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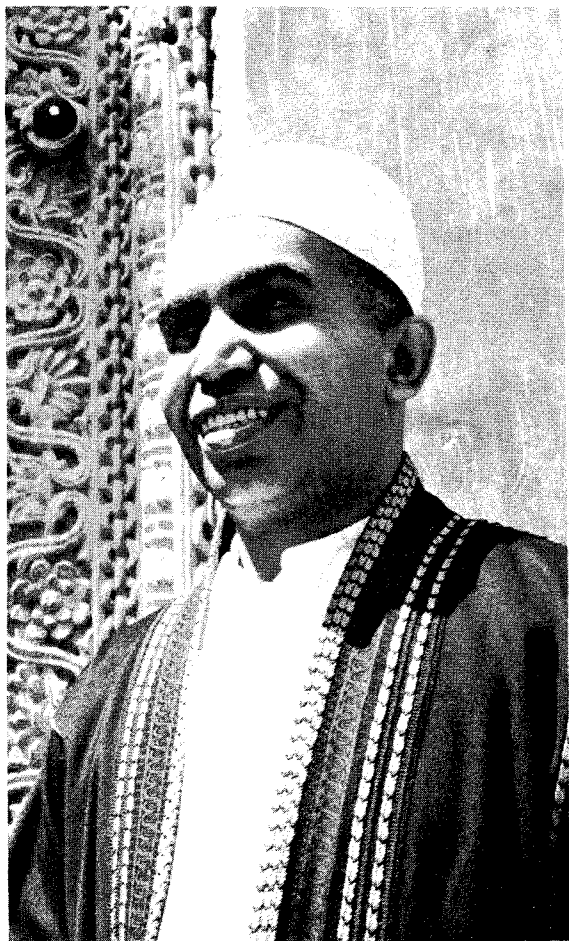
DER - 23  
Zanzibar Arabs - I  
Nationalism Intensifies

September 10, 1954  
c/o Barclays Bank  
Queensway  
Nairobi, Kenya

Mr. Walter S. Rogers  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
522 Fifth Avenue  
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The clove tree, it is said, is eminently suited for Zanzibar's temperament. An owner has only to sit beneath it in perfect bliss and watch the tiny clove buds grow into handsome pounds sterling. This year each faithful tree is bringing its languid owner about 70 shillings (\$10). The clove tree is regarded as even more suited for Zanzibar than its nearest contender, the coconut palm. After all, one runs the risk of getting konked on the head by a coconut if one wiles away his days beneath one of those trees.



Ali Muhsin Barwani  
Zanzibar Nationalist

In recent weeks, though, Zanzibar's attention has been diverted from watching the cloves grow. The island's customary torpor has vanished to a large degree. The reason is an upsurge of Arab nationalism. Tempers have been running high and all Arabs have resigned from the Protectorate's Legislative Council and from the statutory boards and bodies.

Arab nationalism, which had been smoldering for years in this sleepy Sultanate, erupted when the government brought nine leading Arabs, all members of the Executive Committee of the Arab Association, to trial on charges of sedition and possessing seditious publications. An article attacking colonialism, supplied by the British Communist Party, had appeared in the association's newspaper, Al Falag---meaning, in Arabic, "The Dawn."

Another item cited by the prosecution was an Arabic poem which had been circulated in Egypt during the Palestine War. A government witness translated it as:

"O my brother,  
The oppressors have exceeded the bounds.  
It is right we should wage jehad;  
It is right we should redeem ourselves."

Government witnesses translated jehad as meaning "holy war" in this instance. The defense put up a somewhat legalistic argument. They pointed out that jehad also means "effort." The correct translation makes no mention of "waging" war or anything else, the defense said. Their translation was:

