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THE ZANZIBAR REVOLT  
OF 12 JANUARY 1964  
IN RETROSPECT



26 October 1964

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THE ZANZIBAR REVOLT OF 12 JANUARY 1964 IN RETROSPECT

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"To succeed, revolutions need more than resolute revolutionaries.... They require quite exceptional incompetence, if not complete moral and financial bankruptcy, on the part of the system of government they are intended to overthrow. Only governments that do not possess the will to resist, or that are prevented by quite special factors from exercising this will, are overthrown by revolutions."

L.C.B. Seaman, From Vienna to Versailles (Harper Colophon Books, Harper and Row, Inc., 1963), p. 49.

"What are, generally speaking, the characteristics of a revolutionary situation? We can hardly be mistaken when we indicate the following three outstanding signs: (1) it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their power unchanged; there is a crisis 'higher up', taking one form or another.... If a revolution is to take place, it is usually insufficient that 'one does not wish way below,' but it is necessary that 'one is incapable up above' to continue in the old way; (2) the wants and sufferings of the oppressed classes become more acute than usual; (3) in consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses who in 'peace time' allow themselves to be robbed without protest, but in stormy times are drawn both by the circumstances of the crises and by the 'higher-ups' themselves into independent historic action."

V.I. Lenin, The Imperialist War (New York, International Publishers, 1930), Volume XVIII, Collected Works of V. I. Lenin, p. 279.

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1. Summary.

On 12 January 1964, the Sultanate of Zanzibar was overthrown by a brief armed revolt, after having become independent within the British Commonwealth only a month before, on 10 December 1963. This sudden and dramatic fall had been preceded by a long decline, which only gathered speed in the final period.

Historically, the Arab domination of the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba was a minority rule, founded on conquest and supported by use of the islands as a depot for slave-raiding activities conducted on the East African mainland. Slaving operations ended with the establishment of the British Protectorate in 1890, but the Arabs retained their political and economic hold. The prestige of the Sultanate declined during the critical period as one incompetent ruler succeeded another.

In recent years, the African majority began to resent its exclusion from political power. There was also rising dissatisfaction with the land tenure system, which left most of the best land in the hands of Arab absentee landlords. A declining market for cloves, Zanzibar's main export crop, contributed to economic stagnation and added to the reservoir of idle and impoverished workers. Electoral victories only added to African frustration, as the Arabs successfully maneuvered to retain political control, and used the police and British troops to contain the popular unrest.

The prospect of independence under these circumstances made it clear that an inherently unstable political situation would arise in Zanzibar. The result was that states as disparate as the United Arab Republic and Israel began to dabble in Zanzibari politics. The new nations of the African mainland, especially Tanganyika and Ghana, were not far behind. By offering definite examples of African sovereignty, the successive emergence of independent states on the mainland contributed to instability in Zanzibar.

Needless to say, the Communist movement was prominently represented in this overt and covert intervention in Zanzibar's internal affairs. The first elements to cultivate Zanzibari assets were the Communist Party

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of Great Britain (CPGB) and the Soviet Bloc; then Communist China, and finally Cuba. These assets were the "resolute revolutionaries"; they spread across the spectrum of Zanzibari life, supported by propaganda and supplied with funds as needed.

The Communist effort in Zanzibar was first stepped up in 1957, and was then aimed mainly at the Arab Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP). There is reason to suspect that this major thrust was dictated in part by a Soviet hope that, through rapprochement between the ZNP and the Cairo-based, UAR-supported Afro-Asian Solidarity Movement, Communist influence might most rapidly be brought to bear in Zanzibar to promote anti-Western attitudes and campaigns. The unanticipated speed with which black African nations moved toward independence in the 1958-60 period probably forced modification of the general line of the Communist subversive effort. By 1960 the granting of self-government to Tanganyika promoted active African opposition to the ZNP and contributed to the outbreak of racial violence in the island. It was then obviously necessary that the Communist movement accelerate its efforts--already under way--to gain influence in and around the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) and to avoid becoming involved in the racial antagonisms. This in fact was done--at first by building up influence among the ASP-oriented youth and trade union groups, and, as of 1961, by exerting influence within the ASP leadership itself. By 1963, only the Communists had succeeded in developing both a cadre and a following in both the racial communities. In mid-1963 the break between the Arab party and the Communists within it finally occurred. Thereafter, the Communist effort was devoted to bringing together their youth and trade union supporters from both racial groups and to cultivating a national alliance between their break away Arab party--the UMMA--and the ASP.

Independence left Zanzibar fatally vulnerable to any determined subversive stroke, while simultaneously increasing the hopes and demands of the African majority. The police force was rapidly weakened by Arabization of the upper echelons, and by indications that the mainland Africans who formed the hard core of the lower ranks might soon be discharged. The Police Mobile Force (PMF) had been founded

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in 1961 to support the police in repressing disturbances, but it was subject to the same weakening influences as the regular police force, and it proved to be almost useless when the revolt occurred.

