

Chapter 12

A Socialist Diaspora: Ali Sultan Issa, the Soviet Union, and the Zanzibari Revolution

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Beginning in the mid-1950s British colonial officials in Zanzibar began to introduce political reforms and gradually made clear their intention to grant independence. Over the course of four multiparty election seasons they supervised and refereed an increasingly bitter dispute over the inheritance of power, which culminated in 1964 in the racial and partisan violence of the Zanzibari Revolution.¹ In the same years, as mass politics began to seriously divide Zanzibaris, students left the islands by the hundreds to obtain training and education in overseas colleges and universities. The postwar Zanzibari student diaspora was responsible for a wealth of visual impressions, discoveries, and debate. Students returned to introduce the language of socialism into Zanzibari life and politics. They inserted themselves into local debates by arguing that Zanzibar should follow neither the lead of African nationalists nor that of Arab icons such as Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, but should instead seek guidance and assistance from progressive nations such as the Soviet Union. Students such as Ali Sultan Issa argued that only through scientific socialism could real development take place in the islands. They regarded themselves privileged agents compelled by their times and their travels to pull Zanzibar into an inevitable transnational march towards socialism.

In January 1964, only one month after Zanzibar celebrated its independence from the British and colonial army units withdrew, a force of Africans armed only with machetes and clubs launched a surprise nocturnal attack on two police arsenals and quickly gained control of nearly all the government's weapons supply. Within a couple days they forced the sultan to flee on his yacht and the Prime Minister and his cabinet to surrender. The British decided not to intervene on behalf of the deposed government, and African and socialist nations rushed to recognize the new regime. What might have

initially been a relatively bloodless seizure of power soon became, however, a fairly systematic campaign to round up, detain, and punish supporters of the former regime, with Arabs being singled out for the harshest forms of vengeance: plunder, rape, execution, and exile. Zanzibari historian Abdullah Sheriff, in reference to weeks of violence against Zanzibar's Arab community, describes the net effect as "genocidal in proportions."²

The Zanzibari Revolution was in fact a signal event in what Pjero Glejse refers to as "the season of the great illusion,"³ when to many international observers in 1964-1965 a continentwide revolution seemed imminent in Africa. Africa, which in colonial days had been a relative backwater in terms of world politics, was being newly discovered by a generation of diplomats, journalists, experts, and intelligence officers in the Soviet Union, China, and the United States. Some of these men operated in a vacuum of knowledge about Africa; their cold war paradigms at times encouraged dogmatism and facile conclusions. Some American observers, for example, were at first convinced the revolution in Zanzibar was the work of outside Communist powers.⁴ They were also seriously alarmed by the rapid influx into Zanzibar in the next weeks of advisors, arms, and materiel from the Soviet Union, China, and East Germany. In a classic exposition of cold war "domino-theory" analysis, William Leonhart, the American ambassador to Tanganyika, argued that a Communist Zanzibar would serve as a subversive base for the entire region. At relatively little cost Eastern Bloc nations could turn the islands into a showcase of socialist development and an "African model of their own revolutionary tactics."⁵ Under pressure from the Lyndon Johnson administration, the British were prepared to launch an invasion force to eliminate the Communist threat in the islands but only upon the invitation of Zanzibar's president Abeid Karume.⁶ They were convinced Karume was a naïve moderate about to be pushed aside by a circle of savvy pro-Marxist cabinet ministers.

Western panic was mirrored by a sense of socialist triumph and expectancy. In February 1964 Chinese premier Chou En-Lai remarked, "Revolutionary prospects are excellent throughout the African continent."⁷ The following year the Chinese premier paid a personal visit to Zanzibar, the latest of a number of anti-imperialist leaders to pay their respects to the islands' famous revolution, including Malcolm X and Che Guevara. In the "Introduction" to Frantz Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism*, Argentine journalist Adolfo Gilly heralded the Zanzibari Revolution as further evidence that "Revolution is mankind's way of life today... Capitalism is under siege surrounded by a global tide of revolution."⁸ The Vietnamese defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 was

the signal for Algeria to launch her struggle. And in 1960-1961, the defeat of French imperialism in Algeria unleashed the great tide of

African revolution. The revolutionaries of Zanzibar took advantage of this uninterrupted chain of revolutionary struggles to realize one of the greatest deeds of the epoch: storming the center of power with a small nucleus, they expelled imperialism from a backward country with only 300,000 inhabitants. They took the road of socialist revolution, arms in hand, with no other support than the determination of the masses of Zanzibar - barefoot, poor, illiterate, armed as well as they could manage - and their own revolutionary courage.⁹

It is somewhat but not entirely ironic that the Zanzibari Revolution would be immediately included in a great uninterrupted chain of world revolutions. The revolutionary crowd responsible for the uprising was, like most crowds, a "many-headed multitude,"¹⁰ and possessed a series of diverse aspirations. For most the issue was not class so much as race and the chance to settle old personal and partisan scores. Few were aware their local success would garner such international attention or produce such high-level hopes and fears. The historical connection between Zanzibar and Algeria, Vietnam, China, and Russia was most important in 1964 to a relatively few students who, like Ali Sultana Issa, had obtained a Western education or traveled overseas, and who had come to identify themselves as Marxists. Marxism was a rather exotic plant; it did not emerge organically from the dominant nationalist debates in island society in the 1950s over race and civilization and over who should and should not be considered true "sons of the soil" and thus enjoy full citizenship rights.¹¹ Impressed, however, with the rapid economic advances made by socialist nations of the North, students were convinced socialism had and would continue to be adopted by the planet's most progressive nations. Like Ethiopian students of the same period, Issa and his comrades were drawn to socialism not only for its "utopian vision of human liberation," but as "a story of how a weak and backward collection of nationalities, located outside of Western Europe, attained unity, wealth, and international respect: the allegory of the Russian and, later, the Chinese, revolution."¹² They participated in the seizure of power, rapidly assimilated into a new ruling oligarchy, and looked to Moscow, Beijing, and East Berlin for further training, assistance, and inspiration. They had a significant influence on the formulation of revolutionary policies, since the redistribution of wealth and opportunity in the new nation was consistent with both socialism and the general aspirations of the revolutionary crowd.

Ali Sultana Issa was a major architect of Zanzibar's socialist movement, and so it is not inappropriate to explore at least partially through his eyes the relationship between the Soviet Union and the Zanzibari Revolution. I will draw heavily upon his forthcoming memoir,¹³ as well as from oral and archival data from Tanzania, the United Kingdom and the United States, but not, unfortunately, from anywhere else. After a discussion of Issa's exposure to socialism and the Soviet Union, the essay will then seek to reconstruct

the Soviet influence on the Zanzibari Revolution. For a brief period in 1964 it appeared to both Western and Eastern observers that, as a result of the postwar Zanzibari student diaspora, the islands were, like Cuba, emerging as a Marxist client-state not unwilling to either showcase or export its revolutionary model to an entire continent. And either directly or indirectly the Soviets sought to guide Zanzibar along the path of scientific socialism and formal affiliation with the Eastern Bloc. It is my hope this essay will encourage further research on this topic from the perspective of the Soviet archives.

SOCIALIST PILGRIM

In the early-nineteenth-century Zanzibar Town became a leading trading emporium of the Indian Ocean, and Zanzibar led the world in the production of cloves, a tree crop grown on numerous plantations owned primarily by Arabs but dependent on African slave labor and Asian credit for their survival. A colonial census in 1948 reported a total population in the islands of 255,000, of which 75 percent were African (of various ethnicities), 19 percent Arab, and 4 percent Asian.¹⁴ Asians, however, as artisans, merchants, and civil servants, were overwhelmingly concentrated in Zanzibar Town. In 1948 they comprised over 27 percent of the capital's population of approximately 50,000; Africans and Arabs accounted, respectively, for 49 and 16 percent of the city's population.¹⁵

British colonialism brought the abolition of slavery but not the eradication of race and class inequalities, with Africans commonly occupying low status positions in the cash economy or living in villages on the margins of plantation society, where they engaged in fishing and subsistence farming. Although social relations in the colonial period were not characterized by repetitive incidents of overt conflict, many British subjects experienced, on a very personal level, the correspondence between ethnic/racial identity and access to status, wealth, and opportunity in the islands. This correspondence was not complete, however; poor Arabs and Asians lived alongside Africans who sometimes owned considerable numbers of clove trees. Nevertheless, the British accepted and defended a social hierarchy in which the economic roles performed by Zanzibar's various communities were perceived to be both natural and complementary.