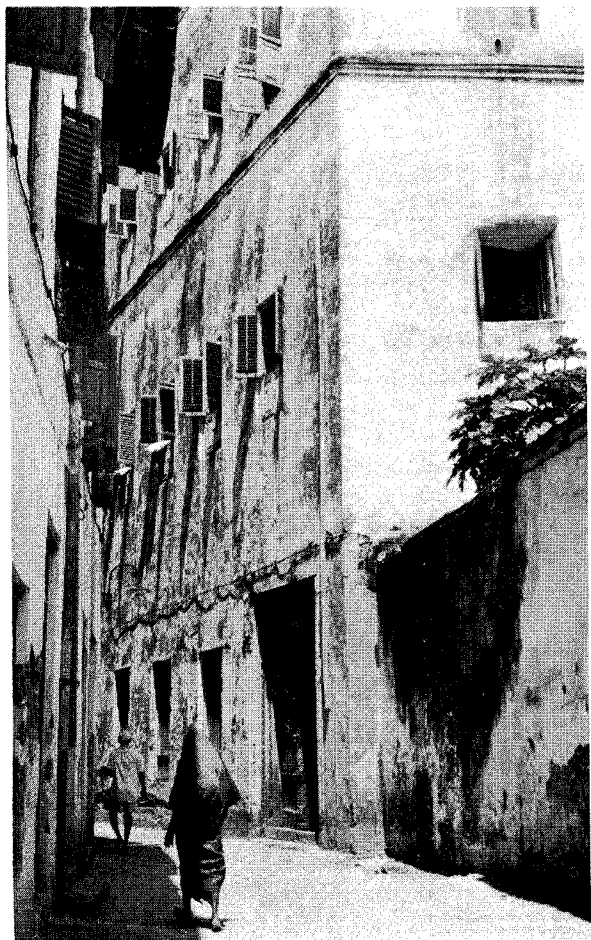
"O my brother,  
The oppressors have exceeded the bounds.  
Jehad is justified;  
Sacrifice is justified."

Whatever the translation, there is no doubt that the Arab community thought that the British had exceeded the bounds in bringing their leaders to trial. A crowd of 2,000 angry Arabs gathered outside the courtroom building when the hearing opened. Arab leaders urged them to remain calm. Police were ready with rifles and tear gas. As a precaution, some European women and children had been brought into town from the outlying districts the night before the trial opened. When the judgment was read, a British cruiser, H. M. S. Ceylon, was in Zanzibar harbor, whether by coincidence or design. It is said that marines were ready for a landing.

The Arabs remained peaceful as the nine were convicted. The editor was fined and the magistrate called him a Communist. The others had to sign peace bonds. Mass meetings followed at which the Arabs of Zanzibar Island and of Pemba Island, also a part of the Protectorate, declared their support for the defendants. Slogans such as "No taxation without representation" have been in the air. If not to jehad, the Arabs here have been aroused to a degree of political activity unseen in years. The mention of Communism has aroused some interest elsewhere though few details of the affair have reached even Kenya. Is the Gospel of Karl Marx making any headway in this land of the Holy Koran?

For the incoming visitor, Zanzibar is still the same old delightful crossroads of East and West. When I alighted from the plane from Mombasa, Zanzibar's airport was filled with Hindus, Arabs, Sikhs, Africans, Pakistanis and, looking somewhat out of place, a few Europeans. There was the usual profusion of national dress and languages. Public notices in the terminal building were written in English, Kiswahili, Arabic and Gujerati. I looked around for my friend, Sheikh Ali Muhsin Barwani\*, who had invited me to come to Zanzibar for a look at the current situation. Ali Muhsin, a young Arab nationalist, was one of the sedition trial defendants and he had just resigned from his seat in the Legislative Council. I was to spend the next three weeks as a guest in his home. But I failed to spot him in the crowd.

"Welcome to Zanzibar," said the young Arab immigration clerk as I filled out the immigration form. Zanzibar maintains only loose ties with the mainland territories of British East Africa. As far as visitors are concerned, it is a foreign port. One of the questions on the immigration form was "Purpose of coming to Zanzibar." "You should put down 'political activity,'" the clerk said with a scowl. Then he burst into laughter. "Sheikh Ali Muhsin is waiting for you," he said. Chuckling over his joke, he hurried me through immigration and customs and took me outside where we found Ali Muhsin.



Stone Town Street,  
Near Ali Muhsin's  
House

Ali Muhsin looked the same as he did when I saw him eight months ago, but he said he feared he has put on a little more weight. He was smiling as usual, his black eyes flashing brightly and, true as ever to Arab traditions for hospitality and politeness, he insisted on carrying my bags. A car was waiting and soon we were traveling along Mnazi Mmoja Road ("One Palm Tree Road") on the way to Ali Muhsin's house.

One Palm Tree Road winds through fully one thousand palm trees on its way to Zanzibar town. Through the trees, the deep green Indian Ocean sparkled in the bright mid-day sun. The driver kept honking the horn as he vied for right of way with bicycles, oxcarts and pedestrians, most of whom prefer the middle of the road.