The final preparations for revolution proceeded on separate but essentially parallel lines. At least two, and possibly three, groups were formed, the leaders assembling men and laying plans with a minimum of consultation among themselves. The common objectives that all accepted were the various police barracks and the radio station. Beyond these none of the groups seemed to have planned. The apparent assumption, and the correct one as it turned out, was that the police weapons in the hands of the African mob would destroy the Arab regime in a single wave of terror. The initial assaults were well-aimed, since the discharged policemen with the various bands knew exactly where to go for the arms that they sought. Whatever resistance was offered was overcome before daybreak on 12 January 1964, and the Arab regime of Zanzibar vanished in a single day as its leaders fled, died, or were interned.

## 2. Background.

### a. The Arab Regime.

The Arab presence in Zanzibar is centuries old, dating from the development of sailing craft capable of taking advantage of the regularly reversing monsoon winds to travel down the East African coast at one season, and to return at another after various raiding and trading activities. Influence became control when the Arabs of Oman drove out the Portuguese at the end of the 17th century; the subsequent period of Omani governors was followed by installation of the Sultan of Oman on Zanzibar in 1832. During this period, the island served as a base for large-scale and often bloody expeditions to the interior of East Africa to round up slaves, a practice that was ended when the British made Zanzibar and Pemba their protectorate in 1890.

Under the British protectorate, the Arabs, who formed a minority of about 15 per cent of the population of the islands, were able to retain their economic and political control. The large Arab landowners continued

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in their traditional way of life, growing cloves and producing copra to replace the past business of slave-trading. There were also smaller Arab traders, often temporary inhabitants who came and went with their dhows in the old manner. A separate "Asian" minority established itself, Hindus, Sikhs, various sects of Moslems, and Christians from Goa. They and the Arabs together were far outnumbered by the Africans, composed of indigenous Shirazis, descendants of liberated slaves, or more recent immigrants from the mainland.

To maintain their position as leaders of so heterogeneous a collection of subjects, the last Sultans of Zanzibar would have had to be exceptionally able men. Seyyid Khalifa apparently was--or perhaps his record improved in retrospect and by comparison with those who followed. His son, Seyyid Sir Abdullah bin Khalifa, had only been on the throne a short time when a qualified observer commented, in 1961, that Abdullah could well be the last Sultan of Zanzibar. Seyyid Khalifa had been renowned and revered, by Arab and Asian and African; Seyyid Abdullah was jeered on the few occasions when he appeared in public. Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) supporters noted that Abdullah never invited Africans to the periodic dinners he gave.

The chances of the dynasty were not improved by the nomination of Seyyid Jamshid as Crown Prince and heir apparent. Jamshid's extravagances were obviously beyond the means of a small and poor nation; he also alienated the African politicians by actively participating in meetings of the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP), which was primarily a party of the Arab element of the nation. Jamshid succeeded to the throne in July 1963, when his father died of diabetic complications. Seyyid Jamshid bin Abdullah was the last Arab Sultan of Zanzibar; his reign came to a violent end after barely six months.

b. The African Majority and Racial Tension.

The African population of Zanzibar constituted an overwhelming numerical majority of the population. This was the more true since the Shirazis, a group traditionally of Persian origin, had been so long on the islands that they identified themselves with the Africans. The Afro-Shirazis formed the laboring classes, and thus were poor at best.

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Restrictions placed on importation of cloves into India and Indonesia in the 1950's were a direct blow at Zanzibar's main export crop, and an even more serious blow to the income of the laboring class who did the picking and preparation of the cloves. The African masses therefore found themselves increasingly idle, or driven by necessity to hard work on small and inefficient farms for a bare subsistence, while the best land was held by relatively rich absentee landlords, usually Arabs. The Africans further believed, and with considerable justification in the opinion of expert and unbiassed observers, that control of the whole administration of the island was monopolized by the Arabs, from the civil service and education to the police and the judiciary.

Under these circumstances, racial antagonism was inevitable. Isolated cases of murder, arson, and intimidation became a regular feature of Zanzibar life, to the point where race relations were a major preoccupation of the authorities from at least 1960 on. This increasing pressure built up into major violence in June 1961, when disturbances occurred that were only suppressed by the deployment of armed security forces, including British troops, throughout the island. This show of force overawed the rioters for the moment, but even at the time it was clear that these who had caused the trouble were only waiting for the military to leave in order to resume their activities.

### 3. Political Parties and Elections.

Political parties came into existence in Zanzibar after 1955, when the British authorities granted a measure of self-government to the Protectorate. In Zanzibar as elsewhere, party designations should not be thought of as indicating unified and homogeneous groupings. Both the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) and the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) included moderate and extremist wings, as did their respective labor unions and other associated groups. These extremists, who were almost invariably Communist-inclined and Communist-trained, did not begin to coalesce into a separate organization until the founding of the Umma Party by Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu [REDACTED] in June 1963. The sorting-out of the extremists was not complete by the time of the revolt of 12 January 1964.

