

THE TANZANIAN ELECTIONS

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TANZANIA'S SEPTEMBER ELECTIONS mark a unique step forward in the country's political development. The elections, for both the Presidency and the National Assembly, were the first since Tanganyika won its independence, the first since the Union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, and the first under the new one-party constitution.

But their significance does not end there. The electoral rules under which the election was fought demonstrate conclusively that Tanzania's leaders, both on the mainland and on Zanzibar, are determined to consolidate and extend the democratic unity which binds Tanzania's people, and to ensure that those who make the nation's laws are truly representative of the workers and peasants who have elected them.

In most democratic one-party states, the name of only one candidate goes onto the ballot paper, the party candidate having been chosen in preliminary consultations and primary elections by trade unions, youth and women's movements, and other mass organizations. The electors may then either vote for the selected person, or reject him. Not so in Tanzania (or rather mainland Tanzania—the island people are to hold their National Assembly elections later). In all but six of the 107 constituencies, voters had a choice between two candidates—both of whom were officially sponsored by the governing party, T.A.N.U. Both candidates appeared on the T.A.N.U. platform together, and both were accorded exactly the same access to T.A.N.U. electioneering facilities. While the candidates were chosen by the T.A.N.U. branch in their district, their names were ratified by the T.A.N.U. central executive before they were permitted to compete for popular choice. Once the candidates had been chosen, all other aspirants were compelled to withdraw, and it became an offence for anyone else to offer himself for election in the constituency.

But why this elaborate procedure? Why did Tanzania depart so radically from the usual one-party pattern? Several observers have suggested that having two candidates in each constituency was mere "window-dressing", a hangover from "Westminster-style" democracy. Nothing could be further from the truth. In a penetrating analysis of the position, President Nyerere, in his address to the last session of the old National Assembly, outlined the reasons for the changes which that session passed into law:

'Since 1958, in election after election, the overwhelming national support of T.A.N.U. has been increasingly demonstrated . . . only one independent candidate has ever been elected to this House in opposition to T.A.N.U.—and he was one of those rare exceptions that truly prove the rule. He was a member of T.A.N.U. who continued to recruit members for T.A.N.U. even during the very campaign in which he was opposing T.A.N.U.'s official candidate. The people are united behind their national movement.

'In consequence of this a candidate supported by T.A.N.U. is automatically elected; the people want a T.A.N.U. representative. *Yet, because we have been operating in the context of a multi-party system the people have had no choice as to which T.A.N.U. candidate. This means that our procedures are, in practice, endangering both democracy and unity; if the people always acquiesce in the T.A.N.U. candidate who is submitted to them by the Party machinery they are losing their effective power over the representative and his actions.* If they are to oppose him they are in danger of giving sustenance to the enemies of our national unity and bringing into jeopardy the future of the principles they wish to defend. *We have thus come to a position where the maintenance of institutions and procedures which were supposed to safeguard the practice of democracy, and which are appropriate to a multiparty system, in fact eliminate the people's choice of their representative.'* (my italics—A.L.)

It was to remedy this situation that the T.A.N.U. annual conference decided, in 1963, to establish a democratic one-party state by law. But this was no lightly-made decision—it was arrived at after a careful study of T.A.N.U.'s experiences in the anti-colonial struggle, and an analysis of the factors which President Nyerere outlined to the National Assembly two years later. Even then, things were not rushed, although the problem was urgent. The President established a Commission, under the chairmanship of Rashidi Kawawa, Tanzania's Second Vice-President, to enquire into the best way of establishing the one-party state. The Commission reported in April 1965, and the last step was taken in June, with the National Assembly passing the necessary constitutional amendments to the 1962 Republican Constitution.

The Tanzanian system has worked well in its first try-out. The elections were keenly fought, but with none of the mud-slinging and phoney antics which make a farce of bourgeois elections. In essence, the people chose those men and women whom they felt would best carry forward T.A.N.U.'s socialist principles, as well as those who would be able and interested advocates of their constituents' interests. The few who had spent most of their time devoting themselves to the pleasures of "high-life" in Dar got short shift from the people: for this and for other reasons, there were several upsets in the election results.

But elections at five-yearly intervals are not always sufficient to ensure democratic control over a country's rulers. T.A.N.U., therefore, is to be a mass organization, through which any and every citizen who accepts T.A.N.U.'s basic principles can participate in the control of the country's single political organization.

Finally, a Permanent Commission on the Abuse of Power has been set up, which will have the duty of receiving complaints from the people about any mis-use of authority by policemen, regional commissioners, civil servants, and even T.A.N.U. officials. The Commission will report directly to the President, who will take appropriate action. President Nyerere explained: 'The Government believes that the operation of such a Commission should help to make a reality of the political equality of all our people, and of their individual freedom within the context of our socialist society'.

The elections resulted in the loss of their seats for a number of prominent people, among them the Minister of Finance, Paul Bomani, and the Minister of Industries, Jeremiah Kasambala. In addition, four junior (non-Cabinet) ministers lost their seats in the contest, while three junior ministers did not win nomination in the primaries. A sad loss for the new legislature will be Bibi Titi Mohamed, the veteran Tanzanian women's leader and one of the founder members of T.A.N.U. (Party card number 16), but she retains her seat on the national executive of T.A.N.U. Bomani has been re-nominated by President Nyerere as Minister of State for Development Planning, while his former post is taken over by the only Asian in the Cabinet, Amir Jamal. The comparatively narrow margins by which the two senior ministers were beaten (a mere 1,160 votes out of about 24,000 in Bomani's case) seem to indicate that local issues predominated, and not policy on a national level.

Prominent Zanzibaris in the new Cabinet are Sheikh Abeid Karume, the First Vice-President of the Republic, A. K. Hanga, the former Minister for Industries, who is now Minister for Union Affairs, and A. M. Babu, the Minister for Commerce and Co-operatives. The President himself has taken over the Foreign Affairs portfolio from Oscar Kambona, who has been assigned the important post of Regional Administration.

There can be no doubt of the overwhelming support for President Nyerere among the peoples of both Tanganyika and Zanzibar. In the Presidential elections, held at the same time, the man who led Tanganyika to independence received 96 per cent of the popular vote on the mainland, and 98 per cent on Zanzibar and Pemba. He has thus received enthusiastic endorsement for his declared policies of vigorous anti-imperialism, of uncompromising struggle against the remnants of colonialism in Africa, and for the rapid, socialist development of Tanzania.

The long night of imperialist ascendancy is over in Tanzania. The people are fully aware of the difficult struggles which lie ahead, but they have shown their confidence in the democratic and radical policies

being followed by T.A.N.U.'s leadership. As long as the Tanzanian leaders retain that confidence, the way is open to progress and unity.

Tanzania's experiment in one-party democracy, unique in Africa and probably in the world, is a significant contribution to the search for the form of democracy best suited to Africa's pressing problems of social, political and economic development. The Tanzanians have decided upon a new departure from the one-party pattern as it has evolved in Africa. The experiment appears to have worked well, and deserves acute study and appraisal by all concerned with the future of African democracy.