We flashed by the Residency, home of Zanzibar's British Resident (he corresponds to governor of a colony), past the Law Courts, where Ali Muhsin and the others were tried, past the playing field, where young Arabs, Indians and Africans compete at British soccer and other games. Then we dived into the narrow streets of the "Stone Town," the old part of Zanzibar, where huge stone houses are crowded closely together.

Few of the streets of the Stone Town are wide enough for cars and we had to creep around by a circuitous route to get near Ali Muhsin's house. At that the streets were so narrow that the walls of all the buildings bear deep scars from passing cars. We left the car some distance from Ali Muhsin's house---the streets were too narrow beyond that point---and a few minutes walk brought us to his home.

Ali Muhsin's wife does not observe purdah around non-Muslim men, but she did not join us for lunch that day. The lunch was typical Arab fare---rice, fish and chicken, well spiced and well flavored. It was a pleasant relief after months of the roast beef and boiled cabbage regimen of East Africa's British community.

"What do we want now?" Ali Muhsin was saying, speaking in his quiet, slow voice, but nevertheless bubbling over with idealistic enthusiasm, "We want the right to govern ourselves!" "Now?" I asked. "Now!" he said, very firmly. "For years we've been enjoying benevolent dictatorship by gentlemen about to retire---worshippers of Lawrence of Arabia. They politely call us aristocrats and then they do what they like."

The Arab masses are in a new mood, he said. As far as they are concerned, the present political set-up has outlived itself. Under it there are no elections to the Legislative Council. Instead the government appoints three Arabs, two Africans, two Indians and one European businessman to serve on the "unofficial" side. The Arab and Indian members are chosen by the British Resident from panels of names submitted to him by political organizations representing the two races.

The unofficials, eight in number, are in the minority as nine government officials also sit in the council. In the Executive Council, where policy is decided and where regulations are issued to implement laws enacted in Legco, there is no unofficial representation. Constitutionally, Zanzibar is a long way behind Kenya, where there are unofficial cabinet ministers and which has, at least in theory, an unofficial majority in the Legislative Council.

"When I was in Legco," Ali Muhsin said, "I was dictated to by the British Resident. Seventy-five per cent of the time, I was told what to say. I was told I couldn't fight for this or that. Sometimes when I criticized things, the Resident would shut me up by ruling me out of order. I couldn't tell my people this or they would have had no respect for me. The worst thing was that I used to find myself unconsciously using the same arguments the British Resident used on me when I would explain to my people why I hadn't done this or that.

"What we don't like is having our internal policy dictated by people who haven't even got our sympathy and who don't understand our background and aspirations. We want self-government, but we don't mean to say we could take over all of the technical jobs at once. Maybe we could do so in 100 years, maybe never. That isn't the point. No country can be completely independent of others. But foreign technicians are a different thing from foreign rulers."

An aim is one thing, but Ali Muhsin realizes that the British are not going to grant self-government to Zanzibar at once. "When I said we wanted self-government now, I realized that it's not going to happen that way. I would be satisfied if they set a date for it. Then we'd have something to work toward."

But British policy is to have little or no long-range policy at all. Rather decisions are made each day on what to do next. A target date would be anathema to them. So, at least for the moment, Ali Muhsin agrees with other Arab leaders, who say they will return to the government if the following demands are met:

---A common voting role for all subjects of the Sultan, regardless of race. This would exclude a large number of Indians, who are here on British passports as members of the Commonwealth and who are reluctant to sever their ties with India. The Arabs and many of the Africans regard the Indians as vultures of passage who have come to make money and intend to return to India. "They don't have the welfare of the country at heart," says Ali Muhsin. Mainland Africans who come to Zanzibar to work for a few years would also be excluded from voting, unless they chose to become subjects of the Sultan.

---An unofficial majority in Legco.

---The "member system," as in Kenya, where unofficials are appointed as cabinet members.

## ---Representation in the Executive Council.

Ali Muhsin is only 34 years old, but already has become a leader in the Arab nationalist movement. He presumably will be around for a long time and already some of his friends joke about him becoming the Prime Minister of a self-governing Zanzibar. Once, when I asked him if he would agree to a steady devolution of power that would take, say, 40 years to complete, he replied, "No, I'll be too old then."

He is very much the idealist, but still seems to be at home in the world of practical politics. Many of his ideals are drawn from Islamic teachings, others from the West. He is something of an intellectual, but he says his real interest is in making money and in promoting education in Zanzibar. The East and West are curiously entwined in this young man, a devout Muslim, proud of his Arab heritage and eager to import industrial development, western education and British-style constitutional monarchy into Zanzibar.