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The Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) was the rallying point for the dominant Arab minority. As such, it received major contributions from the well-off Arab landowners and business men, in addition to the foreign aid discussed below. Consequently, the ZNP was in a better position to propagandize, to organize and to buy votes in the various elections that preceded independence. Sheikh Ali Muhsin Barwani, the moderate leader of the ZNP, is reported to have asked Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu to return to Zanzibar from the United Kingdom in 1957. If he did, he had cause to regret the action later, since Babu rapidly emerged as the leading Communist activist in Zanzibar. Organizations such as Youths' Own Union (YOU) and the Federation of Progressive Trade Unions (FPTU) were nominally affiliated with the ZNP and under its direction. In fact, however, they were creations of Babu, and they served the classic Communist function of "transmission belts", to carry Babu's Communist doctrines to the ZNP members and to the Zanzibar population in general. The FPTU was weakly supported by the workers whom it purported to represent; in effect, it was a political agitation group, especially with its leadership in the hands of such Babu supporters as Ali Sultan Issa and Ahmed Abubaker Qullatein [REDACTED]. In the same manner, the ZNP offices in London and Havana were under the direction, respectively, of Salim Said Rashid El Manby and of Ali Mahfudhea Mohamed [REDACTED]. Both men were strongly Communist-oriented and completely attached to Babu. For a time, the ZNP office in Cairo was directed by Ali Sultan Issa, who has been alluded to above as another pro-Communist activist and Babu henchman.

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The Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) was the spokesman for the majority African population of Zanzibar, but weak organization and a lack of funds partially negated this majority electoral base. With respect to extremism in its ranks, the ASP's problem paralleled that of the ZNP to a striking degree. From 1961 on, the ASP's moderate leaders, President Abeid Amani Karume and Secretary-General Othman Shariff Musa had to deal with an extremist element under the direction of Deputy Secretary General Abdullah Kassim Hanga [REDACTED]. Hanga's influence was enhanced by the Communist orientation of the younger elements, who were stronger in the Afro-Shirazi Youth League (ASYL), and in the Zanzibar and Pemba Federation of Labor (ZPFL), than in the parent party. The ZPFL had some claim to being an authentic working-class group, but it was unable

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to accomplish much in the line of normal trade-union activity because of the depressed state of the economy of Zanzibar and the inability to accumulate strike funds from the union members. Moreover, the Secretary-General of the ZPFL was Hassan Nasser Moyo [REDACTED], whose Communist connections were numerous and varied. With Moyo in undisputed charge, and with such assistants as Adam Mwakanjuki and Abdul Aziz Ali Khamis Twala [REDACTED] to back him up, the ZPFL was primarily a means for spreading Communist doctrines and a potential asset for any subversive tactic that its leaders might decide upon.

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In the 1961 elections for the Zanzibar Legislative Council, the ASP won only 10 of the 23 seats at stake, although its candidates received a majority of the popular vote. The major riots at this time, and the general lawlessness that preceded and followed them, played into the hands of the extremists of both parties, as the more responsible leaders were discredited through their policies and counsels of moderations. Both the ASP and the ZNP began to develop militant wings and strong-arm groups, which were ready material for offensive use by the extremists.

An attempt to burn the United States Consulate in August 1961 showed that relatively advanced techniques were already becoming known on the island. Later efforts to burn the British Information Service office on 5 April, and the post office on 3 May 1962, eventually led to the year's incarceration of Babu and other members of YOU who had been involved. Significantly, with these arrests "anti-colonialist" terrorist efforts ended; when four homemade incendiary devices were found in a deserted house in early 1963, they proved to be so poorly made that it was impossible to detonate them.

Party clashes continued in 1962, and in October the authorities were obliged to use tear gas to disperse the combatants.

The elections of July 1963 followed the previous pattern: the ASP won a striking majority of 63 per cent on the island of Zanzibar, and a plurality of 44 per cent on the neighboring island of Pemba. However, this time, the ASP emerged from the election with a plurality in the National Assembly, winning 13 seats to 12 for the ZNP and 6 for the Zanzibar and

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Pemba Peoples' Party (ZPPP). Again, the aspirations of the ASP to form a government were frustrated, however, by the ZNP/ZPPP coalition from which the ASP was completely excluded. Internal self-government had been granted to Zanzibar the month before, on 24 June 1963, but with only ZNP/ZPPP supporters present, since the ASP did not attend.

But the extremists were apparently prepared to change their tactics. In the final weeks before the 1963 elections, the ZNP lost the dubious services of its Secretary-General, Babu. Emerging from a year's imprisonment for sedition, Babu had found that his loyal associate Ali Sultan Issa had been expelled from the ZNP for insisting too strongly on militant ZNP action to liberate Babu and for too-bitter criticism of the leaders who did not measure up to his own standards. Issa was still in the ZNP's labor union, the FPTU, however, and the two men presented the moderate ZNP leadership with a list of seven candidates for whom "safe" ZNP constituencies were required in the coming elections. The claim was turned down, as was the concurrent, and almost certainly coordinated, one for six safe seats presented to the ASP at the same time by Hassan Nasser Moyo [REDACTED]. If successful, this gambit would have placed Babu and his extremists in the highly satisfactory position of controlling between the two main parties, 13 of the total 31 seats in the National Assembly that was to govern Zanzibar after independence. Babu resigned as secretary general of the ZNP on 16 June 1963. Two days later, having prudently left Zanzibar for the safer climate of Dar-es-Salaam, Babu announced the formation of the Umma Party.