Zanzibar Town in colonial times was a patchwork of ethnic and sectarian enclaves. While visitors from overseas consistently remarked on the town's cosmopolitan atmosphere, until World War II local interest in or access to the cultural and intellectual capital of the West was rather limited. Colonial observers described literate Arabs in the islands, for example, as wholly concerned with reading the Qur'an, commentaries on the Qur'an, Muslim law, stories from the *Arabian Nights*, and Arabic newspapers from

Cairo.¹⁶ F.B. Pearce wrote in 1920 that a typical Arab patrician's "knowledge of the world, and of the latest developments of modern science or art, is practically nil."¹⁷ Jonathon Glassman provides a less dismissive and necessary corrective view of Zanzibari intellectual life; he demonstrates that religious scholars, schoolteachers, and journalists constituted a vibrant community in the interwar years.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Western cultural influences became in the 1940s and afterwards increasingly visible and accessible through cinema, newspapers, and the spread of colonial schools. Issa was a direct beneficiary of rapidly accelerating government investment in education; in 1948 he was among the first students to attend Beit Ras secondary school just north of Zanzibar Town. His geography lessons awakened in him a desire to see other lands, especially the sources of metropolitan power in Great Britain. He recalls that as students "We wanted to find out how a small island like that could rule the world, an empire where the sun never set. We thought, 'What is there? They must have something, so let us go there.'" After quitting school in 1950 he developed a plan with his friend Abdulrahman Muhamed Babu to meet up in London in order to "learn how they managed to rule us.... On the other hand, I was also just a young man who wanted to get somewhere in the world.... Babu and I had that inclination to go to the UK, and it was only there that serious political ideas began to influence us."

For the next two years Issa lived the life of a seaman, vagabond, and stowaway, spending nearly a year in Calcutta, Cape Town, and Vancouver. He developed a taste for very thin trousers, the jitterbug, and the songs of Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra; in Japan he tried to enlist in the American army fighting in Korea. Issa eventually arrived in London in 1953, reconnected with Babu, and found work as a dishwasher at the Mount Royal Hotel. He spent his evenings drinking and discussing politics with Babu and other African expatriates. He officially joined the British Communist Party in May 1954, initially because of its support for immediate independence for the colonies. He immersed himself in party activities and through long hours of study became convinced of the veracity of Marxist-Leninist theory and revolutionary tactics. He recalled that he especially

liked the socialist idea of collectivizing all the means of production, especially for a small country like Zanzibar, rather than to have economic fragmentation.... The Arab plantation owners exploited the Africans, and the Indians exploited the Arabs, and the British banks exploited the Indians. I came to realize this during my discussions with party members. I saw the system in my youth and so it was easy for me to explain and to analyze it dialectically to my comrades in London.

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Cairo.¹⁶ F.B. Pearce wrote in 1920 that a typical Arab patrician's "knowledge of the world, and of the latest developments of modern science or art, is practically *nil*."¹⁷ Jonathon Glassman provides a less dismissive and necessary corrective view of Zanzibari intellectual life; he demonstrates that religious scholars, schoolteachers, and journalists constituted a vibrant community in the interwar years.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Western cultural influences became in the 1940s and afterwards increasingly visible and accessible through cinema, newspapers, and the spread of colonial schools. Issa was a direct beneficiary of rapidly accelerating government investment in education; in 1948 he was among the first students to attend Beit Ras secondary school just north of Zanzibar Town. His geography lessons awakened in him a desire to see other lands, especially the sources of metropolitan power in Great Britain. He recalls that as students "We wanted to find out how a small island like that could rule the world, an empire where the sun never set. We thought, 'What is there? They must have something, so let us go there.'" After quitting school in 1950 he developed a plan with his friend Abdulrahman Muhamed Babu to meet up in London in order to "learn how they managed to rule us.... On the other hand, I was also just a young man who wanted to get somewhere in the world.... Babu and I had that inclination to go to the UK, and it was only there that serious political ideas began to influence us."

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who only "conditioned the students" and "molded and regulated the thinking of the people." Nor was he extremely impressed by London's pan-Africanist associations. He recalled: "Communism taught that not all white people were bad; it eradicated in me any element of racism. When I accepted Marxism it oriented my thinking completely towards the class struggle and away from racial politics."¹⁹ His activity in the Communist Party gained him access to a world of Marxist intellectuals thousands of miles away from the colonial and Qur'anic schools of his youth:

I met so many fine people there – it was like the Swahili saying, *udongo na waridi*, or "clay and rose." I was the clay and I wanted to get the scent of a rose.... The British Communist Party was under Russian domination, but it was very alive, and full of activity. Most of my friends in the party were British and we were very warm to each other. Here I came from the colonies and I was non-white but I was not segregated and was made to feel welcome in all their homes. We organized meetings, classes and lectures. People from the central committee of the Party or from the trade unions would lecture to us. They were very impressive people, more impressive than my evening classes where they were just teaching the syllabus approved by the government. I knew that after my training in the UK in the party I would know how to work and organize when I returned home to Zanzibar.

Because of his admiration for the Russian Revolution he did not let pass an opportunity in 1957 to visit the Soviet Union. From his meager earnings he paid fifty British pounds to attend the International Youth Festival held in Moscow that year. Communist youth festivals had become regular events in the Eastern Bloc in the postwar years. The Moscow festival was the sixth of these and attracted approximately 30,000 youth from 131 countries, costing the Soviet Union an estimated \$100,000,000.²⁰ On the first day of the festival he immediately made a splash:

As the only Zanzibari delegate I was put in an open landrover all by myself on the opening day of the festival, to be driven through a stadium full of thousands and thousands of Russians. Each country had its own delegation and its own car, but since I was the only one from Zanzibar, I passed alone under the rostrum, where stood Krushchev, members of the ruling Politburo, and other Communist Party officials.... I noticed that each delegation would stop for a few seconds in front of the rostrum where the microphones were very sensitive. Beforehand I memorized a couple lines in Russian, which I delivered in the car as it paused under the rostrum: "Long live the friendship of the people of Russia and the people of Zanzibar! *Za mir y druzhba!* For peace and friendship!" I shouted this out as loud as I could, and the microphones caught my voice. The whole stadium erupted in applause and cheers. They responded saying, "*Kharasho!*" Good! It seemed like there were over 100,000 people in the stadium.

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And I believe that's why later that day Krushchev called me over at an official reception and requested me to open the Kremlin Ball that night by dancing with a member of the Communist Party's Executive Committee. Her name, I remember, was Madame Furtseva. Imagine: Here is Ali Sultan coming from Zanzibar, dancing with a Politburo member, a member of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party! A huge lady! You know the Russians the way they eat! My interpreter was very much impressed.... My best memory of the festival, however, was seeing *Swan Lake*, by Tchaikovsky, at the Bolshoi Theater. They invited all of us youth delegates and it was my first experience with ballet. I saw the dancers Raissa Strutchkova and Alexander Lapauri and I was mesmerized by the choreography; it was something completely new to me. And the light, the way they would play with the light to simulate waves, or a swan swimming on a lake, just like a real lake in the background.

Very few if any Zanzibaris had until 1957 ever visited Moscow, and so Issa recorded his experiences at the festival in a series of seven articles written in Swahili that appeared in the Zanzibari weekly newspaper *Mwongozi* from December 1957 to February 1958. He enthusiastically described dances, cultural performances, museums, seminars, tours of industrial sights, and visits to the tombs of Lenin and Stalin. One notable passage in *Mwongozi* describes an incident on his return trip to London after the conclusion of the festival:

When we left East Germany and entered West Germany all our celebrations ceased and we began to feel the difference between the east and west. All of us who were on the train said that if the whole world would be like what we had just departed, it would enjoy great peace. All of us promised ourselves that our responsibility was to explain to the people of our nations the meaning and purpose of the festival.²¹

STUDENT DIASPORAS

When Issa returned to Zanzibar in February 1958 his only political training had come within the Russian-dominated British Communist Party, and his only personal exposure to a socialist society came as a delegate to the Moscow Youth Festival. In the early-1960s, however, his allegiance to Soviet-style communism would be challenged by exposure to further varieties of socialist doctrine and historical experience. He would draw upon the generous patronage of such nations as China, Cuba, and North Vietnam during a brief moment when the "second world" was just beginning to regard Africa as a field through which to penetrate and gradually encircle the capitalist powers. Although he came to admire the Chinese Revolution, he cultivated contacts with Eastern European diplomats, trade union leaders, and intelligence officers, seeking political and military training as well as scholarships for fellow Zanzibaris. As enough of them were able to study or to travel

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overseas they formed a small cohort in the islands that eventually, in 1963, established their own political party that would endorse scientific socialism and look to both the Russian and Chinese revolutions for inspiration.

In 1958, however, Ali Sultan Issa was convinced Zanzibar was not yet ready for a socialist party, and following the example set by Babu, who served as the secretary general of the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP), he became a Nationalist. He recalled that "we had to be subtle about it, we had to bury ourselves in a mass movement, and then try and politicize from within. Even then the British hardly tolerated us communists." Despite the presence of conservative Arab "feudal" landowners in the ZNP, and its support for the sultanate, Issa felt it necessary to join the party because it claimed opposition to both colonialism and racial politics, which he believed were the most pressing contradictions to be resolved.²² He regarded the ZNP's rival, the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP), as a creation of the British to keep Zanzibari nationalists divided along racial lines, as a tactic to delay colonial departure as long as possible.

