it could have worked had it come about quite slowly, bit by bit. Remember that, in this country, we still live in villages. Now I’m 65 years old and I plan to go back to a little place in my village, close to Kibaha. We live in villages and that is not the problem. But people were forced to live side by side in new villages with long, straight streets. This was bad and it was wrong.”

Ole Meisha points to, and describes with his hands, the long straight streets up and down that they were suddenly forced to live in:

“I think they were influenced by China, maybe from Russia and also from him, what’s his name, Ceausescu in Romania. The system came from abroad and perhaps mostly from China. This was a problem and it was a mistake. But apart from this, when we think back to Mwalimu, we are still happy.”

Later researchers are more precise. “Overall, villagisation affected agriculture negatively. In the short term, this was because of the disruptive effect of moving, rebuilding and resettling households, sometimes in unknown areas. In the long term, the longer distances from homesteads to fields led to over cultivation of plots close to the village and longer distances to fetch water and firewood. Other aspects that contributed to the negative outcomes were inappropriate planning, administrative and political problems and lack of appropriate incentives for peasants.” (“Farmers and Markets in Tanzania”. Stefano Ponte. 2002). That is pretty much the way people remember it. The negative consequences covered not just agricultural production but the way people lived their whole lives in the countryside. Maybe these years took the belief in the future from a whole generation.
Now we prefer not to talk about agriculture

Politicians would rather talk about investments and the modern sector. The worn down small farms do not have development potential. If agriculture is to be modernized the peasants have to go. But where can the rural young go?

Agriculture

In 1975, 10 percent of Tanzania’s population lived in towns. Today it’s a third. At the same time the population has doubled. Now there are 12 million people in the towns compared to 2 million then. In the last 30 years a dramatic change in society has occurred. If this continues, and it will, half of the population will live in towns in 10–15 years time. But even today the great majority still live in the countryside. They live in villages, created in the abortive ujamaa project or where they have found land after the project was discontinued. And the rural population has grown from 8–9 million at independence to 23 million today. At independence there was talk of the great unutilised nature and partly this is true today. But those who know about rural life and the conditions of the small holders far away from Dar es Salaam, know that, in large parts of Tanzania the land has been greatly worn out and not much is done to prevent it. Ukerewe is a glaring example but it’s far from the only one.

A bit outside Dar es Salaam I met one of the real veterans, Rashid Kawawa, former Prime Minister, Vice-President for many years and also a former General Secretary of the party. He had all kinds of posts and, for a generation, had been the constant number two. He first met Julius Nyerere in 1948 in Tabora where Nyerere was a teacher. They worked together from 1956 until Nyerere died. Kawawa is 80 years old. He’s frail and has health problems. He lives in a fairly modest villa and shortly after the interview started we were interrupted by a medical assistant who came with his daily medicine. But Kawawa is prepared to talk and, much of the way, to defend what had to be done throughout those 50 years even though some things failed and even though he admits that there were things that could have been done differently.
For him, right from the 50s the key things were freedom and development. The British had hindered progress. The decisions that were taken by the new leaders were necessary to create unity and progress and to prevent the religious and ethnic divisions in society. The government’s takeover of the economy, of schools and health clinics was a necessary precondition, he says. But he admits that the capacity to run the new system was not good enough. He also says that “Some of the leading cadres in the economic system unfortunately did not feel committed.”

Some of the reservations were not voiced when the decisions were taken. “Mwalimu was so good. He stood for socialism and nobody doubted what he explained. It was the implementation of the decisions that was the problem. Mwalimu too realized that. Everybody recognised it. We discussed it all the time.”

Kawawa was there when the major changes occurred after Nyerere resigned from the post of president in 1985 but was still chairman of the party. In reality, socialism was dropped. The emphasis was now on the private sector and on the private-oriented capitalist economy. Later, the introduction of the multi-party system followed. “We accepted the new situation. The world had changed and we realized that we had to give individual people a chance to take part in developing the country’s economy.”

Was this a realization that the government takeovers and nationalizations had been a mistake?

“No, it wasn’t wrong. It was only the timing that hadn’t been right” he says and adds, a little later in the conversation, “It would have been good for economic development if we had realized the need for privatization and for individual enterprise earlier.” Today, Kawawa thinks that nationalization of the economy went too far. “But we didn’t realize that then. We were all preoccupied with carrying out the policy.”

In the years that followed, privatizations have dynamized the modern sector. There’s now more life in industry and trade, the hotel business and in tourism. But what about agriculture in which the great majority of the people are still engaged and what about the countryside where two thirds of the people still live? Since independence it has again and again been emphasized that agriculture is the backbone and the foundation for development. But agriculture has declined.

Perhaps modern society has forgotten agriculture even though so much has been said and written about it, I said to Kawawa.
“The party and the people have criticised the government for not doing enough for agriculture. That’s long been the main criticism and the government has now admitted it. So today there has been massive investments in agriculture. There’s investment in roads, in health and even in the development of farming”, he says.

But in some places there are far too many people. The Forests have gone, the fields are too small and only cassava is grown.

“It’s true that people tend to stay where they have always been and that causes problems. There is lots of land in Tanzania but people don’t want to move. And now we are trying to modernize agriculture in different ways, by using manure, chemical fertilizers and compost.”

But the farmers say that fertilizers are too expensive.

“Yes, but there are other possibilities, such as green leaves and different kinds of compost.”

To this day Kawawa defends the villagisation policy. “We emphasized the need for people to live close together so that we could bring them schools, clinics and water. We also had some positive results and it’s not true that everybody was forced to move together.”

But the policy changed and became one of forced removals.

“In every case, when this happened, the government reacted and stopped it. The government always went in for voluntary collectivization even though it’s true that we used a certain amount of pressure to get people to move to the assigned areas. We had to do this but it wasn’t by force.”

Rashid Kawawa is a pensioner though he still has an honorary post in the party. Maybe it’s unfair to question him about agricultural policy. But there’s a constant criticism that agricultural development has not only been neglected in the socialist period of the ujamaa villages but also later, during privatization.

“Now things are happening” says the old, former Vice President. But the peasants remember that has been said so many times before. If there is an idea what can be done about agriculture and the small farmers, it’s unclear to most people as to what that idea is.

Officially, the experiment with ujamaa villages lasted 15 years and was slowly and gradually replaced by a more private-oriented system. But it was first in 1991 that it was formally decided to put an end to the actual state monopoly in agriculture. For many years, the farmers had lived through far more changes in their conditions than forced villagi-
sation. Historically, the cooperative movement played a role in parts of Tanzania. The first cooperative was established in the Kilimanjaro region in 1925 and in the 50s, before uhuru, agricultural marketing was based on a system with three levels. Local primary cooperatives bought up the crops and sold them to regional cooperatives who, again, sold them to the national marketing boards. This meant different prices in different areas depending on transport costs but it did lead to the organization of farmers in local cooperatives and this gave them certain strength.

The ujamaa programme did talk about co-operatives but now the villages themselves were to be cooperatives. There were conflicts between the old cooperatives and the new party-run villages and, gradually, the state employees took over power from the elected farmers. In 1975 the government formally dissolved the cooperatives and they were replaced by a system in which the party controlled all three levels. This further intensified the exploitation of the farmers. They produced but got little or no money for their crops. In effect, they financed an ineffective state bureaucracy with far too many employees. The lack of control led to a huge increase in corruption and theft. The system “used up” the money the peasants should have had.

In 1982 even the government could see that things had gone wrong. They reintroduced a system of cooperatives but there were conflicts about who should have control and the peasants were deeply sceptical. For far too long there had been far too much pressure and coercion in the system.

For many years, agricultural production has only kept up with the growth in population, and hardly that. One of the important reasons for this is that the farmers lost their will and their belief in progress. There are stories about how the peasants, in the toughest years, said “Yes, Yes” when they meant “No”. This was their reaction to countless directives about what they should grow, when and how. They learnt that it was easiest to say yes and then to do what they wanted when the authorities had gone. Saying yes gave them breathing space. But conditions got worse, the soil got worse and in many parts of the country they no longer took the trouble to produce for the markets because conditions were so bad.

The new times have not led to automatic improvements. In 2005, at the University of Dar es Salaam, Mwesiga Baregu tells that the Ministry of Agriculture has totally failed. “First and foremost there has been no real renewal. It is as though innovation has been forbidden. There have
been cases in which coffee farmers have been imprisoned because they refused to grow coffee when they either could not or would not sell it for extremely low prices. Farmers haven’t been treated as if they were people but only as a production apparatus. They have not let agriculture benefit from the peasants’ own knowledge and assessments.”

In a country where by far the largest part of the population live in the rural areas, conditions of production are affected by many more factors than those directly affecting the crops. When the former District Commissioner Eli Yohana Nyagawa thinks back to the struggle to eradicate illiteracy and on the years after uhuru when a huge effort was made to teach children and adults to read and write his thoughts inevitably turn to the local cooperative movements.

“We had very strong cooperatives and, in these years, they were a huge help in bringing people together and creating a new consciousness. They also helped create knowledge about the economics, the production and the marketing of produce. But the Cooperative associations died. In the mid-70s they were dissolved by the government. This was very unfortunate because the cooperatives helped us enormously in carrying out campaigns for reading and writing and for adult education and they also took part in improving agriculture and crops. But why did the cooperatives die? Because some of the leaders of the primary cooperatives got rich and misused the money for which they were responsible. And the system for the sale of crops wasn’t very good. The primary cooperatives got the money from the regional cooperatives but a lot of the money was misused and never reached the farmers. That was why the government had to dissolve the cooperatives.”

The cooperative movement was compromised and, to some extent, still is. But the state system that replaced the cooperatives created even greater dismay. Since 1991 a new system has been growing up. Now the private market and private businessmen play a bigger role and, even though this has happened slowly, there have been important changes. In some places this has really pleased the farmers but in others it has led to fresh disappointments. The state system was devastated by inefficiency and corruption. The new private actors have gone in where it can pay, but, where it does not pay, they have stayed away.

Cotton is a sad example. In 1981 Tanzania produced 85,000 tons of cotton. Ten years later, production was 31,000 tons or just over a third. There were no guaranteed prices or guaranteed purchase of the year’s
crop. In the summer of 2000 the cotton producers in parts of the country had stocks of cotton left over from the previous year. International prices had been so low that the 20 official purchasers were no longer interested in buying. The lack of action to protect the soil and to improve productivity led also to a fall in yields per hectare. Alone in the years 1995 to 1999 average yields per hectare fell from 675 kilos to 420 kilos. This compares with the global average yield of 1,700 kilos per hectare. In parts of the country there is a new positive development taking place in cotton production but in many of the former cotton areas there are now no cotton fields. The cotton ginneries have gone.

Many years ago, Professor Rwakaza Mukandala wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on what happened with cotton and cooperatives. In his brief conclusion he writes “Everything that could go wrong went wrong. Cooperatives were forbidden and replaced by a state cotton authority. But the farmers got no supplies, no fertilizers, no seed and no payment on time for their deliveries. The cotton ginneries were not maintained. Disease spread to the cotton and quality fell. Everything went wrong.” This was due to poor prices but, to a large degree, it was also due to an awful bureaucracy.

It’s hard to make a precise distinction between the old and the new times since experience has shown that they are interwoven and, together, provide a bleak picture. Today it’s neither the state nor the cooperatives that decide but the market. Yet, says Mukandala, the cooperatives were originally established precisely to help solve the problem that the farmers were dissatisfied with the monopoly of the private purchasers.

Now, once again, the farmers experience private monopoly and the purchasers are not interested when they can’t make money. And the money doesn’t come in if the market is flooded and the prices too poor or if it’s too expensive to transport the cash crops from the peripheral areas. So nobody wants the bother of going to Ukerewe and buying up the coffee harvest when international prices are so bad. Then it makes no positive difference, that the government is trying to stimulate production by distributing coffee plants for free. The politicians have given over responsibility to the market and they do not talk so much about the fiascos except when major droughts and diseases make it necessary to assist people that are going hungry in the rural areas.

The researcher and professor, Issa Shivji at Dar es Salaam University goes straight to the point in his critique: “In the last 5–10 years we’ve just
about stopped talking about agriculture. If you only listen to the politicians and the leaders you wouldn’t think this was an agricultural country. Nobody talks about it. Before, we at least talked about the villages and farming but nowadays the big issue is the so-called technological revolution, privatisation and the big corporations. Nobody is seriously talking about what we do about agriculture in which most of the population is employed. It’s not taken seriously. But there is no other way. In these years, to some extent, employment in the modern sector has declined. There is investment but the kind of companies that develop as a result of privatization do not need many employees. The first thing that happens when the private sector takes over a company is firings and rationalization and many of these new companies come from abroad. But every year Tanzania “produces” somewhere between 800,000 and 1 million people for the labour market. There’s absolutely no chance that they can find jobs in these modern activities. As I see it, a sustainable development is not on the cards unless the key thing is the development of the countryside and the creation of a national market that produces sufficient for our needs. It sounds simple but it’s basic.”

The future?

“In the short run I think we’ll continue on our present course. But people are talking. They’re also questioning the leadership. There’s a debate and, in the long run, there will be changes. But I can also see a tremendous amount of marginalization and maybe we will have to go through a very difficult period with a lot of suffering before we get to a new awareness.”

In ten years there won’t be 35 million people but maybe close to 45 million people in Tanzania.

“That’s right. We’ve inherited political stability from Nyerere but the question is whether we can continue to expect political stability if we see further polarization and marginalization.”

Can the agricultural areas be developed? The fields are too small and the environment is worn down. There are too many people.

“But there are still possibilities. It’s a question of irrigation that can be introduced in many places, of manure and a number of other technologies. It’s not untrue when people say that Tanzania still has many unused resources. But it requires very careful long term planning and you can’t just bet on the free market to solve everything.”
This researcher demands far stronger societal involvement in agriculture in a society where the attempt to control the life of the peasants has proven to be a catastrophe and hence the expectations from the market have been great. Society has to intervene but there’s no sure feeling as to how. And the subject is not high on the political agenda.

It can be difficult to understand the reality of African agriculture on the basis of a Danish or European tradition. Agriculture in Western Europe is based on the market and on private property. But in the European Union there’s also massive public economic support and guaranteed minimum prices. In periods of overproduction the subsidies have ensured that the farmers can sell for high prices to surplus stockpiles. The market is only a supplement to state regulation, state subsidies and state guarantees.

State control in Tanzania has never been based on state subsidies and state guarantees. Farmers were forced to produce crops for which the soil was not always appropriate and for which they got incredibly little cash or nothing at all. In the 1980s Tanzania’s economy in effect broke down. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), together with the international donors, demanded that Tanzania’s economy be liberalized and to let market forces have free play. In agriculture this led to a slashing of state bureaucracy and, at the same time, made it possible for the farmers to decide themselves what they would produce. Competition between private businessmen should in theory ensure efficiency and better prices.

However, Tanzanian farmers, unlike their European colleagues still do not have guaranteed minimum prices and they get no subsidies. They are totally dependent on the fluctuating prices on the world market. When prices for cotton and coffee are at the bottom the harvest has no value. When drought hits the harvest of food crops then people go hungry. And in such difficult times the market mechanism is no help. Nor can poor peasants with very small plots buy fertilizers so that they can increase production and productivity.

In his speech on the budget in the autumn of 2003 the Minister of Agriculture talked about the insufficient use of fertilizers. His explanation was that some of the firms had imported insufficient fertilizer and he explained this by saying that the farmers use of fertilizers was too small partly because of high prices and partly because of drought. According to the minister the same was true of pesticides. They were too few and too expensive. Tanzania’s consumption of pesticides is extremely low.
In Iringa I met an eighty-year old white Tanzanian, Johst Leisa. He came to Tanzania with his German parents when he was four years old in 1927. He has lived through all the changes since then. He has also seen how small African businesses have grown in recent years as a result of liberalization. In many ways this is really good and, he says, has created a new dynamism in Society.

“Of course it was necessary to liberalize agriculture. The system didn’t work before. But Tanzania was crazy to accept the terms of the IMF and to remove all subsidies. Of course there should be subsidies for fertilizer to ensure growth in agriculture production. They talk about free competition but often there’s no competition. The purchasers and the sellers feel no obligation. They don’t enter a market unless there’s profit to be made.”

In the chapter on Iringa the old men and women from the village of Mbigili told how in the old days they got fertilizers from their cows, but artificial fertilizers were also cheap so they used some and the yields were much higher than they are today. In the past there were also “bwana shambas” (agricultural extension workers) and they could get medicine for their cows so that fewer died of sickness. Now there are fewer cows and less fertilizer and the soil yields less and less. Without fertilizer the soil

Ineffective smallholdings and ineffective transport. Many think that improvements in agriculture demand major migration out of agriculture.
gives almost nothing. The economy is terrible, they say. The bad economy also weakens the sense of community. Nobody talks about forced villagisation anymore but the old people talk about the traditional sense of community, a time long before independence. In some places it still exists.

“Before uhuru it was easy to care for the soil and to get a proper harvest because the soil was good. People were summoned to work on the fields together but first they bought pombe (homemade beer) and then they got going. The community was always rewarded with beer. But it has also become difficult to afford pombe.”

The down-to-earth Regional Commissioner in Iringa, James Luhanga, confirms part of the account of the inhabitants of Mbigili. “There are places in the country where you can till the soil without fertilizers. But around here it’s a waste of time to try it. We’ve got lots of land but there are people who have moved out because they couldn’t buy fertilizer. They moved to areas where they could cultivate without fertilizer. If we had fertilizers there would be no problem here.”

But Luhanga is optimistic. “The government we have now has laid the basis for a really good future. We hope the next government will zoom in and take an active role in agriculture. This government has not done that. There has not been enough time. But agriculture will still be the basis of our economy. It’s not because the government hasn’t tried. But in fact I don’t believe that the donors want us to do well in agriculture so that we can export and be competitive. They would rather help us with education, roads and health. But, at the very least, we need to produce enough subsistence crops for ourselves. That’s the minimum requirement. There are still years when we import maize.

If we can solve the problem of agriculture then we can solve all the other problems. We still have fantastic resources. Better resources than all our neighbours. We have lots of water, lots of land and unused resources in the Southern and Western part of the country. But there is also a risk that we’ll see erosion and decay in many places.”

“This can be the truth if we keep on getting more and more people in the villages. So people have to move to the towns and of course they must have something to do when they get there. But they can not stay in the countryside. My idea about development is that there must be fewer and fewer people living in the rural areas, not more and more. We will not get more land; only less and less. People must live in the cities and work in factories and service industries or in the country as agricultural workers
in a more mechanized agriculture. That way we can produce more food crops, and food will be cheaper. Then we can use the money that is ready and waiting in the banks. We have money in the banks that can not be lent out because there are no borrowers. And that’s because everybody on the land are smallholders and smallholders are unreliable.”

*Why are they unreliable?*

Maybe it’s their nature. Maybe it’s because they’re poor. I don’t know. But you can lend a farmer some money with the very best intentions. You hope he can produce a lot more and pay the money back but suddenly he has moved away. You never see him again and you’ve lost your money.”

The old farmers tell that they can not afford fertilizer. They say that it’s hard to afford the local beer that smoothed the road to work together. But the basic problem is much greater. The small farmers are basically outside the cash economy. The international experts discuss genetically modified crops as part of the solution to the problem of food supply in the poorest countries. But in many ways Tanzania is not part of the commercial agricultural market as we know it. For example, hardly any seed grain is bought and sold. Good seed grain based on locally developed high-yielding types of corn gives a better yield. But the small peasants don’t buy seed grain. They sow what is left over from the previous harvest even though this gives lower yields and is more subject to disease.

Tanzania’s annual consumption of seed grain is only 2,000 tons. Tanzania is twenty times bigger than Denmark but, in Denmark, 2,000 tons is what is consumed in a fraction of the agricultural land. It’s enough for 10–20,000 hectares of barley or wheat but the total cultivated area for these crops in Denmark, is more than one hundred times bigger. And that’s only for wheat and barley.

In Tanzania, the proper question is not whether or not to use genetically modified seed grain but how to increase production by using traditional types of seed grain. It would be possible to increase yields dramatically with better seed grain and modest amounts of fertilizer. But, generally speaking, the small farmers are outside the cash economy.

Despite all the problems, Iringa is one of the most dynamic regions. It’s also a region with good potential in farming and there are villages that are doing well. Some of them are assisted by the Agricultural Sector Development Plan (ASDP) supported by Denmark with a focus on the Iringa region. This programme has replaced another Danish-supported
agricultural programme that gave positive results. It’s not purely hopeless to do something. Yet the agricultural sector programme (ASDP) is, all the same, a good example of the uncertainty and lack of ideas about what is to happen with agriculture at the national level. The programme has been developed over many years. The objective is to replace single projects carried out in isolation from one another and often supported by several foreign donors with one single national programme that is steered and directed by the Tanzanian authorities from the national to the district level. The idea is to increase productivity, increase the interplay between the private and the public sectors and to carry out specific activities in the districts. All this is to be based on updated three year plans.

But in January 2005 a review of the programme concluded that, down through the state system, there was very little knowledge of it. The feeling that the programme was nationally and locally owned, a feeling essential for dynamism, did not exist. The ministries concerned did not feel committed to the programme and didn’t know much about it. Therefore the implementation of the programme goes very slowly. The lack of understanding of the programme is due, among other things, to the fact that it is written in a way that is difficult to understand. What should have been a shift from more isolated activities to collective, massive national action to improve the conditions and profitability of agriculture has, as yet, not created a new more dynamic development. And the strategy that formed the basis for the new programme was completed in 2001.

Success is not just round the corner but there’s a need for success and not just for the small farmers. For many years Tanzania’s production of food has not grown more than the growth in population. And traditional agricultural exports are declining.

There’s great uncertainty about the future. Many people know that agricultural change in the Western world has led to very few farmers producing huge amounts of food. But in Tanzania the task is at the same time to (1) increase efficiency (2) increase yields and (3) to increase employment. Perhaps this is impossible. It’s unrealistic to believe that agricultural productivity can improve if the individual farm gets ever smaller and the economic situation of the farmer gets worse and worse. But even if Tanzania aims to have large commercial farms there is still need for a policy that also improves the chances of the small farmer.

The old, and now pensioned-off former government employee, Eleather Mahawi sings pretty much the same tune:
“Since 1995 the government has contributed a lot to development in the rural areas with schools, books and roads. There have been changes and people are more politically aware than before. The donors have also helped to create more local capability and so the local leaders know more than they did before. It is still difficult to reach the rural people but now they are more free to market their crops. There are no longer monopolies. But it’s a big problem that production has declined because the inputs that are necessary have become more expensive and the farmers can not get credit or loans from the government. The decline has happened in most places except in Iringa and Songea and a few other places where there’s still virgin and very fertile land and where the big farms produce a lot of maize. But there too they complain about the high prices for inputs. It’s hard to see what will happen. But there is a tendency for the young to leave the countryside for the cities in the hope of getting jobs. This means that the rural population is getting old and that could lead to even lower production. The cities will have still bigger problems. There’ll be more corruption and crime because there are not enough jobs. Most young people will not have jobs. If the government can create a basis for big mechanized farming then maybe some of the youth can stay in the countryside. But they will not be farmers but farm labourers.”

All this is possible but there are some calculations that don’t add up. Mechanized agriculture will create jobs in the countryside but total employment will anyway be less than today. There will be more population growth in the cities where unemployment is already enormous and the speed in which jobs are created nowhere matches the speed in which the young are entering the labour market. Every year, even though about 200,000 to 300,000 leave the market due to age or death, almost a million young people enter the labour market so the task seems completely impossible.

Alphonce Mutayerwa, the leader of a children’s human rights organization in Kuleana, Mwanza, sees how the children come to the towns in the hope of a different future. But usually they get neither a job nor an education:

“All over the country the tendency is the same. More and more children leave the villages and go to the towns. Ukerewe is an extreme case but far from unique. There are many reasons for this. There are economic and demographic factors which are particular for Ukerewe but there are many other factors. Even though the population is growing, a lot more
can be done to improve peoples’ standard of living in the rural areas. It’s true that many farms are far too small but it is also true that there is no real help. There’s no support for the small farmers, no agricultural extension workers and no supervision. Twenty kilometres from Mwanza the farmers never see an extension worker. Things have not got better in recent years. The service the farmers should have is simply not there.

Then there are the questions about inputs and about sales of crops. Before, there were cooperatives. Now there are none and nothing has replaced them. It’s true that the cooperatives suffered from the same disease as the government system; bureaucracy and poor control. In some places the cooperatives were robbed by a few powerful people and collective responsibility, the very basis of the movement, had no chance. The local cooperative societies died out and their roots were cut.