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Neither the Umma Party's membership nor its activities left any doubt of its Communist orientation. Ali Sultan Issa, Ali Mahfudhea Mohamed, Salim Said Rashid and others quickly fell in line behind Babu and his new party. Umma was smaller than the longer-established parties, but its leaders had sympathizers who remained in the ZNP, in the ASP, and in their respective fronts. Umma attempted to hide behind the ASP to some extent. When a joint committee was formed to oppose a bill requiring the registration of societies and newspapers, Babu was the committee's secretary general, but its president was Abeid Amani Karume, the relatively-moderate ASP leader. Umma worked busily in

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the youth field, handing out much literature and announcing the formation of a National Union of Students (NUS). An All-Zanzibar Journalists' Organization was inaugurated on 7 August 1963; its officers were all Communist sympathizers and Babu was considered to have inspired its formation.

An organization calling itself the Zanzibar Communist Party (ZCP) emerged during the pre-independence period, but its existence may be disregarded in considering the development of subversion in Zanzibar. In fact, it was so artificial that one outside source alleged that it was an invention of the ZNP, and one of a series of minor parties created to draw votes from the ASP. This view would suggest a degree of sophistication not seen elsewhere in Zanzibari political action; an especially ingenious touch was the use of a Secretary General whose name could lead to his being confused with Babu, the real turning point of Communist activity in Zanzibar. The ZCP's leader was Abdulrahman Mohamed Hamdany, called "Guy", whose record included travel to Communist China and the Soviet Bloc, and also treatment in various hospitals for mental ailments. Whether independent or sponsored from outside, "Guy" collected only a score or so of followers, and his ZCP was of no importance either in furthering or decreasing the subversive threat to Zanzibar.

#### 4. Non-Communist Intervention in Zanzibari Internal Affairs.

Caught in the current of decolonialization that was sweeping the world in general and Africa in particular, Zanzibar drifted toward independence. Under the conditions just described this obviously unstable political situation was one to encourage foreign meddling. The Zanzibar "political animal" was plainly staggering; the vultures circled lower in readiness to pick its bones when it fell. A variety of foreign states intervened in Zanzibari internal affairs, openly or discreetly, during the final years of the British protectorate. Each nation seems to have selected its clients, either individuals or parties, in accordance with its estimates, its inclinations and its objectives either offensive or defensive. For their part, the Zanzibaris, both individuals and groups, accepted aid whenever and wherever offered, in a tacit, and possibly even unconscious, recognition of the self-evident proposition that Zanzibar was incapable of surviving as an independent and unsupported nation.

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The United Arab Republic (UAR) gave considerable backing and funds to the ZNP as the party of the Zanzibar Arab element after establishing close links in the early 1950's. As late as mid-1963, heavy Egyptian support for the ZNP was continuing, although the more recent Egyptian broadcasts had ceased to discriminate against the ASP. Earlier, in 1961, Ali Muhsin Barwani had tried to counter the extremist influence of Babu on the ZNP by strengthening the ZNP's relations with the UAR. One of his initiatives in this direction was to bring five Egyptian teachers into the Zanzibari school system. The fact of Egyptian backing for the ZNP was widely enough accepted for a rumor to gain credence, in the last days before independence, that in case of trouble Egyptian troops would be brought into Zanzibar. The accuracy of the rumor is less important than is the climate it connotes.

Given the known UAR support for the ZNP, Israeli aid to the ASP was to be expected. Rather than an Arab regime which would by definition be hostile, Israel naturally preferred to see an African government installed in Zanzibar, particularly one that would have reason to be grateful to Israel after its accession to power. The most prominent Israeli in Zanzibar was Mischa Feinzilber (wa. Feitzwengler), whose business activities included a fish-freezing plant and several lime concessions on the islands. Feinzilber's connections with the ASP became increasingly close, to the point where he applied to join the party, and actually claimed to have become a card-carrying ASP member in early 1963. Feinzilber made little secret of the fact that Israeli funds were going to the ASP; his own connection with the Israeli Embassy in Dar es Salaam suggests that he may have been the channel for these funds. One source has alleged that both Karume, the ASP president, and Othman Shariff Musa, the Secretary-General, had pocketed a great deal of Israeli money, along with Tanganyikan funds. Abdullah Kassim Hanga, as deputy secretary general of the ASP, was a member of the party's financial committee, and may therefore have known about this subsidy or participated in it. In addition to financing the ASP, and/or its leading members, the Israelis also paid the travel costs and expenses of Harold Lester, a Queen's Counsel and a British Zionist, when Lester came to Zanzibar in October 1962 to defend certain ASP members who were on trial for riots that had occurred on the island of Pemba. In addition, a number of Israeli-sponsored scholarships

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were given ASP oriented youths. Feinzilber once stated that some of these would be taught military tactics.