His political training in London served him well; he rose rapidly within the ZNP, emerging as one of its most talented grassroots organizers. Receiving no salary, he and his wife and young children (whom he named after Mao, Castro, and Stalin) depended on friends for their essential needs. In 1960 he obtained his first opportunity to observe conditions in socialist nations other than the Soviet Union when he attended conferences in several nations, including Ghana, Guinea, North Vietnam, and China. In Hanoi he was invited to attend a formal dinner on a very hot day presided over by Ho Chi Minh, who

walked in wearing a worn out khaki uniform, his sandals made from tire treads, the kind you wear in the street among the children. He opened the dinner by removing the top of his uniform, wearing only a t-shirt underneath, and he asked the rest of us to do the same. And of course it was so hot we all took advantage of this.... Ho was very simple. In fact I've never seen a president like that in my life: he would move through the streets without any guards, walking among the children.... All the other heads of state I have seen have moved around with an entourage and bodyguards, as if they're the enemy of the people, or as if they are afraid.

In China he was taken on an official tour retracing the steps of the Long March, all the way from Guangdong to Inner Mongolia. He admired the sacrifices made by the Chinese and their rapid economic development:

Of course now the Chinese blame Mao, but they should not; its like how the Russians blame Stalin. But developing a backward country into an industrial country on par with developed nations in a short period of time is not easy, and no wonder a lot of people died in the process. But the sacrifice

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of lives was justified and if I had that same power I would have done the same as Mao or Stalin. If I had a huge country to bring from backwardness to modernization I would have done the same things, yes....

So in general although I was already a member of the British Communist Party for four years and had visited Russia in 1957, I was not as impressed by the greatness of the Russians as I was with the Chinese in 1960. Life is a constant state of change, and I was free to develop and put all ideologies to the test, to see which was most viable and most suitable to our own conditions in Zanzibar. In China I was deeply impressed by their vast and formidable country, by their sacrifice and their achievements, so that when I returned to Zanzibar I was in complete agreement with Babu about China, that this was the ideological line to follow.

Babu, who first visited China in 1959, remembered, "I studied China as a development model in contrast to the western model.... It evoked all the emotions of joy and hope for the oppressed who were still struggling under very difficult circumstances."²³ Issa and Babu's pro-Chinese perspective was not necessarily the general view among all socialists in Zanzibar however, since in the early-1960s China was, in comparison with the Soviet Union and East Germany, the least popular overseas destination for student travelers, putting the Chinese at a distinct disadvantage in their efforts to gain influence in the islands. Within the ASP, for example, Kassim Hanga had obtained a degree from Moscow's Lumumba University and married a Russian woman of partial African ancestry. After his return to Zanzibar he was appointed deputy secretary general of the ASP. Hassan Nasser Moyo, as secretary general of the Zanzibar and Pemba Federation of Labor (ZPFL), an umbrella group for all ASP-affiliated trade union organizations, was invited to tour China in 1960, and the following year he obtained a scholarship to study political economy at Lumumba University.²⁴ Hanga and Moyo emerged in the early-1960s as the leaders of a small but vocal socialist faction within the ASP, which aroused the suspicion and disdain of more Western-oriented ASP leaders such as Othman Shariff. In 1962 Shariff reported to the British that "Many [young men] go to the Lumumba University where they acquire strange ideas.... They return with a paper which is described as a degree and which they exploit to influence the ignorant, illiterate people who worship them...."²⁵

The ZNP was able, however, to distribute scholarships overseas on a much larger scale than the ASP. Assigned as the ZNP's chief representative in Cairo in 1960-1961, Issa supervised hundreds of Zanzibari youth given scholarships in Egypt as a result of an arrangement carefully worked out in 1958 between ZNP leader Ali Muhsin and Colonel Nasser.²⁶ While to the more conservative and Arabcentric wing of the ZNP Cairo - the capital of Arab nationalism - was clearly the most beneficial place to send Zanzibari

students overseas, Ali Sultan had other ideas. Cairo, in 1960, was one of the only cities in Africa where Eastern Bloc nations had obtained diplomatic representation. Anxious to replicate something of his outlook and experience among his Zanzibari cohorts, Issa forged relationships with various socialist embassies in the city and requested scholarships. He recalled that Cairo was "moribund, and decadent," and so the students were "better off studying elsewhere." He estimated that prior to the revolution, over a period of several years, a total of about 200 Zanzibaris had obtained scholarships to various institutions in the Soviet Union. East Germany accepted more students – about 300 – but usually for shorter six-month courses in trade unionism and cooperatives, though some also studied medicine, engineering, and telecommunications. Another thirty students went to Soviet client states in Eastern Europe.²⁷ About twenty students went to China and North Korea, but almost all of these left early. Issa recalled, "Our boys could not take the Asiatic lifestyle.... Their society was too tough, and the social life was very bad; they weren't allowed to mix with the Chinese.... Also some students didn't really want to study Marxism-Leninism."²⁸ He reassigned most of the students leaving China to institutions in Eastern Europe.

Haroub Othman, a professor at the University of Dar es Salaam in the Institute of Development Studies, recalled that Marxist literature was widely available in Zanzibar in the late 1950s, and that students at his school were even allowed at assemblies to recite sections from the *Communist Manifesto*. "There was a great urge among Zanzibaris at the time to go overseas to study," and so students were literally "running away from schools" when they got the chance. Through Babu and Issa he traveled in 1960 to China, where he was employed as a Swahili instructor and a translator at Radio Peking. He had few complaints about living conditions and was deeply impressed with what he saw of China's economic development after eleven years of Communist rule. In 1962, however, he refused to translate radio scripts attacking the Soviet Union, and left his work-study program early to travel across Asia on the Trans-Siberian railway. Arriving in Moscow, Zanzibari students convinced him there to apply for a scholarship, which he eventually obtained at the prestigious Moscow State University. Othman ultimately spent five years earning his degrees in the USSR, during which he attended the Bolshoi Ballet or the Moscow Conservatory every weekend for the equivalent of two dollars. He estimated that in Moscow in 1963 there were more than forty other students from Zanzibar, a per capita concentration of students in that city only surpassed by Cuba and Iraq. Most were members of the Zanzibari Student Association, which divided sharply according to students' ASP or ZNP affiliations. He personally joined neither, but as a socialist he supported the left wings of both parties.²⁹

Such unprecedented access in East Africa to socialist educational institutions had its predictable effect. The British Resident in Zanzibar observed in 1962 "the building up within the country of a measurable body of young people, who, even if they do not become card carrying Communists, at least become so imbued with the doctrines of Communist subversion that they must constitute a threat to future security."³⁰ British intelligence reports were full of warnings about growing "communist penetration" within the ZNP and to a lesser extent within the ASP. The ZNP's "progressive" faction, for which Babu provided the principal leadership, was especially entrenched within the party's affiliated youth and trade union organizations. With access to Chinese funding and news sources Babu began his own newspaper in Zanzibar Town, *ZANEWS*, which regularly voiced support for anticolonial struggles in Algeria, the Congo, and elsewhere. His views about the sultanate, global politics, and economic planning were very different from the large majority of the party still hostile to socialism, for whom Ali Muhsin emerged as the leading strategist and intellectual. They also antagonized colonial officials; the British Resident considered Babu a menace to the peaceful development of Zanzibar.³¹

SECESSION

Worries over the spread of socialist ideas, money and influence in the ZNP increased after the party won its first elections against the ASP in 1961 and appeared poised to inherit power. The colonial state, based upon the content of articles appearing in *ZANEWS*, charged Babu with sedition and sentenced him to fifteen-months imprisonment. Ali Sultan received the news in Havana while arranging with Raul Castro for military training in Cuba for twenty Zanzibari recruits. He returned immediately to the islands and not only publicly denounced the British but his own more conservative party leaders for their alleged conspiracy or at least acquiescence in Babu's detention. He cited circumstantial evidence to suggest that for some time it had been the intention of Ali Muhsin and other ZNP elders to remove Babu from his position as secretary general as a means of reigning in the radical youth of the party.³² Such accusations earned Issa expulsion from the ZNP's Executive Committee, and his forced resignation from the party.³³

Issa convened a press conference where he read a statement with the Castroesque title, "Condemn Me Now but History Will Absolve Me."

What is taking place now in Zanzibar has not surprised me at all but confirms the belief I have always held since I have started to think and use my intelligence, to differentiate right and wrong, just and unjust.... [The ZNP] is a liberation movement. It is a mass movement [comprised] of different sections and strat[a] of the people. This is an objective reality and anyone who tries to deny this is just fooling himself.... Concretely, we have within the ZNP the follow-

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ing main features, a section which cherishes capitalism and abhors socialism, the capitalist class and the landlords who prosper and grow fat by exploiting the working people. They live like parasites while others toil and sweat. And a section of proletariats, peasants, small farmers, small shopkeepers, individuals who through their own labour manage to make the two ends meet. We have also the professional, the intelligentsia, the students, the youths and the women.... We must be ruthless and wage a determined struggle against the enemies of the people, expose them for what they are and not to flirt and appease them hoping that they will change and be good.... The Socialist countries headed by USSR by the very nature of their economy are anti-Imperialists. These countries are for the real independence of the people. This has been amply demonstrated by the stand adopted by these countries whenever there has been a conflict, examples Egypt, Cuba, Korea, Indochina, Congo and Laos....