Ali Muhsin says he got into politics only by accident. "I really am interested in making money and in seeing people get education," he says. He seems to do all right at the former. He has some shambas (plantations) of his own and manages others for relatives. He studied agriculture at Makerere College in Uganda, a predominantly African institution, and now is putting some of those lessons to work in Zanzibar. Recently he started a carpentry business as well. In pursuance of his interest in education, he served on education boards before the Arab exodus from government. He knows only too well that Zanzibar needs many more engineers, lawyers, doctors and other trained people. Ali Muhsin has a mammoth volume at home that lists scholarships available at institutions all over the world. He often pores over it, figuring out which could be secured for Zanzibari students.

He has an intellectual approach to politics and once when we went to the beach for a picnic, he brought along a copy of the Constitution of India and a report on proposed constitutional reforms in Tanganyika. That was his light reading for the afternoon. He has an idealistic faith in the United Nations. Like other non-self-governing people, he looks to it as a sort of Court of Appeal for the world's injustices. He is co-proprietor of a weekly nationalist newspaper, Mwongozi (in Kiswahili: "Guide") and practically every week a column of the paper is devoted to telling about the work of some little-known U. N. agency. When he talks about slavery in Zanzibar he acknowledges what the other Arabs maintain---that the slaves generally were well treated---but then he will add in a firm voice: "Yet it was a denial of human rights!"

Ali Muhsin often talks glowingly of the late King Ibn Saud of Arabia and how Ibn Saud, with his sword, carved out a stable desert kingdom. Ali Muhsin's own sword, handed down through his family, is rusty and in storage, though. He would rely on the less romantic pen, and on public utterances, to carve out an independent Sultanate, though one within the British Commonwealth, in Zanzibar.

As a devout Muslim, Ali Muhsin keeps to the rigorous schedule of five prayer sessions a day. He never smokes and he regards drinking as a sin and weakness. A source of annoyance to him is a bar near his home called "The English Bar," and operated by a Goan, presumably for the benefit of the Goans and other whisky-drinking Christians. Every

night it is crowded with young Arabs. "It should be called 'The Muslim Bar,'" Ali Muhsin growls. The Prophet forbade drinking and that's that. He generally is tolerant of others, yet when it comes to drinking, he favors outright Prohibition. What about the Goans and the British? "It would be for their own good," Ali Muhsin says.

He has read extensively in Islamic literature and flavors his conversations liberally with quotations from the Koran or sayings of the Prophet. One of the Prophet's sayings that he often aims at his fellow Arabs in his pleas for racial unity in Zanzibar is: "The Arab is no better than a non-Arab and a non-Arab is no better than an Arab. All are children of Adam and Adam was from dust."

Racial unity is a must in his opinion. Like all Arabs he has reservations about the Indians, even the Muslim ones, but he seems to be willing to make the best of it provided they become Zanzibari nationals.

He has no reservations about the Africans, though. He regards them as closely akin to the Arabs, as indeed they are. He himself had an African greatgrandmother. "It's the poor Arabs who remained pure," he says with a laugh. "They couldn't afford slaves." At home he speaks in Kiswahili, basically a Bantu language, when talking with his wife and their four children. He knows some Arabic, but many of his Arab brothers have long since forgotten it, many generations of them having been raised by Bantu-speaking African mothers or African nurses. The Arabs practice no color bar against the Africans and still a further link is that of religion. Nearly 100 per cent of the local Africans are Muslims. They were never enslaved and some of them were slave-owners or slave-dealers themselves.

Ali Muhsin had a glimpse of the western world during a tour of England and the Continent. Unlike some Arabs, he is not disturbed by what inroads western civilization has made in Zanzibar. In fact he is eager for more of it. He has been urging government to undertake a new geological survey in the hope of finding marketable minerals and attracting industry. He would like to see the tourist industry expanded, too.

Zanzibar, though, is the land of "Haraka, haraka haina baraka" (Haste, haste has no blessing), and Ali Muhsin mirrors the mood of his fellow citizens. He is no fiery crusader and entertains no fierce dogmas. The long-settled Arabs have a saying when referring to the highly excitable ways of the newcomers from Oman---"His blood is still hot." Ali Muhsin, the product of several generations in sleepy Zanzibar, is quite cool when it comes to politics. He has no personal animosity against the British officials and regards some of them, including some who prepared the case against him, as good friends. He seems to be just as amused as his fellow Arabs when they kid him about "talking too much" and about regarding himself as "our great leader."