The ASP was further funded and supported by the various non-Arab governments of the African mainland. In 1962, one source stated that Ghanaian aid, while generous, was also relatively discreet, since Ghana wanted to maintain good relations with the UAR, which was backing the ZNP, as noted above. At the end of 1962, John Kofi Tettegah, Secretary General of the Ghana Trade Union Congress (GTUC), travelled to Zanzibar at the invitation of the ZPFL. John B. Ferguson, Ghana's Acting High Commissioner in Dar es Salaam, came with Tettegah on this occasion, and was noted as addressing private ZPFL meetings. The Chairman of Ghana's Bureau of African Affairs, Aloysius Kow Barden, visited Zanzibar from 22 to 25 June 1963, accompanied by David Busumtwi-Sam, currently Ghanaian High Commissioner in Kenya. Their trip was said to have been related to the provision of funds for the ASP in connection with the election campaign then under way. In November 1962, Rajab Saleh Salim joined the Bureau of African Affairs in Ghana, where he designated himself as the deputy publicity secretary and foreign representative of the ASP. He was a former Swahili announcer for Radio Moscow, and while in the USSR he had set up what he referred to as the Moscow office of the ASP. Karume officially denied the existence of this office in 1961, leaving the possibility open that Salim had decided to form it on his own. Whether with Karume's knowledge and permission or without it, there was evidence that the ASP office in Moscow was in communication with the Afro-Shirazi Youth League (ASYL) at home.

Tanganyikan support of the ASP was not limited to provision of the funds that Karume and Othman Shariff were said to have appropriated. Dar es Salaam is easy to reach by small boat from Zanzibar; once there, travellers from Zanzibar without passports could count on receiving travel documentation from the Tanganyikan Government or from the various Bloc Embassies. In addition to his numerous other activities, Ali Sultan Issa found time to establish a bar in Dar es Salaam, as a cover for his frequent trips to the mainland. President Julius Nyerere favored the ASP as a manifestation of general African nationalist solidarity, and speeches by Bibi Titi Mohamed, of the Women's Section of the Tanganyika African

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National Union (TANU), were noted as having contributed to racial tension on Zanzibar in April 1961. The ZNP protests at ASP's "mainland associations", primarily with Tanganyika, added further fuel to the racial rivalry on the islands in early 1963.

On the more serious question of Tanganyikan support for the actual revolt of 12 January 1964, as opposed to ASP's more legitimate drive for recognition, the main mover seems to have been Oscar Kambona rather than President Nyerere. Kambona, as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defense, was in an ideal position to supply aid to the Zanzibar revolutionaries. He was a long-standing acquaintance of Abdullah Kassim Hanga, the two men having shared a flat in London during their student days. He was also friendly with Babu, despite the latter's position as secretary-general of the Arab-inclined ZNP. There is ample reason to believe that the Zanzibar revolt was planned prior to the independence of Zanzibar, and that Kambona was deeply involved in the planning.

Kenya appeared in the Zanzibari picture in the person of Ajuma Oginga Odinga, Vice President of the Kenya African National Union (KANU), and Minister of Home Affairs after Kenyan independence. Oginga visited Zanzibar on 13 May 1961, and spoke at an ASP meeting, attacking colonialism in typically Communist terms. Long after the fact, Abdullah Kassim Hanga credited Oginga with helping him and many others to study abroad--that is, in the Communist Bloc. Babu, as soon as he had announced the formation of his new Umma Party, left Dar es Salaam for Nairobi, where he was reported to have seen Oginga. A recent analysis has pointed out that Oginga, Kambona and Babu had been in contact over a long period of time, and were all left-wing extreme nationalists ambitious for power. They thus had every reason to concert their ideas and tactics in general terms.

5. Communist Intervention in Zanzibari Internal Affairs.

Working through the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), the Soviets got off to the earliest start in preparing candidates to organize subversive activity in Zanzibar. Babu's six-year residence in the UK,

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from 1951 to 1957, was more distinguished by Communist activity than by the journalism studies in which he was allegedly engaged. In 1955, he became chairman of the East Africa Committee of the Communist-penetrated Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF), and he may have joined the CPGB at about the same time. The visit of John Francis St. John Eber to Zanzibar in August 1963, confirmed that the MCF had not forgotten about Babu in the intervening years. Eber, a Singapore Communist and the business manager of the MCF, contacted Babu at that time, for reasons not stated but easy to imagine. Ali Sultan Issa and Abdullah Kassim Hanga were also first noted in contact with Communism while in the UK; Issa is specifically reported to have joined the CPGB in 1954.