The "enemies of the people," according to Issa, were the "opportunists" and "reactionaries" whom he accused of taking over the ZNP. Because of their essential Arabcentrism they were unable to adopt any meaningful progressive stands, could not see the necessity of alignment with the Eastern Bloc, and were even willing to collaborate with the colonialists. In closing, despite the ZNP's proven potency at the ballot box, he declared, "I am confident that we shall win in the end, and by we I mean the progressives not only in Zanzibar but throughout the world."³⁴

After Babu's release from prison in early 1963 he, Issa, and others from the ZNP founded the Umma Party, meaning "the people" in Swahili.³⁵ Their secession was personal and ideological; it occurred against the backdrop of an imminent transfer of power between the British and the ZNP. Surviving party manifestos suggest the party was intended to be a movement of socialist "vanguard" youth dissenting from the ethnic politics engaged in by both the ZNP and the ASP. It was the outcome of efforts to "expose" young Zanzibaris overseas, and it drew members from both the ASP and the ZNP. Umma also gained the cooperation and support of Hanga and Moyo, who had grown disenchanted with Karume's ineffective leadership of the ASP, and who had made two separate attempts at party-wide conferences in 1962 and 1963 to supplant him in the party hierarchy.³⁶ After the ASP's latest electoral defeat to the ZNP in 1963, Moyo, as secretary general of the ZPFL, formed close working ties with Umma trade unionists, with whom he shared a common militancy.³⁷ While the ASP was paralyzed by a series of factional disputes, Umma emerged in late 1963, despite a base of support limited to urban youth, as the leading organizing forum of the government opposition.³⁸

Issa's own role in the Umma Party was cut short, however, by his decision to join his wife teaching Swahili in Beijing and to seek treatment there for his duodenal ulcers. His passport confiscated by the British, he left the

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islands at night in an outrigger. In China he heard the news over the radio of the independence of Zanzibar from British rule, and a few weeks later of the Zanzibari Revolution:

I remember I had a temperature on that day, and I had my sweater on, but when I heard the news all of a sudden I was well. My temperature, boof! Gone!... For three days I did not sleep, I just listened to the radio, expecting British intervention at any moment. Over the radio I could hear my [Umma] comrades in Zanzibar, the ones I had sent to Cuba for training, shouting in Spanish, "Today Zanzibar proclaims in front of Africa and the world that Zanzibar is the first liberated country of Africa! *Patria o muerte* [Our fatherland or death]! *Venceremos* [We shall conquer]!" These were Cuban slogans the comrades remembered from their time there; they just substituted Zanzibar for Cuba.³⁹

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF ZANZIBAR

Despite Umma's growing profile in late 1963 and its semi-open advocacy of revolution, neither Babu, nor for that matter Karume, Moyo, or Hanga, played any role in organizing the Zanzibari Revolution. It was the work of ASP Youth League leaders like Seif Bakari,⁴⁰ who, with little formal exposure to socialism, mobilized a rebel force through the Youth League's extensive network of local branch committees.⁴¹ Although taken by surprise, the Soviets, East Germans, and Chinese quickly granted recognition and began to send diplomats, intelligence officers, and various experts. They were well aware of the presence in the islands of significant numbers of men whom they had invited in the past for official tours and courses of study and thus were prepared to immediately cast the takeover as the latest incident in a global class struggle. Within days of the uprising Soviet journalists publishing in Russian newspapers stressed, according to an American diplomat in Moscow, the "progressive, anti-feudal nature [of] new regime.... Articles have attempted [to] twist racial conflict into [a] class pattern where most Arabs are feudal landlords and Negroes are 'popular masses.'"⁴²

Racial conflict in Zanzibar had at least a partial material foundation however, and it was not immediately clear how the new regime would choose to describe or to justify the recent violence. Nor was it clear what redistributive policies, if any, it would impose, what its international alignments would be, and what influence the Soviet Union would have. Leading members of the rebel force did not as a whole boast of administrative experience or high educational attainments; they formed a majority of the thirty-two-person Revolutionary Council but did not generally seek to initiate policy. They were willing, with the notorious exception of "Field Marshall" John Okello, to defer to Karume as president, Hanga as vice-president, and a hastily assembled cabinet of six ministers. Karume was at first in a weak

position, since he played no role in the actual planning of the revolution and possessed no security force with which to assert his authority other than a contingent of Tanganyikan police on loan from Julius Nyerere. Fearing a counterrevolution, Karume was compelled to work with ministers who in the past had repeatedly challenged his leadership, and who now worked behind the scenes to impose their influence and to blur the lines of authority. Among his cabinet there was only one – Aboud Jumbe – who had not in the early 1960s openly challenged Karume's political ability and authority. Hanga had repeatedly sought to supplant him, Babu had come originally from the ZNP, and in late 1963 Othman Shariff, Hasnu Makame, and Idris Abdul Wakil had left the ASP altogether. Karume was also forced to initially defer to the wildly unpredictable John Okello, who led a crowd of armed men determined to humiliate and despoil Asians and Arabs, and who generally recognized no other authority than his own.

In this tense atmosphere Karume might have looked to the British for support, given their continuing preponderance in the civil service, and their relatively cordial relationship with the ASP in the past. Karume's attitude towards the British, and by extension the Americans, was seriously undermined by their slowness to recognize the new regime, however. Although American diplomats could see the value of rapid recognition, they intended to follow the British lead in this matter, as Foreign Minister Duncan Sandys needlessly delayed for crucial weeks. Finally, after Karume ordered a brief expulsion of British and American diplomats from the islands, the recognition came through from London and Washington D.C. on 23 February 1964. Members of the Revolutionary Council interpreted the long delay, however, as nonsupport for the revolution and possible Western collusion with exiled counterrevolutionary elements. Karume's initial confidence in the British as his "friends" was shattered, and thereafter he leaned more consistently on the advice of his socialist advisors, Babu in particular, who pressured him to order the removal of nearly all remaining British expatriate civil servants by April 30.⁴³

Babu, as minister of External Affairs and Trade, managed in fact not only to gain Karume's apparent trust but also to emerge as the leading and by far the most effective socialist strategist of the new regime. Karume looked to him for support in his efforts to contain "Field Marshall" Okello. In early March, during one of Okello's absences from Zanzibar on the East African mainland, heavily armed Umma comrades, some of them Cuba-trained, led the effort to disarm Okello's followers. The rest they recruited into what was to be a new, more loyal and disciplined army. Karume then prohibited Okello from ever returning to the islands. These actions both stabilized the islands and opened up greater space for Babu to enhance his power. Diplomatic visitors to the islands, debriefed in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in March and

April, consistently commented on Babu's intelligence, charm, evasiveness, and innate political skills. Just as frequently they offered less than flattering assessments of Karume's own abilities⁴⁴ as well as his apparent unconcern over the potential threat from Babu and a force of "mobile police"⁴⁵ under Babu's direct control. Frank Carlucci, who arrived in the islands at the end of February as the new American ambassador, reported on March 6 that "Karume is dupe for Babu.... Commies moving fast toward prearranged plan for complete takeover with Babu as their ringmaster. UMMA group is [according to his sources] 'cock-sure of itself.'"⁴⁶ The next day he wrote, "To date Karume-Babu relationship has resembled that of bird paralyzed by snake. Do not know whether Karume fears or trusts Babu.... Meanwhile Babu and his boys are utilizing every moment to consolidate their political position."⁴⁷ On 8 March Carlucci, along with the American ambassadors to Tanganyika, Kenya, and Uganda all agreed that Babu was emerging as "effective power holder," and that he needed to be removed from power as soon as possible.⁴⁸ Secretary of State Dean Rusk wrote to various American embassies worldwide in early April that Babu had his own armed force, "including hard core trained in guerilla warfare in Cuba." Rusk was convinced the reason for the "great Communist interest in Zanzibar is to establish strategic foothold off East African coast in order unleash intensified campaign subversion and infiltration throughout East Africa and beyond."⁴⁹

Supporting the assessment of a Communist "drift" in Zanzibar, American observers in March and April noted Karume's enthusiastic welcome of Russian, Chinese, and East German aid offers. With its coffers empty the new government was most impressed by immediate cash assistance: the Soviet purchase of 500 tons of stockpiled cloves earned the treasury \$378,000. This move was more than matched by a Chinese grant of \$518,000 to the new regime.⁵⁰ By early April a Soviet ship brought the islands a cargo of military equipment, and fifty Soviet military advisors arrived to train a new army.⁵¹ In terms of social and economic development aid however, both East Germany and China surpassed the Soviet Union. Zanzibar was the first nation outside the Eastern Bloc to offer the German Democratic Republic (GDR) full diplomatic recognition, and in gratitude for this breakthrough the East Germans offered a generous package of assistance, including a plan to build massive new European-style apartment blocks to eventually accommodate 40,000 Zanzibaris.⁵² Though the plan meant to demolish and to rebuild most of the heavily-African neighborhoods of Zanzibar Town, Karume was delighted with these proposals and in succeeding years invested considerable government resources to make at least part of this dream of modern housing a reality.