This is all true. But an alternative is needed. There’s a need for a structure that can support the peasants. A few kilometres from here people grow lots of vegetables that we need here in the town. But the farmers can only sell the vegetables very cheaply to private buyers who take most of the profits when they sell them. The farmers complain that there is no proper marketing system. We lack ideas as to how to help the farmers organize themselves in order to strengthen their position.

At the same time and for a number of reasons, the bonds that hold the family together are getting weaker and weaker. The extended family is gradually being replaced by the nuclear family: you have your child and I have mine. You look after your own children and not theirs. A lot of different structures are gradually breaking down. But who is interested in creating new structures?”

“Increasingly,” says Alphonce Mutaboyerwa, “the organizations of civil society are growing up but they are not strong and certainly not in the rural areas”.

One of the many paradoxes is that, even though it seems that the official and political Tanzania is tired of the problems of agriculture and the small farmers, every middle and upper class Tanzanian with self respect invests in agricultural land; often in the village of his childhood.

Professor Rwakaza Mukandala comes from the Bukoba area and he has bought his own farm there:

“When I come home to the farm there’s no problem getting the extension agent, bwana shamba, to come. He gives me advice and, afterwards, we sit down with a cold beer. He likes that. But he doesn’t visit those who
now we prefer not to talk about agriculture

Everybody gives the same answer. But the degree of optimism or pessimism as to what can be done about agricultural development varies greatly. Mukandala is one of the optimists. He thinks that positive development in agriculture can help reduce some of the conflicts that threaten Tanzania.

“We do have some choices” he says. But he admits that the challenge is huge. “The big changes began in 1985. Yet it’s only now that there’s beginning to be a real interest in agriculture even though most of the population lives in the rural areas and live off farming. But if we redouble our efforts and our agricultural assistance I do think it’s possible to reduce unemployment and poverty and to curb the migration from the country to the towns.”

Jeff Makongo is only in his early fifties. He reflects both on the past and the present and says:

“The future of the rural areas seems bleak. Sometimes I wonder whether I myself will see positive changes. Let me tell you about the changes I have seen in my own home area of Majita by Lake Victoria. It’s densely populated. Just as on Ukerewe, there were lots of people. People fished and they had cattle. There were lots of trees and big common and free grazing areas. There was enough firewood. The free grazing areas have now been taken over by farmers who work the land and the trees have been chopped down to make charcoal. There’s more drought than before. There are no more trees to chop down and people have begun to dig up the tree roots to make charcoal. This means that the area will gradually become a desert.”

Does anybody tell the farmers how dangerous this is?

“They know. They know it perfectly well. But it’s a question of survival. What do you do when your child gets ill, when your pregnant wife has to go to the clinic or when your child is sent home from school because the school fees have not been paid? The village leaders tell everybody that they must not do it. And the old people knew all about the environment. When we grew up we were told where we must not chop down trees and where we should not till the soil because these were holy places. But the important thing was not that the places were holy but that they meant something to the village. These were places with good water or perhaps
with trees and plants that were medicinal. People knew that and they still know it.

Now we have liberalization and the opening up to foreign investment. Now they also invite in farmers from abroad. Maybe an investor from Denmark can buy up 500 hectares of good land in a thinly populated area where there’s still land that has never been cultivated. But the local people do not have this chance. Some of the good land is in areas where there are no roads and no bridges over the rivers. The ordinary small farmer doesn’t have a chance. But the big investor does and maybe there’ll be jobs for some agricultural workers. But, as I see it, the whole question of the future of the rural areas is unclear.”

Jeff Makongo says that there are foreign investors putting money into cattle farms and there are also investors taking over fishing areas so that the fishing rights of the ordinary fishermen disappear. There are even companies that are taking over hunting rights in the conservation areas where, before, the local people went hunting. “The companies and the big farms contribute to the economy in a different way than the small farmers. Maybe this development is necessary. Maybe the big people can pay more taxes. It’s also easier to keep an eye on them. But there’s less land and less room for the indigenous population. I don’t know what the long term plan is. But maybe the small farmers will be gradually squeezed out, just as the supermarkets in Denmark have squeezed out the small shops in the towns.”

The change is already happening and the big investors have prospects that the smallholders never had. A foreign consultant confirms that the government wants to sell land in plots of 10,000 hectares to South Africans. As yet, not much has been sold, partly because of lack of clarity about rights of ownership to the land. But many people have come to have a look. Huge commercial mechanized farms will be able to produce so much that they will quickly be visible in Tanzania’s production statistics. But this will not solve the problems of the peasants and will not give that many jobs. It’s easier and more effective to drive a tractor and a combined harvester than to control 25 men and women with hoes. The really big investors will come from abroad and, if and when they come, they’ll bring their own means of production.

But, if they can, Tanzanians do also invest in land. This is true of lots of people in the middle-income group and particularly for those who are really rich. The ethical stipulations of the Arusha Declaration are no
longer respected as they were and there are conflicts about good available land while, at the same time, there are many places where there is a shortage of land, leading to soil erosion and poverty.

As Jeff Makongo says: “Most of the country’s leaders have bought up big areas in the countryside but they do not develop them as quickly and effectively as they should. They do not have the time to be there themselves so they have to employ managers who are not always good enough. Much of the good land lies fallow for years and is just an investment.”

Once again, one hears the old complaint that, while Indian businessmen can get loans and credit to import cosmetics (that the country can do without), no proper credit system has been put in place for the small and medium farmers. It’s risky to give credit to small farmers. It is far less risky to deal with that part of the private sector that imports goods for the private consumer.

Discussions easily focus on three kinds of farmers and three types of agricultural areas. First there are the old, over-populated areas with poor, small farmers who can not get credit or loans and who do not have the training or the resources to change or improve their situation. They cultivate the same land with the same crops again and again. The soil gets poorer and poorer and often the plots of land are so small that this itself is an obstacle to development. The young flee because there are no future prospects. Then there are the semi-commercial farms of the kind where the new and the old elite buy up land, partly in the villages where there is still vacant land and partly around the urban areas. Much of the land is cultivated but, in many places, not intensively. The land is also an investment; a place to retire to. Finally, there are the commercial farms based on foreign capital. As yet these are just in the making. Unclear property rights make investors cautious. But there is land to be found, especially in the southern and western parts of the country.

This is a simplified picture and there are other kinds of farms in between them. There are still areas where pastoralists raise their cattle. Yet these too are under pressure from the tourist national parks and the investors who buy up hunting rights. There are also major differences between the conditions of the small farmers in densely populated areas like Ukerewe and conditions in other parts that are still thinly populated. But there the land is getting worn down. By far the greatest part of investment avoids the peasants who live their lives on small plots of land.
The dream of education

The African community and African socialism have historical roots. There was a sense of popular community to build on. People helped each other within their villages and within the clans of their ethnic group. Not everybody was equal but the strong social relations and ties did give a sense of safety and security. There was solidarity and unity. In few fields was this more striking than when there arose a new awakening as to what schooling and education could mean.

Tanzania’s former Prime Minister, Joseph Warioba, was born in 1940 in a little village close to Bunda. His parents were poor small farmers and he was the third of seven children. He was one of the only two children who went to school. Later he got the chance to go to secondary school and then for higher education. He became a lawyer, a barrister, the Attorney General and then Minister of Justice and finally Prime Minister.

“My father grew up in the time of German colonialism and went to school for two years. In the school system of that time, after two years you changed school but his father didn’t see any point in this. My grandfather kept my father in hiding until it was too late for him to continue his school and he never got more than two years schooling. When he grew up he found that one of his friends who had been in school for four years became chief clerk to the local colonial chief. So when I wanted to go to school he encouraged me to do so. I started in a little so-called “bush school” but after one year I went to an ordinary government primary school. I got the chance to continue to secondary school but school fees were a huge problem. My father was very poor. This was 1953 and school fees were 60 shillings a year. In no way could my parents pay this.

9.

The failure of the school policy

“What happened is embarrassing and shameful” says Nyerere’s former private secretary. Nothing got higher priority than education for all but the promise of free schooling was not kept. Now, once again, education for all is the promise but schools have become big business and inequality has become the norm.
But we were organized in clans and my father went to the clan. He sold a goat to get the money and many people helped out with 50 cents here and a shilling there. Finally he raised 27 shillings and then the clan chief got together the 33 shillings he lacked. I was sent to school with 10 cents pocket money.

I knew that my parents couldn’t afford 60 shillings for the following year. So we approached the District Education Officer. She was a woman and came to the village to find out whether it was true that my parents couldn’t pay. Finally I got a free place. So the next year I only paid very little. But my father always supported me.”

Joseph Warioba was one of the lucky ones. His parents aimed to send two of their children to school. Most did not get to come to school and that was the situation throughout Tanzania.

Few countries have given such priority to education as Tanzania did after independence in 1961. Yet it was a harsh fact that, at the beginning of the 1970s, less than half of the country’s children went to school. Most children never got a chance but uhuru did open up new opportunities and for adults too. Sixty-five-year-old Selemany Mchongo was a construction worker and literally one of those who helped create the new educational system. He helped construct the new university outside Dar es Salaam and this meant that, at the age of twenty eight, he got the chance to learn to read and write.

“I had only learnt to read the Koran but now adult education classes started up, linked to the university. The teachers were young volunteers who, very enthusiastically, offered to teach us and, in many ways, they organized the programme themselves. There was great enthusiasm and this meant that I learnt to read and write. But after a time, the teachers found that they no longer had the time and also many of the pupils dropped out. Gradually it dried up and finally died out. But I can still write my own letters. And for this I really am grateful for their enthusiasm and for the adult education programme.”

Despite the enormous input the development of the educational system was slow and while the formal system was being built up others dried up when the steam went out of the original enthusiasm and everybody got busy with their own lives. The adult education system was formalized and for a number of years got donor support but today there’s not much left. The long term priority was on the children but, forty years after uhuru it became clear that, despite the high level of political, ideological and logistic input, the educational attempts had failed.
At the end of 2003, Professor Marjorie Mbilinyi of Dar es Salaam University was leader of the educational association, HakiElimu and she told me that, when they took stock at the end of the century, only 56 percent of children of primary school age had gone to school. Of the 56 percent that started, a third dropped out and only 38 percent completed. And of the 38 percent that completed, only 6 percent continued in the educational system. Since then, a new educational programme has been adopted and there have been improvements. But as yet there have been no improvements in the society that should absorb the school pupils.

Education was the keyword. For Nyerere, education was more important than anything else. Education was the point of departure and the prerequisite of development. Yet despite that it hasn’t worked.

Just after independence the racial and religious separations of schools were abolished. School fees were also abolished. These were important decisions and incredibly popular. In 1971 the single Party, TANU, decided that illiteracy should be wiped out by the end of 1975 but that did not happen. In 1971 the number of illiterates was estimated to be 5.2 million. By 1975 the figure was up to 5.9 million. It was thought that part of the explanation for this was that the big villagisation programmes had registered more illiterates who had never before figured in the statistics. A new campaign, “Education for All” was started.

Among other reasons, the collectivisation of the villages had been decreed in order to create the conditions for building schools. Now the villagers criticized the lack of schools. “We’ve moved into the villages but where are the schools they promised us? And where are the health clinics?” Forced collectivisation destroyed much of the faith in progress and support for the system. But the criticism did give results. In most regions schools were built by self-help and work was done to create alternative forms of education to get enough teachers. Shortage of funds limited this but, according to Marjorie Mbilinyi, the results were in many ways impressive.

“Education has never been free. The parents built the schools, they paid taxes, they bought school uniforms and textbooks. And above all that they paid 20 shillings per child. Despite all that, by 1984 the number of children in school had doubled. In fact, at that time, more than 90 percent of children went to school. The campaign also meant more equality between boys and girls since the girls also went to school.”
“Education for all” was the big slogan but the goal was never achieved. Now Tanzania is trying again.

But already at the end of the 1970s there were huge problems of shortage of funds and materials and, after a time, also shortage of teachers who were very badly paid and sometimes weren’t paid for several months. Different forms of informal payments developed; from the parents to the teachers.

The reality was not nearly as positive as the statistics depicted. The slogan was Universal Primary Education (UPE). All children should have access to primary school. In principle, school was to be free even though, as Marjorie Mbilinyi emphasizes, there are always expenses. But the time of UPE didn’t last long. In the mid-80s Tanzania’s economy was on the brink of catastrophe. In reality, the country was bankrupt. Many public employees no longer got their salaries and even if they did they couldn’t live off what they got. The system began to break down and Tanzania’s foreign donors and the international lenders demanded major economic reforms (Structural Adjustment) as a condition for continued aid. In the front was the International Monetary Fund (IMF) demanding structural reforms and one of the main demands was that public expenditure be cut
drastically. Tanzania was far too poor to offer free education for all, they stated.

The period from the end of the 70s until the mid 80s has been called the Seven Years War between Tanzania and the IMF. The IMF won and, at the same time as President Nyerere retired, the reform process was set in motion. The reforms were designed to improve Tanzania’s economy but the first thing they did was to kill off the vision of education for all. Once again, from standard one school fees had to be paid. The cost of going to school grew dramatically and, in the course of five years, the number of children registered in primary school fell by 30 percent. So there were only ten years in which there was free schooling (UPE). After Structural Adjustment hundreds of thousands of children were kept at home. A large proportion of those registered at school dropped out.

So this was the way it was from 1985 until 2001 when a new educational plan was adopted and, once again, school fees began to be abolished and free education for all was re-introduced. Between 2001 and 2003 net school enrolment grew from 59 percent to 91 percent. In just three years the total number of pupils registered in primary school grew from 4.4 million to 6.6 million and today there are now more than 7 million children in primary school.

It has not been easy for parents to follow the erratic course of educational policy. For by far the largest number of years since independence the fundamental idea of free schooling has been an unachievable dream. There was an awareness that without education there would be no development but generations of children and young people had no access to schooling. When the chance of free schooling came the people reacted positively; in the early years of independence, after 1974 and, once again, after 2001. Millions of children went to school after 1974. But, just as the expectations were so high so were the disappointments so deep. The schools kept getting worse and more overcrowded. After the parents had put in masses of voluntary work to build the schools then once again the poor were excluded. And all this exacerbated the difference in the treatment of boys and girls. Due to the tradition whereby families gave boys priority in schooling, far more boys than girls were sent to school by families who could only afford to send one child to school. Another reason for this is that girls have more duties in the home so the household could more easily do without boys.
Everybody who was a child in the years just after *uhuru* has their memories of what school was like then. Alphonce Mutaboyerwa went to a mission school that was taken over by the government in 1964. He tells of how pupils who left school after standard eight had more qualifications than those who today have three more years schooling.

“Compared to today the quality was high. There must have been some other spirit in the system then. But of course one reason was that the schools we had in the past were only for those that were going to have a job. They chose pupils who would fit into the colonial administrative system. Every educational system has its purpose and the British system was good at what it was designed for. The missionaries created the best schools in the country. In many of the mission schools, the brothers and the sisters were themselves teacher-trained and they were enthusiastic. I continued from standard eight in the mission school to a secondary school in Kibaha in Dar es Salaam and I can still remember that most of the new pupils in Kibaha came from the mission schools that were the guarantee of quality. It’s important to remember that the aim with the nationalization of the schools was not to attack the missions. The aim was to create a united nation where differences of religion or race played no role. The mission schools specialized in strengthening their own congregations. It was wise to stop this and to give everybody access to schooling.

When I came to Kibaha I came together with children from other religions for the first time. We were Christians, Muslims and Indians all together and there was no conflict. We all practised our own religions and that caused no problems, not even between classmates. We were friends, across the lines of ethnic group, religion and race and this was very positive. But, looking back, it’s easy to see that the school system became overloaded. The symptoms of this were shortages of supplies, inefficiency and, finally, corruption due to the shortages. Those who had access to resources had real power. Shortages also create corruption and corruption was something new in our society. We didn’t know about corruption before but, as life got harder, corruption raised its ugly head. People began to bend the rules. When there’s no proper control then people start to act against the rules and when nobody checks what happen then bad practices become the rule. The whole system was overloaded.”

Bishop Fortunatus Lukana on Ukerewe also defends the first steps that were taken even those that led to a drop in the quality of the schools. The old mission schools were good but they were there primarily for the
privileged. The system had to be changed. He himself did not experience this personally. Around the time of Uhuru he was already studying and the changes came slowly.

“There were a few shortages here and there that hadn’t been there before. In some places there was some inefficiency since people were appointed to posts that they weren’t qualified for. Nyerere was well aware of this. This is where we start, he said, and later we’ll make up for the things we can’t do now. But today we can see clearly that quality declined. Education was the major priority but the huge expansion gave big problems. There weren’t enough teachers and it became really hard to find good school principals and good teachers.”

The reforms continued but the goals were constantly hampered by shortage of money and lack of capacity. It was understandable that the education explosion started with backlogs but these were never redeemed. “Here, on Ukerewe,” says the bishop, “we have children and young people who can’t write their own name after six years in school.” So he can understand why there are parents that are not wild about sending their children to school.

Most people, though not all, agree that it was right and proper for the government to take over the private schools after independence even though quality fell. Eli Yohana Nyagawa does not agree. He himself was trained as a teacher but became a civil servant and, finally, a district commissioner. He was over thirty years old when the big changes were carried out.

“Things were done too hastily. The missions ran good hospitals and the churches made a big contribution to society. It was wrong of the government to take over the hospitals and the same was true of the schools. The missions ran many good schools and I personally think that it was a big mistake to take them over. They could have told the mission administrators that now there had to be equal access for everybody. In this area, those that advised Mwalimu made a mistake.”

In 1965, Martha Mvungi became principal of a mission school in Kidugala, near Njombe, when she was only 23 years old. She agrees with Nyagawa. “The mission schools were always supervised. There were always people out there checking quality. You could feel this and you could feel their respect. I myself was then in further education and on my way to university when the school was taken over by government. But my heart bled when I came back and saw my old school. There was no super-
vision of the nationalized schools. There was nobody to supervise them and this was one of the big mistakes. Lots of things disappeared and were simply stolen. I don’t think it was necessary to nationalize the schools. They could simply have introduced government decrees that all schools had to follow. But if they had to take over then they could have done it in another and far better way.”

Nyagawa was District Development Director in Tabora when the next great step, free primary school education for all, was undertaken in 1974. He was deeply involved in training masses of new teachers in order to meet the demand. New teachers were trained in a special programme and, when Nyagawa resigned, he was awarded a special medal by the President in gratitude for his educational activities.

“But our choice of candidates for teachers was not good. I’ll give you a shocking example. A political leader goes into a bar and is well treated by a bar girl who’s just finished primary school. He asks her “Why are you standing here in a bar when we need teachers?” So a completely random girl with seven years schooling gets chosen. “Come to my office tomorrow” he says to the girl “And then I’ll send you on to the school inspector and then you can start your training.” So we got candidates who were not motivated and were not interested in teaching but just wanted to have a job.

It was the blind leading the blind. Of course we should have started training teachers on the basis of a plan and should have developed the programme gradually. But we went the other way round. We started the programme without having the teachers and with almost no plan. And it was a huge programme. We reduced the number of illiterates, yes, but many of these became illiterate again for, in the villages, there was nothing for them to read.”

Nyagawa’s last job before retirement was that of District Commissioner in the Arusha region. He was there when, in the 1980s, the principle of free schooling for all was abandoned:

“We started by introducing the principle that parents should pay a contribution to cover the costs but not school fees as such. At first, it was only 20 shillings a year for a child in primary school but then it grew right up to 4,000 shillings and, in some regions, 8,000 shillings a year. In the villages there are a lot of really poor people. They couldn’t pay these sums and they had to take their children out of school. So we’re happy that the government has now abolished these fees.”
Jeff Makongo was eight years old when, a year after independence, he started in a bush school under a tree in a village near Lake Victoria. “The school was in my village and what was then called a bush school is what today we would call a kindergarten class. We actually did meet under a tree. There was no classroom and we each took a little stool with us to sit on under the tree. It was a Roman Catholic mission school. In my home area there were no government schools. The catechists of the mission ran these schools on a voluntary basis.”

The government began to take over the schools in 1966. But the process started slowly and at a different pace in different parts of the country. The process was really only completed at the beginning of the 70s. And then, in 1974, came free schooling for all.

“I didn’t see these changes myself when I was in the village but only later. When I look back today it’s with mixed feelings. To me it is important to say that the government’s takeover of the schools and carrying out the principle of education for all were steps that everybody welcomed. I would not be where I am today if the government hadn’t taken these decisions. I come from a very poor family.

We paid school fees. But from when I was ten, I helped in getting the money. I worked in the fields and I fished so I could help pay. When I was chosen for further studies the family held a party but I could see in my parents’ eyes that they thought: “What are we going to do? How are we going to manage?” So, Thank God for the government decision that they no longer had to find school fees. This would simply not have been possible. But we still had to work hard to find the money for the school uniform, for shoes and whatever else was needed. Both among parents and children there were high hopes and we were pleased that they would make room for everybody in the schools.

Many people thought that, if only their children completed primary school then they were guaranteed a job. That was how it had been before. So there was a kind of enthusiasm. But the quality of the schools declined and it was soon clear that there were no longer jobs for all who had been to school. Nor did the young people who left school after standard seven have the skills to set up on their own. The expectations were not met and this removed much of the motivation for sending children to school. The whole system was affected by all the extra children attending school and everything was in short supply. There was no proper support for the teachers from the educational authorities and no follow-up. So my feelings as
to what happened are mixed but I myself wouldn’t be where I am today if they hadn’t then done what they did.”

At the time of the interview, Jeff Makongo is a senior member of staff in the educational organization HakiElimu and he traces the pattern of what happened up to the present. During the time of the British, the educational system removed children from traditional agriculture. The educated got jobs. Firstly in the colonial administration, and later in other sectors. To go to school was to get away from farming. Even though farming and gardening were on the self-help school curriculum and the aim was to train the young for farming the idea of this never really got across. The quality of teaching was not good enough and the practical work was regarded more as a punishment than an option. The expectations of going to school were still to get a job away from farming.

So the parents reacted as they do today. Jeff talks about the surveys that HakiElimu carried out on Ukerewe showing that a large number of the pupils quickly dropped out of school. The reason for this is that, for a seven-year-old child there could be a better future in fishing than going to a bad school with no chance of further education nor any of the skills they really needed. (See the chapter on Ukerewe).

Nearly everybody I talked to says that people do understand that education is important. They know that, to get jobs, society demands skills and that it’s important to be competent. But what the schools have to offer has to be seen in the light of other opportunities and there’s a risk that the children learn nothing in a bad school. And on Ukerewe many think that they lose too much by going to a rotten school rather than take the chance of earning money by fishing, an industry that needs children and bigger boys.

There are other serious concerns. In the fishing villages there’s the risk of HIV and of premature pregnancy, a risk greater than in school. But at many other places the risk of sending girls a long way to school is a cause of serious concern. In the chapter on Iringa, the old women talked about how young girls often got pregnant much earlier than before. In the old days, they were often pregnant at fifteen but now they’re sometimes pregnant at twelve or thirteen. And they also said that, if the girls got pregnant, they were thrown out of school.

Parents are happy that school fees have once again been abolished and the men of Mbigili say that all the children in the villages go to school. But the re-introduction of free schooling has meant that whereas before
there were 45 children in a class, now there are 75. But it was only in 2003 that school fees stopped and this meant that, until then many people kept their children at home. They simply couldn’t raise the money.

A few children from Mbigili continue their education in a secondary school but this costs a lot of money – 30,000 to 40,000 shillings for a dayschool and eight to ten times that sum if they have to go to a boarding school. The nearest secondary school is 15 kilometres from Mbigili and many of the children go there. But they go to a day school and live together in a single room. Fifteen kilometres is a long way in a country without school buses or the money to buy bicycles. It’s hard for the parents. One of them sold a cow to raise the money. The money is one thing and the risk of pregnancy another.

None of the old people here talk about AIDS/HIV. But Mbigili is only 25 kilometres from the regional capital, Iringa. Here the District Director Gabriel Benedict Fuime told me that the village teachers were part of the problem of infection rather than part of the solution and that the older girls who, in one year are school pupils are, in the next year, attractive village girls. Even though the teachers pay is poor they do have a certain status. This is dangerous because it is still the case that, when they get their salaries they meet up with their old friends in Iringa. Here they party and go for the girls and, far too often, this leads to infection. So the teachers are also a risk in the villages and to the girls in school.