Communist contacts with and influence on Zanzibar nationals spread rapidly beyond the first leaders noted above. The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) received, trained and returned to Zanzibar such labor organizers as Qullatein, Moyo, Mwakanjuki and Twala. Salim Rashid worked from London in close cooperation with the International Union of Students (IUS). The number of students trained is difficult to determine, first because of the constant coming and going as students completed courses of differing duration and intensity, and second because much of the travel was clandestine to avoid passport restrictions imposed by the British authorities on Zanzibar. In March 1962, one source reported that a total of 167 Zanzibaris were studying in various Communist countries. At the end of 1962, a total of 111 was given, and by June 1963, a figure of 65 was reported. This picture of an apparent decline was probably due to the lack of solid information; it is, however, possible that many of the students returned to Zanzibar as the date of independence came close. The basic fact was that any Zanzibari who could be reached by Communist spokesmen and who indicated interest, could expect to receive a scholarship, regardless of his academic qualifications or lack thereof. Once in the Communist country of destination, he could also expect to receive some sort of education, together with as much political indoctrination as he could or would absorb. If the indoctrination "took", he would return to Zanzibar with some appropriate diploma and enter the wide-open field of agitation and subversive preparation.

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Radio broadcasts from Moscow and from Peking were being received in Zanzibar by the middle of 1960. The audience was naturally limited by the relatively small number of Zanzibaris who could afford short-wave sets, but the programs doubtless filled the standard function of keeping the local militants informed of the current agitational and propaganda line. Radio Peking broadcasts in Swahili were particularly noted as coming in clearly at the end of 1961.

Printed material of all kinds supplemented the broadcasts. The Umma bookshop was sponsored by the ZNP youth front, YOU-- that is to say, by Babu, who later adopted the name "Umma" for the party he founded. It openly handled all types of Communist publications that had not yet achieved the distinction of prohibited literature in accordance with a list maintained by the British authorities. A report of November 1961 noted that 6,000 books were then being held in customs, addressed to the Umma bookstore. A ZNP "bookmobile" operated from 1961 on, offering both Chinese Communist and Soviet literature. The inpouring of Communist publications continued both through the mail and in the baggage of returning students, conference delegates, and miscellaneous travellers returning from Iron Curtain junkets. Where the specific publications were named on the prohibited lists, confiscation of the material and prosecution of the bearers was possible. Otherwise, the authorities had no alternative but to allow the entry of clearly subversive material.

The Chinese Communists entered into the picture in the late 1950's, initially at least, by supporting individuals already chosen by the CPGB and the Soviets. In early January 1959, Babu visited Peking, and his remarks on arrival were duly quoted by the New China News Agency (NCNA). Babu also arranged for Ali Sultan Issa to meet the Chinese, and Issa was noted in August of 1960 as making his second trip to Peking. Babu himself took a delegation of 22 ZNP members to Communist China at about this time; the return of the delegation was described in the press in September 1960. The colony of Chinese nationals on Zanzibar was small, amounting to only about 50 persons whose interests appear to have been mainly commercial. Their inactivity was probably more than compensated for by the NCNA

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correspondent in Dar es Salaam, Kao Liang, whose previous extra-journalistic endeavors had led to his being expelled from India in 1960. While there is no specific data on his Zanzibar operations available, Kao is a known Chinese Communist intelligence officer, and Zanzibar was included in his field of operational activity along with Tanganyika. Issa, who travelled frequently to Dar es Salaam, ostensibly to watch over his bar business there, may well have been the key Chinese contact in 1963.

Efforts to establish the total number of Zanzibaris studying in Communist China at any given time are no more rewarding than in the case of the Soviet Bloc. The evidence from early 1961 on indicates that there were about 10 Zanzibaris studying in Communist China at any given time, compared to the more than 100 in the Soviet Bloc.

Cuban activity in connection with Zanzibar was shorter in duration, and more directly focussed on preparation for armed revolt. Babu sponsored the opening of a ZNP office in Havana which he placed under the direction of his loyal follower Ali Mahfudhea Mohamed (see biography). From that time through the end of December 1963, a total of 20 Zanzibaris were identified by name as studying in Cuba. Of these, two were probably women, to judge by the names given. This count matches fairly closely with a report of early 1963, which stated that as of that time, a total of 16 to 24 Zanzibaris had been trained in Cuba. All of them were members of YOU and the FPTU, who had been sent by the ZNP, in other words, by Babu and his lieutenants. These were cadre personnel, who were to train others on their return to Zanzibar. Ostensibly, their training was to be in trade-union matters, but by early 1963 it was increasingly reported that their instruction had included, if it was not wholly confined to, guerrilla warfare preparation. Most returned with Castro-style beards and large quantities of subversive literature. They were also uncommunicative about what they had been taught, causing some derision because they seemed to be no more fitted for finding jobs after their training than before they left. The revolt of 12 January 1964 may have enlightened a large number of persons on the type of training offered in Castro's Cuba.

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The growing interference of Communism in Zanzibar was not limited by the considerations of Sino-Soviet rivalry that have now become standard in the world Communist movement. Individuals originally contacted by one of the Communist rivals continued to receive substantial backing even after openly showing their connections with the other group; individuals and groups were repeatedly noted as receiving money, advice and propaganda from Chinese Communists and Soviets simultaneously. In general, the Zanzibar developments provided support for the thesis that in Africa the Sino-Soviet conflict operates significantly only at the level of control. As long as the problem was that of installing a Communist controlled government in Zanzibar, the intra-Communist rivalry extended no further than maneuvering for positions to be exploited at some future date. In no case did either Soviet or Chinese Communist action undercut the basic drive toward a Communist-controlled regime for Zanzibar, even though the impetus of the moment was being supplied by an asset under control of the rival Communist power.