The Chinese initially focused their aid efforts on agriculture, proposing to establish a state-run rice farm at Upenja. Don Petterson noted that

by late summer there were a total of sixty Soviets, fifty East Germans, and forty Chinese in Zanzibar.⁵³ With the arrival also of Cubans, Czechs, Poles, and Bulgarians, "Zanzibar was awash with spies and agents of one kind or another."⁵⁴ Zanzibar played host not only to a capitalist-communist rivalry, but one between the Chinese and the Soviet Bloc. Sino-Soviet relations on the island were reportedly "strained and chill."⁵⁵ Because of coordination between the Soviets and the East Germans, the Chinese had "withdrawn from public eye into behind the scenes operations."⁵⁶

American observers reported not only on an influx of socialist aid and expertise, they worried over the growing influence of Zanzibaris trained and educated in socialist nations, most of them Umma comrades. Leonhart reported the somewhat exaggerated impressions of a visiting French diplomat, who found "nothing random in [the] rapidity with which [Zanzibari socialists] have moved, in precision with which they have selected key political and economic positions, and in circumstances that they have [a] man for each job who has spent at least one year in [a] Communist country."⁵⁷ Issa recalled, "We wanted trained socialist cadres in the administration. We had to take these people from within and push them. We were committed, but we were just a minority, just like a pinch of salt." On 25 March, for example, moderate cabinet ministers Shariff and Makame were transferred to diplomatic posts overseas and replaced in the cabinet by Moyo and Abdul Aziz Twala, who increased Karume's encirclement by socialist advisors.

During the "100 days" of the People's Republic of Zanzibar those who had studied overseas felt empowered to propose a series of initiatives inspired by the Russian Revolution and its junior relatives. Leonhart reported that Twala and Hanga were both proud of "their Moscow education." "They noted that the new Zanzibar constitution would have to be modeled on [the] USSR, since both had [a] similar basis for derivation [of the] government authority from revolutionary success."⁵⁸ Led by students returning from Eastern Bloc colleges and universities, the Zanzibar Revolutionary Students Union requested in March that the government nationalize foreign banks, the export-import trade, and all means of production. They also asked for the rapid industrialization of the country, and six to eighteen months compulsory military service for all young men.⁵⁹ Another student committee called for regulation and censorship of all books and films in the islands, recommended the prohibition of the "twist" as a capitalist dance, warned against witchcraft, and called for a full-scale reform of education in Zanzibar.⁶⁰ The students were way ahead of the regime however. For the time being the state engaged in symbolic actions such as the banning (and burning) of rickshaws in Zanzibar Town. It also made clear its support for redistributive policies, which would take years to reach their conclusion. The government initially tolerated a great deal of informal looting, ordered the return of all items in

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pawn shops to their original owners, and announced its right to seize privately owned land and property in the name of the people.

Certain administrators in early 1964 took local initiatives not only to redistribute wealth but to begin the construction of what they intended to be a socialist paradise. Upon his return from China Issa was appointed area commissioner in Pemba Island, and in this capacity he began to organize the people for nation-building tasks. Carlucci, the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, came to Pemba to investigate stories of looting and violence against Asians, and Ali Sultan served as his host and escort. The two stayed up late drinking whiskey and arguing. Carlucci reported the following:

Spent two days as Issa's house guest. Issa is capable, personable, dedicated Communist... decorates house with pictures [of] Mao, Stalin, Lenin and has daughter named "Fidela." [Issa] mainspring of Pemba communist movement. Proud of his handiwork, Issa treated me to demonstration of how Communists can use popular revolution to indoctrinate people. We attended youth cadre meetings, people's mobilization meetings, party rallies and even danced in mud with work battalion. Issa... once had crowd shout to me "tell American people we building peoples paradise in Zanzibar and Pemba." On tours of island people came out of houses to wave and shake hands. Over 2,000 at airport see Issa off.⁶¹

India's visiting High Commissioner reported that Rashid Abdullah, Pemba's regional commissioner, "walked barefoot among the people and dished out orders for mass action which were carried out instantly and effectively by competent organizations." He also observed "people's courts, public corporal punishment, and massive brigades of women clearing land. Mob regaled with communist slogans responds with canned cheers and V for victory hand sign of revolution." Abdullah boasted that Pemba would be transformed within six months.⁶²

Socialist nation building came also as a theme to dominate the media. *Kweupe*, the official government organ, published repetitive calls for islanders to unite together as one people and to build the nation. In this context other revolutions were held up as models. In February an article in *Kweupe* stated that "Russia is among the glorious nations of the world. That's because Russia was the first in the world to liberate itself through a revolution led by the workers and farmers." Ever since, according to *Kweupe*, Russia has led the world in economic development.⁶³ And yet enthusiasm for the Russian experience was less repetitive or overt in *Kweupe* than suspicion of capitalists and imperialists as enemies of progress. Whether through anonymous editorials or summaries of speeches by Karume and other ruling elites, *Kweupe* cast the revolution as an uprising of workers and farmers against capitalists and imperialists, and not against Arabs.⁶⁴ *Kweupe* became the forum for multiple essays instructing citizens as to why it was necessary to

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fear and loath capitalists and to regard the United States in particular as the most dangerous imperialist power. In mid-April the American embassy in Zanzibar Town was the scene of multiple noisy demonstrations involving thousands of islanders denouncing American imperialism and demanding that "all Americans go home."⁶⁵

While Zanzibari socialists and their supporters from overseas wanted to shut down the American diplomatic outpost in the islands, Americans had for weeks been devising various "action plans" for removing or neutralizing the Communist presence in Zanzibar. Most of the American effort was directed towards convincing the British to intervene militarily in the islands, which they agreed to do, but only with a personal invitation from Karume. Such an invitation might be forthcoming, they believed, if Karume were convinced that his political position was in immediate peril, and that he needed to eliminate the threat posed by Babu's faction in his cabinet, army, and bureaucracy. Neither Kenya's prime minister Jomo Kenyatta in Nairobi nor Tanganyika's president Julius Nyerere in Dar es Salaam could be persuaded, however, to try and convince Karume he was indeed in jeopardy. By April American hopes rested on negotiations for an East African federation to include Zanzibar, Tanganyika, Uganda, and Kenya, which would in effect bury Babu and his comrades in a sea of moderation and nonalignment. This idea had long currency in East Africa, and yet talks between Uganda's leader Milton Obote, Nyerere, and Kenyatta broke down by 11 April. At the same time, however, another opening presented itself. To the surprise of American observers Nyerere became suddenly alarmed about rumors of the imminent invasion of Zanzibar by a counterrevolutionary army training somewhere in the Middle East, as well as rumors of the proposed establishment of a Soviet air base on Zanzibar. The source of these rumors remains unclear, yet they were more effective than any of the dire warnings presented by Leonhart and others to Nyerere in preceding months that a Communist Zanzibar would discourage foreign investment, divert his resources, and spread anti-Arab, anti-Asian violence throughout East Africa.

Nyerere developed a new strategy for intervention. To back up his proposal for a federation of Tanganyika and Zanzibar it appears he simply suggested he was willing to remove his contingent of Tanganyikan police from the islands, exposing Karume to a possible coup. In negotiations held while Babu was on a trade mission in Indonesia, Karume accepted Nyerere's proposal. To sweeten the deal, Nyerere easily persuaded the United States to offer a cash grant, to be channeled indirectly to Karume through his Tanganyikan friends.⁶⁶ On 23 April, still in Babu's absence, Karume won the support of the Revolutionary Council for the federation agreement. That same day Babu returned, and it was clear that he was deeply opposed to the union, wanting to retain Zanzibar as an independent showcase for socialism.

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His arrival led to rumors of an Umma coup planned for 26 April, which never materialized. Had Babu chosen to resist, Nyerere would have probably invited the British to intervene in what could now be construed as a Tanganyikan domestic dispute.⁶⁷

A PARADISE OF DISCIPLINE

The immediate effect of the federation was as the Americans had hoped: Babu and many of his closest Umma supporters were transferred from Zanzibar and effectively forced into political exile. As Nyerere had hoped, Zanzibar could no longer serve in a federation as an independent potentially "subversive nest," and was now obliged to accept the general nonalignment of the Tanganyikan government. On the other hand, plenty of Zanzibari socialists remained in the government; the Soviets, East Germans and Chinese continued their aid efforts in the islands⁶⁸; and the regime's most radical policies had yet to be imposed. The CIA reported in September 1964:

What constructive work is going on in the islands, whether in road-building, agricultural development, or the training of security forces, is all directed by foreign communists. The ruling authorities listen only to Communist advisors, exclude Westerners from contact with the people or with themselves, and systematically attack Western interests. Babu and his [Umma] colleagues have brought Zanzibar further under Communist influence, or at least for the time being, than has been the case in any other African country.⁶⁹

The impact of the Soviet Union on revolutionary Zanzibar, which continued its experiment with socialism until the 1980s, was more indirect than direct. The Soviets did not attempt to surpass the Chinese or the GDR in terms of development assistance. In 1966, for example, 123 Zanzibari students were in the GDR, 58 in the USSR, and 21 in China.⁷⁰ Issa, who survived the purge in 1964 of many of his Umma comrades, and who served Karume as a cabinet minister for eight years, gives some idea of the Soviet approach to Zanzibar in the later 1960s, albeit from a pro-Chinese perspective:

