

Goodness, safety and peace

By **DAVID NICKOL MBE**

FORMER DISTRICT COMMISSIONER

Nyerere instilled into everybody the peace and warmth of friendship that endeared him to all

Mwalimu Nyerere was without doubt the best Leader in all the ex-colonial African countries – the most respected by Africans and by people in Europe and America, because of his moral character, his charisma and his humility. Not for him the be-medalled uniform, the shining car and motor cycle outriders – he chose a humble style for himself and dressed more like Chairman Mao than the blustering dictators elsewhere in Africa.

He created a united nation out of about 200 tribes and instilled into everybody the peace and warmth of friendship that endeared him to all. His only grave mistake, and he was man enough to admit it, was to come under the spell of Chinese ideology and establish, partly by force, collective farms; the Ujamaa villages.

In his first few months as President, he also abolished the hereditary chiefs, the natural leaders of the people throughout the country, and through whom the country had been governed for some 40 years. Although this was damaging it is entirely understandable in that he had to establish his authority and the Chiefs posed a threat.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s he conducted a campaign pressing the Colonial Government to surrender power by stages with full independence as the ultimate goal. In all of this he was firm but patient and if things did not move fast enough for him and for his less patient colleagues, he brandished the threat of Positive Action.

The last two Colonial Governors, Sir Edward Twining and Sir Richard Turnbull, reacted to this with equal patience; greeting measures of self-rule, step by step, just keeping ahead of the game all the time. As far as I know there was never rudeness or bad temper, each side acting as gentlemen for indeed, that is what they were.

At this time I was District Commissioner in Handeni, then Kisarawe and we felt the pressure which was not always comfortable. The political surge towards independence disturbed the tranquillity of the surface of our pond and we received a considerable stream of secret memoranda warning us of the dangers ahead. But we had to keep the flag flying and maintain governance and law and order.

At Handeni I received a secret telegram asking how many running yards of barbed wire I needed to enclose safely the police lines. Worse still, an arrest list with

orders to arrest some 20 potential trouble makers if the balloon went up. I pointed out to my boss, Provincial Commissioner Tanga, that many of those named were my friends on whom I relied to run the ever more and more democratic process of local government and that to arrest them would certainly lead to trouble.

PC Tanga was a man of the old school whose benign attitude was to trust his District Commissioners' judgment and to back them fully. So I put the arrest list away in my safe. As for barbed wire to enclose 10 Police Askari, there were some 4,000 muzzle loading muskets licensed by us and we supplied the gunpowder and I knew they were on my side. Forty-four years later my wife and I entertained the now elderly Paramount Chief of the Wazigua in Dar es Salaam and he told us there were a further 4,000 muzzle loading muskets unlicensed about which I knew nothing making a formidable force of 8,000 armed men. He said: "Yes. They probably were on your side!"

At Kisarawe when things were hotting up, I had to prosecute, convict and send to prison two activists, one of whom had so damaged the trade of a bus owner who had given evidence leading to the conviction of an elephant ivory poacher, that his bus went off the road altogether. The other was a clerk in TATO, the commercial arm of TANU, who defrauded hundreds of small-holders of their rightful payments for crops of maize and cotton. Both appealed against conviction and sentence giving me three weeks of mild anxiety whilst the High Court deliberated over the appeals. Both appeals were lost and in one case the High Court called on the appellant to show good cause why the sentence should not be enhanced.

When Independence was granted it must be said that both Sir Richard Turnbull and Nyerere had managed the last few months of Colonial rule with enormous skill. There had been no violence at all. The only casualty was a man who had a bit too much to drink in Arusha and fell off his bicycle.

Whenever we are in Tanzania we make a point of saluting the Mwenge in Mnazi Moja Dar es Salaam and of course the war memorial. If we are there on the 7th of July we mark and honour Saba Saba Day, which is the date when TANU was founded.

So much of the goodness, the safety, the peace and the niceness of the people of Tanzania goes back to this one great man, Julius Nyerere, Mwalimu as he was called. **F**