There are no personal grudges or frenzied feelings, but still the relations between the Arabs and the government have grown progressively worse in recent months and Ali Muhsin played a major role in the affairs. First a dispute arose over a new immigration law, which the Arabs regarded as unfair to immigrants from southern Arabia. They thought that the government was trying to restrict Arab influence in Zanzibar by severing the ties with their ancient homeland. Then another dispute arose over the controlled price of cloves. These were soon overshadowed by the Al Falaq case.

Al Falag, along with Mwongozi, Ali Muhsin's newspaper, had been warned last January by Sir John Rankine, then the British Resident, that some of their articles were "seditious" and "near seditious." According to Ali Muhsin, Rankine told them that the Arabs hold a privileged position in Zanzibar, one akin to that of the white settlers in Kenya. There were other communities willing to take the Arabs' place, Ali Muhsin quotes Rankine as saying.

After the meeting, the Executive Committee of the Arab Association, as publishers of Al Falag, voted to get rid of the editor, Ahmed Mohamed Nassor el Lanky. A general meeting of the Arab Association was held, though, and the Executive Committee was overruled. Ahmed Mohamed would stay.

Al Falag in particular continued to attack the government and colonial rule in general and on May 28 the government took action. The editor and nine members of the Executive Committee were charged at a preliminary hearing with four counts of sedition, three of possessing a seditious publication and one of failing to print the name and address of the printer and owners in one particular issue.

The charges of possessing seditious publications were based on three items found in the Al Falag office during a police raid. Two were copies of "The Africa Newsletter," published by "The Africa Committee" of the Communist Party in London. The third was a propaganda poster that had been sent to Al Falag from Communist Hungary. All three items were anti-colonial in tone.

On May 29, the day after the hearing, what the Arabs regarded as insult was added to what they regarded as injury. Following an old custom, Arab leaders called on Chief Secretary R. E. Alford, who was about to take over from Rankine, and invited him to their Idd-el-Fitr garden party to be held on June 3. Idd-el-Fitr ("The Holiday of the Breaking of the Fast") marks the end of Ramadhan, the month of fasting, and is one of the most important holidays in the Muslim world. The British Resident customarily attends the garden party. But this time Alford refused. He said he could not come because the Arabs were under charge and because their publication, in one of the articles alleged to be seditious, had insulted the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton. Their pride wounded, the Arabs left in a huff.

Three days later the Arab Association held a mass meeting. Ali Muhsin spoke, saying: "Government has refused to cooperate with us. It never listens to our advice or, when it does, it ignores us." He moved that all Arabs resign from Legco and other bodies. The motion was carried unanimously, amid cheers.

The Arabs' pride had been aroused and they would not retreat. The meeting approved of the leaders' refusal to accept an offer from Rankine. He had proposed to drop the charges if their lawyer apologized in court, admitting the charges to be true.

After the meeting the three Arab Legco members sent in their resignations. About 30 Arabs who had been serving on boards and committees did the same.



The trial opened June 8 before Magistrate W. M. MacKenzie. There are no jury trials in Zanzibar. It was an odd collection of defendants. Some were quite wealthy and all either owned land or belonged to land-owning families. One was a member of Zanzibar's royal family and another was a retired policeman. The defendants were:

---Sheikh Abdulla Suleiman el Harthi, the 70-year-old, white-bearded president of the Arab Association. He was born in Oman, the southern Arabian Sultanate that has close links with Zanzibar. He is a wealthy shamba owner.

---Seyyid Seif bin Hamoud Feisal, vice-president. He is in his 30s and is a member of the royal family. Born and educated in Oman, he speaks little English. He owns and edits another nationalist weekly.

---Hamoud bin Salim el Ruwehy, treasurer. He is in his 30s and is a successful copra exporter. He also owns some shambas. He was born in Zanzibar.

---Abdulla Hamoud el Harthi, manager and treasurer of Al Falaq. Born in Zanzibar, he is in his 40s and is a shamba owner.

---Ali Muhsin.

---Ahmed Seif el Kharusi, a former schoolteacher, now a taxi and shamba owner and co-proprietor, with Ali Muhsin, of Mwongozi. He is in his 40s, dresses in fancy sport shirts and carries a formidable walking stick wherever he goes. He was born in Zanzibar.