The Chinese assisted in agriculture and health. They were more sincere in wanting to help us than the Russians. For instance, when the Chinese and the Russians gave us arms, the Chinese gave us new weapons, and the Russians gave us old ones.... I remember once in Moscow they gave us all kinds of propaganda books to take back to Zanzibar. The Russians wanted us to pay freight charges, and I refused, and they eventually paid the charges. Another time I asked the Russians for some teachers, and you know what they told me? They said they wanted to be paid in gold. I said, "We don't have any gold here, we have cloves." And then they told me if a Russian teacher dies in Zanzibar, then we should pay for his coffin to be sent back home. I said, "Your colleagues the Chinese cremate their people here. I think if your comrades die here you should pay for their remains

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to be sent home yourself...." I always relayed such conversations on to Karume; that was my working style. Of course he knew my affinities were with the Chinese, but Karume could see himself between the Chinese and the Russians, who were more sincere and generous. But at the time we had to work with both. We renamed the hospital in town "V.I. Lenin Hospital," but the Russians sent only sporadic shipments of medicine. Meanwhile the Chinese sent us a full team of doctors, and they remain even now at two hospitals, one here and one in Pemba. We should have called the hospital "Mao Hospital...." There was no comparison. Here the Chinese were backward, they wanted to develop their country first, but still they helped. Here the Russians were advanced with Sputnik and everything, and yet they were meager. They were very mean and arrogant, I can say. That is my experience with the socialist superpowers. The Chinese cultivated rice with the people but the Europeans would not, so the people accepted them more. Each helped in their own way but the Chinese in their own society were more akin to us: they lived in the fields, they planted with us, and they won the hearts of the people.⁷¹ So it was through our experience and our contact with the Chinese that we looked for our solutions through the Chinese way.

By 1968 the Chinese had expanded their aid program to include the construction of a new sports stadium, a shoe factory, and other small scale industries. About 400 Chinese worked in the islands on these projects, in hospitals and on state farms. They also helped train Zanzibar's new 3,000-person army. The East Germans numbered about 200, working as teachers, and in the construction of modern housing and two government-owned dairies. About eighty-five Soviets assisted in secondary education and in the military.⁷² As the years passed the Chinese gradually gained more favor with Karume, who appreciated their humble living standards.⁷³ Karume became disillusioned with the high cost and/or poor success of East German aid projects,⁷⁴ and by 1970 limited their assistance to the training of the regime's expanding security apparatus. In that same year Chinese military officers replaced all Russian military officers in the islands. In the 1970s the Chinese were clearly Zanzibar's leading foreign patrons, as they had also become on the Tanzanian mainland.⁷⁵

Despite one of Africa's largest infusions on a per capita basis of socialist aid and expertise, the islands never experienced the anticipated economic take-off. Nor did Zanzibar develop on as "scientific" a basis as Issa and his comrades would have wished. Instead state policies were an amalgam of nationalist improvisation and ideas and techniques adopted from overseas. Karume's personal intent was never to imitate the Russian, Chinese, or any other revolution. While Issa may have believed the Zanzibari Revolution embodied an essential link in a great chain of world revolutions, Karume told the American consul in Zanzibar in 1965 that "neither communism nor capi-

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talism had meaning for Africans." Africans are "just interested in achieving a better life for themselves."⁷⁶ As Karume consolidated his power, fewer and fewer Zanzibari students were permitted to study in the socialist world out of the fear they would never return to the islands. Zanzibar was subjected to a series of his rather arbitrary decrees and a growing isolationism.

On the other hand, socialist experts remained patient tutors in the techniques of authoritarian rule. Socialism continued to represent a legitimizing discourse for a massive redistribution of wealth and opportunity in the islands. The Russian Revolution remained a reference point. Notwithstanding his comments to the American consul, Karume said in 1965 at an official commemoration of the Russian Revolution, "This celebration is not only for the people of Russia alone but it has spread throughout the world for people who love human freedom and [who support] defeating every intrigue of the capitalist governments."⁷⁷ At the next year's commemoration, he praised Lenin for opening the door for a series of workers and farmers' liberation movements, adding that he wanted the Russian people to continue their development "until all revolutionary peoples will have the beginnings of progress in their nations."⁷⁸

The Soviet Union's largest impact on the Zanzibari Revolution, then, was not the aid it was willing to provide; it was the ideas and institutions from Soviet history that Zanzibaris found most compelling. Karume's regime adopted an array of schemes such as land reform, forced labor, and food rations, which bore a distinct garden resemblance to development strategies of the socialist world. It is not always easy to disaggregate the specific and direct Soviet contribution in all such cases, since archival data from the Karume period in Zanzibar is scarce and because Zanzibaris were eclectic in their influences within the socialist world. Russia did exercise a discernable influence, however, in the area of youth development. As minister of education Issa introduced Marxist teachings into the curriculum on the secondary level; to pass their exams students needed to be "politically minded" and to demonstrate familiarity with the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. In 1964-1965, moreover, Aboud Talib, Abdulla Said Natepe, and other Zanzibaris traveled to the USSR and to the GDR to learn techniques of youth mobilization from the Soviet and East German youth leagues *Komsomol* and *Freie Deutsche Jugend*. When they returned to the islands they established the Young Pioneers, a socialist version of the Boy Scouts originally developed by Komsomol in the 1920s, and which by the 1960s had attained a wide currency throughout the socialist world.⁷⁹ By 1975 the Young Pioneers had become thoroughly entrenched in Zanzibari schools and claimed a total membership of 28,000.⁸⁰ The organization emphasized duty to the nation, discipline, and volunteerism through a series of rituals, songs, parades, and service projects. In 1965 Rajab Kheri adroitly expressed

the purpose of the Young Pioneers and to what extent they were inspired by foreign models:

Our problem is that we are backward, we have to be in harmony with our friends who are the long time founders of these children development programs. Now, their children have achieved high development levels. We have to construct a bridge of friendship with them and unite with them. In this way we can achieve that same level of development. Hence we have adopted Pioneer groups. Through this union we can exchange ideas and strategies for guiding our children....⁸¹

The legacy of the Russian Revolution in Zanzibar was not limited, then, to military training or to education; it also contributed to the widely-held nationalist imperative of nation building, or *kujenga taifa* in Swahili. The ruling elite in Zanzibar sought inclusion in a world of modernist codes, numbers, and images that resonated powerfully among both nationalists and socialists; nationalists embraced socialism as a persuasive and impressive antidote to dependency and underdevelopment. They defined modernization as the full development of the nation's productive capacities, and the proper mobilization of all national, and especially human, resources. Of course Zanzibaris did not become enthusiastic modernizers solely through their exposure to Soviet society. They, however, did adapt from the Soviets and other socialist powers a series of techniques such as the Young Pioneers intended to ensure productivity. The call for socialist discipline among the younger generation was something about which the entire family of socialist nations could readily agree: the project distilled the essence of the socialist master narrative to a series of essential messages to be passed on to the next generation. Through the Young Pioneers the disciplinary techniques of distant socialist lands could be unpacked and absorbed into the rhythms of every day life.⁸² They would be necessary in pursuit of the socialist notion of creating a New Man, one who was "non-materialistic in consumption, but highly materialistic in production."⁸³ Issa recalls:

I wanted to instill socialist morality in Zanzibar and to fight against the corruption bred by capitalism. I wanted to change the mentality of the people and to create a New Man. This was an idea from socialism that I came across in my studies in London, to build a society where everyone is hardworking, honest, humble and sincere, where no one looks down on their fellow human being. In capitalism people always want to accumulate, especially when they come from the bush, and they start with nothing except their shoes. They want to accumulate quickly so if they fall down again at least they have something for the future.... One way of creating a New Man, I believed, was to change the environment. By changing the environment we could change the mentality of the people.... I wanted to build factories and heavy industry not only to produce tractors

and guns but also because an individual cannot remain lazy if he is working on an assembly line, because the conveyor belt does not wait.... [W]e needed the industrial life here in the islands because it requires more discipline and conditioning.

CONCLUSION

Western scholarship appropriately emphasizes the impact of colonialism and neocolonialism on Africa's historical development. Less understood are the efforts of many nationalists in Africa who in the decades after World War II sought to break free of this orientation and dependence by actively seeking guidance, aid, and inspiration from the socialist world. The Soviet Union's stature in world affairs gave socialism enormous prestige in the islands. The reverse was also true: The prestige of socialism gave the Soviet Union enormous stature. Probably starting with the Moscow Youth Festival of 1957, Russia emerged as a model for the kind of society a cohort of Zanzibari intellectuals wanted to establish in the islands. Students returning from overseas introduced socialism as a new language, critique, and set of aspirations. Nationalists embraced socialism as a means to level society, to develop the nation's productive capacities, and to justify an assertion of state control over the society and the economy, unprecedented in local history.