Gabriel Fuime says that between January and November his district had lost twenty teachers because of AIDS. “In all, we have 2,000 teachers, so 20 dead teachers amounts to 1 percent in ten months. With the new 2001 Plan we invest a lot in education and this is necessary since, many schools are just places where pupils go to spend their time. So we invest in new and better teachers. But while we’re trying to fill the holes in the system, all the time we’re losing teachers due to sickness and death. If we can’t break this vicious circle I fear that development will just go backwards.”

There’s a need for new and better teachers and we demand a lot from them. But, all the same, we can not do without the older teachers even though they lack the qualifications. Some started teaching at a time when no demands at all were made of them and it hasn’t been possible to upgrade them. Many are disillusioned by the lack of support, the miserable salaries, overcrowded classes and schools that are so poor that they have little motivation. Gabriel Fuime is not impressed by the teachers
and tells how they have attempted to use local teachers to help in special cases because they reckoned that because of their training they had better qualifications. They also tried to use them as supervisors in the huge national census in 2002. “But they messed it up. They were given brochures in one language, Kiswahili but there were things they didn’t understand and they made stupid mistakes. It didn’t work. The teachers we now train have a higher standard. So now we hope that there will be real improvements.”

Fuime is not afraid of talking about the challenges that the schools still face. He fears that the result of the AIDS epidemic can mean that, once again, the programme fails. And in this he’s not alone.

According to the then Minister of Education, Joseph Mungai, the estimate is that, on the national level, 7,000 teachers die each year from AIDS. Most of these are primary school teachers. The new plan must both compensate for all these deaths and lead to a dramatic improvement in the educational system. And one can see this effort all over the country.

For the District Commissioner for Ukerewe, Kazi Mwibule, schools are the major priority. “It’s true that in the past, compared with other parts of Tanzania people at Ukerewe were well-educated. There were better facilities and more primary schools; most of them run by the churches, both Anglican and Roman Catholic. Ukerewe was an island of education but, today, most of the educated people have left the island and many of the schools are pretty much in ruins. Now we really put our efforts into education. We have a big programme that aims to improve the whole educational sector and most of the schools are already better than they were before.”

The Regional Educational Director for the Iringa region, Madahu Salum, is optimistic: “There have been huge improvements since 2001. School fees prevented children from going to school but now parents are prepared to send their children to school. Abolishing school fees was a very positive step. Of course there are problems but the government is taking care of them. In the course of the last two to three years we’ve recruited and employed many new teachers. The teacher training colleges now train more than before. The students that leave after form four (eleven years schooling), get a year’s teacher training before they start teaching. New classrooms are being built and new textbooks and teaching materials are being bought.”
Others are more sceptical. The elderly Masai, Ole Meisha, who had the chance to go to Germany to study pharmacy and who had a good middle class life in Tanzania, says:

“The educational system has got worse and worse and even now we can see that it’s deteriorating. But it’s true that the government, once again, is giving it priority. There’s more investment now in government schools and in teacher training colleges. I think we’ve got to the bottom and are on the way up again. But many parents that can afford it still send their children to Kenya, Uganda and Europe to study. This shows the difference between the rich and those who are so poor that they don’t know what to eat tomorrow. There are those that send their children far away to get the absolutely best education and there are still children that cannot go to school. And there are others in the middle. I can’t afford to send my grandchildren to study in Nairobi.”

Today it’s not just the public sector that’s trying hard. For many years the government has encouraged private investment in schools and educational institutions. In the major towns one has the impression that there is a private school on every street corner. There are private Christian and Muslim schools and private commercial colleges. Nearly all of these are so-called “English-Medium Schools”, that is schools where the language of instruction is English.

Critical Tanzanians still defend the takeover of private schools by the government after Uhuru in order to create national unity and to put an end to religious and class privileges. There’s also widespread agreement that the decision to make Kiswahili the national language contributed to unity and harmony in a country with 120 different ethnic groups.

But now, once again, new divisions have been created. Since the beginning of the 1980s and the re-introduction of free education the government school system has dramatically declined. Liberalization and privatization started in the mid-1980s. Parents who were aware and who were able to pay the fees began, at an early date, to put their money into private schools, both inside and outside Tanzania.

Today, and especially in the towns, people are divided between those who have to be satisfied with what the government has to offer and those that can afford private solutions. And this starts already in the kindergarten class.
In the 1980s I met a woman who was a director in the Ministry of Education and who gave me a little insight into the family economy. She was married to a doctor with a private practice and she herself earned 6,000 shillings a month before tax and 4,000 shillings after tax. “We have to have 27,000 shillings a month after tax for the house, the car and, most important of all, to pay to send the children to private boarding schools,” she told me. In addition to her husband’s medical practice they had a chicken farm on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam and some land in the village of their childhood. With all the income they could scrape together they just about managed. But her salary was just about only pocket money.

There are hundreds of similar stories about how the middle and upper classes, in the year of economic disaster, fought to manage, first and foremost to pay for their children’s education after the government school system had broken down. It’s probably been one of the important factors leading to corruption. Many have been prepared to do anything to give their children a good chance.

Mwana Hatibu Lweno is a Muslim grandmother in the upper half of the middle class. She’s frustrated about what has happened but personally proud to be able to support her own family. Yes, there are new divisions but things are happening across these divisions. Her Muslim grandchildren go to a fairly new catholic Christian school, St. Mary’s in Dar es Salaam:

“Today, many children go to school just to have a place to go. Nothing happens in the overcrowded government schools. These schools have lost their aim and direction. Unless you, as a parent, can pay expensive fees for extra teaching or unless the child is extraordinarily bright it’s incredibly difficult for them to learn anything. When we were children we could rely on learning something in school. But today you start by paying for extra tuition in the kindergarten class. The children have no time to play. They go to school and then they go to mathematics and every sort of extra lessons outside school hours.”

Mwana Haitubu says that the private schools are also under pressure and influenced by the need to earn money. She thinks that St. Mary’s school was much better three years ago when her first grandchild started. But even though there’s a lot of pressure in the higher classes the school is far better than the government schools. It doesn’t worry her that the
school is Christian but she’s upset that the school has also become a place

to make profits.

I asked the Educational Director Madahu Salum whether he’s con-
cerned about the way that the school system is splitting the population. But no:

“What Nyerere did then was not a bad thing. At that time the deci-
sions helped to unite the country. But I don’t think the situation today

is that alarming. We’ve had problems. Earlier we were sending children
to Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. We don’t do this anymore because our

English-Language schools are good. And now the government is trying to

ensure the quality of teaching in the state schools. We have special gov-

ernment schools for children with special abilities. We have a long term
development plan for the primary schools and a plan for the development

dof further education.”

Salum’s boss, the Regional Commissioner James Luhanga, is also full

of optimism:

“We have given people a new chance to shine. One of the negative
things about socialism was that it removed the possibility for people to
take initiatives themselves. Now they can do that. They can think and
they can use this to get rich. We don’t have a class of rich and a class
of poor. Some have just thought and worked hard. They’ve gone in the
right professions and they have managed. It has become possible to earn
money and once you are rich you don’t go backwards. You get richer and
richer. But wealth is not reserved for a particular group of people. For a
short time there was greater inequality in the educational system but that
was only for a brief time. Now we’re improving primary education. We’re
strengthening the infrastructure: classes, textbooks and teaching materi-
als. It’s a long process. In all we have about 12,000 schools but we’re doing
it. We’re increasing the number of teachers and we are making the classes
smaller; from about 70 children per class to about 40. And we are improving
teachers’ qualifications. The new ones get far better training. If people
want special fancy education they can still choose private schools. But I
don’t fear that because we’ll make sure that the children that qualify can
go further. We will also improve our secondary schools. We encourage
people to build local secondary schools so that the government can then
take over the cost of salaries and materials. These will be day schools and
not expensive boarding schools. But the main part of Tanzania’s second-
ary schools will be government schools. We’ll rebuild the school system
and I really believe that, in the next ten years, it will be completely rebuilt, right up to university level. In every village it will be possible to get good primary education and there’ll be access up through the system. If people want to pay for something else they can do so. But I’m not all worried about religious schools or other fancy forms of education. It’s OK by us if people choose them. But everybody will be able to get a good education in the public system. We’ll have more universities. And we want private universities to start up. We won’t take them over but give students scholarships. We don’t deny that it can be profitable to run private universities. That’s fine. I am not worried about these trends and we can see that they provide new opportunities.”

The civil servants are delighted and not all worried. But Professor Marjorie Mbilinyi is:

“One of the most challenging results of the neo-liberal policy in the field of education has been the government’s encouragement of the private sector to invest in both primary and higher education. This happened in the mid 80s at the same time that the government and the international donors reduced their financing of public education. Since 2001 the public sector has again assumed responsibility for primary school teaching but the damage has been done. At the end of the 1990s we could see how two school systems had already developed in contrast to each other. There’s one system for those who have money and another for the big poor majority. In the private and expensive school system English is usually the language of instruction from the beginning and right throughout the whole system. This shows how the forces of globalization affect Tanzania and it is in conflict with the efforts to use Kiswahili as the language that unites and helps create national unity.”

Lots of institutions of higher education and colleges have been started in the larger towns. Fees are very high and admission is based on exams and interviews. The vast majority of children have no chance of admission.

The best English language primary schools require that pupils have gone to English language kindergarten classes before. They use a much more up-to-date pedagogy and the pupils that have gone through this system can compete with anybody, also foreigners. Marjorie Mbilinyi tells me that some of them continue to universities abroad:

“At the same, conditions in the public schools have become worse since 2001. The teachers’ salaries are still low and often not paid on time.
The junior classes are often seriously overcrowded but some of the higher classes are half empty because a third of the pupils drop out before they are finished. The cane is still an important instrument; used in primary schools, secondary schools and even some teacher training colleges. We’ve got a dualistic system: one for the rich and another for the poor. This is totally in conflict with what Mwalimu did so much to promote in the 1970s. It’s no longer race that separates and it’s not long before we realize that inequality based on class is far more explosive.”

Professor Mwesiga Baregu has grown up children (three of them live in the USA) but he also has children of eight and ten years old. He confirms the picture:

“It’s true that we live in two worlds even though we inhabit the same area. My family lives in the Kunduchi area north of Dar es Salaam. There’s a public school but in fact I don’t know the standard of it. I have never seen the inside. My two children wouldn’t dream of going there. Every morning they are driven in a bus five kilometres to the Academy International. One day I asked them “What about our local school?” and they looked at me flabbergasted. They’re at school from eight o’clock in the morning until two in the afternoon and there are other big differences. In many government schools they have to teach in shifts because there’s a shortage of both teachers and classrooms. So maybe the children get only about three hours of teaching a day.”

The cost of a good private school such as this one is 350,000 Tanzanian shillings per term. There are three terms a year so the annual cost is about one million shillings. In addition there’s the cost of textbooks, excursions, swimming lessons etc.

I meet Martha Mvungi in another of the new big, modern private schools, the ESACS Academy with 400 primary pupils and 170 secondary pupils. There’s a whole line of buses in front of the school that is on the Northern edge of Dar es Salaam. Here too the pupils are driven to school. Martha Mvungi is the school director and she’s also general secretary of the association of non-government schools. Formally, the ESACS Academy is an NGO (Non-Government Organization). It was founded by Martha Mvungi in 1995. After a long career in the Ministry of Education she decided to work for herself. She turned down a post as head of department and instead, in 1990, was linked to a Canadian-funded project to train young women. After training about 2,000 women in leadership and
social studies she jumped over to the private school system: first in awful small offices and then in a large, new and well-arranged school building.

“From 1994, the new schools outside the government system began to be selective and to set new standards in teaching. We employed teachers but we also found that many teachers really needed further training and re-training. We employed a Kenyan consultant to support and train our teachers, we held seminars and workshops. But that’s not enough. More is needed.”

It is true that Tanzanians are divided into segments”. She explains. “The division is a fact but perhaps it’s unavoidable. Remember that the global economy forces us to turn out very clever young people who are creative and able to compete with all kinds of other people. Perhaps this is not possible in a system where everybody gets the same public education. It is unfortunate but many of the private schools also try to take in some orphaned children. The schools are not there just to make money. They try to help some of those who can’t afford to pay what it costs. There is no money to be made from education but of course the schools are expensive.”

Martha Mvungi employs several Kenyans and one of them is in charge of the primary school. Today people are more willing to admit that the Kenyan school system has been better than the Tanzanian. Even though there’s a huge problem of unemployment in Kenya, Kenyans are generally better educated and have more qualifications. Martha Mvungi is not the only one who thinks so.

There’s government-to-government co-operation between Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. One of the goals is to create a common East African labour market. In Tanzania there’s fear that Tanzanian labour will not be able to compete with Kenyan. It is a matter of professional qualifications but also a question of language. Kiswahili has united Tanzania but on the walls of the ESACS Academy there are notices telling the pupils that they must speak English, even in the breaks. In English teaching too, Tanzania lags behind Kenya. Globalization requires English, not Kiswahili.

If anyone can, Martha Mvungi can describe the erratic development of Tanzania’s school system from the time of her previous status as a school principal as a twenty-three-year-old in Kidugala near Njombe, via the Ministry of Education and her positions in UNESCO to the job of director of a private school. The problems in the Tanzanian system are
not just in the collapse of primary school education but also that very few continue in the school system.

“The school system was very limited. Many never got a chance and very very few went up the system. In the early years adult education was strong and this helped some people. There was an interconnection between the students and the local society. People wanted to learn to read and write and there were useful UNESCO programmes. But when for the first time, free education was introduced for all, this happened without preparation and proper control. There was no focus on the children, let alone on their needs. One hundred children were shoved into a class with obvious negative results. The system could have dealt with a natural and gradual expansion but sometimes the political will was stronger than common sense. The system reacted to a real need but the system could not deal with the task. Now, once again, we have a plan for ‘Education for All’ at a time when the system should have gone further. At the same time, we have a large group of young and grown ups that can not read and write nor do simple calculations since they never went to school in the long period that went by between giving up free education for all until it was re-introduced. It’s a huge problem and there is a need for a huge effort, also in adult education. Nobody is more capable of doing this than the government and I think that a massive input now is possible. But the government effort has to be supplemented by the activities of the NGOs. It’s important that there is follow-up and support and this was not the case during the first campaign for Universal Primary Education. And it’s important that we do not just drop the school leavers. They’ve got to be able to get further.”

Martha Mvungi knows what educational systems require and she’s absolutely sure that in contemporary globalized society it is a system of stratification that matches the stratification of society. She hopes the government can deal with its part but the private schools will still offer something better.

So the Education Director in Iringa, Maduhu Salum is not right when he says that, today, there have been such major improvements in the educational system that people no longer really need private schools, let alone schools abroad.

Rwekaza Mukandala talks about how, in practice, there are four groups of parents of children that are seeking education and of children that are studying:
“First there are those that send their children abroad, outside Africa. Then there are those that send their children to good schools in neighbouring countries such as Kenya. The third group consists of those that use the best private schools here and, finally, there are many that only have access to the government schools.” And the state schools vary greatly from one part of the country to another.

Some things are new. But there are things that resemble what was before. Rwekaza was born in 1954 in a village near Bukoba. He went to a Catholic school in an area where there was no government school but two Christian ones, a Catholic and a Protestant. He describes his father as a kind of kulak, a rich farmer with a coffee plantation, eucalyptus trees and 100–200 head of cattle. He was an enlightened man who had taught himself to read, write and count. After *Uhuru* his mother learnt some things from the adult education programmes.

Rwekaza got through his exams so he could go further in the government educational system but his brothers and sisters were not so fortunate. So they went to private schools. Some were sent to neighbouring Uganda, not far from Bukoba. At that time there was also stratification. For some decades between then and now attempts were made to create more equality. But now Tanzania is back to an even more divided system.

When Mwalimu Nyerere’s secretary for many years, Joseph Butiku, looks back on more than 40 years’ struggle for education he starts by emphasizing the overall effort in the time after *Uhuru*. As a result of these changes a huge group of Tanzanians were trained in organization and leadership. Despite all the weaknesses this was a precondition for leading the country into the modern world. When talking about the school system itself he focuses on the relative:

“Quality is a relative concept. Seen through Western eyes it’s true that the quality of schooling has fallen at the same time as the huge development. But seen through Mwalimu’s eyes education is a tool for development and liberation and this tool must be for everybody. When education is defined as a tool that everybody must have for their own development then you can not just give this to a few people and talk about quality. At some point of time quality in teaching will be achieved for all but you can not start by giving a small group elite teaching while the great majority get nothing. This was the choice we made then and today too it’s the choice that Tanzania must make.”
Today, once again, we hear mutterings from Tanzanian society, especially from the Muslims”, says Butiku. “They were discriminated and maybe this is still true. I don’t believe it is now, but there was a gap that made it easier for Christians to get jobs because they were the best educated. This led to the danger of a divided society. This was a clear threat that Mwalimu reacted against. Today we still have Christian and Muslim schools and we must be aware of that. The fundamental thing must be government schools and the guarantee that everybody can get teaching, not just religious teaching.”

Butiku has hope in the new educational policy but also talks about how much has been lost in the years since the mid-80s when free schooling was abandoned. “What happened was embarrassing and shameful. I don’t know the figures but a large group of children have never been able to go to school. Now the government is trying to improvise and do something about it but a lot of damage has been done.”

Butiku says that: “When we talk about the lack of development on Ukerewe and the other places where 80 percent of the population lives, we must recognise that, if education is a tool to develop and to liberate the mind of the individual then we have only seen the beginning of the first phase. It’s still the case that not all children go to school and many parents have lost sight of the need for education. This was there before. Parents knew that one had to learn in order to cope for oneself and one’s family. Today many have lost faith in the belief that schooling can make a difference and coping is no longer a theme in the schools. People just wait to hear what the leaders have to say. When I grew up my grandmother and my parents told me that as a grown up man I was responsible for producing enough food for my family and my children. Today the schools don’t prepare children for tilling the soil, producing food and creating development there where they are. It’s true that at the time of ujamaa we tried to introduce farming and other practical work in the schools. But there were already then signals, that the children were no longer a part of the life of the family. Many viewed this kind of working together as a form of punishment.

Today the problem is that those that get a better or further education are preparing themselves for jobs in offices. They go away. There is a mass movement away from the areas where people should be. They are moving away from areas where they don’t know what to do, even though these areas are vital for the development of the country. There’s this mass
movement to the towns even though the fundamental problems can never be solved there. At the time of Uhuru, Tanzania was poorly prepared for the educational and technological challenges and Tanzanians are still poorly and insufficiently trained. The greatest failure is that the system of education has not changed people’s way of thinking. People have not got the means to change their situation. Now we educate an elite that thinks education makes it possible to run off and to be successful in other places such as with the donors. They don’t use their education to solve the fundamental problems of society. This is the greatest failure.”

In Tanzania there is still poor and insufficient education. Everybody agrees with Butiku about this. Society is in the midst of an effort to change the educational system. There are lots of investments in the private centres for training the upper class elite. But, with the help of the donors, there are also enormous resources invested in the plan for the development of primary school teaching, The Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP). There are continuous reports on how far the goals have been reached and a major national review in October 2004 gave insight into the efforts made at every level: from renovation and building village schools, to improving teacher training and to the production of teaching materials. Big things are happening. In general terms, the review says that huge changes have been made in only three years. You can see this in the villages. There’s not just major investment in school buildings. In the course of three years over 32,000 new teachers have been recruited and the total number of teachers in 2004 was 120,000.

But there are still problems. In this period of three years the number of pupils has grown from under 6 million to over 7 million and now there’s an average of 59 pupils per teacher while in 2001 there was one teacher per 46 pupils.

A special section of the report on HIV/AIDS makes it clear that there is apparently an alarming increase in HIV positive and AIDS sickness among teachers. In the nature of things the figures are sketchy but it is estimated that it’s realistic to count on an annual drop out in the number of teachers of 3 to 4 percent due to HIV/AIDS. This figure is a bit lower than the Ministry of Education’s estimate of 7,000 deaths a year but in all circumstances there are thousands that die every year. And the District Director Gabriel Kuiime is surely right in saying that teachers are part of the AIDS problem and not necessarily part of the solution.
A study in 2004 reveals that only 7 percent of pupils in primary school, 30 percent in secondary school and 50 percent of students in teacher training have had instruction in HIV/AIDS. Only 10 percent of teachers at primary school level have themselves received instruction on HIV/AIDS. One of the conclusions reads: “There is no good understanding of HIV/AIDS in the schools and little is known about the pupils, the students and the teachers’ knowledge, attitudes and practice about this.”

But AIDS has great influence, not just in the situation of teachers but also on the number of orphaned children. Once again, there are no accurate figures but this study estimates that between 3 and 5 percent of school pupils are orphans.

The challenges grow and grow. At the same time there is an ambitious plan for the expansion of education at the next level. There’s a Secondary Education Development Plan that runs until 2009. The goal is to increase the number of pupils in secondary schools from 345,000 in 2003 to 2,000,000 in 2010.

One cannot avoid being impressed by these efforts. Compared to the uncertainty about agricultural policy there’s far more coordination and focus. The big question is whether this time, unlike the period until 1974, it’s possible to make this huge spring forward.

In the educational organization HakiElimu these developments are followed with tension and nervousness. One of the most ambitious goals about the building of secondary schools is to build secondary schools in every ward. To save money many of these schools are to be built with local labour and there’s some enthusiasm about this. But can teachers be got hold of at this level and, if they can, can you get them to live in local areas of the countryside, far from the towns where, anyway there’s a huge development going on in well-functioning and wealthy private schools? Jeff Makongo of HakiElimu is sceptical and worried about a possible move backwards.

In February 2005 HakiElimu published a report focussing on the situation of teachers. It pointed out that they have far lower status than in the first years after independence. Their salaries are extremely low and they use a lot of money to get extra income in order to survive. A primary school teacher in the countryside gets only about 80,000 shillings a month (less than US$85). A well-trained office worker in the private sector can earn 5–6 times more. The government is aware of the problem and
there are reports that something will be done. But it’s expensive to give significantly better pay for such a large group of public employees.

The new emphasis on education must not lead to yet another defeat. And the new emphasis is huge. At the same time as this critique of miserable teacher salaries and overcrowded classrooms the government has introduced the concept of “Quality Education for All”.

The critical challenge is whether the government system will be able to provide quality education within a reasonable period of time and to provide reasonable opportunities for the millions of poor children that have no chance of getting into the schools that demand school fees. There’s also a lot of concern that the contribution of the private educational sector to the new stratification or class divisions in society increases the risk of social and political conflicts.

Will the total effort make it possible to maintain relative harmony in a country where unity and harmony has been the most successful result after uhuru? The issue is that of class divisions but it also begins to be about racial divisions. Jeff Makongo says that there is once again a trend towards racially separated schools; for example, private schools that only have Asian students. “This of course affects further the development of society. I see no Indians doctors in the remote hospitals in the countryside” says Jeff Makongo and hints at the risk of a society where the different classes and groups only work for their own interests and within their own networks.
10.

Maybe the extended family is disappearing

“We are becoming Europeans rather than Africans”, says the retired civil servant. “The feeling of community is less than before and this makes life more difficult for the young people.”

“We see a lot of hopelessness and despair”, says the leader of a children’s rights organisation.

The family

45 percent of Tanzanians are under 15 years old. There are 16 million children and very young to take over a society where poverty is the norm and unemployment is enormous and widespread. Up to a million young people join the labour market every year. The market is not very big and far fewer people leave the labour market due to age or death. This is a huge challenge to a nation where there are few possibilities in the countryside, the chances of a good education are minimal and the job market in the towns is wretched. There’s struggle for everything. First and foremost it’s a struggle to have a future. The chances depend on which of the Tanzanian worlds the kids are born into.

Yet in Africa there is still the idea of the extended family. There are big family obligations and there is more solidarity than in Europe. The individual is responsible for his relatives and to those who are distant in his lineage and not just for his or her own children or their own parents. That is the tradition.

But in Iringa the Regional Commissioner James Luhanga says that the extended family has many problems because the AIDS epidemic means that people no longer die in a sustainable way. There are too many people who die too quickly and too soon after each other and there are too many orphans. They are too big a burden for the family. Luhanga also explains how the work of UNICEF, among others, has helped create a trend so that, while the generation of the grandparents had 15 children, now parents maybe have 2 or 3 children. This is positive and necessary because
the rise in population cannot continue. But the trend also shows how the picture of the family is rapidly changing, at least in some places.