#### 6. Toward Revolt.

The situation in Zanzibar deteriorated with increasing speed as independence loomed. In its early stages, Babu's Umma Party did not appear to constitute an immediate threat, but an evaluation in August 1963, noted that its formation meant that the extremists were no longer under control of the more moderate leaders of the ZNP and the ASP. Travel to and from the Soviet and Chinese Communist Blocs increased; subversive literature arrived in ever-greater quantities; and financial aid was supplemented by sabotage and subversive training of activists, particularly in Cuba.

Rumors of violence and armed revolt began to be heard, discreetly at first. A private Umma Party meeting in October 1963 discussed violent action to be taken after the departure of the British authorities; and Abdulrazak Musa Simai told another closed Umma gathering that the Arab regime of Zanzibar would be overthrown in Cuban style. As independence approached, a qualified foreign observer notified his own government in unequivocal terms that youthful elements in the ASP and Umma parties, in the trade unions, and in other new organizations intended to destroy the Sultanate. He added that the individuals to whom he referred had been

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trained in the Soviet Bloc, in China, and in Cuba, that they were asking arms of their former mentors, and that some arms were already hidden in Zanzibar.

In itself, "Uhuru" (Freedom) was a slogan calculated to supercharge the already tense atmosphere of Zanzibar. This was the more true since Kenya was to achieve the same status only two days after the Zanzibar ceremonies of 10 December 1963, thus completing the liquidation of British colonialism throughout East Africa. Looking across the narrow waters that separated them from the mainland, the African majority could see multiple proofs that as Africans they could aspire to political sovereignty. The economic situation on Zanzibar was already bad, and it was unlikely to improve without radical changes, since the British had at least seen to it that the available funds went to the right places, something that a post-independence government could not be counted upon to continue. Animosity toward the big landlords added fuel to the smoldering dislike of Arab political control.

Independence also meant the departure of British troops, so that the police remained as the only force immediately available to support the Arab regime. The riots of June 1961 and thereafter had clearly shown that unrest could exceed the strength of the available police units. A Police Mobile Force (PMF) was formed in August 1961; it was housed in a special barracks at Mtoni and trained in military tactics as well as riot control. The PMF was to be used to back up the police in suppression of internal efforts to overthrow the monarchy, but the departure of all but one of the British officers left the PMF almost useless when the revolt actually occurred.

At the beginning of 1963, the police numbered about 900 in all, including the PMF. The officers were predominately Arab or British; the constables were Africans, many of them mainlanders. Even at that time, the ASP considered that it could count on the African rank-and-file of the police in case of need. This opinion was backed by the fact that a number of police constables had actually sided with the ASP during the 1961 ASP versus ZNP riots. Under such circumstances, policies of Arabization of the higher ranks and purging of the rank-and-file by discharge of mainland Africans were ill-advised, to say the least. Nevertheless they were undertaken in complete

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disregard of their inevitable effect.

The result of this two-pronged assault on the integrity of the police was a rapid and progressive demoralization of the force that was the last bulwark of the regime. Inside the organization, the policemen might have defended the regime whose salt they had taken, out of ingrained discipline if for no other reason. Once outside it, they were a deadly danger, since they knew the vulnerable points for attack. This fact, while lost on the high policy makers, was obvious to the various extremists who were already laying their plans for armed attack.

#### 7. The Order of Battle.

The participants in, and the final arrangements for, the armed revolt of 12 January 1964, have been the subject of considerable reporting after the fact. The reliability of such material is often weakened by speculation, or by embroidery upon known events, and by distortions due to personal bias. Nevertheless, the main lines of endeavor may be deduced with reasonable accuracy in the case of the Zanzibar revolt.

Almost without exception, the sources reporting on the revolt confirm that the plotting was multiple and parallel. At least two, and perhaps three, plans for the violent overthrow of the Arab regime were hatched more or less independently and at almost the same time. The various leaders seem to have known of the actions envisaged by their opposite numbers. They may have consulted to some extent, but there was no single "general staff of the revolution".

The most clearly identified of the combat groups was the one led by John Okello. As shown in the accompanying biographic summary, Okello is a curious figure who emerged from origins that are obscure and possibly not yet completely known. He may have been a former policeman; certainly his following included a number of the disgruntled ex-constables who have already been referred to. Similarly, his probable mainland origin would account for his attracting the support of a group of mainland Africans, largely uneducated, underprivileged and ready for any solution of their troubles, especially a violent one that offered the attractive prospect of loot. From somewhere

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he obtained firearms, including some automatic weapons, for his followers, who were variously estimated to number between 200 and 600. Even so, many of them went into the attack with sticks and other pickup arms. The various indications that Okello was exalted to the point of insanity need not be regarded either as unlikely or necessarily detrimental to his success in the situation in which he found himself.