In popular revolution stories there is a consistent cast in Zanzibar of several lead characters, including Ali Sultan Issa, whose exploits have become material for both praise and accusations among the islands' various memory communities. His story illustrates the sort of socialist ideas, strategies and ruling techniques to which islanders had access, and how the lives of ordinary Zanzibaris were reshaped by such exposure. Ali Sultan and many of the revolution's most stalwart supporters were, however, utterly confounded in the 1970s by what socialism had come to mean for ordinary citizens: constant shortages, decaying infrastructure, underemployment, harassment, and fear. Former Umma comrades, supposedly fully assimilated into ruling party circles, retained their own personal networks however, and in 1972 launched an unsuccessful coup attempt in Zanzibar that resulted in Karume's assassination. They wanted to bring an end to Karume's authoritarianism, fully implement "scientific" socialism, and to reform a revolution they no longer considered enlightened or even civilized.⁸⁴ Thus as late as 1972 the "scientific" revolutionary model, as originally conceived in Russia in 1917, still endured in Zanzibar, at least among oppositional elements.

Notes

1. The complex nationalist struggles that led eventually to the Zanzibari Revolution are discussed in Jonathon Glassman's work "Slower Than a Massacre: The Multiple Sources of Racial Thought in Colonial Africa," *The American Historical Review*,

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- vol. 109, no. 3 (2004), pp. 720-754; "Sorting Out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar's Newspaper Wars," *Journal of African History*, vol. 41 (2000), pp. 395-428; Michael Lofchie, *Zanzibar: Background to Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965); Anthony Clayton, *The Zanzibar Revolution and Its Aftermath* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1981).
2. Abdul Sheriff, "Race and Class in the Politics of Zanzibar," *Afrika Spectrum*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2001), pp. 314-315.
 3. Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 7.
 4. The Cubans in particular were reported to have been responsible. See the *New York Times* (23 January 1964), cited in Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, p. 59.
 5. Telegram, Leonhart to Secretary of State, 1/28/64, no. 3, Zanzibar Cables and Memos, vol. 1, 1/64, National Security File; Country File; Africa—Zanzibar, Box 103, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, University of Texas, Austin, Texas (hereafter LBJ Library).
 6. Thomas Burgess, "Youth and the Revolution: Mobility and Discipline in Zanzibar, 1950-80" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2001), p. 264.
 7. Alan Hutchison, *China's African Revolution* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1976), p. 68.
 8. See Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 1.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 3. Although East African heads of state were for the most part sober-minded in their assessments, they were also disturbed by the possibility that Zanzibar might serve as a base from which revolution and violence would spread throughout the region. They feared the extension of cold war politics into the region. Julius Nyerere, President of Tanganyika, warned the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization in 1963 of a "second scramble for Africa," not between the Western powers, but between the Chinese and the Soviets anxious to gain African allies in the emerging dispute over which of their revolutionary models was the most authentic and effective. Hutchison, *China's African Revolution*, p. 43.
 10. See Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot; Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888* (London: James Currey, 1995), p. xi. Glassman quotes Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus*.
 11. For these debates, see Glassman, "Slower Than a Massacre," and "Sorting Out the Tribes."
 12. Donald Donham, *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution* (London: James Currey, 1999), p. 123.
 13. Ali Sultan Issa, *Walk on Two Legs: A Memoir of the Zanzibari Revolution*, ed. by Thomas Burgess, forthcoming.
 14. Lofchie, *Background to Revolution*, p. 72.
 15. A.H.J. Prins, *The Swahili Speaking Peoples of Zanzibar and the East African Coast* (London: International African Institute, 1967), p. 19.
 16. Robert Nunez Lyne, *Zanzibar in Contemporary Times* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1905), pp. 216-217; F.B. Pearce, *Zanzibar, the Island Metropolis of Eastern Africa* (London: Frank and Cass, 1920), p. 224; W.H. Ingrams, *Zanzibar, Its History and People* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1931), pp. 205-206.
 17. Pearce, *Island Metropolis*, p. 224.
 18. Glassman, "Slower Than a Massacre," pp. 733-744.

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19. For most African students in London anti-colonialism, socialism and pan-Africanism were by no means exclusive intellectual and activist strains. Babu, for example, helped to launch a pan-African monthly called *African Outlook*, and was editor of *Africa World Review*. A.M. Babu, "Memoirs: An Outline," in *Babu: I Saw the Future and it Works; Essays Celebrating the Life of Comrade Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu, 1924-1996*, ed. by Haroub Othman (Dar es Salaam: M&M Printers, 2001), p. 12.
20. Joel Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, trans. by Ralph Blumenau (Oxford: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 212; Richard Cornell, *Youth and Communism* (New York: Walker and Company, 1965), p. 147, Appendix 2.
21. See "Mzanzibari Kenda Russia VII," *Mwongozi* (7 February 1958).
22. Glassman's work demonstrates that nationalist rhetoric from all parties contributed to reciprocal dehumanization and endorsed purge categories primarily along racial lines. On the other hand, ZNP party literature, such as an election manifesto from 1961, vociferously claimed its opposition "to narrow tribalism and communalism" and its support for "an ideology of political and social equality... [and] the unbreakable unity of peasant, worker and intellectual." The extent to which these phrases were politically expedient or actually embraced by large elements of the ZNP community remains somewhat ambiguous. While Glassman argues convincingly that Arabcentric "values of *ustaarabu*, coastal exceptionalism, and disdain for mainland Africans" formed an important foundation of the ZNP's appeal, it is also clear the ZNP's cohort of socialists were so oriented towards class analysis they placed little importance on Arabcentrism. The islands would obtain enlightened guidance after independence, in other words, not from Zanzibar's heavily-Arab urban elite, but from the socialist world. Zanzibar National Archives (hereafter ZNA) AK 16/48, no. 23, "Zanzibar Nationalist Party; Manifesto for the General Election of 17th January 1961"; Glassman, "Slower Than a Massacre," p. 736.
23. Babu, "Memoirs: An Outline," pp. 15-16.
24. Burgess, "Youth and the Revolution," pp. 197-198; Don Petterson, *Revolution in Zanzibar: An American's Cold War Tale* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002), p. 39.
25. Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, MSS. Brit Emp. S. 390, Clarence Buxton papers Box 3, "Evidence Given by Sheikh Othman Shariff and Sheikh Khamis Masoud," 23 August 1962.
26. Ali Muhsin describes at length his efforts to secure the scholarships; Ali Muhsin al Barwani, *Conflicts and Harmony in Zanzibar (Memoirs)* (Dubai, 1997), pp. 99-110. The ZNP did not receive such patronage alone; by 1964 there were about 2000 students in Cairo from sub-Saharan Africa, and Egypt's government offered free office space, stipends and unlimited air travel to representatives of numerous anti-colonial movements. Peter Mansfield, *Nasser's Egypt* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 100-101.
27. It is unfortunately not possible to confirm these figures from archival materials outside the former Eastern Bloc nations. British intelligence estimated in 1962 about 116 Zanzibari students attended socialist universities, which figure might be low. Public Records Office, London, UK (hereafter PRO) CO 822 2070, E56ii, Appreciation of Zanzibar Central Intelligence Committee Report, July 1962.
28. Emmanuel Hevi, a Ghanaian, confirms Ali Sultan's remarks and adds to the list of African grievances in China language difficulties, low educational standards, and racial discrimination. The Chinese government spied regularly on African students

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and imprisoned Chinese women with whom they associated. Emmanuel Hevi, *An African Student in China* (New York: Praeger, 1963), pp. 130-131, 136, 175, and 215-216. The "spartan sexual regime" in China was deeply discouraging to African students. After 1963 their numbers in China dropped precipitously as a result of these issues and the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. Hutchison, *China's African Revolution*, pp. 186-188.

29. Interview by author, Haroub Othman, Zanzibar Town, 16 July 2004.
30. PRO CO 822 2070, British Resident to Colonial Office, 6 October 1962.
31. PRO CO 822, 2166, Secret file on Babu; RHL, MSS.Afr.S.1446; R.H.V. Biles interview.
32. Many former Babu supporters continue to vigorously assert the truthfulness of these claims. Muhsin has meanwhile strenuously denied these allegations. Barwani, "Conflict and Harmony," pp. 176-177.
33. These events are discussed in more detail in Thomas Burgess, "An Imagined Generation: Umma Youth in Nationalist Zanzibar," in Gregory Maddox, James Giblin, and Y.Q. Lawi, eds., *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence From Tanzania: Essays in Honor of I.M. Kimambo* (London: James Currey, in press).
34. Photocopy of Ali Sultan Issa's original, in author's possession.
35. In the Arabic original, however, *umma* refers most commonly to the Islamic community.
36. Burgess, "Youth and the Revolution," pp. 198-199. British intelligence reported in May 1963: "As Ali Sultan is a thorn in the flesh of ZNP, similarly Moyo is a thorn in the flesh of ASP." ZNA AK 31/16, no. 30, Zanzibar District Intelligence Subcommittee, 5/4-10/63.
37. ZNA AK 31/15, no. 138, District Intelligence Committee Meeting, 18 October 1963.
38. See Lofchie, *Background to Revolution*, pp. 259-263.
39. The eighteen who trained in Cuba were highly visible due to their use of such Spanish revolutionary expressions and their adoption of Castro-style beards, giving rise briefly to rumors the revolution was the work of Cuban agents. See K. Kyle, "The Zanzibar Coup," *The Spectator* (24 January 1964); also "How It Happened," *The Spectator* (14 February 1964).
40. Okello's memoir, read widely and taken seriously by western observers, has unfortunately grossly distorted the facts. John Okello, *Revolution in Zanzibar* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967).
41. Babu referred dismissively to the large majority of the revolutionary crowd as members of the "lumpen proletariat," inherently possessing the unprogressive perspective of their class. A.M. Babu, "The 1964 Revolution: Lumpen or Vanguard?" in Abdul Sheriff and Ed Ferguson, eds., *Zanzibar Under Colonial Rule* (London: James Currey, 1991), pp. 220-247.
42. National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NACP) Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66; Subject Numeric File 1964-66, Box 3042, Political and Defense; Pol 15, Government, Kohler at American Embassy, Moscow, to Department of State, 17 January 1964.
43. See Petterson, *Revolution in Zanzibar*.
44. Burgess, "Youth and the Revolution," p. 266.