---Amour Zahor el Ismaili, a retired Chief Inspector of the Zanzibar Police. Born in Zanzibar, he is in his early 50s and owns a large shamba.

---Salim Ahmed el Busaidi, a dapper man in his 30s. Born in Mombasa, he looks after his mother's plantations.

---Lamky, the editor. A big, husky youth of 25, Lamky was born in Zanzibar. At the age of 10 he was sent to Egypt for schooling and spent 10 years there. In 1949 he was sentenced to two years in prison for revolutionary activities. It is said that he had fallen in with some Egyptian Communists. He bears scars on his back from prison floggings. On the expiration of his sentence, he was sent back to Zanzibar and he became editor of Al Falaq last year over Sheikh Abdulla's vigorous protest. Lamky also is secretary of the Arab Association. Both positions formerly were paid jobs, but he volunteered to do them free. His family are wealthy landowners. A sister of his is studying at the American University in Cairo and has been making Kiswahili broadcasts, beamed to East Africa, over the government radio. Kenya officials regard the early broadcasts as having a pro-Mau Mau tone. Since the Suez settlement, the broadcasts have toned down. Lamky was denied a visa to enter Kenya for an Arab conference some months ago.

Charges against still another committee member were dropped when he apologized in writing. He is a retired schoolteacher and the others say he was fearful of his pension.

The Crown's case for sedition rested on four passages gleaned from Al Falaq. One was the jehad poem. Another, copied from an issue of



the Africa Newsletter, read as follows:

"Mr. Lyttelton, whose policies and actions have resulted to in the two years he has been at the Colonial Office, in the mass killing of Nigerians, Gold Coasters, Malaysians and other colonial people, and in the destruction of elementary civil rights of millions, had the effrontery to say that he was carrying on a grim and stern task unflinchingly in order to continue the life and liberty of ordinary men and women in the colonial territories."

The other two items alleged to be seditious were written by Lamky and were as follows:

"We should not, however, pay much attention to the rumors we hear about of the superiority of the white people in their special mission of promoting civilization to the backward nations to help them reproduce wealth from their agricultural and metal resources; for these rumours cannot face the bitter facts which portray to us the truth or the material gem of Imperialism---for they are at once destroyed by the well known facts about the subjecting, domineering not to say tyrannizing methods on which all Imperialists---without one exception---depend."

"Freedom to the Kenya Government means frustration and threatening. Freedom in Kenya is obviously the freedom of the Government to revenge, to confiscate others' freedom, to check the freedom of thought and freedom of the press---aye, freedom in Kenya tends to kill the very gem of freedom. Democracy is a hollow word---it has neither economical history nor social establishment; it is, in fact, a word without any principle. This is the system of government in that democratic Kenya! This is the system that embodies the whole meaning of authority and slavery. It is the government that overrides the rights of, and overrules the people, to suit its own high handed policy."

The prosecution dwelt at length on the matter of Communism. At one point, Sheikh Abdulla, was asked if he is a Communist. He is perhaps the most respected man, next to the Sultan, in Zanzibar. "You know me better than that," Sheikh Abdulla replied. The prosecutor did not press the question.

Lamky denied association with or sympathy for the Reds. He clammed up when questioned. He said he had not noticed until it was pointed out to him by the authorities that the Africa Newsletter bears the notation, "Published by the Africa Committee of the Communist Party." Questioned as to the basis for his caustic remarks on democracy, he said he had never heard of democracy. He said he did not approve of colonialism, but that he knew nothing about the Gold Coast, Nigeria and Kenya. He said he did not know whether it was a fact that "Mr. Lyttelton's policies and actions had resulted in the mass killing of Nigerians, Gold Coasters, Malaysians and other colonial people." He did not care whether it was true or not, he said. He maintained that a person responsible for mass killings would not be the object of hatred and contempt.

Sedition is defined by Zanzibar law as, among other things, anything

that brings the government into "hatred or contempt," or which raises "discontent or disaffection."

In closing, the Attorney General said the Arabs liked to regard themselves as being the leading community of Zanzibar and that a severe punishment should be inflicted as a deterrent to others. The defense lawyer, a European from Dar es Salaam, retorted that he had not realized until the last five minutes that the case was against the whole Arab community.