In Mwanza, Alphonse Mutaboyerwa of the Children’s Rights Association Kuleana says that Tanzania is rapidly moving away from the extended family and in the direction of the European nuclear family. “One no longer talks about common children in the family but about my children and your children; just as in Europe.” I asked Mutaboyerwa how, in his experience, young people view society today and he said:

“Usually you can only expect that people value a system in which they can find some form of security, at least in some corner of the system. It’s hard to expect that people like a system that doesn’t give them a chance. Most of the young people who leave school have no future, no money, nothing to do, no job and no kind of occupation. All they can see is the poverty around them. It’s almost impossible to convince them that they should be happy. But that’s the situation for a very large number of the young. We see a lot of desperation and hopelessness, a lot of suppressed anger and a lack of trust in the system. We also see crime, self-destructive behaviour, drug abuse and alcoholism. These are symptoms of despair. But you can not only blame the government. At the level of the family there’s also apathy and resignation about parental responsibility. We have nuclear families rather than extended families. But when the extended family no longer exists it has to be replaced by something else and this underlines greater parental responsibility. I see a lot of negligence. People are money chasers and do not see themselves as up bringers. They think that money is everything for life and the family. But the risk is they chase money but lose their children or that they hunt money but lose their wives or husbands.

People must realize that they have brought children into the world and they must ask themselves “How do I make things better for my child?” For this upbringing they must spend time and sacrifice something, set limits and show their children the consequences of their actions. We have had parents come to us with a child and say “Take this one. He’s impossible.” But he’s still the child of his parents. Parental care and responsibility have to be greater when the extended family no longer exists. In Kuleana we do a lot of work with parents and their responsibilities and if the family lets them down then the very best policies are of no use. So you can blame the government but that’s of no use. The whole nation is built around the family.”
I have often thought that the reason the HIV/AIDS epidemic has not had even more disastrous consequences in Africa is because of the extended family and the responsibility of the extended family.

Today this is a far too optimistic assessment. Maybe there are areas and communities where people still help each other. But in many places you’re alone. You only have responsibility for yourself. Take funerals. When someone dies this usually brings friends and families together. They help each other, pay for the funeral and comfort each other. But gradually it’s more seldom that there’s help and support before the death, when the person is sick. People do not generally put a lot of time into caring but they are still prepared to spend time on funerals, marriages and these kinds of events. Family ties are not so strong as before and they are still being weakened. It sounds fine to appeal for a return to the original way of life with a greater sense of responsibility but that’s not very realistic.”

But what happens when the parents disappear? There are more and more orphaned children.

“Yes, and the grandparents are also poor. They’re old and weak and there’s little they can do. So there are more and more families in which children are the head of the family. It’s terrible but it’s true. The parents are dead, the grandparents are dead, the children are alone and they have to find out how to survive. Some find work as domestic servants. They’re underpaid and overworked. Some are abused. The number of families that consist just of children is growing. Children come to us and we check them out and confirm that there’s no family to help them. There’s economic poverty but I also define poverty as the mental and material incapacity to mobilize resources that can solve these problems. Mobilization can strengthen people and, among others, this is what NGOs do. But poverty is growing, both financial and in the other sense of the word. A part of the reason for this is that the party system is dying out, there’s no popular mobilization anymore. People do not see any prospects for the future and there’s nobody to encourage them. In this way too, poverty is growing.”

What does Kuleana do when children say “I’ve got no home, there’s nowhere I can go”?

“We can not keep them long here but we can try to help them if, despite everything, they do have a home. We can also send them to some of the hostels run by the missionaries where they care for orphaned children.
Alphonce Mutaboyerwa: “Most of the young people who leave school have no future, no income, nothing to do, no job, no kind of occupation.”

We try to help them with different kinds of job training and to find work. And we’re not the only organization.

But it’s very difficult.”

“The extended family is still there, but it’s under stress and it’s true that the focus is on the nuclear family” says James Luhanga. Referring to the many deaths from AIDS he adds: “People do what they can, they meet for the funerals, but all the same when a mother and a father to 4 or 5 children dies they begin to talk about placing the children outside the family, even though in the past they would have rejected this for their own kin.”

In Mwanza, the retired civil servant, Eleather Mahawi says: “The old way of understanding a bigger community has almost disappeared. Today family responsibility is only to the parents and the close relatives. The old system whereby you could eat and sleep anywhere as long as there was room has almost gone. I don’t know whether it’s a positive thing but today, to do and to use what you have properly you have to limit the old system. Before, life was easier. There was food and resources for everyone. Now there are shortages and peoples’ attitudes are changing.

We’re becoming Europeans rather than Africans. It’s more difficult for the young today than it was before. Then we could travel and stay with
family members, perhaps for a whole month without paying. Today you can’t do that. When we were young it was much easier to get attention from our parents and relatives. There was a kind of divided responsibility. Today, if you’re poor, you’ve only got yourself. Earlier there were also more taboos and we did what our parents told us. I first had sex when I had completed secondary school. Today the atmosphere is different and we have more sub cultures, more mixed cultures and fewer clear rules. There are areas where 60 different ethnic groups live together and mix. This leads to fewer norms and freer sex. The young start their sex life earlier. In my time it was completely unheard of that a teacher would run off with a pupil. But now it’s quite normal. Then it was unthinkable that a 12-year-old girl got pregnant but today this often happens. Children were with their parents for a longer time.”

In Tanzania the norms are different for the different ethnic groups. There are differences in the ways family patterns change and there are surely differences between those who are poor and those who are wealthy.

Professor Rwakaza Mukandala does not agree with the idea that the extended family is disappearing:

“It’s important to understand the concept of the extended family,” he thinks. “There’s the core of the family and then there’s the family outside the core. The thinner the blood connection the less the closeness and there’s nothing new in that. Families meet for funerals, weddings and other family events. There are clearly defined rules about bride price, inheritance and a number of other things. One of the rules is that parents have complete responsibility and duty to look after their children until marriage. You can also help children of other family members but that is not a duty in the same way. One of my brothers died and I helped the children with their schooling. I did so because I could afford it and because I wanted to but it is not a duty.”

As Luhanga said, it’s also about sustainability. How huge is the pressure on the family and how much can it manage? And there’s also a difference between the well-educated and wealthy families and those that live on the breadline. Mahawi’s example of a local community in which live people from 60 different ethnic groups is a typical example of a fishing community by Lake Victoria. These communities that provide Nile perch for the European table are also villages that many Tanzanians describe as like Sodom and Gomorra.
The District Commissioner on Ukerewe, Kazi Mwibule, has such a fishing village in his district. It draws young men and boys from a very big area because there’s money to be earned. Girls and women also come and the cultures and norms break down. Here, the idea of the extended family is very weak.

Mwibule tells about how there’s a need for people to control their sexuality and to limit HIV infection. But he also talks about the wild, dangerous and uncontrollable life in the fishing villages. He knows that the official version is that the longer the girls stay in school – despite the fear that the girls who are not supervised get pregnant – the older they normally are before they get their first child. But he knows that he’s up against powerful forces in the way that such a local community works.

At a time when demographers expect a slow but continuous decrease in the average number of births per woman he talks about the changes in the family pattern and the end of taboos that can have the opposite effect.

“Women can give birth to more children today because many of them are healthier than before and because many taboos have gone. For example, in the old days it was forbidden for women to have sex as long as they were breast feeding and they often did this for 2 years. In this period the husband slept with a girlfriend and the mother slept alone. But this custom was forbidden for Catholics. At that time there were also other methods to limit the number of births. There were plants, there was magic and even though these methods were not very effective yet there was a certain control that is not there today.”

Jeff Makongo from HakiElimu says he was not very surprised to hear that the national growth in population has for many years been almost three percent a year even though the AIDS epidemic kills more and more:

“In one or other way this is what I expected. When I grew up, the young girls got married earlier, especially those that didn’t go to school. And when they married early they also got children. What happens today is different. Lots of young girls and boys do not get married yet they do have children. They didn’t do this before. It’s true that we need to lessen the pressure of population growth in order to control our problems. But how do we do this? We do have a policy on this. You can find documents with the official policy but it’s a policy that’s somewhere up in thin air. It’s difficult to see how it can be carried out down here on earth.”
The individual accounts are full of contradictions and are there in everyday life. There are far more deaths than before due to, among other things, AIDS but it’s also true that 40 years of serious efforts in public health have reduced maternal mortality and disease connected to pregnancy. Infant mortality fell for many years but is once again on the increase. At the time of Uhuru every fourth newborn child died before it was 5-years old. Today it is only one in seven, although AIDS has weakened the progress.

Tanzania has the right family planning policy. The religious communities have not been allowed to hinder family planning activities. You can get condoms at muslim health clinics. But this does not mean that the policy reaches, or is accepted by, the whole population. The classic theory on population growth says that while information and the offer of birth control are important the crucial thing is social and economic development. In traditional society, having many children was the route to wealth. In modern society children are an expense and it is therefore sensible to have only 2–3 children per family. If infant mortality falls with social development then parents can also be sure that their children survive.

But theorists also talk about the poverty trap. If there is no social and economic growth then the theory doesn’t work so there’s the risk that population growth continues. If poverty is not reduced and if the HIV/AIDS epidemic kills more and more children then a result might be that many people choose to have more children to ensure the survival of the lineage. So it’s difficult to make predictions about population growth and to predict how individual families will react.

I have chosen to talk to middle-aged and elderly people in Tanzania. People, who can remember the history and have a perspective on the present. They talk less about HIV and AIDS than I had expected. When I ask people about this it is particularly the more educated that tell me that things are really bad. People just don’t want to talk about it much. It’s a way to suppress it but suppression is sometimes necessary in order to get other things to work. But the subject of the epidemic comes up in other ways as, for example, when the district director says that the school plan could fail since so many teachers are dying or in a discussion of how the family structure is affected by both individualism and the new economy and by the way that people no longer die in a sustainable way.
Maybe the extended family is disappearing

Yet there are many people who, at the personal level, talk openly about AIDS. When I spoke to seventy-year-old Nyagawa in Iringa the theme was primarily about early historical development in Tanzania and we didn’t discuss AIDS until at the end when I asked him about his family. Without being asked, he told me that 2 of his 8 children had died of AIDS, a daughter aged 23 who was in teacher training college and a son of 35 who was a bookkeeper and a father. He left behind two boys and one of them has since died of AIDS: “It will be the end of us if they don’t find a medicine” he says. “The number of orphans is growing each and every day.”

Tanzania is a society where far too many people are dying. The future prospects for far too many of those alive, the frustrated and unemployed poor and tens of thousands of orphaned children are terrible. The parents are frustrated, even those parents that have coped well. Mwana Hatibu Lweno has retired from her job but has some agricultural land south of Dar es Salaam. She is sixty and has 4 children and 5 grandchildren. That is not a lot for Tanzania:

“When we were young we supported and helped our parents when they were getting old. But now that we’re getting old it is our children that want us to support and help them. They are worried that they won’t get the chance to live the life they want to have”, she says. Mwana helps her children and her grandchildren. As a well-educated Muslim she talks with pride and joy about how her Muslim grandchildren started in a newly opened Christian school. But she’s quite clear that today people think mostly of coping for themselves and their closest family:

“The situation for young people today is terrible. I’m a kind of middle-class person and we don’t have problems. But when I drive through town and see the horde of young men between 16 and 24 selling all kinds of strange things on the street and in fact have nothing to do I feel sad and hot inside. I can’t stop thinking “Could that be my grandchild?” There are no jobs and that’s not all. Young people can not see a goal or direction in their lives. They go to school and they leave school and they know nothing and cannot do anything. When I went to school we girls at least learnt to use our hands. We learnt a bit of housework. At the very least there should be a bit of occupational training for all young people. The schools have started a little bit again but it’s almost nothing.”

Selemany Mchongo is 65 years old and a former construction worker. He has 4 adult children and says that the oldest of his children got the
best education. Since then the standard declined. *Uhuru* meant that he got an education since he benefited from the new adult education programme. So he thinks education is very important but that it has got more difficult in recent years:

“In the 60s and 70s you could save a little bit out of an average salary in the public sector. You could maybe build a little house from your savings. You can not do that today. Before, after paying your taxes you could count on getting medicine and treatment if you fell ill. Today it’s very hard to get medicine even when you have paid your tax. At one time when I was a child and my parents were already old I was seriously ill. They took me to hospital where I was treated and got well. But today I don’t have the money to take my grandchildren to hospital. I don’t know where the money goes. The hospitals are worse and the schools are worse. Life is difficult for the poor. Ordinary people suffer more than they did before. Maybe it’s because today we’re so many people. At that time we were only a few.”
Corruption has become a quality of leadership

“Corruption is now widespread as part of development and the most alarming thing is that, in recent years, corruption in the political system is growing”, says former Prime Minister Joseph Warioba.
Corruption is everywhere, and it is tolerated.

Corruption

In most countries of the world, corruption is a plague. But corruption can be different things. In many cultures there is a long tradition for giving presents and getting something in return. It is said that the relationship between client and patron (protector) is the basis of many traditional social relationships. In a hierarchy there are some that pay and others that offer protection. This can lead to gross exploitation and, in many cases, this has happened. But it can also give a certain security. Many people consider it natural to pay for a benefit from the chief of the political system even though this is in reality the same as corruption.

In Northern Europe, shown in surveys to be the least corrupt part of the world, there’s a tradition that billions of dollars are spent on the black market, where taxes or value added tax are not paid. Very few people consider this as corruption but the dictionary definition of corruption covers not just bribes but also other services in conflict with the law, including the black market.

Many Africans hate corruption but they are also tired of being criticised by those who say that corruption is a special African phenomenon. What about Italy? What about Japan and what about China? Are there not countries known for corruption that are doing well? All the same, corruption is hated, especially by the poorest. Corruption makes inequality worse since a result is that you can buy a public office, an education and influence. It means that there’s no guarantee that money is actually spent on what it was intended for. Widespread corruption makes all formal procedures unpredictable. Investors can pay for advantages. But many professional investors are tired of corruption’s unpredictability and of the expensive delays that corruption creates in paperwork, harbour pro-
cedures, goods transport and every other kind of thinkable and unthinkable situation.

Every year, the organization Transparency International publishes an index of the extent of corruption in the world. In the nature of things it can’t be exact. The index is based on the assessments and opinions of experts and, to be sure, in some cases on prejudice. All kinds of countries are assessed on a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 means no corruption and 0 means sky high corruption. Then countries are ranked, with the least corrupt at the top and the most corrupt at the bottom. In 2004 Tanzania got 2.8 and was listed number 90 in the world. Tanzania shared this position with Russia, India, Nepal, Gambia, Malawi and Mozambique. The 5 Scandinavian countries were among the top 8 and the only non-Scandinavian countries at the top were New Zealand, Singapore and Switzerland. Finland was number 1 with an index scale of 9.7. Denmark was 9.5. This was before employees in the Danish Immigration service were arrested for taking bribes.

But the index can surprise those who are prejudiced. Botswana in Africa is placed better than Italy. The five best-placed African countries are higher on the index than China that is placed number 71. Tanzania’s score is not just better than African countries such as Kenya and Uganda but also better than Vietnam, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Bangladesh shares the bottom position with Haiti, with an index score of 1.5.

Corruption is discussed far and wide in Tanzania. Everybody has their own opinion as to the extent and accusations – not least against politicians – fill the air. The debate got lots of ammunition when, in December 1996, a report by an anti-corruption commission was published stating that corruption was rife throughout Tanzanian society.

Mister Anti-Corruption is the former Prime Minister Joseph Warioba. He became chairman of the Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission after the 1995 election. Today it’s called the Warioba Commission. The Commission documented corruption and presented its results. Such an open and comprehensive documentation had never been seen before.

“There was also corruption before 1995 and there was already corruption before independence because the British passed a law against corruption in the 1950s” says Joseph Warioba in his office in Dar es Salaam. “But corruption then was confined to lower ranks of the civil service and it was not a serious problem. It didn’t have major influence on peoples’ economic and social life. Now it does.”
Warioba says that corruption grew after independence but that, from the start, the government took a strong line. The first case at a high level occurred in 1963 when the Minister of Justice was forced to resign. But corruption continued to grow. Around 1971 the government passed an anti-corruption law and in 1983 a law was passed against economic sabotage that covered corruption but this didn’t stop the spread. In 1989 the party appointed an anti-corruption commission and it presented its report to the party in 1990. This showed that corruption was now a very serious problem and the party’s debates and decisions led to the resignation of the government.

“I was Prime Minister and, in March 1990, I and all my ministers resigned. The President re-appointed most of the ministers, including me, but not the 7 ministers whose areas of responsibility had the most widespread corruption. These included the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice. At the election of 1995, corruption was a very serious campaign issue. The current president (then Mkapa) promised that, if he were elected, he would really do something about corruption and a year later he appointed the Presidential Commission on Corruption with me as chairman. We produced a national report that covered all sectors and the whole country and concluded that corruption was massive, both small corruption, so-called petty corruption at a low level and big corruption at the highest level of government, especially in the financial sector and around public purchase. The report analysed the basic reasons and gave a number of recommendations. The report was very comprehensive and direct and the president decided that the report should be made public. Such a decision had never been made before. Usually a commission reports only to the government but our report was published and the major newspapers printed it as a special edition. For the first time, the public got full knowledge of the extent of corruption and of its causes. It was a milestone. Before that people could say, corruption isn’t so bad, and Tanzania is not like Kenya. But they couldn’t do that anymore. Now corruption became an issue on the public agenda. People could speak openly and corruption has been in the news since then. Hardly a day goes by without the newspapers writing about it.”

And what happened then?

The government has tried to act on our recommendations and has taken some action. A national anti-corruption strategy has been established and the president appointed a minister with good governance as his area
of responsibility and special focus on the fight against corruption. Several 
laws have been passed and others revised that make it easier to combat 
corruption and to have more transparency. One of the most important is 
a law about tenders and public purchases. There’s lots of corruption about 
tenders and public construction work. A law has been passed about state 
finances, that strengthens control and auditing of accounts. Measured in 
this way the government’s actions have been colossal. To a certain extent 
big time corruption is perhaps less than it was in 1995 and has certainly 
not grown at the same speed as previously. So there has been some suc-
cess. But, generally speaking, the extent of corruption has not changed, 
especially at lower levels and in political life. In the field of social affairs, 
in the educational system, the health sector and the courts nothing really 
positive has happened and the most alarming thing is that corruption in 
the political system has increased. In politics corruption is worse today 
than it was in 1995. Whether we look at the political parties, local govern-
ment or parliamentary or presidential elections there is lots of corruption 
at every level and in every political party.”

How do you explain that corruption is unchanged even though the presi-
dent stood for election on the promise to fight corruption at the same time as 
awareness of corruption has grown and the media discuss it?

“We thought that the new situation would automatically reduce cor-
ruption. This is what we thought and hoped. But that did not happen. 
We had the support of the president but it was wrong to think that this 
meant there was a real political will. Corruption was institutionalized and 
still is. It requires a lot more to combat this kind of corruption than one 
single person. The president’s commitment has not filtered down through 
the system and out to the people who ought to support him in the strug-
gle. It’s especially at the political level that we haven’t seen this; among 
the political leaders, the ministers. If you have been elected with the help 
of corruption it’s hard to fight corruption. People have no confidence in 
their elected leaders and there’s a tendency to continue this corruption to 
keep the position you’ve got with the help of corruption. That’s what we 
see. On paper the government has the instruments that are needed but we 
lack the leaders that really feel committed.”

When I talk to people around the country they all talk about corruption. 
They also say openly that a particular district commissioner or local govern-
ment is corrupt. It is almost official but they say that the only thing that hap-
pens when a corrupt official is exposed is that he’s moved to a different post. He then carries on somewhere else.

That’s why I say that corruption is institutional. It is at every level and it is tolerated or the people that should control it are themselves involved. Corruption can’t be fought just by a man at the top who cannot know everything. And corruption has spread to every field. We talked to lots of people throughout the country, and they were ordinary people. They told us things and they showed us documents so we went to the government and asked to see the papers. Civil servants at high levels did not come to us voluntarily. They were very guarded. The great majority of them only came to us when they had to or when they were summoned. But we met thousands of other people. We went to villages and asked to see people at an open meeting to hear their views. After that we spent two or three days to meet people individually behind closed doors. At one of the open meetings a man said “I do not believe you can do anything about corruption.
in this country unless you replace the whole leadership from the village to the very top. Corruption has become a quality of leadership. He talked about members of Parliament that talk about corruption but themselves use corruption to get elected. “How can I trust them?” he asked. “They talk in parliament to get attention and to become ministers. But I’ve noticed that ministers don’t talk about corruption.”

I asked him why he meant that corruption is a part of being a leader and he answered by talking about the chairman of his village. He was a quite ordinary man and before he was elected he lived in an ordinary village house made of clay with a thatched roof and dressed modestly, he wore sandals and ate ugali in the morning. After being elected he changed completely. He went around in smart clothes, bought good shoes, built himself a fine house and went to a restaurant for his breakfast. “I know he didn’t get a salary, so he could only do this with the help of corruption.”

Later I asked him “Why do you accept it? Why do you also accept a bribe to vote for a certain candidate and he answered: “What do you expect? For the last five years it’s always us that pay, at the health clinic, in court, in school, everywhere. All the time we have got to pay. Every fifth year when there’s finally an election it’s us that are offered a bribe. Wouldn’t I be an idiot to say no?”

“His tale alarmed me. It is everywhere in politics. In the one-party system there wasn’t much corruption. The party paid for political campaigns and not the candidates. But after the multi-party system was introduced corruption has grown so enormously that even the nomination of a candidate is affected by massive corruption. And when we get to the actual election contest it is clear that there’s massive corruption. In some cases, quite ordinary people ask for money just to be registered. The governing party is organized at grass roots level and when the nomination process starts, the local leaders, right down to the level of the party cell, are involved and corrupted. People know that the cell leaders are paid and so the voters also want to be paid. During the election campaign the candidates pay for entertainment and small presents are given out to the voters. All the time, the politicians are talking about corruption but pretty much all of this is just rhetorical.

All the same I’m convinced that the anti-corruption report was important by making the debate public and creating public awareness about these things.”

*At the time of uhuru did you imagine such an extent of corruption?*
“In a way, it’s developments that have led to the spread of corruption. In the first years of independence people could make ends meet. When I was employed by government in 1966 I got a good salary. I could pay for our daily needs, save money and build a house. Later two things happened. After the nationalizations in 1967 a large number of parastatals were set up and the people in charge found out that they could make money out of their monopoly situation. Then came inflation and salaries were no longer enough to get by. Corruption began, but still at a low level. Appointment and promotion were still based on qualifications. There was no nepotism. I come from a very small tribe and yet I managed to serve my way to the top. But conditions have changed and corruption has penetrated everything. Before, as a politician you had to have the people’s support and close contact with them. People had to know you and have confidence in you. But with time we got procedures, we consolidated the party system and people in the party got power. There were people in the party who decided who should get this or that job. These people had power and corruption too developed. For 25 years I was at the top of the party, in the executive committee and election was based on qualifications. It’s not like that now. The central committee members were well-known national leaders. But today, if I ask people who are the members of the central committee nobody knows. They are not national leaders. The party is still there but it is no longer a popular movement. And now the government has more power than the party.”

And now the traditional question as to whether there is a particular African problem with corruption.

“There are always specific reasons for the growth of corruption. Here, among other things, there’s been the economic crisis and inflation. But it’s important to emphasize that corruption is corruption. Kenya decided to choose another development path than Tanzania, yet Kenya has more corruption. Corruption in Africa has to do with the level of development but I do not think there’s more corruption in Africa than in the developed countries. It’s built into your system in a different way because your systems are strong. The significance of corruption for your economies is thus also less. But corruption is there: everywhere and in every system.”

The oldest survivor of the elderly is the former Vice President Rashid Kawawa, and he says “It’s true” when I ask him whether Warioba is right in saying that corruption has moved to the highest level in the political
system. He confirms that today there are politicians who are richer than politicians in the past had ever been. When I ask him whether he’s disappointed he says “Yes” and repeats this thoughtfully several times.

His answer is also clear when I ask him whether corruption in recent years has become worse or less. “It’s worse” he says. He’s in no doubt that the party does what it can to stamp out corruption. Despite his 80 years he still follows and knows about the debates but he also knows how difficult it is to attack corruption. He says that, when you have children you want to give them the best start in life but salaries are not enough. He knows about the argument that the multi-party system has made corruption worse. There are more people to be bribed.

“Our people were not honest enough”, he says, talking about the early corruption among the leaders of the nationalized companies in the 1960s. But he explains the massive increase in corruption with the argument that while economic activities before uhuru involved a few people today the whole country is involved. “Africans were not at all involved in the economy before. Now they are and so corruption has also spread before we were aware of it.”