The political base, the composition and the leadership of the other combat group (or groups) is less well established. An ASP extremist wing is identified in various reports, with the planning being done by Abdullah Kassim Hanga, either alone or in association with Babu, Twala and other Umma Party members. There is one report of a third, separate, Umma Party group being formed, but the record of cooperation among the Communist-trained subversives makes it seem more likely that they would have pooled their efforts without regard to nominal party affiliations.

The ASP group is said to have enjoyed the moral and material support of the government of Tanganyika. President Nyerere's moral backing for the ASP has already been mentioned, but it does not seem that he knew of the actual plans for violent revolt. In the matter of material aid, Oscar Kambona, Tanganyika's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defense, is reported to have given the ASP a few rifles and two machine guns, on a clandestine basis and without informing Nyerere. These weapons would have sufficed as a base of fire for the attack on the first police post when the revolt began. Again there is confirmation that few if any of the revolutionaries were actually armed in the first attack. They did not need to be; the African constables had already been told in general terms to lay down their arms and to arrest their Arab or European officers in the event of an ASP-supported revolt. They had not been told of the specific date of the revolt, but when it occurred they did as they had been ordered.

Two fringe groups are of some interest in connection with the order of battle for the Zanzibar revolt. The first of these was the Mozambican contingent, mainland Africans who had come to Zanzibar seeking work. Some of them may have received training in Algeria under the auspices of

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the Mozambique National Liberation Front (FRELIMO). Two independent sources have identified them as participating in the revolt in cooperation with the ASP; one of these sources stated that a total of about 200 Mozambicans were involved in the action.

The other fringe group was the "Cubans", Zanzibaris who had been trained in Cuba under the program begun by Babu and the extremist ZNP element that he directed. Their numbers and their participation were noticeably exaggerated in reporting immediately after the revolt, to the point where the presence of actual Cuban nationals was rumored. There is no indication that the Cuban-trained Zanzibaris were leaders rather than followers, but it is reasonable to suppose that their expertise was made available to the leaders, and that they served to stiffen, if only morally, the untrained levies who formed the various assault groups.

#### 8. Armed Action and Aftermath.

The final steps that led to revolt were precipitated, according to one source, by the government action in banning the Umma Party on 4 January. There was, moreover, a rumor that the government intended to make a series of arrests on 13 January. At a meeting with Babu and Hanga, Okello is represented as demanding action; his group knew of the ASP plot and doubted that it could be kept secret. In fact, it was not kept secret: the police had a report on 10 January that arms were to be landed, but no shipments were intercepted despite efforts to that end. On the same day Ali Muhsin Barwani, Minister for Home Affairs, was given a report that Babu and his followers were talking about overthrowing the government. Muhsin laughed it off, saying he had heard fifty such reports in the past 18 months.

On the night of 11 January, at about 8:15 p.m., the police received word of a possible revolt. The report was ignored by the officer in charge, since it followed several days of persistent rumors. This report may have been a tip from a penetration of Okello's group; if so, he risked and lost his life for nothing since he was said to have been one of the first persons shot after the revolt succeeded. An African informant has stated that he was called out of his house at 10:00 p.m. by an Umma representative, taken to an assembly point and given a rifle from a crate. The informant had had military training, and the other persons whom he saw being armed at the same

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time were either ex-soldiers or ex-policemen. A separate report stated that the weapons used in the initial attacks had been imported into Zanzibar from October 1963 on, falsely labelled as office machinery and brought through customs with the cooperation of Umma Party members in the Customs Office.

The attacks on the police barracks began before dawn on 12 January 1964. One report fixed the time at 3:15 a.m., stating that the attacking force at the Mtoni Barracks consisted of 200 unarmed irregulars, led by one Zamadhmai Hadj, a former constable who had been recently discharged from the police force. According to another source, the Mtoni attack was led by Said Washoto, a common criminal, while Okello was off leading the assault on the Ziwani Barracks. A third report gives additional credit to Okello, saying that he and his band returned to support and to take over the Mtoni attack because most of the 200 or so ASP attackers were wavering. After taking one (or both) police posts, Okello's band, a hard core of 15 to 35 men, took over the Raha Leo Headquarters.

Once installed, after whatever contribution to the initial success, Okello began appointing a revolutionary council, and notified ASP and Umma Party leaders that they were part of a new government. This footnote is of interest in assessing the character of the Zanzibar revolt, since it confirms the negative indication given by the complete absence of any reporting on a concerted plan for action beyond the overrunning of the police posts and capturing the radio station at Raha Leo. The various revolutionaries seem to have assumed that once the police were neutralized, the Arab regime would dissolve. As it turned out, their estimate of the situation was correct. The distribution of police weapons to the African crowds led to an outburst of terrorism directed against the Arab minority. Although unplanned and apparently uncoordinated, the wave of loot and slaughter was thorough and effective. By the end of the day, the Sultan had fled, and the Arab community members who did not flee with him were either in hiding, dead or rounded up in improvised concentration camps. The Arab regime of Zanzibar was decapitated, and the government that later designated itself the People's Republic of Zanzibar was firmly established in less than 24 hours.

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