The magistrate handed down his judgment on June 19, finding all nine guilty. He rejected the defense claim that while the articles were strongly critical, they would not incite hatred or contempt. He also rejected the assertion that if anyone were guilty, it would be Lamky alone. The others, as owners and publishers, were also responsible, he said.

Lamky was fined a total of Shs. 11,100 (\$1,554) and ordered to enter into a peace bond for Shs. 5,000 (\$700). The alternative was 3 years and 7 months in prison. The association paid the fine. The others were required to enter into peace bonds of Shs. 5,000 each. The Al Falag press was confiscated and publication of the newspaper was banned for one year. The magistrate said that the defendants other than Lamky "have been unfortunate in their choice of editor. Ahmed Mohamed Nassor Lamky despite of what he has said in court is in my opinion a Communist and an ardent supporter of the Communistic doctrines which are causing war and tyranny amongst the civilized nations of the world today and Zanzibar is a civilized country. Zanzibar was a name on the map of the world long before the hinterland of Africa was even discovered." The Arabs said they would appeal the convictions.

A delegation led by Sheikh Abdulla was quickly dispatched to Pemba, where two-thirds of the Protectorate's 44,000 Arabs live. Mass meetings were held, attended by a number of Africans. Speakers said that the government had abrogated the right of free speech. Arabs must unite, the speakers said. Umoja ni nguvu (Unity is strength) became the slogan of the day. No specific political plans were put forward, though.

Two mass meetings were held later in Zanzibar at which umoja ni nguvu was again proclaimed. The leaders aired their demands in public for the first time, though in general terms. They declared that the system of nominating members to Legco had outlived itself. The presence of the Arab members was a waste of time, anyway, because government never listened to them, the speakers said. They demanded that elections be introduced, but did not specify whether they wanted them on common role or communal lines.

Among some Arabs there has been a fear that the common role would lead to African domination. But this fear seems to be lessening. Most if not all of the leading Arabs as well as many of the average people are backing the idea of common role elections for all subjects of the Sultan. They have realized that unity would have to precede self-government, and the sedition trial and the other disputes with the government had whetted their desire to rule themselves.



The July 23 Demonstration

On July 23, Legco met for the first time without the Arabs. The association organized a demonstration for that day. Men carried banners in the town proclaiming in English, Kiswahili and Arabic: "We want the vote" "No taxation without representation" "We want the Four Freedoms" and "Unity, fraternity, liberty and long live the Sultan." Some of the banner-carriers were Africans, who had volunteered.

That day was the Day of National Liberation in Egypt. In Zanzibar, Rankine had already left for a new post, in Nigeria. The resignation of Lyttelton as Colonial Secretary had just been announced. The Zanzibari, like other colonials, were speculating intently on what his successor, Alan Lennox-Boyd, would be like. Mwongozi hinted darkly that some divine force was at work in the departures of Rankine and Lyttelton.

It is apparent that present Arab feelings go much deeper than just the sedition case. The case served to provide them with an outlet for long-simmering nationalist feelings. The penalties, after all, were of a token nature. Arab discontent really goes back to 1890 when the British, faced with growing German power in Tanganyika and anxious to stamp out slavery and the slave trade at its source, forced a reluctant Sultan to agree to British Protection. Historian L. W. Hollingsworth says: "He (the Sultan) had but the vaguest notion of the real implications of protection to himself and his subjects, apart from the certainty that Britain would demand further restrictions on slavery and the slave trade."\*

\* Hollingsworth, "Zanzibar Under The Foreign Office 1890-1913," London, 1953.

Zanzibar presents a different situation from that of the mainland. There the Africans, prior to the advent of the British, were living in a totally primitive state. Zanzibar was no modern country but it did have a culture and it was enjoying prosperity. Many of the present buildings were put up long before the British arrived. Today's Arab always remembers that Zanzibar once was ruled, though sometimes despotically, by an Arab Sultan. He recalls, too, the past glory of the Arab race and how the Arabs once held an Empire that stretched from Spain to the gates of China. There was enlightenment and learning in that Arab Empire at a time when Europe remained gripped in the ignorance and barbarism of the Dark Ages. One Sultan, after hearing an English explorer tell of an expedition to the frigid Antarctic wastes, remarked caustically: "And does it, too enjoy British Protection?"