The researcher at the University of Dar es Salaam, Professor Issa Shivji, thinks that there’s an important psychological difference between the time in the 1970s and the 1980s when corruption got serious and now. Then even though there were people who used their position unjustly to rake in money and advantage it wasn’t then legitimate to be rich. Now it is and you can even boast about your wealth. Of course you would never admit that your wealth had been achieved with the help of corruption and would refer to one’s “personal achievements”.

I asked Shivji whether a different development path in Tanzania could have prevented corruption from being so widespread and he answered, just as Waroiba did, that corruption is a reality everywhere but that it’s greater in countries that have followed other paths.

“Because of our economy corruption is highly visible here. But I would like to say to those that see a connection between socialism and corruption, that I do not see that connection. Today we have more corruption than we had at that time but we have absolutely no socialism. It’s no longer petty corruption but there’s definitely more corruption at high levels. We all know that when there’s privatisation, the multi-national companies use corruption to get what they want. It’s been like that all over the world. So I don’t see any connection between socialism and corruption. It’s a
problem that when we talk about corruption we think of petty corruption but, in practice, that is the easiest to control. Far more is required to fight corruption at the level of government and among decision makers. It’s extremely hard and requires both courage and great influence. But I don’t see corruption as the decisive problem for Tanzania. The decisive thing is the vision we should have for this country. What’s needed is a vision that comprises the whole people, something that people can identify with and will work for. It’s the great collective national vision we lack above all other things. It would also help solve other problems.”

Big or small corruption. The ordinary poor Tanzanian is most aware of petty corruption but when petty corruption pervades society and affects almost everybody the consequences are huge.

When the old people on Ukerewe say that everything has become incredibly expensive they don’t distinguish as to whether the payment is a bribe or money under the table or an official fixed and legal price. The rules have varied since uhuru. At times schools and health clinics have been officially free. At other times parents and users had to pay part of the costs. But their memory is that gradually everything has become more and more expensive and that all the time they had to pay more and more, officially or unofficially. Many have noticed that school fees have in fact disappeared since the latest reforms in 2001 and they hope it stays that way. But they are sceptical.

In the economically worst years when teachers and health assistants were, in reality, not paid, an underground economy developed in which Tanzania’s poor had to pay for everything that the public sector could provide. And it’s still the common view: “Health clinics and treatment are for those that can pay. The rest are allowed to die,” as the 81-year-old Sylvester Mazigo said. He adds that corruption is much worse than before. Others sing the same tune. There are more clinics and more medicine: “But there is only treatment for those that can pay.”

Corruption can also lead to murder. Bishop Fortunatus Lukanima tells that it has happened on Ukerewe that people murdered a cattle thief rather than bring him to the police. “Everybody knows that those arrested bribe the officers and are released.

People took justice into their own hands and murdered the cattle thief.”

Corruption affects all kinds of life and is part of many descriptions of the past and present. “In the past you could not bribe your way through
the educational system” says Jeff Makongo when he describes his own struggle for education and he says, without hesitation, that now you can. You can give a bribe to be able to see the exam questions in advance, you can bribe your way to the exam certificate and to a passport.

A few months after Jeff Makongo made this statement education swindles were, once again, front page stuff in the newspapers. The Leader of the National Examinational Council was fired at the beginning of 2005 after it was pointed out that examination papers had been widely leaked before the national exam so that everybody who could afford it knew the questions in advance and then could prepare for the exam.

Like most people, The Bishop of Ukerewe thinks that society was almost without corruption prior to uhuru. He is certain that corruption grew after the wave of nationalizations that both led to shortages of equipment and money and to high inflation:

“Nyerere was a sort of prophet and he himself was totally above corruption. He was convinced that it was possible to avoid being corrupt. But not everybody was a Nyerere and corruption developed.”

An overworked system, a society of shortages and an economy in a state of collapse made for an explosive increase in corruption in the socialist period. Over the last 15–20 years, liberalization and the market orientation have led to a change in the nature of corruption. Via the political system there were easy and cheap routes to the liberalized market system. Warioba says that, while most of the old leaders were relatively modest members of the middle class, there are now politicians who, after ten years in leadership positions, are millionaires. At the top level corruption has tended to move more to the level of the politicians than was the case before. So the politicians, particularly after the change from a one-party system to a multi-party system, want to get rich and to get more money for their election campaigns and to bribe voters and local leaders. This has given corruption yet another turn of the screw.

For Joseph Butiku, who for years lived according to Nyerere’s ideal of honesty and community, the worst thing is the change of attitudes towards corruption:

“Yes, there was corruption when I was a child. My father was the local village leader and sometimes sat on the local court. I remember that in my childhood people sometimes came to us with a goat. ‘What is this for?’ he would ask. ‘I would like to help you with some meat.’ But he would answer: ’No, No, No. If I accept the goat people will say that my
Corruption has become a quality of leadership

judgement was biased.’ Yet sometimes this did happen and you heard complaints that a judgement was not fair because the accused had bribed the court. So there was corruption, but it was a brand and a source of shame to be considered corrupt. You weren’t respected. It’s not like that today. Today corruption is like daylight robbery. People quite openly ask for money. “Either….or, is what it’s about. “Either you pay…..or”. And it’s everywhere. I see two explanations. For some people it’s a way of thinking and of life. It’s a kind of basic attitude, a lifestyle. That’s life. For other people, they see it as a result of the lack of goods and services.

People can still not get what they need easily and they have to pay for this under the table. It’s the way things are. There’s competition to survive and it’s also part of poverty.”

The corruption in a “shortage society” was very visible in the 1970s and part of the 80s. The official system hardly functioned. There was really a parallel economy. The daily struggle was not about rules and procedures but to get by. It was pretty much impossible for state employees to avoid being part of this corruption. In the 1980s when I interviewed a Tanzanian university teacher he said: “We’re all stealing because no one can survive on their salary. I sing my own praises that all I steal is time.” By this he meant that he couldn’t dream of spending his whole working day at the university which provided him with an officially fulltime salary because you could not live off a university salary. I met him because he had a good consultancy job with an aid agency.

Eleather Mahawi was a district official in the Shinyanga region at the time after the Arusha Declaration in 1967. He says that people then were happy about the schools and the new opportunities:

“But then things changed. Lots of schools were opened. They were free but there were no teachers, no proper classrooms and, once again, people got frustrated. It was our job to mobilize the village people. We should mobilize the local people to build schools and teachers’ houses and health clinics. It was one of our most important jobs. But we always lacked resources. People wanted to do something but we lacked corrugated iron sheets, we could not get cement and there was no transport. There was a shortage of all kinds of materials. And for a long time it got worse and worse. In point of fact this continued to get worse until 2–3 years before Nyerere’s death in 1999. For the whole period from 1967 until 1995 the situation was critical. There were people in the system who tried to change the policy but they were fired. You could not be in opposition. I didn’t
like what was going on. It was a time of bad planning, the wrong use of resources and masses of corruption. It was extremely unsatisfactory.”

Mahawi quietly gives his own account of micro-corruption when he was a child in the 1950s and 60s. He went to a boarding school and at the time of school holidays there was a bus that drove them home from school. It was free but all the same the driver demanded some coins. “This of course was a kind of corruption. So there was corruption then. But it got worse after independence and worse again when the shortages got really serious in the 1980s.”

*Is there less corruption today?*

“Less? I think there’s more. It hasn’t got better. And now corruption is completely open. At least that time it was a bit secret. The government claims that it’s doing something about it but the results are negative.”

In the tough times of the 1980s, Eleather Mahawi worked on regional development in Tanga. His title was community development officer and I asked him how corruption affected his work:

“Among other things I should advise on the procedures in the government system. But when I talked to people they complained that they had to pay just to see a government official and to get anything at all. It was almost impossible to advise people. You could never be sure that what you advised them to do was possible. People were constantly running into problems and this impeded their input. It affected everything”, he says. “It was difficult to arrange meetings because every rumour, for example that you could get sugar or cooking oil simply emptied the room. And everybody tipped everybody. Society ran on tips and bribes.”

Mahawi too got tips even though he says that this wasn’t easy in his service job. Everybody used the channels to get through the day. Sometimes corruption was the way to get resources to where they were really needed. But when there was corruption everywhere it was also a way to prevent resources getting to where they were needed. The money ended up in the wrong pockets. You feel embarrassed when, after you have taken part in consulting and planning what should be used for a new classroom to see the money go somewhere else. This was what happened to me. I didn’t give up but in the last years before I retired I spent more and more time to find out how I could get resources from other channels. I put together suggestions for projects and I went to the donors for money, materials and staff. We succeeded in getting money from, among other
Corruption has become a quality of leadership
donors, Sweden and help from the Danish Volunteer Service (DVS, now MS). In this way we at least got something done.”

Corruption is institutionalised. The poor have to pay and the rich get a standard of living they want to keep. Salaries are not as bad as they were a few years ago but state employees can still not save up to buy a house or a plot of land on their official salaries and have no chance at all of paying for a private school so that their children can get the best education.

And what about life after retirement? I meet many Tanzanians in or around the retirement age, and one of them tells me that life is now so tough, that, according to him, insufficient retirement schemes fuel corruption. Public employees want to improve their situation after retirement, and people outside the public sector have no pension schemes at all, so they all use corruption in efforts to be able to make some savings for their old age.

Most ordinary people just pay up and curse corruption. In Iringa, the Regional Commissioner James Luhanga is one of those who see great possibilities in the new Tanzanian society. He’s not worried about the changes and for the inequality that has increased. That there’s now a group of rich people he sees new possibilities for investment. They can create jobs and, yes, with the new system there can even be investments in new private universities. For him, corruption is a less important thing:

“It’s true that there is corruption as everywhere else. And it’s true that there are people who’ve become rich through corruption. But they are not a special class and sooner or later they’ll be disclosed. Corrupt people tend to squander their money and to boast about their wealth. They can not hold on to their wealth so corruption is not a real factor in society, not a main factor. We don’t shut down banks because we fear that people will rob them. We have to focus on the main developments in society and that is not corruption.”

But maybe it’s important to remember that a regional commissioner has the status of a minister in the national political hierarchy.
Harmony continues, but conflicts are becoming sharper

The divisions in society deepen, and fear of fragmentation is increasing, finding stronger religious and political expression. And multi-party democracy stimulates conflict.

Religion and multi-party democracy

“Tanzania’s unity was created under an authoritarian system. There were sacred cows, but the differences have been there all the time, smouldering under the surface. Differences are always differences. What is new is that now people can talk about them openly, so that the differences are exposed to the light. What is important is how we recognize the differences and make sure that they are not ignored.”

At the university in Dar es Salaam, I have asked the social scientist, Professor Rwekaza Mukandala, the standard question about the reasons why almost everyone talks about tendencies toward more division and disharmony in Tanzania after liberalization and the introduction of market economy and a multi-party system. His answer is that some of the tensions have been there all the time. Unity was not only the result of a total political vision and egalitarian policies; it was also maintained by an authoritarian state that did not allow disagreement.

But Tanzania, in spite of these tendencies, continues to be peaceful and stable. And OECD and the African Development Bank’s 2004 annual report not only calls Tanzania one of the most stable nations in Africa, but also reports Tanzania’s continually stronger democratic commitment, with improved strategies for good governance, less corruption, a strengthened ethical commission, and increased efforts for human rights.

The report also states that “although Tanzania’s economy has grown quickly during recent years, poverty is widespread throughout the country”. Several studies all point out that there have only been small improvements in poverty reduction during the last ten years. At the beginning of this century, 36 percent of Tanzania’s population lived below the level
that, according to Tanzania’s own calculations, can ensure satisfaction of the most basic needs. Ten years earlier, this figure was 39 percent.

It is estimated that 2.3 million people or 13 percent of Tanzania’s total work force are unemployed. More than half of the unemployed live in urban areas, and in 2001, unemployment in Dar es Salaam was 46.5 percent, while in other cities, more than 25 percent. According to the report, unemployment is a major problem for young people between the ages of 10 and 24. There are no figures for the employment rate among poor rural families that do not earn enough for their daily bread let alone their children’s future. Actual unemployment is higher than indicated by the available figures.

The Tanzanian economy is more dynamic than earlier, and economic growth in most recent years has been 5–6 percent per year. But the growth is far from stable. There is lots of activity in the mining sector and more money is being earned in the gold mines. This provides jobs. There are also more tourists than earlier, and some enterprises in the modern sector show growth. In some areas, positive things are also happening in agriculture. But in relation to the extensive, eroded land areas and the almost one million young people entering the labour market each year, all this does not look very impressive. What do look impressive is the sharply increasing inequality and the growing competition, not only for jobs and money right now, but also for everything that is necessary for developing prosperity in the future.

There is the struggle for land. Ukerewe and other densely populated rural areas are being worn down, but land is still a good investment for those who have the money to both buy land and develop agriculture. And in large areas of the country, land is for sale.

There is the struggle for education in a fragmented society, where an enormous new effort is being made to strengthen the public education system, but where the re-establishment of free public schools for all has overburdened the miserable schools and poorly trained teachers even more. At the same time, large investments have been made over the last 20 years in private schools and teaching colleges for the children of the rich. And there is the poor people’s struggle to make a living in spite of an unequal society, which until 20 years ago hailed the ideals of equality and brotherhood. There are also religious tensions, even though the mainland of Tanzania is still characterized by significant religious harmony.
The old people are worried. Many speak positively about the improvements they can see. Better houses, more and better roads – more information and greater contact with the outside world. But they also say that many things were easier in the old days. Life has become more difficult, and many feel that it has especially become harder for their children. Grandparents talk about what they can do for their grandchildren. The same grandparents were responsible for their elderly when they were young themselves. Now that the extended family has shrunk to something that very much resembles a nuclear family, the young people want the elderly to continue to help them. It is almost an impossible task for grandparents to ensure that also their grandchildren’s generation can have a proper life.

A pattern has developed. It has become much more difficult for the younger generation to break out of their inherited economic and social status. Some have been able to use their opportunities, and they struggle to maintain their improved status and pass on their prosperity, education and influence to their children. And then there are children born by the poor and born to remain in poverty in a polarized society.

Former Prime Minister Joseph Warioba speaks about present politicians who are millionaires after less than ten years in their positions of leadership. He sees poverty and the gap between rich and poor as the main problems, and fears that in the course of 20–30 years, we will see regular class struggle in Tanzania. And this division in society that is created by economic inequality is reinforced by other factors. If the national sense of community and solidarity does not function, people will seek community in other, smaller groups.

As Professor Issa Shivji at Dar es Salaam University says: “The whole idea is to maintain society’s cohesion. That is why it is so important with a national vision that can unite, as was the case with the Arusha Declaration. It is very difficult to predict how things will develop, for example, in relation to religious harmony, but it is clear that when we see an extreme marginalization and polarization without having a common unifying vision for the future, then there is a great risk that political stability will be threatened, and that people will become more closely connected with ethnic groups or religious affiliations or something else that causes increased fragmentation in society.”

In spite of everything, most people choose to believe in possibilities. But insecurity about the future and fear of new types of conflicts emerge
Harmony continues, but conflicts are becoming sharper

in many conversations – also in conversations that are not about the economy or employment.

Tanzanians talk a lot about religion, and the religious symbols have become yet more visible. When I first visited Tanzania in the 1960s, I reacted spontaneously with indignation to the large amounts of money invested in building churches and in the competition between the different Christian denominations, even in the poor areas. Now, the churches are being challenged to a great extent by the mosques, even in areas where there were previously very few Muslims. Tanzania lacks foreign economic investments, but the religious investments are streaming in. And after year 2000, not only through all possible and impossible Christian missions, but also through Muslim missions.

The old people on Ukerewe say that 50 years ago there were only two different churches on the island, the Catholics and the African Inland Church. And there was one mosque in the main town, Nansio. Today, there are many different churches and there are mosques in almost all the villages – even where there are only four or five Muslims. That is what the Christian villagers say, in any case. They say that the mosques are paid for with Arab money. Most Tanzanians are religious in one way or another. But on Ukerewe, the Catholic Bishop Fortunatus Lukanima tries to place the religion question in perspective:

“I am a bishop. But human nature is after all human nature. Christianity has tried to influence Tanzania, but we must not delude ourselves into believing that Christianity is the solution to all problems, or that Islam is. There is human nature; there is selfishness and greed. Christianity has good principles, but life is lived by human beings who can be corrupt, weak and even evil. We have also seen this in the Catholic Church through the years, both in USA and Africa, with paedophilia and corruption. The Bible is OK. God’s commandments are fine. But we are human beings, and there are many influences. The teachings are not corrupt, but the church and the people that present the teachings can be. Let us not say that Christianity has done this, and Islam has done that. Islam can be just as corrupt. Perhaps not the teachings. But Muslims are also human beings, influenced by power and money and many other things.

Islam is more aggressive now. When I grew up on Ukerewe, there was one mosque in Nansio and very few Muslims. There were no mosques in the villages. Now there are many. They are financed from outside the
country, but the churches are too. Now, Muslims can obtain money from outside just as the church has been able to. Now, we are building too, they say. And why not? The big question is whether the churches and mosques are built to the benefit of the people, or whether they are just made for the sake of competition. Are they building a mosque in the hope of having followers later, and when they get followers, then what do they do? Do they give people a better life?

I have many questions. Will the new churches and mosques bring a new force into people’s lives? Will they try to regain some of what has perhaps been lost? For Muslims, is it a question of the faith being stronger now, or is it because now there is oil money, and they can show their muscles as Christianity could earlier? I do not know.”

The many new mosques are not only an Ukerewe phenomenon. Along the road a little way from Iringa I stopped by a Muslim health clinic, adjacent to a new mosque. It was not open at that time, so it was quiet, but I studied the health posters and was surprised and impressed to find posters informing about family planning and condoms. While I was there, a friendly young man came and offered to explain. He introduced himself
as the responsible clinic assistant and told me that he was Christian Lutheran. It is not unusual, he said. Muslims do not have enough trained people, and they employ qualified Christians. The health clinic is open to everyone, and it follows the official Tanzanian policy, which includes family planning. There is no religious discrimination.

I talked with the young man about there being many more mosques than earlier. “Yes, especially along the main road,” he said, and when I asked what he meant, he added that it was probably a form of advertisement to place mosques where everyone could easily see them. In the same village, there were also plans for a new Roman Catholic Church, and there was already a rather new Anglican church. It is apparently easier to collect money for religious buildings than for so many other things. Electric lights are still a luxury for the great majority of Tanzanians in the country. But competing forms of spiritual light reach out to the furthest corners.

Regional Commissioner James Luhanga confirms that it is customary to employ Christian labour in Muslim institutions, but of course only where religion is not what is essential. There are Christian teachers in natural science at several of the new Muslim schools.
Iringa District is the central district in Iringa Region, and Director Gabriel Benedict Fuime of the district administration confirms that many new mosques are being built with financing from the Middle East. “Also in villages where there are only two Muslims,” as he says. He says that one can sense “a surge of religious feeling in areas where there traditionally existed great harmony”. He stresses that harmony basically still exists. There is a tradition for marriages between different ethnic groups and between adherents of different religions. It is still like that. “But,” he says, “there is a more insistent introduction of new ideas and ideologies than before. It is a dangerous development, which we also experience in the rural areas.”

Otherwise, he finds that the new divisions in society are especially found in the cities. He speaks of greater individualism and a risk of something that could develop into class struggle. “This development has not affected the villages, but if it does, it will take a long time for it to manifest itself.” In general, Fuime sees tendencies toward what he calls a more dualistic society. “There are those who demonstratively show their wealth in the midst of great poverty. In the cities, there is a clear tendency toward the emergence of classes.”

In Mwanza, Eleather Epiphan Mahawi says that Muslims and Christians do not have the same friendly relations as they had earlier. At many places, there is strong competition between them. “Many people in the country follow religions, not because they are believers, but because they are bought. The new missions come with clothing, and they come with money – both Christians and Muslims – and one has the feeling that the missions receive more support from foreign donors, if they can show growing congregations. To a certain extent, missions have always worked in this way, but in the old days they really did help us to a greater degree. The Muslims have always criticized the Christians, and the Christians, although to a lesser extent, have criticized Muslims, but there has been a change. Earlier, relations were friendly, but now there is a more hostile attitude. Muslims feel that the roles they play are more inferior. Statistically, it is also correct that Christians have the most posts in government, business and education. Christians are more interested in education, but they are also the best situated, so they have other possibilities for financing expensive education for their children. And traditionally, Muslims have not been especially interested.”

Almost all Christians agree that Muslims have historically been less interested in education, but the new religious discussion also reveals that
this has changed. In Dar es Salaam, Ole Meishaa, who is Christian, talks about change. It is true that the Christians in Tanzania have always felt that it was important to learn, whereas Muslims were not interested. “They believed in reading their religious books, even though that did not produce development. But today, Muslims also encourage their people to have a good education. Today, Muslims will also have their children in good schools. That is good, and it can give a better balance,” he believes.

Muslims have always felt that their chances were poorer, because the Christians dominated the school system. Mwana Hatibu Lweno in Dar es Salaam told how friends of her Muslim parents even tried to get them not to send her to the government school, because they were afraid it would turn her into a Christian. “It is true that as a consequence of religious concern and Christian dominance many fewer Muslims than Christians have had a proper education,” she says, but she also adds that Muslims are now just as interested as the Christians in sending their children to school.

However, there are still more Muslims than Christians who drop out of secondary school, and there are many fewer Muslims with a higher education. “I don’t know why,” Mwana says, “or whether it can have something to do with selection. There is maybe still a certain feeling that the system is unjust and prejudiced.”

According to Hamsa Njozi, who is leader of the literature department at Dar es Salaam University, and at the same time a renowned and somewhat controversial Muslim intellectual debater, there is no doubt whatsoever that prejudices still exists in the system. They existed before uhuru, after uhuru, and they exist today. Hamsa Njozi challenges the official version of history that tells how the system since uhuru has attempted to remove the inequalities inherited from the British system. Basically, he means it is a false version of history.

“Inequality before uhuru was based on a clear British strategy. With reference to experiences from Asia, the British attitude toward Muslims was based on three forms of discrimination: 1) Refuse them education! 2) Refuse them employment! 3) Destroy their business opportunities! This was a completely conscious policy, and the Muslims were therefore in front in the struggle against the British. They supported Nyerere, but after uhuru, they were the ones who exerted pressure to nationalize the Christian schools, while Nyerere, who was strongly influenced by a close affiliation with the Catholic Church was against this,” Njozi states.
His version of the subsequent development is that the Christians continued to fear the Muslims. Therefore, the East African Muslim Welfare Society was forbidden in Tanzania, and in the 1960s, Muslim leaders were arrested. A very tense and untenable situation developed, and Nyerere only nationalized the schools when he was forced to do so in order to remove the tension. This was also the reason that nationalization came so suddenly and was so poorly prepared.

According to Njozi, the same Christian Tanzanians continued to run the same national institutions, and relations between Muslims and Christians in the educational system have not improved during the 45 years since uhuru. In Dar es Salaam, 80 percent of the pupils in elementary school are Muslim, and only 20 percent are Christian, but at the next level in the secondary schools, it is just the opposite. There, the Christians dominate. In 1995, Tanzania had its first Muslim education minister, but he was fired on the advice of Nyerere, who still operated from behind the scene. The new minister interfered, according to Njozi, in a practice that made it possible to exclude Muslims from higher education.

Examination papers that are coded to ensure anonymity are used for final school examinations, but according to Njozi, the special examination councils decoded the papers before they made the final lists of who was qualified to progress in the school system. They made use of this to exclude Muslims. When the Muslim education minister changed the system and stopped the swindle, 40 percent more Muslims were admitted to higher education; but only for one single year. Then, Mwalimu had the minister fired, and the old system was reinstated.

There are many other examples of clear and documented discrimination, says Hamsa Njozi. Muslims are underrepresented everywhere: at the university, among the district commissioners and in the election commissions.

In Dar es Salaam, I ask Mwana Hatibu Lweno how she, who has Muslim grandchildren in a Christian school, experiences development. Does the same religious harmony exist as it did previously?

“In our home, there is no difference. We have tolerance, and we have harmony. But when the politicians start, and when election is approaching, they put words into our minds. They talk about the Christian way and the Muslim way, but it is only before elections; otherwise, we live together peacefully. No one forces anyone. We have no problems. My son married a Christian woman. She has converted to Islam, but we visit with
Harmony continues, but conflicts are becoming sharper

her parents, who are Christian, and we have no problems. But with this capitalism we have now, it is of course much more important for everyone to think about themselves and not so much about others and the community. That is the change that is going on, and in this way it is not so good. Maybe we could mix the two, a little capitalism and a little socialism. I can see that there is a need for changes, and I hope the young people will not just sit down and complain, but that they will also work for change.”

