

## THE TANZANIA INDEPENDENCE DAY



By Abdulrazak Fazal Updated: July 2020

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Tanzania Tanzania nakupenda kwa moyo yote!

Today the 9th of December is Uhuru Day, the 58th anniversary of our Independence Day. It brings back the memory of 'Tanganyika' of those days and its remarkable leader, the witty and humorous Mwalimu Nyerere. How could we ever forget his anecdotal speeches! Incidentally Mwalimu was the first among the East African leaders to gain independence for his country Tanganyika (later to become Tanzania after its merger with Zanzibar).

Recalling vividly that eventful day having come from Zanzibar on holidays Daressalaam was found in the grip of festivities. The entire city was illuminated with lights and decorations. Acacia Avenue had become the cynosure of public eye. In fact, the decoration on display of one of the shops there received the first prize. Another awardee was the Upanga Ismaili Jamaatkhana that was superbly decorated and lit. On the eve of independence, we packed ourselves in a pickup and headed for the National Stadium. The atmosphere there was electric. Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, was the Guest of Honour representing the Queen at the ceremony. At the stroke of midnight Tanganyika became independent. Amidst cheers and roars our flag was hoisted replacing the Union Jack. The crowd went ecstatic.

We countrymen had high aspirations but sadly 58 years since not everything has been rosy. Just to quote a couple of paragraphs from an earlier column that had appeared sometime back: -

“On this eve of our independence day anniversary I see from the balcony of my meager home a cobbler sweating out on the pavement, a couple of cart pullers awaiting prospective customers and a maid carrying a bucket of water over her head stumbling and taking a pause. At the end of the day they will collect shs 1000 to 2000 (\$1 or 2) and walk 4 to 5 kilometers to their huts in the shanty Manzese or Magomeni for a scarce meal with their families. Quite the opposite from the nearby skyscraper appears a so called 'mheshimiwa' who leisurely drives away in his car. I look upwards for a just equation from the Almighty in this contrasting situation.

What is saddening is the plight of the poor and their dismal level of income that results in the severity of disparity between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. While the limousine line up the big restaurants where billing is done in hundreds of thousands there are also the alms seekers who queue up outside the restaurants, mosques, churches and temples for leftovers. This trending probably characterizes most of the third world countries."

Mwalimu's intentions were good but unfortunately his socialistic ideology and plans of self-reliance could not keep pace with the rapidity of global development. Further the defunct East African Community and the falling sisal price in the International Market took their toll on the economy. The introduction of the exchange control led to the shilling's slide against the US \$ and the fall of imports. Worse, the Uganda war shattered the economy.

The Mwinyi phase is remembered for its liberalization policy. Imports started afresh and exchange control was relaxed. Plots were allotted and new houses built. But with it came negativity, corruption became the norm. Unfortunately, corruption inflicting most of the third world economies not only results in socioeconomic inequalities but is the root cause of poverty.

The Mkapa and Kikwete rule resorted to privatization of public institutions and called for investments. Skyscrapers started adorning Daressalaam, and computers and modern technology penetrated the system. Some may not agree but the globally dominant IMF and World Bank bugged up our economy. The \$ escalated to new heights. Our agro economy seemed swindled and the so-called investors plundered our valuable minerals. Imagine a country rich in gold, diamonds and platinum being categorized 'poor'!

The majority Tanzanians live below poverty line, even bare necessities of life and public utilities are inaccessible to them. Inflation soared and the fixed income earners had to bear its brunt. They let go a meal and walk rather than take a bus ride to save a bit here and there. Schooling of children, hospitals and funerals became costly affairs. Blessedly President Magufuli strives for perfection and betterment of the masses to overcome economic problems. Presently there is growth in our GDP, inflation rate to an extent lowered, prices of certain valuables brought down and the \$ though costly is somewhat constant unlike its volatility in the past. There is also a strong drive for local talent. On this auspicious day we make an impassioned plea to the Almighty to shower His blessings upon TANZANIA.

Mungu ibariki Tanzania na watu wake

Happy Independence Day to all my fellow Tanzanians.

**By Abdulrazak Fazal**

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