As elsewhere in the world, British rule brought considerable benefits to the local people. For the slaves, it meant freedom. For the Arabs, it meant education and other aspects of western civilization. For all, it meant the destruction of a system of absolute rule and the preparation for modern, democratic self-government. The nationalist quarrels over the timing of the latter, but not with the idea. It is to the credit of the British that they create this very class of men most bent on ending British rule. Men who have studied abroad, often at least partly at the expense of the British taxpayer, and who become as English in many respects as their English rulers, can be the most avid nationalists. Yet British colonial governments continue to send young men abroad for study.

The nationalists in Zanzibar seem to be indifferent to Communism. They neither oppose it strongly nor appear to be in favor of it. Lamky and a few others might be exceptions, but on the whole Communism seems to be no issue in Zanzibar.

The attitude of the Arabs toward the Al Falag case, in view of the undisputed fact that Communist propaganda had been published, may seem a bit puzzling. But the Arabs are a proud people. To them the case meant something else: a hostile move by their alien rulers. To at least most of them, neither the word Communism nor Communist ideas mean anything. An Al Falag article that emanated from Vegetarian Party headquarters would have drawn no more response as such. But government, in their view, had thrown down the gauntlet. They could not retreat.

Privately some Arab leaders are distressed about Lamky and his ideas. He may or may not be an actual Communist, but he certainly is what would be called "pink" in the United States. Some Arabs would like to see him removed as secretary of the Arab Association after the whole affair is settled. But to do so now, they feel, would be a sign of weakness. Lamky may stay, though, because he is a hard worker and because of his influential family connections.

The remarks published by Lamky about Lyttelton and Kenya are, at least in my opinion, completely untrue and unfair. Malaya and West Africa are off my beat, but I would think the same could be said about the references to those places. The question of whether a government should regard such remarks as seditious involves one in all sorts of abstract points. In democratic, self-governing countries irresponsible newspaper rumblings are usually ignored by the authorities. In the colonies they are not. Colonial rulers argue that their charges have not yet developed enough political maturity to be able to shrug off inflammatory writings. And the ruled reply that this is an insult to their intelligence and "another example of the white superiority complex."

In Zanzibar, the sedition statute is rather all-inclusive and the judge is given considerable latitude.

Free speech has become the battle cry in Zanzibar, yet there are some Arabs who fail to understand what it really means. Several have been saying that a local Indian paper should be prosecuted under another section of the same sedition law---one forbidding the incitement of ill-will between various races---for publishing an article that they regard as anti-Arab.

Lamky maintains that he does not know who sent him the Africa Newsletter or the propaganda piece from Hungary. They just came in the mail, he says. Ali Muhsin says that Mwongozi, too, has been receiving unsolicited publications, including those from Communists. The Communists have been making an effort to influence nationalists in Africa and it is possible they got the names of Al Falag and Mwongozi from the Colonial Office's biennial report for the Protectorate, which lists all local publications. "What are we to do if these things show up in the mail?" says Ali Muhsin. "Does that automatically make us guilty of possessing seditious matter?"

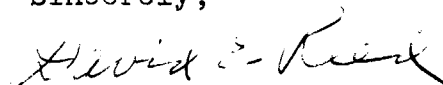
Regardless of what the outside observer might think of the Africa Newsletter's remarks on colonialism, those remarks nevertheless seem to meet with general approval among many of the Arabs. The reason is that they are anti-colonial. During the last war there was some sympathy among the Zanzibar Arabs for the Germans---because the Germans were fighting the British. But neither did that make the Arabs Nazis.

While the Arab nationalists are likely to agree in general terms with what the Reds say about colonialism, it is highly unlikely that any more than just a few would ever sympathize with the other aspects of Communist preachings. The Arabs, first of all, are the land-owning aristocracy of the islands and many are quite wealthy. Talk of redistributing the wealth would not appeal to them. Then, too, they are deeply religious and the atheistic side of Communism is abhorrent to them.

An article published in Mwongozi last February had this to say about the ideal Communist society: "Going through the pages of the gospel of this religion, one comes across some terrifying prophecies similar to those of St. John. They predict the collapse of the structure of this world and the rise of another based on the workers; the workers alone, which means a structure of bodies without heads... what a dream of horror."

The only noticeable Red Flag that flies in Zanzibar is the one atop the Sultan's palace. The solid red banner has always been the national emblem of Zanzibar and it has no political significance. Landowners perhaps cannot be Communists but they can be nationalists and very vigorous ones at that. As long as nationalist unrest continues in the islands, the anti-colonial side of Communism, along with anti-colonial talk from any other source, will be received with sympathy.

Sincerely,



David E. Reed