Many agree that religion plays a larger role in political life than earlier. Always – also in the time of Nyerere and the one-party system – attention has been paid to the balance between Christians and Muslims in the country’s leadership, but earlier the party and the leadership guaranteed the balance. With more parties and a more open democracy, the religious competition becomes more open, and the religious themes become part of the election themes, even though it is not permitted to use religious agitation in the political context.

At the end of 2001, a large conference was held at the university in Dar es Salaam on “Religion and democracy in Tanzania”. It was arranged by REDET (‘Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania’), a programme supported by Denmark and with Rwekaza Mukandala as chairman. The conference papers weighed several kilos, and in 2005, after being revised and updated, they were ready to be published. I was allowed to see the manuscript.

Bruce Heilman writes in a paper presented at the conference about the need for stronger conflict resolution mechanisms, and he argues that there are at least three reasons why Tanzanians should be concerned about the conflicts between religions: First, the global economic and political tendencies present a challenge for both Islam’s and Christianity’s messages about tolerance and love. Second, conflicts about faith and religion in Tanzania are connected with the struggle for access to limited resources, and therefore, these conflicts reinforce geographic, ethnic and class divisions. And third, there are indications that the question of religion is increasingly being politicized.

Heilman believes that economic liberalization exerts strain on national cohesion, because the state has withdrawn from many areas: With reference to other researchers and other African countries, he mentions the army of dissatisfied, unemployed youth and the risk of economic frustrations providing fuel for the bonfires of extremist religious movements.
that offer young people identity and a feeling of self-worth that has been stripped away by modern society.

It is difficult to differentiate between analyses and prejudices in the political-religious debate. Before the large conference on religion, REDET made a study of the population’s religious attitudes that showed that the great majority of both Christians and Muslims continued to consider the inter-religious relations as very harmonious. In spite of his sharp criticism of social discrimination, the Muslim ideologist, Hamsa Njozi, also emphasizes the fact that the relations between Muslims and Christians, at the human level, are basically good and peaceful.

“It is obvious that problems are created when people become poor and when inequality increases day by day, because some people are stealing the wealth of society. And the problems are especially great if the Muslims are poor and the Christians are rich. But that is not the basic problem. Basically, it is not a horizontal problem. Muslims and Christians live side by side in peace, and this is extremely important, because Dar es Salaam does not have separate neighbourhoods for Muslims and Christians. We are mixed. But while there are no problems across society, there are great vertical problems in relation to the state. The problem is that the state is basically Christian, and most government officials are Christian.”

If Hamsa Njozi is right, then it is the Muslims’ conflict with the state that is increasingly in focus and is reflected in the democratic multi-party system, even though religious parties are forbidden in Tanzania. The Tanzanian state is secular, and religion is formally the private affair of the individual. But claims of religious discrimination are part of the political agenda. And when both Muslim and Christian leaders agitate for specific candidates and parties, as was the case preceding the elections, then politics and multi-party democracy receive a very strong religious dimension.

Hamsa Njozi is far more radical and critical than more official Muslim spokesmen.

BAKWATA is the national Muslim council in Tanzania. The General Secretary is Alhaj Othman Ntarru, and his version of historical development resembles more the official version. Because of the country’s history, there has been and still is a strong “Christian network”. Its negative effect is the Christian nepotism existing in the system. Christians have favoured Christians, because they know them best, and because the best educated
Harmony continues, but conflicts are becoming sharper

people have been Christian. “It is very human, but it has reinforced inequality,” says Othman Ntarru.

“Poverty and inequality and unemployment play a role in the relations between groups, and maybe there is a bit more inequality today than earlier; but the main problem is the networks. Fortunately, the leaders are neither blind nor deaf, so efforts are being made to create a better balance.”

As an example of what is being done, Othman Ntarru tells of a new Muslim university in Morogoro. The state has donated the land. The main task is to strengthen qualifications and capacity in the Muslim milieu, says the general secretary. It is much more important than money. He confirms that many mosques are being built and also more Muslim schools, but most are not especially well organized, and it is not enough to correct the imbalance.

BAKWATA has as its goal to contribute more to lessening the imbalance and to aid the government in its efforts to maintain peace and security. Othman Ntarru emphasizes that there are no conflicts between Christians and Muslims or between Christianity and Islam. According to him, there are no conflicts between Muslims and the state, either. For him, the problem lies in a fourth place:

“I do not think that Western culture is characterized by Christianity. It is characterized by materialism, and the conflict is between religion and materialism. It concerns morals, and that the religious teachings are not adhered to. The conflict is not between the religions but between religion and materialism. Perhaps Muslims are speaking louder in this conflict than Christians, but historically, Christians and Muslims have lived together in peace.”

The General Secretary admits, however, that tensions have emerged, also within Islam. He himself is rather young, 49 years old and born a few years before uhuru. Like other young leading Muslims, he was sent out of the country to learn about Islam. Among other places, he has been in Saudi Arabia, where he met the controversial and more fundamentalist Islamic Wahabi movement. He says that while he does not belong to this movement himself, there are other young Tanzanians that have returned with radicalized opinions. They have been highly critical of the local Muslim traditions, and this has created tensions, both within the Muslim community and in relation to the new Christian missionary churches.
This development started about 15 years ago, but according to the General Secretary, the situation is gradually improving.

Rwekaza Mukandala, who led the large religion conference, speaks of a religious revival that started in the 1980s and was strengthened by the economic troubles that many people experienced. “People turned to the churches and mosques to find comfort, and the Iranian revolution and developments in the Middle East, Libyan and Sudan also had an influence.”

He says that the tensions increased because of the new, more fundamentalist evangelical and missionary Christian churches that held open-air meetings and did not respect earlier unwritten rules about a kind of respect for informal religious zones. Earlier, Christians and Muslims did not carry out missionary activities in each other’s main areas. The new groups, often American-financed revivalist churches, did this; and it developed into a form of war. The new American churches started the war, the Muslims retaliated as did the traditional churches, among them the Catholic Church.

A paper presented at the conference discussed the development in the relations between the state and the religions after liberalization in Tanzania. Laurean Ndumbaro and Mohammed Bakari write about a revival movement that has marked the country since the 1980s, both within Islam and Christianity. They describe the new open-air meetings with revival preachers, and the increase in the number of mosques and churches (especially from the Pentecostal movement), and they say that now, at a time when one set of national values are no longer generally accepted, people see inequality and injustices in society in a religious and ethnic perspective, whereas under ujamaa, they viewed them in a class society context.

They also write that the introduction of multi-party democracy has influenced development. Some Muslims try to use the political system to change what they consider continued discrimination of Islam. They speak of the Christians’ “hidden agenda” of modernizing and westernizing Tanzania in a way that undermines Islamic culture. At the same time, there are also Christians who fear that some Muslims will purposely create religious conflict in society by working for more fundamentalist and less tolerant Islamic attitudes.

“Some individuals and groups seek to exploit the religious revival for their own political and economic purposes, and it is difficult to separate
things, because in recent years most religious protests have political overtones,” say the two authors. They name specific Muslim and Christian groups that are less tolerant and less willing to compromise than what people have been accustomed to: for example, Ansar Sunna among the Muslims, and Marian Faith Healing Centre and ‘Jesus is the Answer’ on the Christian side.

There have been serious religious conflicts and confrontations in Tanzania, although they have seldom been of such magnitude that they would be of media interest outside Tanzania’s borders. In a few cases, the confrontations have caused people to be killed and buildings to be burned down. In 1998, three people were killed during a violent clash around the Mwembechai mosque. The authorities’ and the critical Muslims’ versions of what happened and who was responsible are very different. 1998 was also the year when 11 people were killed by a bomb that exploded at the American Embassy. The authorities believe the attack was an indirect consequence of international terrorism, and connect it with Osama bin Laden’s network. The most recent larger conflict took place in 2001.

There have especially been confrontations between the state and Islam, and the two authors write, “While citizens have taken advantage of plural politics to raise issues that were unthinkable under a single party era, state institutions particularly the police force have failed to adjust themselves to deal with citizens’ challenge under multiparty politics. State security institutions have continued to use the authoritarian techniques of the single party era to violently deal with legally accepted citizens democratic challenges such as demonstrations.”

From Hamsa Njozi’s point of view, police brutality against Muslims reflects the fact that the state security system still represents Christian interests. USA’s and its allies’ anti-terror attack on Afghanistan and later Iraq has meant that the political and religious agendas have become more closely linked. Anti-American demonstrations took place in front of the American Embassy in Dar es Salaam in October 2001 in protest against the attacks against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and Muslim posters here criticized President Mkapa’s government and the national Muslim council, BAKWATA.

Another aspect of the picture is that the more radical Muslims consider the Muslim council to be a semi-government institution, or the state’s and the governing party, CCM’s, lackey. The radical Muslims do not accept BAKWATA’s role as coordinator and peacemaker.
Tanzania officially became a multi-party democracy on October 1, 1992, through the approval of an amendment to the country’s constitution. The liberation struggle on the Tanzanian mainland was led by Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), which was founded in 1954 with Julius Nyerere as its uncontested leader. Zanzibar had its own unity party, ASP, but in 1977, the two parties merged together to form CCM, Chama Cha Mapinduzi or Revolution Party, still with Nyerere as chairman, and now CCM was the only legal party. During the whole period, this party was the central power in society. It was here that the political line was decided. Parliament and the government functioned on the party’s premises.

The argument for the one-party system was that this poor, new country had no time or resources to waste on political disputes. What was necessary was political unity. Nyerere expressed it in this way in 1963: “Where there is only one party, and where this party represents the country as a whole, democracy’s foundation is stronger than where there are two or more parties…” Rather a true democracy within one party than useless disputes between several parties. Experiences from other African countries proved that many parties could sharpen tribal conflicts. In neighbouring Kenya, the consequence of establishing several parties was that each of the strongest ethnic groups controlled its own party.

The structural adjustments and liberalization following 1985 were a result of an internal economic crisis and extreme external political-economic pressure. Likewise, the transition to multi-party democracy was to a great extent a result of external pressure.

Preceding the introduction of the multi-party system, a presidential commission in 1991 made a public opinion survey and concluded that more than 75 percent of the Tanzanian people wished to continue with the familiar one-party system. The political world situation had changed, however, and the Tanzanian leaders continued the reform efforts.

The first multi-party election took place in 1995. Twelve parties participated. CCM won almost 60 percent of the votes and 186 out of 232 mandates. The next largest party in the new parliament was CUF, which had its support mostly on Zanzibar and had 24 mandates. Eight parties had so few votes that they were not represented. Four candidates participated in the presidential election, and Benjamin Mkapa received 62 percent of the vote.

Five years later in 2000, 13 parties took part in the election, but CCM increased its share to over 65 percent of the votes and 202 mandates. The
opposition received a total of 29 mandates, divided among five parties. In the presidential election, Benjamin Mkapa won almost 72 percent of the votes this time. Local elections in 2000 gave CCM an overwhelmingly strong position.

There has been strong criticism of the elections on Zanzibar, but the general evaluation is that the elections on the mainland were largely free and just, and that the result reflects the realities, which also include the fact that CCM sits heavily on the whole system.

In spite of the criticism of the governing party and its total power, the opposition seems to have become weaker. In February 2004, President Mkapa made a speech in which he explicitly regretted that the opposition parties were so weak. “If we do not experience serious political competition between comparable teams, we will gradually deteriorate into political superficiality,” he said, and added that CCM needs a strong opposition to keep it “on its toes”.

In the rural areas, people do not talk very much about the multi-party system; however, there is a certain satisfaction that CCM is no longer alone in the field.

Tanzanians like to speak in pictures, and 78-year-old Anthony Musiba Muhikwa says that he is happy for the multi-party system, because it can help wash the dirt off the governing party. He adds: “It is like a lamp that sheds light. If the governing party goes too far astray, the new system means that light will be shed on it.”

Sylvester Mazigo agrees that having many parties helps, because people can criticize the leaders. This was impossible earlier. Even though he does not feel that leaders listen to criticism very much, it is still an important difference. This difference also makes it possible to go to court with a complaint against the district commissioner or the district council. “That is good,” he says; “it would have been unthinkable before.”

At the beginning of 2005, the newspapers were full of articles about the coming parliamentary and presidential elections in October 2005. The main focus was CCM’s internal discussions about presidential candidates. There was almost no doubt that Tanzania would experience a peaceful presidential shift. After two periods, Benjamin Mkapa could not be nominated for re-election, and internally in CCM, there were many candidates for the post.

After the 55-year-old popular Muslim foreign minister, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, won the internal primary election in the spring, most people
already considered him to be Tanzania’s next president. His later victory in the 2005-election came as no surprise.

A bit maliciously, people say that it is extremely practical for CCM to have introduced the multi-party system. The opposition and the competition ensure that the democratic rules are observed, but CCM is sure to maintain its power anyway. The only risk is, as Mkapa expressed it, that the opposition is so weak that the system completely degenerates.

In spite of CCM’s power over the system, the opposition can manifest itself, but it does not seem very well organized. It has no unified, convincing proposal for alternative national policies or visions, but mostly focuses on criticism of individual persons and specific questions.

The most ambitious Tanzanians with political ambitions seem to be of the opinion that possibilities and ambitions are best promoted in CCM with its monopoly on the real power and its strong national network.

The multi-party system does not change the power balance in Tanzania. But for better or worse, the new and more open pluralistic democracy does expose disagreements to the light. There is more washing of dirty laundry in public, but multi-party systems also stimulate both corruption and religious conflicts – corruption because candidates buy influence, and religious conflicts because the political system, regardless of formal regulations, is saturated with religious interests and is seen as an instrument for maintaining or changing the religious balance of power.

Many people have opinions about this. In Iringa, Eli Yohana Nyagawa says, “Even in areas where the people are dominated by Catholics, it is easier for Muslims to be elected to parliament. I am afraid that religion will send us somewhere where we will think with sadness about the past. The times are different from what they were before.”

He clearly reflects the traditional Christian way of thinking. It is the Christians who regret that religion has become more visible in politics, because Muslims – also on the mainland – seek to use the political system to promote their cause. But Nyagawa also says that it is not only a question of religion. He feels that political development is being hurt by religion, but primarily by money: “Whether we like it or not, reality is that no one can be a member of parliament without bribery, and this is true throughout the system. It starts with acceptance by local leaders, and for this, you must pay. A poor person cannot become a member of parliament. Last time, there were candidates that bought bicycles for the local leaders to gain their support, and next time, it will be worse. When
candidates compete to be nominated, they go around and pay the local leaders. There are clever people without money who do not have a chance to become political leaders. And it is like that in all parties. Religious campaigns are not allowed, but anyway religion is whispered about. But it is primarily money that creates problems. And there is more nepotism. There is not the same will to balance things as there was before.”

Ndumbaro’s and Bakari’s paper from the university’s religion conference states that *ujamaa* ideology and its welfare policies appealed to the majority of Tanzanians and especially to the poorest segment of the population. After this ideology lost its support, it left an ideological vacuum, which the market ideology could not fill. According to the two authors, the tendency for socio-economic problems to find religious expression is partly due to the lack of a national set of values that place society in the centre of development.

With different words and emphasis, the debate revolves around consequences of the divisions in a society where inequality is increasing, and where an insurmountable gap is perhaps about to develop between the group that has opportunities for progress and development and the group that is completely marginalized.

Jeff Makongo: “What I see when I compare things with my own youth is that classes are beginning to emerge. The class society that Nyerere was violently opposed to, and that we almost avoided, is coming now. Now, we have private schools where people with money and influence can send their children, and where they can receive what they call quality education. And the religious organizations once again have their schools. We have new religious schools. And race plays a role: Indians open more and more schools. Formally, they are open for everyone, but in reality they exclude many social classes. We are creating a class society, and that as far as I can see is the most serious danger in the coming decade. We are moving into a form of capitalism where this kind of thing happens. We are in the process of developing a system of those who lead and those who are led, and those who are led will continue to be the lowest, because they receive no education and they have no economic power to change things. People talk about human rights, but more and more people are just fighting to survive.”

“It sounds pessimistic, but anyhow I am basically optimistic,” he continues. “The next ten years will lead to great changes, and maybe it will
happen even faster. Young people are beginning to take over the leadership. We discuss with them, and we can sense that even though many seem passive, there are also many that want changes. There are still too many old-timers among our leaders, and even though many of them are good, there is a bit too much of the old mentality. I think positive changes are on the way. The young leaders will also have to think about development in rural areas. Even the modern sector that everyone is talking so much about needs the purchasing power and customers residing in rural areas. Many of the present leaders have been here for a long time. They have built their houses here in the Dar es Salaam area. They have established an existence here, and they have lost contact with their places of origin. I believe the young people will think differently.”

Most conversations are concluded with some optimistic twist. A stereotype about Tanzanians is that most of them prefer to be positive and optimistic. The analyses point out almost insoluble problems, but the conclusions are often that everything will be all right anyway – because there is the tradition for conversation; because there are young people who can see that some things must be changed; because there is a common understanding of the need for a new vision; and because, after all, the society that was created during the years following 

At the same time, however, the differences are becoming deeper. Conflict researchers point out the need to be prepared to use more conflict management, and economists say that growth must increase and distribution improve, if development is to really benefit the poorest segment of society.
“We’re still in harness!”

… says the NGO representative when he speaks about Tanzania’s dependence on foreign aid. Aid is necessary – for the focus on schools, for example – but faith in aid is far weaker than earlier.

Development aid

It was one of the first days at Ukerewe. We had talked long and exhaustively about the old days and now. About the time when there was enough land for everyone, and water was no problem; about the cotton fields and the good economy that the cotton sales provided for the farmers; about how there were more churches and mosques now, how most houses had corrugated iron instead of grass roofs, and how there were more but poorer health clinics than in the old days. We also talked about the trees that are gone, the lack of progress in agriculture, and the life that is harder in so many ways than in the old days. And we had time to discuss the children and young people and that respect for the elderly is not like it was then. The radio and the daily access to news from the whole world were mentioned as positive, but they also place the hard life in perspective.

It is a conversation with an old man who was born during World War I. He is Catholic and had 18 children; 13 are still living. Most of them have done well, but the old granddad says that because of the hard life today, it is no longer realistic to believe that his grandchildren will have a better life. “Our expectations are the same as before, but it is not possible,” he says.

He and the other old folks on Ukerewe have contributed a lot to the population growth. Their children have also had many children, though fewer, typically only 5–6–7 each. No wonder that today there is so little land per family that it is largely impossible to develop and modernize the island’s agriculture. Nor is it difficult to understand that the agricultural island, Ukerewe, no longer produces any surplus. And of course the young people are leaving.
The old people know all this, but they do not have many ideas about what to do about it. Maybe it is unreasonable to ask an 85-year-old man what his hopes are for the future, but I ask anyway, because he has been good at telling me about the long history he himself has participated in. But he has absolutely no idea about what should be done. “We can only ask for help,” he says at the end of the conversation.

When I came to Tanzania 20 years ago, I experienced that it was just about impossible to visit a village or a school without the hosts presenting their guest with a list of their needs: ‘We have a project.’ ‘We have an idea, but we don’t have the money.’ ‘Give us a tractor.’ They didn’t listen when I told them that I was just a passing journalist. I was a European, a ‘mzungu,’ and when Europeans pass by, it was imperative to start using your fantasy and making a list.

The elderly on Ukerewe think in terms of aid in a very basic way: Things have not gone very well. We have not had much success. But we have received help. Give us more help!

A better educated man in Dar es Salaam ended a conversation in a more advanced way by telling me that he had now founded his own NGO (non-governmental organization), which could participate in any kind of project. He was about to resign from his job so that he could be active on the development front. Implicitly, he was saying: Just give me money and ideas; I am ready for anything.

It is not hard to find examples of ‘aid-thinking’ in Tanzania, but the rhetoric and thinking have changed basically during the last 20 years. Today, many view aid as a necessary evil, although it is hard for them to imagine a situation where they can do without it. In ordinary conversations, many people talk about aid’s negative effects and the risk involved in too much aid.

Nobody speaks any longer about Europe’s fault or responsibility for Tanzania’s or Africa’s underdevelopment. In connection with uhuru, this was a central theme for both researchers and ordinary Tanzanians who had experienced discrimination and lack of opportunity. Today, this is not a theme in ordinary debate.

The actual injustices in the world are discussed. Marginalization of the poorest countries in a constantly more dynamically market-driven globalization is often a central theme. But the arguments relate to the world of the present and are not primarily based on historical injustices. Most of the Tanzanians I meet consider ‘Problem Tanzania’ as Tanza-
nians’ own problem. They must find the solutions themselves, at home in Tanzania.

In 1995, donors were very tired of Tanzania. The donors’ and the Tanzanian government’s aid thinking had resulted in billions of aid dollars being invested in the country. There is no doubt that the needs were real, but things went badly in spite of the aid, also after the shift in government policy in 1985 after almost 25 years with socialism. President Nyerere stepped down in 1985, and the country had slowly initiated a reform process, but both leadership and direction were lacking. And confidence between donors and the Tanzanian government was at a low point.

In 1994, Tanzania’s Finance Ministry and the Danish Foreign Ministry agreed that a group of independent international advisors should investigate what should be done. A group was appointed with the Canadian researcher, Gerald Helleiner, as Chairman, and two Tanzanian and two foreign economists as members (including Knud Erik Svendsen from Denmark). They issued a report in June 1995, and the first recommendation was that both donors and the Tanzanian government should immediately start planning a gradual reduction in Tanzania’s dependence on foreign support. Tanzania should be less dependent on development assistance.

The report arrived at a point in time when international development assistance was already beginning to decline, year by year. From 1990 to 2000, aid per inhabitant in Sub-Saharan Africa had been cut in half. Aid to Tanzania would have decreased in any case. But this was the first time that a group of experts (including two Tanzanians) said that it would be best for Tanzania to become less dependent on aid. In the international debate, it was called the ‘aid dependence syndrome’. Too much aid could unbalance the economy and reduce the country’s ability to solve its own problems.

The Helleiner report described how attempts to create broad social and economic development in Tanzania had failed. Child mortality was still unacceptably high; life expectancy was only 51 years, which is not much higher than 20 years earlier. Admission to primary school had fallen from 93 percent in 1980 to less than 69 percent in 1990, and only four percent continued to the secondary school level compared to an average of 17 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. After almost 35 years of
independence and very significant foreign assistance, both donors and
most Tanzanians had expected more and better results.

At the start of the 1990s, each Tanzanian received the statistical equiv-
alent of 48 dollars in aid each year, comprising in all about 28 percent of
Tanzania’s gross national income. Aid has decreased. Ten years later, aid
comprised about 34 dollars per inhabitant and only 13 percent of the
national product. This is a considerable decrease, but in 2002/2003, 45
percent of actual state expenses were still financed by foreign aid.

It costs money to receive aid. Receiving a gift of a school, hospital or
health clinic is not free. When the aid stops coming, it is necessary to pay
for salaries, maintenance and medicine or teaching materials. Otherwise,
results deteriorate, and the deterioration remains to symbolize a failed
effort.

The rapid expansion of the educational system in the 1970s was to
a great extent financed by donors, but it contributed to pressing public
expenses so high that Tanzania required more and more aid. The idea
was that growth in production and the economy could gradually ensure
greater national self-financing. But that did not happen.

Exports failed due to falling prices of raw materials, among other rea-
sons. The nationalized industries were running at a loss and then stopped
producing. The bureaucracy grew and cost still more. Donor aid became
the solution to most problems. The most clever administrator or politician
was the one that was best at acquiring aid funds.

“We can just ask for help,” says the old farmer from degraded Ukerewe.
There is no surplus energy for new thinking, and many old ideas have
been tried without good results. But the local Catholic bishop makes an
appeal to think differently and more dynamically.

“Before I became bishop, I worked for the church in Nairobi and trav-
elled a lot, among other places to Zambia, Malawi, Nigeria and Ivory
Coast,” says Fortunatus Lukanima. “Conditions differed from country
to country. There were different ‘isms’, but my conclusion is very clear.
There is no shortcut to development. There is only the hard path, but we
could do more ourselves. We do not need foreign help or foreign cur-
rency to improve agricultural extension services. And we do not need the
inefficiency we experience. We need more work, more motivation, more
human responsibility. That doesn’t cost anything.”
The bishop sits in a room full of great stacks of books. Cases of books brought to the island to be deposited in the school libraries. Therefore, we also come to speak about the strange fact that it is impossible to find a newspaper or a book on an island with 260,000 inhabitants. There are a couple of shops with an unbelievably poor selection in Ukerewe’s main city, Nansio, but otherwise nothing. Only rarely can people be seen reading. Almost no one reads in this country, where they talk so much about education, and where they had a teacher for president for almost 25 years.