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45. Petterson, *Revolution in Zanzibar*, p. 180.
46. Telegram, Carlucci to Secretary of State, 6 March 1964, no. 69, Zanzibar Cables and Memos, vol. II, 2/64-4/64, National Security File, Country File; Africa—Zanzibar, Box 103, LBJ Library.
47. NACP Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66; Subject Numeric File 1964-66, Box 3042, Political and Defense; Education and Culture, EDU 9 UN, Carlucci to Department of State, 7 March 1964.
48. Petterson, *Revolution in Zanzibar*, p. 174.
49. NACP Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66; Subject Numeric File 1964-66, Box 3042, Political and Defense; Pol 2, General Reports and Statistics, 1/a/64, Rusk to American embassies, 3 April 1964.
50. NACP Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66; Subject Numeric File 1964-66, Box 3042, Political and Defense; Education and Culture, EDU 9 UN, Rusk to American embassy, Lagos, Nigeria, 26 March 1964.
51. NACP Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66; Subject Numeric File 1964-66, Box 3042, Political and Defense; Pol Political Affairs and Religion ZAN 1/1/64; Leonhart to Department of State, 2 April 1964.
52. Petterson, *Revolution in Zanzibar*, pp. 166-167, 260.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
55. NACP Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66; Subject Numeric File 1964-66, Box 3042, Political and Defense; Pol 15, Government, American Embassy, Dar es Salaam to Department of State, 9 April 1964.
56. NACP Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66; Subject Numeric File 1964-66, Box 3042, Political and Defense; Education and Culture, EDU 9 UN, Vass at American embassy in Nairobi to Department of State, 24 March 1964.
57. NACP Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66; Subject Numeric File 1964-66, Box 3042, Political and Defense; Pol 15, Government, Leonhart to Department of State, 8 April 1964.
58. NACP Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66; Subject Numeric File 1964-66, Box 3042, Political and Defense; Pol 2, General Reports and Statistics, 1/1/64, Leonhart to Department of State, 11 February 1964.
59. NACP Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66; Subject Numeric File 1964-66, Box 3042, Political and Defense; Pol 13 Non-Party Blocs, ZAN 1/1/64; Frank Carlucci to Department of State, 6 March 1964.
60. "Ripoti ya Utamaduni na Maingiliano," *Kweupe* (7 March 1964).
61. Telegram, Carlucci to Secretary of State, 26 March 1964, no. 137b, Zanzibar Cables and Memos, vol. II, 2/64-4/64, National Security File, Country File; Africa—Zanzibar, Box 103, LBJ Library.
62. Telegram, Nairobi to Secretary of State, 15 April 1964, no. 14a, Zanzibar Cables and Memos, vol. II, 2/64-4/64, National Security File, Country File; Africa—Zanzibar, Box 103, LBJ Library.
63. "Nchi ya Rusi," *Kweupe* (8 February 1964).
64. The transition from the dominant ethnic discourse of the years prior to the revolution, as reported by Glassman, to *Kweupe's* class-based rhetoric of 1964 is perhaps less abrupt than this passage suggests, since "workers," "farmers," and "capitalists"

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- served often as references to Africans, Arabs, and Asians. Thus despite attempts by Umma socialists to distance themselves from racial polemics they helped to popularize a discourse ruling elites employed to target the property and citizenship rights of specific ethnic communities.
65. Telegram, Carlucci to Secretary of State, 9 April 1964, no. 43, Zanzibar Cables and Memos, vol. II, 2/64-4/64, National Security File, Country File; Africa—Zanzibar, Box 103, LBJ Library. See also "Kombora Laondoshwa," *Kweupe* (11 April 1964).
 66. The grant amounted to two million British pounds, which Leonhart regarded as "indispensable in holding situation at most critical point." Telegram, Leonhart to Secretary of State, 6 May 1964, no. 75, United Republic of Tanganyika/Zanzibar Cables, vol. I, 4/64-1/65 [2 of 2], National Security File, Country File-Africa-Tanganyika, Box 100, LBJ Library.
 67. Burgess, "Youth and the Revolution," pp. 269-275. This description of events differs from that found in Amwrit Wilson, *US Foreign Policy and Revolution: The Creation of Tanzania* (London: Pluto Press, 1989). Wilson downplays Nyerere's independent mindedness and claims the federation was "created by the US."
 68. They supported Karume's efforts to retain as much Zanzibari autonomy as possible. The East Germans also eventually won their squabble with the West Germans in Tanzania when by February 1965 Nyerere allowed the GDR to establish a consulate general in Dar es Salaam, as well as to retain their consulate in Zanzibar. Petterson, *Revolution in Zanzibar*, p. 227.
 69. CIA Memorandum, 29 September 1964, URT-Zanzibar memos, vol. I, 4/64-1/65, National Security File, Africa-Tanganyika, Box 100, LBJ Library.
 70. Only six students were in the United Kingdom, down from 310 in 1963. Numbers of Zanzibari students in socialist nations were also to decline dramatically in the late 1960s. ZNA AD 1/140, no. 123, "Maendeleo ya miaka miwili tangu baada ya Mapinduzi."
 71. Ali Sultan's remarks would have pleased Chinese Premier Chou En-Lai, since they were consistent with "The Eight Principles" of Chinese development assistance he articulated in the mid-1960s. These included providing aid without conditions, and imparting skills to locals and sharing their living conditions. Hutchison, *China's African Revolution*, pp. 50-51.
 72. CIA Memorandum, 2 December 1968, United Republic of Tanzania vol. II, Cables 2/65 - 12/68, National Security File, Africa-Tanganyika, Box 100, LBJ Library.
 73. Petterson, *Revolution in Zanzibar*, p. 167.
 74. An East German biology teacher in Zanzibar in 1967 recalled that his students, after asking him once about the size of his salary, informed their instructor that for that amount Zanzibar could support five to ten Chinese teachers, all of whom could live in the house he alone occupied. Interview by author, Eckhart Schultz, Zanzibar Town, 22 July 2004.
 75. George Triplett, "Zanzibar: The Politics of Revolutionary Inequality," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4 (December 1971), p. 612; "Zanzibar Politics," *Africa Report* (December 1970). Chinese assistance to mainland Tanzania assumed even larger proportions. The Tan-Zam railway project was the largest Chinese aid project anywhere in Africa; the thousands of Chinese workers it brought to Tanzania constituted the largest Chinese communist overseas presence anywhere in the

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- world. China was Nyerere's dominant development model in the 1970s. Hutchison, *China's African Revolution*, pp. 251, 259.
76. Petterson, *Revolution in Zanzibar*, p. 263.
 77. "Sikukuu ya Mapinduzi ya Urusi Yasherehekewa," *Kweupe* (9 November 1965).
 78. "Urusi Yasherekea Mwaka wa 49," *Kweupe* (8 November 1966).
 79. Interview by author, Aboud Talib, Zanzibar Town, 16 July 1996; see also *Kweupe* (17 July 1965).
 80. "Report of the Young Pioneers at the 4th General Conference of the ASPYL, 1975," uncollected files of the ASPYL, Darajani, Zanzibar Town.
 81. ZNA AK 4/111, Young Pioneers, "Information given by the representatives of the Young Pioneers leadership who officially visited Donge School, 8 November 1965."
 82. For a lengthier discussion of the Young Pioneers in Zanzibar, see Thomas Burgess, "Bodies of Evidence: The Young Pioneers and the Rituals of Citizenship in Revolutionary Zanzibar," *Africa Today*, vol. 51, no. 3 (April 2005).
 83. Jerome Gilson, *The Soviet Image of Utopia* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 174.
 84. This assessment is derived from oral sources, as well as court proceedings reprinted in *Kweli Ikidhihiri Uwongo Hujitenga* and *Truth Prevails Where Lies Must Vanish*, from May–August 1973, and Hank Chase, "The Zanzibar Treason Trial," *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 6 (May–August, 1976), pp. 15–33.