“It is sad,” the bishop says. “Most people can read and write. They have actually completed primary school. But they couldn’t dream of buying a newspaper or a book. People are not conscious that they could maybe improve their lives by reading a book about gardening or raising chickens. Fishing is an example that shows that people like to earn fast money, spend it and enjoy life. You can buy two newspapers for the cost of a beer, but beer is sold and newspapers aren’t. If a video shop opens, people stand in line, even for a terrible film. We should read more, and we should especially read something that can help development. But the attitude is to wait and see. Maybe something will come from outside, maybe from a donor. But things do not work like that. Change only works if it comes from inside, not from outside.”

University researcher, Professor Haroub Othman, in Dar es Salaam, returns to the Arusha Declaration’s proclamation that Tanzania can accept aid but must never become dependent on donors, because “he who pays the piper calls the tune”. And he tells how Nyerere, according to his view, tried to avoid the problem, partly by appealing to the multilateral donors – e.g. UN – and partly by seeking cooperation with Scandinavia.
His idea was that it would give less external dominance and less dependence than aid from the major powers:

“But dependence is dependence,” he says, and with other words than the bishop he emphasizes that already in the early years, more could have been done independently. He cites the large sports stadiums (also built with Chinese aid), an over-dimensional airport in Kilimanjaro, and other very unsuccessful projects. “We could have saved money and built them ourselves, but that would demand that we have faith in ourselves, and at present we have not.”

It is not unusual to meet people who are critical of aid but who appeal for aid anyway for specific purposes, or because they themselves – either directly or indirectly – receive their salaries from aid funds. People are generally sceptical about aid. They want very much to be far more independent, but they also recognize the country’s insurmountable need, poverty and marginalization. “Poverty is rapidly spreading,” Othman says. “In the 1960s, there were no street kids; today, they are everywhere. Many are not even able to eat one meal a day.”

Jeff Makongo has directly or indirectly worked with and for donors most of his life. In a discussion about the future, he enthusiastically declares himself to be an optimist, because he believes in the young people. About donor dependency, he says:

“The day we can free ourselves from donor dependency is the day we will seriously become creative and make our own decisions. Aid gives us greater freedom today, but within a framework that means that we are still harnessed. I consider this to be one of the greatest difficulties.”

Jeff emphasizes how difficult it is; he does not find any quick or easy solution, since there is a need for example for massive investments in education and in transforming society, and since financing of the enormous new efforts in education would be totally unrealistic without a very large amount of aid. He tells about people who struggle to survive but also cites examples of passivity. He differentiates between development in urban areas, which is presently very dynamic, and in rural areas, where development is not dynamic at all. He is sure that one of the reasons for this is the many years of compulsory measures that blocked development and made people give up their faith in their own ability to improve their situation.

“There is no initiative and no creativity in many rural areas. People are sitting and waiting. My own younger brother writes to me to ask for money to start some small business, but he has not made a thorough
investigation, and the idea has no real basis. If I send money, it just disappears.”

Joseph Butiku was present when the Arusha Declaration was formulated, including the phrase about the one who pays decides. And he was there when Tanzania’s dependency on donors became almost total. He describes the paradoxical problem:

“Support from donors increases a country’s political dependency. Donor aid is aimed at developing a country’s own capability, and this increased capability helps the country achieve political and economic independence. So aid can support independence, but it can also destroy the people’s own ability to strengthen political and economic independence, because there is an inherent tendency for the country and the people to become dependent on aid and not be empowered to be free of it – this can be called aid’s vicious circle. We suffer from this. We feel the threat of the dependency syndrome. We receive help and help and help and help, and if you travel around the country, you see donors and donors everywhere. They have spread to all corners of society, all the way into the villages. It is as if people want to avoid the fact that we have to work to create our own development. Aid can only be a supplement. It is actually possible to accomplish things without aid, without help. And sometimes I feel that if aid was cut way back, if we sat down together and made a really modest minimum aid package and left the rest, the really hard job, to us, then something would begin to happen.

There are always situations in life when you wake up and feel desperate and don’t know what to do about your problems. But it is precisely on such days that you use all your abilities and exploit a maximum of your capacity so that you actually end up by achieving something. We never come in this situation. When things become really difficult, there is always some donor that will make it a little easier for us. We don’t find our own solutions with our own brains. That’s what the American pioneers did. They experienced extreme hardship when they fought their way through America. They used their wits, and they worked hard. In a way, it should be easier for us today. We don’t have to reinvent the wheel, but we don’t use the experiences of people who have actually achieved something through their own efforts. We don’t think about what they accomplished. We think, ‘Give us, give us’, but not about how real development is achieved.”
The aid paradox emerges all the time. In a discussion that has nothing to do with aid, James Luhanga, in Iringa, suddenly refers to how population growth in this area has decreased, partly as a result of an excellent UNICEF aid project on reproductive health, women have fewer children. The agricultural sector is fraught with enormous problems, but studies of Danish agricultural assistance show that higher agricultural productivity has been achieved in places where aid has been effective, and where tree planting has reduced environmental degradation. Many concrete initiatives would not be possible without foreign aid.

In Mwanza, Alphonce Mutaboyerwa, the leader of the children’s rights organization, Kuleana, talks about young peoples’ hopeless situation, and the faith he has in spite of everything that big progress is about to take place in education. He says that during the last two years investments have been made in schools and in improved teacher education and better teaching materials, and he emphasizes how important it is that this effort continues over a long period of time. It is completely crucial for Tanzania’s youth that this progress continues, and it cannot be financed without foreign assistance.

Tanzania is extremely hard hit by the AIDS epidemic. The official estimates say that 2.2 million people are HIV-positive, but many fear that the real figure is still higher. Young people in the productive age group are dying. The problem of orphaned children continues to grow. The fight against HIV and AIDS involves to a great extent peoples’ own efforts and the necessity to change sexual practices and sexual habits, but also here foreign assistance plays a big role.

UNAIDS states that there is no sign of a total decrease in the share of HIV-positive cases in Tanzania, but in Mbeya Region there has been a decrease in the number of HIV-positive from more than 20 percent of the 15–24 year olds in 1994–95 to less than 15 percent in 2003. At the same time, the use of condoms has increased, and sexual debuts occur later. In Mbeya Region, an extensive campaign has produced results.

The opposite has happened in Rukwa Region, where there have only been limited initiatives and where the share of HIV-positive in the same age group increased from 22 to 30 percent. The conclusion drawn in the 2004 report from UNAIDS is that inexpensive standard prevention campaigns at the district or local level are not sufficient to stop the epidemic. More is necessary. Also this involves aid.
When I ask Alphonce Mutaboyerwa about his view of the future, he says that he is optimistic, on the condition that some changes are made, among them an increasing role for the private organizations, NGOs, both as partners and watchdogs of the government. He also says that the governmental system has shown a new willingness to listen. Opportunities lie in the interaction between investments in education, NGO partnership and the necessary increase in family responsibility that continually and almost like a chorus is emphasized in his analyses of what is necessary for the situation for children and youth to improve.

But the NGOs are also dependent on aid. They are primarily financed by the North and are dependent on this assistance. The NGOs are accused – together with the UN system and the other donors – of snatching the best people from the government system and jacking up salaries. So there are critics who mean that all this foreign money can contribute to weakening the public administration that is supposed to be the backbone of the Tanzanian system.

Mutaboyerwa does not buy this criticism: “I believe that labour in a free labour market flows to where it does the most good. This is the principle of an open market. Tanzania’s problem is high unemployment, also among people with an education. Lots of young people are leaving the universities and other institutions of higher learning, and they need work. The challenge is to find work for the unemployed.” He has no doubt that the role of aid is positive.

Aid is named as only one of many factors in the comparative study of Vietnam’s and Tanzania’s economic development published in October 2003 by the Economic and Social Research Foundation in Dar es Salaam. The study, “Economic Reform in Tanzania and Vietnam. A Comparative Commentary,” is written by Brian Van Arkadie and the Vietnamese economist, Do Duc Dinh.

Vietnam has experienced far stronger growth than Tanzania, and for several reasons, but the researchers conclude that the Vietnamese state has played a more positive role in development than the Tanzanian state, which has been far more passive. According to the researchers, Tanzania’s dependence on aid is part of the explanation. Aid has meant that donors finance most government development projects. “And because of the dependence on donors, the tendency is that programmes are adapted to concrete donor wishes rather than national priorities.”
The researchers write that the Tanzanian economy has reacted rather positively to liberalization, but a more thorough comprehensive public investment programme for the infrastructure and development of human resources is necessary if growth is to be maintained. And it is difficult for the government to react actively and positively enough, because the necessary development capacity is lacking. The Tanzania answer to this analysis will probably be that there is therefore a need for more aid, because on its own, the country lacks the necessary resources.

One of Tanzania’s problems according to this analysis is that when the reform process and liberalization really took off, the Tanzanian state was so weak due to economic crisis that it was thought necessary to privatize the economy quickly by selling the state-owned enterprises. The state sold 330 enterprises in seven years – more than one enterprise every tenth day. Vietnam, which also came from a situation with a one-party system and state control, liberalized without privatizing in this way, and Vietnam experienced considerably greater success.

It is a big paradox, if it is correct, that official development assistance and especially that which is channelled through the state, actually weakens the state. But the researchers claim that this is the case. It is more than implied that in reality donors have taken over the independent state (see also the next chapter).
The new economy

On July 29, 1985, Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere spoke for the last time before Tanzania’s Parliament as president. It was a state of the republic speech about what the country had achieved during the almost 25 years he had been president. Nyerere spoke relatively openly about many of the country’s problems. He promised his successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, an extremely difficult job, not least due to the national debt and poor economy. However, it was still a proud speech. The nation had been built, unity and harmony created and maintained, discrimination eliminated. And in his conclusion, Nyerere said: “It appears clear from what I have said here that Tanzania’s economic difficulties are not a result of our socialistic policies, but that on the contrary it is socialism that has provided us with the strength to struggle against the hardships in community with understanding and hope.” Mwalimu was not surrendering.

Today, Tanzania is considered one of the best sub-Saharan countries in which to invest. 350 out of 400 state-owned firms have been privatized. During the period from 1995 to 2000, total foreign investments in Tanzania reached more than a billion dollars compared to less than 100 million during the previous five-year period. This is still not very much; however, it does represent impressive progress. Private investments now receive part of the credit for the fact that for several years the Tanzanian annual growth rate has reached five to six percent, and the then Prime Minister Frederick Tluway Sumaye was interviewed in 2004 by Financial Times and was asked whether Tanzania had completely broken with its socialist past, he answered:

“We are socialists with an open market, exactly like the Labour government in Great Britain. We have created an open economy and liberalized everything, and we are more liberal than countries like South Africa.
Firms that invest in Tanzania can send the profits and benefits home, and there is no foreign currency control.”

It is only a small share of Tanzania’s labour force that has any chance in the modern private sector. The statistics from 2002 show that only four percent of the labour force is employed in the formal private sector. More than 80 percent still earn their livelihoods in agriculture, and almost ten percent are employed in the informal sector, which comprises all unregistered activities from street trade to all forms of small artisan and small service jobs and the grey to black work carried out by both adults and children.

But although the private sector, and especially the industrial production sector, is a very small part of the total economy, a lot is happening. It is in the private sector that the focus is on growth. Tourism and mining are two examples.

Tanzania has gold reserves. During the socialist period most gold mining died; but now it is growing again. Five gold mines have started up, and some of them are very large. Geita Gold Mine, owned by international giants such as Anglo Gold and Ashanti Goldfields, is about to develop into one of Africa’s largest gold mines, employing about 1,800 people. Before the gold mine opened, just before the turn of the century, 30,000 people lived in Geita. Now, the population is about 120,000, and 80 percent of them are dependent on mining in one way or another. The indirect employment effect extends far beyond those who are directly employed in the mine.

In his speech in 1985, Nyerere said that at the time of independence, only 220 factories with more than ten employees were in business on the Tanzanian mainland. The productive sector, excluding agriculture, was extremely small. This changed during the years after nationalization. In spite of economic problems and inefficiency, there was a certain amount of growth but when the economy went really bad at the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s, production fell once more. And in 1983, the total value of Tanzania’s industrial production was only a little more than five percent higher than 16 years earlier. During the same period, Tanzania’s population increased by many millions.

Nyerere told how Tanzania’s total economy was smashed by a series of destructive blows from outside the country. Tanzania is an oil importer, and oil prices tripled at the end of the 1970s. Uganda’s dictator, Idi Amin,
attacked Tanzania so that Tanzania was forced to pay for a costly war in order to force him out and then topple his dictatorship in Uganda. The East African Community, which was a kind of free market for Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, collapsed and was an expensive loss for Tanzania. And bad weather led to falling agricultural production for three consecutive years with the result that Tanzania had to spend a great deal on food imports. As a consequence, the average income per person in 1983 was much lower than in 1966, and the decreases continued during the following years.

All Nyerere’s explanations are correct. Tanzania was also hard hit by falling prices on the export markets for the country’s most important agricultural products. When I spoke with Professor Mwesiga Baregu about his childhood in the 1950s as the son of a coffee farmer, he described how the whole village was aware of it when coffee prices were good. “We benefited from the high prices on commodities in the 1950s as a result of the Korean War,” he said. “We haven’t seen such a boom since.”

On the contrary. Prices for commodities such as coffee, cotton and sisal, which are Tanzania’s traditional export products, have crashed since then, while prices for the industrial products that the country needs to import have risen. It has almost constantly been hard going, and there are many good excuses for many of Tanzania’s problems.
However, it is remarkable that Nyerere does not say a word about how the village programme weakened agriculture and led to a decrease in production. Or how inefficiency and huge deficits in the state-owned production enterprises drained the public economy and caused a decrease in industrial production.

The serious foreign exchange crisis and the country’s actual bankruptcy were consequences of both the problems inflicted on Tanzania from outside and the difficulties the country created for itself. As a result of the crisis, public employees were unable to live on their salaries, and much production came to a halt. No foreign exchange was available for the necessary import of primary products and spare parts. But thousands of employees still went to work each day. Their salaries were barely enough for pocket money but still enough to increase the public debt.

Reality is different in 2005.

When I talk to 80-year-old Al Noor Kassum, one of the few political veterans with an Asiatic background, he describes the necessary change since the time when Tanzania “just printed new money”. As the value of money dropped, more and more bills were printed. Inflation raged.

Today, inflation and the monetary situation is under control, says this long-since retired politician. Al Noor Kassum has no doubts that the radical political-economic shift and the liberalization of the economy and investments were right and necessary.

“It is true that the gap between rich and poor is increasing, but tell me one country where this isn’t happening,” he says. “Now we have a market economy, where the rules are that some win and some lose. That’s how it is throughout the world. Taxation can be used to equalize things somewhat, but it is necessary to have incomes in order to tax them. Tanzania is still poor, and it will take time. But Tanzania can be the first African country to achieve general macro economic progress. The system functions; the flow of goods and money is under control; the duty on added value is in place. If God gives us rain, we now have the prerequisites for progress.”

Al Noor Kassum has been a member of several Tanzanian governments, and as representative for Tanzania, he was deeply involved in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) preceding the reforms in 1984–85:

“Nyerere wouldn’t have anything forced on him. IMF tried to do that, and he hated it. But Mwalimu was a fantastic person. Just as he had seen
in the 1960s that nationalizations were necessary in order to prevent the economy from being controlled by a single race, he now saw that the world economy had changed and that Tanzania also had to introduce market economy. It actually happened already in 1984, and the system was in place when President Mwinyi took over in 1985. Mwinyi inherited a market economy."

Al Noor Kassum was a young practising lawyer before independence, and it was in this capacity that the British appointed him to the legislative council in Tanganyika. Nyerere urged him to join the independence party, TANU. He did, and with certain reservations, he defended nationalizations even though they affected his own family and his father lost his property: “I was not in the government at that time but a member of the party, but it is probable that I would have supported the decision if I had the opportunity. Nationalization was an aspect of the policy that aimed to create unity in the country, and it had to be done with a clean cut.”

The times were different then. Today, the demands of the world economy are completely changed. A research report from 2002 investigates whether East Africa has been globalized. The researcher, Beatrice Kalinda Mkenda, studies East Africa’s (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) significance in world trade, and she concludes that East Africa in a certain sense was less globalized in 2001 than in 1980. According to global trade statistics, East Africa’s share of world trade was 0.14 percent in 1980 (i.e. about 1.5 pro mille). In 2001, the share was 0.07 percent. Tanzania does not stand out in any positive way. Tanzania’s share has fallen from 0.04 percent to less than 0.02 percent during the same period. Its share, which was already microscopic, is cut in half.

A special index calculates trade in relation to population size, and it is designed so that an index figure of less than one indicates that a country is marginalized in relation to world trade. Tanzania has an index of 0.0, Kenya 0.1 and Denmark 9.1. It would be difficult to be more marginalized than Tanzania.

Beatrice Kalinda Mkenda’s research shows that although direct foreign investments in East Africa increased in the 1990s, this increase followed the catastrophic 1980s, and even around 2000, total investments were lower than they were in the 1970s. 2000 was the last normal year before the terror attack on September 11, 2001 changed the world’s economic and political situation. In 2000, less that one-half percent of direct foreign investments went to the sub-Saharan African countries, and still
less went to East Africa and again a little share of that to Tanzania. Year after year, all statistics show that almost all direct foreign investments in developing countries go to about ten countries that are especially characterized by large growth economies with a significant domestic market. China tops the list every year; no African country is among them.

In 2000, according to researchers’ statistics, Tanzania had almost no part in globalization. However, there is a strong national focus on foreign investments and the growth and benefits that foreign investments can bring. And there is a rapidly growing understanding that globalization under all circumstances influences the economy. The question is whether the influence is positive or negative. Tanzania’s economy is a very little economy seen from an international perspective, but in a small economy even a little bit can make a difference.

When President Mkapa assessed the state of affairs in 2003, he said that the most recent figures showed 224 million dollars in foreign investments for the year. About 70 countries had now invested in Tanzania. He named especially South Africa and Great Britain, and most Tanzanians would undoubtedly consider foreign investors as being almost identical with South Africa.

South Africa itself needs far more foreign investments than the country receives today in order to solve its own poverty and unemployment problems. But for the rest of Africa, South Africa is an investing giant. South Africa is investing everywhere, which causes both fear and joy depending on how the new economy is understood.

South Africa has in Tanzania invested in construction, mining, tourism and hotels, telecommunication, supermarket chains, banks and air transportation.

Many people are provoked by the fact that South African interests control Tanzania’s largest bank, the airlines and a very large share of the communication sector, and that more foreign control is on its way. Critics speak of South Africa’s new ‘colonization’ of Tanzania and fear foreign monopolistic control of strategic sectors. Tanzanian business people claim that the government and the banks give foreign firms better conditions than they themselves receive.

However, President Benjamin Mkapa said that he had only one answer to this criticism. Tanzania wishes to attract even more South African investments: “The old apartheid South Africa was our enemy. The new
independent South Africa is a friend and our development partner,” he said.

Tanzania has had enormous economic problems and still has. But not everyone has been convinced that it is right to make an almost total shift away from the former economic policies and their focus on the necessity for a country to own and control all its strategic sectors.

“Maybe my convictions are old fashioned,” says Eli Yohana Nyagawa. “I think that it was completely correct to privatize enterprises that were losing money, but it is wrong to also privatize enterprises that break even without government subsidies. And I think we could have organized prosperous Tanzanians, so that they could have played a far more positive role in taking over state enterprises. The attempts that have been made have not been wholehearted. One of our problems is the lack of openness. The government has not explained properly about the privatizations. Nyerere explained things. The politicians today do not. And the secrecy is going to be expensive for us. I am a member of CCM, but our party has lost its popularity and one reason is the secrecy, which gives the opposition a good opportunity to point the finger at us.”

“Our President has succeeded in many things. Really many things, but I am sorry to say that in this area, he has not succeeded,” says Nyagawa and criticizes the privatization of well-functioning banks. He disagrees with the argument that it is necessary in order to fight corruption and inefficiency:

“It is the same Tanzanians as before who are running the enterprises. They are only removing the very top. The same people do the same work, but with a foreign board of directors. Instead, they could start an effective training programme for Tanzanian employees. They could send the right people for international training. But they have not done that. They have fired a lot of people, but that doesn’t help us. On the contrary. Nyerere united us. He created unity and harmony, and conditions for the various ethnic groups became more equal. Before independence, there were rich and well-developed areas, and there were areas that were poor and very backward. But we were brought together. Now there is privatization – take for example electric power service. They will also privatize TANESCO, which is responsible for providing electricity. But the big goal after electrification of the cities was supposed to be providing electricity to the villages. Can a privately run TANESCO ensure that? People
in the countryside are poor; they can’t pay for electricity. Will it be done anyway, if the electric power company is private?”

Perhaps the attitude toward the new policies would be more positive if the government explained them better. Like Nyagawa, Alphonse Mutaboyerwa talks about the government’s secrecy and the fact that the lack of explanations about the sale of enterprises to foreigners is creating hostility. People love and still idolize Nyerere, because he was very careful to explain the government’s policies.

Nyerere’s old partner Joseph Butiku is also sceptical. In his description of how the government is failing the farmers and rural areas, he says that everyone is streaming to the few cities, especially Mwanza and Dar es Salaam, and that Dar es Salaam is spreading and receiving more and more people, even though it has neither industry nor agriculture. When I interrupt him and say that there is industry in Dar es Salaam, he asks rhetorically:

“How much? How much is there actually? Every time the president talks about an industry that is doing well, he is talking about the breweries. During the last three years, every single year, he has talked about Tanzanian Breweries and maybe very few others, maybe a textile factory. But go to Morogoro or to Bagamoyo or the other cities. You see no real industry. Our largest industry is still agriculture. Industry will always be just a small sector in this country, especially manufacturing. In Dar es Salaam, we find primarily the informal sector, a sector that is outside the law and can be the source of instability.”

If, during this phase of Tanzania’s development, agriculture is discussed at all, it is often deemed to be only a sector for investments. Nyerere had already talked about the need for modernization and about the impossibility of developing an agricultural sector where the farmer’s only tool is a hoe.

Therefore, foreign investments are also being encouraged for agriculture. Things are developing slowly due to unclear rules concerning land rights, but investments do seem to be on the way. However, while foreigners will be moving in with huge mechanized farms, it will be necessary for Tanzanian farmers to receive support so they can move away from the densely populated and degraded areas around the lakes and establish themselves in the extensive virgin land areas in the south and west. The foreigners have money, but the farmers do not, so there are many problems to be solved if this development is to be harmonious.
Under all circumstances, conflicts about employment will arise. Modern industrialized agriculture with larger farms will create some jobs but not very many. And the areas with mechanized agriculture will never be able to be as densely populated as many Tanzanian agricultural areas are today.

There will be far from enough jobs for everyone. Modernization means more emigration to the cities and the modern industrial and service sectors. But these sectors, as Butiku says, are small, and he believes they will always be so modest that they can only employ a small share of the workforce.

It would appear to be a ‘Catch 22’ situation. Development in the cities and the modern sector create new jobs but not enough to provide work for the new generations of young people growing up there. Development in the rural areas demands investments and modernization, but this would cause emigration and more young people leaving for the cities, which already experience record-high unemployment. More and more people in the cities have to try to manage in the black and informal economy. And it is in the cities that, unemployment is setting records.

In mining, tourism and some few other sectors, employment is increasing, but so are all the other problems that exist in poor countries with high unemployment and poorly regulated production. Exploitation of underpaid children is taking place in the fishing villages, some of the mines and all other places where uneducated children and youths struggle for a way to survive.

The greatest increase in employment by far is probably in the trade and service sector. I discuss with Jeff Makongo the fact that there are very few trucks in Dar es Salaam, where the amount of traffic is increasing rapidly, and he tells me that the traffic is influenced by the imported goods coming into the harbour: “Cosmetics, all kinds of plastic gadgets, juice and lots of other stuff are coming in, mostly from the Arab Emirates, but not much is going the other way. And lots of new small cars and mini-buses, daladalas, are coming in, so it is difficult to get around in Dar es Salaam. No doubt there is focus on the cities in the new development, but it has most to do with trade.”

Many Tanzanians, also among those who are better off, claim that it is too difficult and expensive to invest in Tanzania. Bureaucracy can be complicated; there are taxes on labour; and the future is uncertain. The
workforce is poorly educated or has no education at all, and it is not efficient.

Therefore, it is not only Denmark and Europe that experience jobs being moved to more competitive countries in Asia. Tanzania is also experiencing this. African books are printed in Asia. Tanzanian cashew nuts are being processed in Asia. And it is cheaper to transport maize by ship from Australia to Dar es Salaam than in five-ton trucks from Tabora in the interior and out to the coast.

An ineffective economy comprises strange paradoxes, and except for tourism, fishery, mining of gold and other minerals, Tanzania does not have much to offer to the large international investors. That is why South Africa has become a local giant, perhaps the giant that will lead the regional economy in the future.

In the comparative study of Vietnam’s and Tanzania’s economies (see section on aid), the researchers write that the Tanzanian reforms have not yet created new growth in industrial production. Tanzania has still not been able to create any significant industrial exports.

This contradicts the official picture that the government presents, but it agrees with Joseph Butiku’s observations.

The researchers write that whereas by far the most foreign investments in Vietnam are in the production sector in joint ownership with Vietnamese firms and without privatization, investments in Tanzania have mostly been used to pay for privatization, i.e. the sale of state enterprises. The money has not been used to the same extent to create new production capacity. Real new investments have been concentrated on mining and not on industrial production.

The Vietnamese state is still deeply involved in Vietnam’s enterprises and in the production plant, and therefore also in managing development, whereas Tanzania’s government has both liberalized and sold its enterprises through privatization.

The South African investments have meant that South Africa plays a decisive role in Tanzania’s economic development. The gold mines, which are 100 percent foreign-owned, are also important, but not much is happening in the processing industry.

Vietnam and Tanzania have a one-party system, socialism and an agrarian economy as their common heritage. But whereas Vietnam has experienced great economic growth while maintaining its one-party system
and state involvement in the economy, Tanzania has had poorer results with a multi-party system and widespread privatization of production. According to the study, there were two crucial differences in the situations in the two countries before the reforms. Historically, both countries have had high ambitions in relation to investments in health and education, but Vietnam’s investments have been much more successful than Tanzania’s. In Vietnam in 2000, only seven percent of the adult population was illiterate, whereas in Tanzania the figure was still 25 percent. In Vietnam, a far larger share of the adult population also had a technical or vocational education.

The other crucial difference is that Vietnam’s efforts related to family planning have been far more effective. Annual population growth at the turn of the century was 1.4 percent in Vietnam, but twice as much in Tanzania.

A stronger state, a better educated population, and lower population growth has provided Vietnam with other opportunities to not only increase industrial production but also to develop agriculture. In Vietnam, they talk about a growing market-based, family agriculture, and the increase in agricultural production has been far greater than in Tanzania. One explanation is greater possibilities for irrigation, but Vietnam’s farmers have also received far better state support than Tanzania’s farmers. And Vietnam has been better at creating interaction between public and private initiatives.
In the introductory quotation, Joseph Butiku describes the new globalized world where everyone must compete under equal conditions: The healthy and the handicapped, the well educated and illiterates, the rich and the poor and hungry.

The efforts of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are directed toward creating a liberal global trade system without distortions and with open borders. One long-term perspective is for USA and the rich countries in EU to abandon protectionism, which is so harmful for the world’s poor, not least in relation to agriculture.

Perhaps there are long-term developments on the way toward a more just global trade system. But can the handicapped, the illiterates and the poor and undernourished succeed when they are up against the well-trained, rich and well-educated in such a just system? Does a trade system that is technically and legally just and equal for all also mean that the weakest can succeed just as well as the strong?

The answer is simple: Of course they cannot. The weakest countries are weak for many different historical reasons, and today their weakness means that they are constantly lagging further and further behind. And this is true in almost all areas: economically, of course; but also in education and in the crucial areas of research and technology. How could it be otherwise?

We have divided the world into industrialized countries and developing countries. Recently, the global picture has become blurred, because a group of Asian countries with China in the lead is speeding into the global economic arena. We have called them developing countries, but they now compete with us and can perhaps threaten us economically.

There is a massive movement of jobs from Europe and USA to Asia. Within the foreseeable future, China’s economy will be the world’s largest, and real concern exists about job opportunities in the West. In many
areas, European industrial and service enterprises are no longer competitive. European countries try to use wealth to make concerted efforts to achieve the necessary transition, and to launch extraordinary initiatives in research and education to meet this challenge.

But in January 2005, Tanzanian newspapers also printed articles about out-sourcing jobs, especially in the textile sector with focus on the clothing industry in the little country of Swaziland. Swaziland has a population of only one million, but 30,000 people in this country are employed in 24 factories in the clothing industry, and a much larger share of the population is economically dependent on these textile jobs. Since it belongs to the UN category of least developed countries, Swaziland benefits from a special export quota for textiles on the regulated international market. This has caused a boom in textile production. However, from 2005, this quota is gone. The world is moving toward a more liberal textile market without protection and quota systems, and prognoses indicate that in the course of a few years China and India will control 70 percent of world production. The firms in Swaziland have started firing people. Several other countries in Southern Africa have considerable textile production. They are also being hit, but the national economic significance is less than in Swaziland.

Tanzania has textile production, but since it has no significant export, the threat to this area by China and India is limited. Cashew nuts, however, comprise an important Tanzanian export product, and most of the harvest is sent to India for processing and packaging due to trade liberalization, India’s efficiency and perhaps also the Asiatic background of the owners of the cashew-nut industry and trade.

The small African countries are not competitive on the world markets for industrial production. When competitors storm forward in the great race for world markets, these African countries lag behind. And their worst competitors are not necessarily the old industrial countries, but perhaps far more the large industrialized Asian developing countries, which enjoy the benefits of much larger domestic markets and greater industrialization.

In addition, there is in Tanzania certain nervousness about African neighbours. Already at the time of independence, Kenya was more industrialized than Tanzania. Industrial traditions are greater in Kenya, and the educational system and firms have jointly created a more efficient workforce. In free East African competition, Tanzanian has problems in
relation to Kenya. Many middle-level managers in the new Tanzanian industries are from Kenya.

Tanzania should be able to do better. That is clear. First-generation leaders led Tanzania onto a course that – together with the hostile international economy – contributed to daunting Tanzanians’ spirit and ruining the country. With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to see that much should have been done differently.

Much can also be done differently today, although changing governments have attempted to make corrections. Tanzania, unlike China, cannot afford the waste that high levels of corruption create, and corruption should be fought much more effectively. At many places in the Tanzanian system, it is also possible to do more on its own in regard to making society more efficient. And it is necessary to devise a clearer vision and plan for agriculture.

Many people know this. The middle-class and the class of the well-educated are growing. There is increasing knowledge and will to assume responsibility, but in a society that only gives few people a chance, the focus is on how you make a livelihood for yourself and your closest family. You can very well be against corruption and still benefit from it. You can very well wish for a society with greater opportunity for everyone and still utilize the special connections available to the elite. During my travels, I also heard stories about the people I interviewed. Some of them had been good at taking care of themselves, and also they used methods that help corrupt society.

Tanzania can and must do more itself. But there is also much that Tanzania and other similar small economies are not able to do, no matter how much they try and how clever their democratic politicians are.

Tanzania cannot increase production in agriculture by guaranteeing the peasants fixed high prices for agricultural products as is done in the EU. We know that this recipe works. We know that if farmers receive guarantees that they can sell their crops at reasonable prices, they will also invest in fertilizer and better crops. But Tanzania does not have the money, and IMF and WTO do not allow such protection of the domestic market.

And Tanzania has no possibility to become a leading country through concentrating its own efforts on education and research. Education is lagging very far behind, and as a research nation, Tanzania is not to be found
on the map at all. If even the rich and well-educated Denmark is finding it difficult to keep up in the field of research and education, it is obvious that Tanzania has no chance whatsoever to either keep up or try to catch up.

Nor can Tanzania build its industry by protecting the domestic market during the development phase against competition from outside. Historically, that was how it was done in Europe and USA, but international trade regulations will no longer allow it.

In most areas Tanzania and other equally poor developing countries have no possibility to attract foreign investments that really create jobs. It is more expensive and risky to invest in Tanzania than in a large Asiatic country. Tanzania’s domestic market is microscopic. The infrastructure is poor, and it is cheaper to transport grain in large amounts by ship from Australia to Tanzania than by truck from inner Tanzania to the coast. The electrical system is poor and demands emergency generators. The qualifications of the workforce are poor, mainly because of the poor educational system. These are the realities that will scare away most investors.

The World Bank generally maintains that some least developed countries can only hope to attract foreign investors, if they can improve their infrastructure and levels of health and education through increased aid. Tanzania has met most of the demands required of poor small countries by international donors and financial institutions: liberalization, investments of donor funds in education, and favourable conditions for foreign investors.

But even if such efforts were successful, and if economic growth could be maintained at five to six percent per year, it would take a very long time to have any impact on unemployment and poverty. Each year, hundred thousands of poorly educated young people enter a labour market that is already suffering from enormous unemployment. Many come from poor, degraded rural districts where farmers have lost hope with regard to the land’s productivity.

Even if it were possible to tackle the gigantic challenge presented by the agricultural sector and make it more productive and sustainable, emigration from agriculture would continue and increase year by year, because this would be a prerequisite for a more effective agricultural sector. “The job is so formidable that it is close to being impossible,” Butiku says, and he sounds convincing.

In an attempt to solve this formidable, almost impossible task regardless, an impressive and in many ways effective effort is being made at
present in Tanzania. They are trying to create an elite that can in any case take care of themselves and might be able to drag other segments of society upward with them.

The new upper class is in the process of solidifying its position. The new society could be seen as divided in layers or new classes. Some even say that society is once more becoming racially divided. In any case, various divisions are being created and they are all very visible. Land and education, together with political-economic control in the public and private sectors, are the central elements in the new layer and class divisions. The upper class ensures itself land and the best possible education for the next upper-class generation.

Many families and individuals have made an impressive effort. At a time when official Tanzania was in an actual state of economic and institutional collapse, those with strong resources were actively ensuring their own and their families’ futures. There was not much else they could do. Primarily, investments were made in their children’s futures, and a large share of the total sum paid for private school tuitions has undoubtedly come from various forms of corruption and black work. Official salaries have never been sufficient.

This can be criticized, but the individual family had to avoid becoming part of the collapse and decline. And today, there is actually a new faith in the possibility of creating a positive trend. Some places, the new development is creating certain optimism, also because it is linked to better management of the public finances, low inflation and relatively high economic growth. The macro economists are happy.

But as many conversations in this book show, there is also new anxiety regarding the future. Now, the official policy is growth through inequality, and even though everyone still speaks of harmony, divisions are clearer than before. Religious harmony is no longer taken for granted, and polarization and marginalization also cause stronger religious tensions. Ethnic differences are discussed less but are mentioned as an aspect of this anxiety for the future.

Not all the Western prescriptions work as the advisors thought they would. Today, no one in Tanzania dreams of returning to a one-party system, not to mention socialism. But people do talk openly about the fact that what we call democracy, with many parties, has increased corruption as well as some of the religious conflicts, including the latent conflict between the state and the very large Muslim majority on the mainland (on
Zanzibar, the Muslims comprise a large majority).

Democracy guarantees neither harmony nor economic growth. Also, the governing system is so strong that it has been able to prevent the emergence of a really strong opposition. So, actually, Tanzania has a one-party government in a multi-party democracy.

Tanzania is still an inexperienced state. Second-generation Tanzanians govern or the third generation is just about to take over. Many have learned from past mistakes, but there is a great deal of uncertainty about both future policies and future possibilities.

The absolutely most positive scenario could look like this:

The educational effort succeeds this time, so that during the course of a few years everyone receives reasonable schooling with a marked decrease in illiteracy.

Success is achieved in modernizing agriculture that is partly still based on family farms, and on this basis, food production increases just as markedly. The AIDS epidemic is stopped and the mortality rate is gradually reduced. A sensible investment climate is maintained and further developed, so the development continues in the industrial sector, service sector and tourism. It turns out to be possible to maintain and further increase growth in the collection of both income taxes and value added taxes. On the basis of this development, it becomes possible to increase annual economic growth to seven-eight percent per year.

The lion's nightmare! When all the Masai have a cell phone.
This scenario is so optimistic that many would call it unrealistic. It assumes large and well-used foreign aid and strong internal political and economic management and effort. In addition, it would solve far from all problems. The emigration from the countryside to the cities would continue.

Increased employment in the cities will even with this scenario continue to absorb only a fraction of the young people. The environment, both rural and urban, will continue to be under extreme pressure; management of insufficient water resources will be a constant challenge. And inequality will continue to grow. The Tanzanian government will be able to solve more problems itself than it can today, and this will provide a reason for important optimism, but in spite of this, polarization will continue. Many of the weakest and the poorest will not benefit from development, and tensions will grow between society’s various groups. Due to increased agricultural production, Tanzania will perhaps be able to increase exports, but Tanzania’s role on the world market for industrial products and services will continue to be microscopic.

This is the optimistic Tanzanian scenario. Many countries are in a far worse situation than Tanzania, countries that are just as poor or even poorer and also more densely populated and with still worse environmental problems. There are countries that are situated far inland without harbours, and countries that are plagued by open internal and external conflicts that drain their economies and opportunities.

There are countries where no investors would dream of investing (except to find oil or diamonds), and there are typically also governments that are far worse at utilizing foreign aid than Tanzania.

Tanzania’s history tells about a country that has done very well, but not at all well enough, a country that today has a much larger population and in many areas much greater problems than at the time of independence.

It is the history of a country that is deeply affected by globalization, but whose trade statistics show that for the most part it is not part of the same globalization. It is a country that must compete on equal terms but hardly has a chance to succeed on what the world community calls equal terms.

A story is told about a Tanzanian trade minister who participated in a debate about an international system with liberalization, free trade, and completely just trade regulations, which treated each nation with exact
equality. The trade minister said that he tried to imagine himself in the boxing ring with Mike Tyson as his opponent. In this case, he said, it would be a poor consolation that Mike Tyson and he were to box according to exactly the same just rules. This is an old story from the time when everyone feared Tyson, and the trade minister felt sure that he would very quickly be knocked out. He did not wish to participate in this type of ‘just’ fight.

Some forms of sport are considerate of weakness, of those who are handicapped or just not as good. They play in their own division or league, or they are given a handicap that equalizes differences. That is not how it is in the global economic struggle between countries. Here, the rules are based on the illusion that all countries and peoples have the same qualifications. There is no handicap for the handicapped, and no second division to protect and train those who are not so strong. Here, even the weakest have to be ready to lose in the global super league.
TANZANIA’S HISTORY

(not including Zanzibar’s internal development)

1885 Tanganyika, which is present mainland Tanzania, is declared a German protectorate.

1920 After Germany’s defeat in World War I, Tanganyika becomes a mandate area under the League of Nations, and since 1945 under the UN. Great Britain administered the area during the whole period.

1954 Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) is founded. TANU is a further development of Tanganyika African Association, founded in 1929. Julius Nyerere becomes TANU’s first leader.

1960 Julius Nyerere becomes chief minister after an overwhelming victory for TANU in the election of September 1960.


1962 Tanganyika becomes a republic, and Nyerere is chosen as the republic’s first president.

1963 The islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, which have been a British protectorate, become the independent sultanate, Zanzibar.

1964 After an internal rebellion, the mostly Muslim Zanzibar is declared a republic. The Afro-Shirazi party takes power. The same year, the United Republic of Tanzania is formed as a union between Tanganyika (now mainland Tanzania) and Zanzibar. Nyerere becomes the republic’s president and Abeid Karume from Zanzibar becomes vice-president.

1965 A new constitution makes the one-party system the political basis for Tanzania. Both TANU and ASP continue as the only legal parties, TANU as the mainland party and ASP as the party on Zanzibar.
1967 TANU approves the programme for socialism and self-help, the Arusha Declaration. The declaration and the subsequent legislation become the basis for nationalization of enterprises, *ujamaa* villages, the forced moving of villages, and take-over by the state of schools and hospitals. The declaration makes ethical and moral demands of leaders with regard to not having economic interests outside their governmental functions.

1971 TANU decides that illiteracy must be eliminated by 1975. This plan is not fulfilled.

1973 After a soft start based on voluntary establishment of *ujamaa* villages, the system loses its patience. The rural population is forcibly moved through operations that shall move whole village populations together in new villages by 1976.

1974 It is decided that the city Dodoma should gradually become Tanzania’s capital. Dar es Salaam is still in 2007 the real capital, but parliament and several other functions are moved to Dodoma.

1974 For the first time, Universal Primary Education (UPE) is introduced. It is popularly understood as free access to schools for everyone in the country. Parents must however pay certain expenses. The school population explodes. Ten years later, more than 90 percent of all children of school age attend school.

1977 TANU and ASP unite into one party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) – the Revolutionary Party. Nyerere becomes the party’s chairman. Zanzibar continues to have its own government under the union government.

1978–79 Tanzania attacks Uganda after the Ugandan forces under dictator Idi Amin invade the northern part of Tanzania west of Lake Victoria in October 1978. The Tanzanian forces capture Uganda’s capital, Kampala, in April 1979. Idi Amin flees. The war is popular in both Tanzania and Uganda, but it is also extremely expensive and comes at a time when Tanzania’s economy is already poor, also because of internal nationalizations, increasing oil prices, and falling prices for Tanzania’s exports.
The economy becomes worse and worse. The government cannot finance the expansion, e.g. in health and education. From the mid-1980s, expense-sharing is introduced in the school system. Parents must pay school tuition, and the amount increases rapidly until it is so high that the poor cannot afford to pay. School attendance falls dramatically.

Tanzania is at ‘war’ with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The economy is terrible. Donors pay 60 percent of all development costs. The debt increases. IMF demands among other things liberalization of imports and devaluation of the Tanzanian shilling. This does not solve the problems, and Tanzania rejects several IMF demands. The government begins to reduce the number of public employees; 25,000 are fired. IMF and the donors punish Tanzania by reducing aid, because they do not believe that the reforms are far-reaching enough. A final agreement is first made with IMF in 1986 reducing the value of the Tanzanian shilling by 40 percent, completely liberalizing foreign trade, and giving the private sector a much greater role. The period with socialism is over. Privatization of state enterprises is also planned.

Julius Nyerere steps down as president. He does not run for re-election, and Ali Hassan Mwinyi wins with 92 percent of the vote. Mwinyi is Muslim and from Zanzibar. The final agreement with IMF is signed in July 1986 by President Mwinyi. Julius Nyerere continues as chairman for CCM.

Liberalization continues and privatization accelerates. In 1994, donors freeze much of the planned aid. One reason for this is the discovery of an enormous amount of tax evasion leading to budget deficits. In 1996, a new IMF agreement is made, and donors begin again to increase aid.

The constitution is amended, and the multi-party system is introduced.

The first multi-party election. As party chairman, Nyerere still plays a role behind the scene. CCM’s candidate is Benjamin Mkapa, who is considered to be Nyerere’s choice. Four parties nominate presidential candidates. Mkapa receives 62 percent of the vote. In the parliamentary election, CCM receives 59
percent of the vote and 186 out of 232 seats. The remainders are divided among four opposition parties. Eight parties receive too few votes to be represented.

1996 Corruption is a growing problem in spite of anti-corruption campaigns since 1983. Mkapa makes the fight against corruption the main theme of his election campaign and appoints former Prime Minister Joseph Warioba as chairman of a commission to investigate the scope of corruption. For the first time, such a commission report is made public. It is printed as a series in the newspapers.

1996 Mwinyi steps down as party chairman; Mkapa is chosen as his successor. The post of president and chairman of the governing party are again joined in one person.

2000 Mkapa runs for re-election and receives 72 percent of the vote. In the parliamentary election, CCM receives 65 percent of the vote and 202 out of 231 seats. The remainders are divided among five parties. Seven parties do not win any seats.

2001 A new Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) is presented to re-introduce free schools for all. School fees are abolished and from 2000 to 2003, student enrolment in primary schools increases from 59 to 91 percent. The plan for primary school education is followed in 2004 by a plan for strengthening teaching at the next level, the secondary schools.

After 2000 The economy and inflation are under control. There is a certain amount of growth in tax income. Privatization of enterprises has accelerated, and there is some foreign investment, especially by South Africa. Tanzania presents itself as a very open and liberal country, which gives investors ideal terms. After some years with very low economic growth, or negative growth in relation to the increase in population, Tanzania experiences several years with five to six percent annual economic growth. Population growth is between 2.5 and 3 percent annually.

Oct. 2005 Parliamentary and presidential elections. CCM’s presidential candidate, the former foreign minister, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete is elected as Tanzania’s new president.
Arkadie, Brian Van, researcher, ESRF, Dar es Salaam.

Bakari, Mohammed, researcher.
Baregu, Mwesiga, Professor of Political Science, University of Dar es Salaam.
Busunda, Anthony, former farmer, Ukerewe.
Butiku, Joseph, former private secretary for Julius Nyerere, Director, The Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation.


Fuime, Gabriel Benedict, District Director, Iringa District.

Heilman, Bruce, researcher.
Helleiner, Gerald, Canadian researcher.
Hydén, Göran, Swedish-American researcher with extensive knowledge of Tanzania.

Kassum, Al Noor, political veteran, former minister and ambassador, Dar es Salaam.
Kawawa, Rashid, former Vice-President.
Keenja, Charles N., Agricultural Minister.
Kida, Heriel Naftal, author of “Tanzanians Arise and Get Rich”.
Kikwete, Jakaya Mrisho, Tanzania’s fourth president.
Kipanda, Celestine, Catholic priest, Ukerewe.

Leisa, Johst, entrepreneur, retired. Tanzanian born in Germany, Iringa.
Luhanga, James, Regional Commissioner, Iringa Region.
Llujangi, George, former teacher, Ukerewe.
Lukanima, Forunatus, Catholic bishop, Ukerewe.
Lweno, Mwana Hatibu, Muslim grandmother, former programme assistant, Dar es Salaam.

Mahawi, Eleather Epiphan, retired government official, Mwanza.
Makongo, Japhet (Jeff), HakiElimu, educational NGO, Dar es Salaam.
Mazigo, Sylvester, former farmer, Ukerewe.
Mbilinyi, Marjorie, Professor, member of HakiElimu and former Program Officer, Policy Analysis and Advocacy.
Mchongo, Selemany, former construction worker, Dar es Salaam.
Meishaa, Ole, former businessman, Dar es Salaam.
Mkanzabi, Bernard, former farmer, Ukerewe.
Mkapa, Benjamin, Tanzania’s third president.
Mkenda, Beatrice Kalinda, researcher.
Mkwawa, famous historical hehe chief.
Muhikwa, Anthony Musiba, former farmer, Ukerewe.
Mukama, John, former teacher, Ukerewe.
Mukandala, Rwekaza, Professor of Political Science, Chairman for REDET, University of Dar es Salaam.
Mungai, Joseph, Education Minister.
Mutaboyerwa, Alphonce, leader of children’s rights organization, Kuleana, Mwanza.
Mvungi, Martha, Director, ESACS Academy, Dar es Salaam.
Mwibule, Kazi, District Commissioner, Nansio, Ukerewe.
Mwinyi, Ali Hassan, Tanzania’s second president.

Ndumbaro, Laurean, researcher.
Ngando, Bituro, former farmer, Ukerewe.
Njozi, Hamsa, Head, Department of Literature, University of Dar es Salaam.
Ntarru, Alhaj Othman, General Secretary, BAKWATA, Tanzania’s National Muslim Council, Dar es Salaam.
Nyagawa, Eli Yohana, historian, former teacher, Iringa.

Onyango-Obbo, Charles, Ugandan journalist at The East African.
Othman, Haroub, Professor, University of Dar es Salaam.

Petersen, Steen, former Danish development worker.
Salum, Maduhu, Regional Education Chief, Iringa Region. 
Shivji, Issa, Professor of Law, University of Dar es Salaam. 
Sumaye, Frederick Tluway, Prime Minister. 
Svendsen, Knud Erik, Danish economist, former advisor to Julius Nyerere. 

Warioba, Joseph, former Prime Minister.
KNUD VILBY (born 1942) has worked on development, environmental and poverty issues as a journalist and writer for 35 years. He was editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Information* from 1972 to 1979; chairman of the Danish National UNESCO commission (1979–1987), chairman of the Danish Association for International Cooperation (MS) (1991–1997); former member of the board of DANIDA and former vice-chairman of the Development Council and of the Council for environment and development. He was chairman of the Danish Writers’ Association (1998–2004). From 2005 he is a member of the board of Danish Church Aid and on the board of the Danish Ecological Council.