

# **CLASS STRUGGLES IN TANZANIA**

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition with New  
Introduction**

**by**

**Prof. Issa G. Shivji**

**NOT FOR SALE**

## Preface

**Class Struggles in Tanzania** was originally conceived as an answer to the various critics of my earlier paper, "*The Silent Class Struggle*". Despite its title this did not actually deal with class struggle: rather it concentrated on the analysis of economic structures. Since many of the criticisms revolved around the questions of class relations and the identification of specific contradictions in Tanzania society, it would have been futile for me to answer the critics point by point. Instead, I have tried to give an outline sketch of the class struggles in Tanzania since independence. Some of the arguments of the previous paper have been integrated in the Appendix, which also briefly analyses the economy and its integration in the world capitalist system.

The present work is in no way a comprehensive history of class struggles. My aim has been simply to indicate the course of these struggles and hope that further historical research will fill in the many gaps that no doubt exists in the present work.

To analyse the class struggle is very much a *political* task and part of the struggle itself. No doubt therefore this work is likely to tread on the toes of many vested interests, not least the liberal academics who would only want to see 'celebration' of the so-called Tanzanian 'experiment'. Scientific historical analysis is neither to celebrate nor to criticize but to explain. Explanation implies nothing about an author's preference for this or that course of history. In any case, this would be irrelevant; for history cannot be remade, it can only be interpreted and explained.

It is important to emphasize this point, especially in an intellectual climate where celebration and occasional criticism, rather than *consistent explanation*, are the order of the day. Emphasizing explanation does not mean that the author is pleading 'neutrality' as regards the method of analysis or philosophy of history. Nor should emphasis on

explanation mean mere 'fascination with ideas': for that is the task of an 'intellect worker or a clown, not of a committed intellectual. A committed intellectual explains and interprets the past to understand and demystify the present with a view to changing it for a rational and human future. As Marx said: The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point, however, is to *change* it.'

Once again let me thank all those comrades who helped with this work in one way or another: some deciphered my scribble and turned it into a legible form; others read the manuscript and made valuable suggestions.

## PART I

# **The Theory of Class Struggle and its Applicability to Africa**

*Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.*

LENIN



## Chapter 1

# The Concept of Class and the Theory of Class Struggle (Some Aspects)

### 1.1 Introductory Remarks

The Marxist theory of class struggle is perhaps one of the theories least discussed and most distorted by bourgeois academic scholarship. This is understandable. For class struggle is basically about state power, a fact rightly considered subversive and dangerous by the ruling classes and embarrassing by 'objective' academics.

The Marxist concept of class on the other hand has in the last few decades received enormous attention in Western social science, albeit in a typically obscurantist fashion. The political sting has been cleverly removed by reducing the concept to a static, quantitative, and undialectical category. Thus many volumes have been written on social classes and social stratification but a cursory glance is enough to show that they are the work of statisticians rather than social scientists. The mysticism surrounding figures and quantities has claimed victims even among some radical academics.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is not meant to be a criticism of the use of figures and quantities as such but one must always distinguish empiricism as a philosophical outlook which lies at the base of Western sociology from the use of empirical data illuminated by a rigorous social theory.

Nevertheless, there has been progress since the days when even the concept of social class was a taboo. Then, openly against the Marxist concept of class, was pitted the concept of elite. Now that the concept of elite<sup>2</sup> is increasingly losing its previous vigour as an analytical tool in Western Countries, it has been exported to the underdeveloped scholarship of the underdeveloped world – especially Africa.

The theories that reign in academic circles are of course not simply of academic interest. The alleged non-existence of classes and class struggles in Africa and the 'elite' substitute therefore serve perfectly the interests of the ruling classes both national and international. The propagation of the non-existence of classes and its theoretical rationalization in the elite theories attempt to exclude by definition the Marxist theoretical tools and therefore the possibility of genuine revolutionary movements guided by scientific methodology. This, and other similar theories, are a most pliable ideological tool in the hands of the unscrupulous African leaders enabling them to harp on the so-called harmonious development and the social homogeneity of the African population. The expounding of the revolutionary ideology as applied to concrete conditions in Africa is at once condemned as un-African; against the harmonious development of African Personality; foreign ideology advocating conflict and hatred between man and man, and so on.

Leaving aside the typical distortions of the Marxist concepts of class and class struggle by bourgeois scholars, there are genuine theoretical and ideological problems surrounding these concepts. It must be admitted that even among Marxists there is anything but clarity about them, especially in their application to the concrete conditions in Africa. Frequently the discussion in this area degenerates into repeating and asserting the commonplaces or taking dogmatic political positions.

In the tradition of Marxist thought and methodology these concepts must be submitted to vigorous scientific inquiry; a creative analysis and application is necessary if Marxism –Leninism is to continue to serve the oppressed classes. Recent events with great historical significance like the debate between the Soviet Union and China, the Cultural Revolution, and the upsurge of a variety of 'socialisms' in Africa and Latin America, have forced Marxists to begin to look at Marxism afresh with some interesting results. This task, however, cannot be left to the academic Marxists alone: potential revolutionaries must themselves

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<sup>2</sup> See *infra* p. 24 for the discussion of the concept of 'elite'.

fully appreciate the theoretical problems involved because they have immediate significance and relevance for guiding *revolutionary practice*. In this part I shall try to discuss briefly the concept of class and the theory of class struggle before applying them concretely to the Tanzanian situation.

## 1.2 The Formal Definition

The concepts of class and class struggle are probably the most elusive in Marx's writings. Though there have been subsequent interpretations and re-interpretations of his writings, yet academic scholarship remains unsatisfied as to the definition of these terms. Notwithstanding the lack of formal definitions, clear-minded Marxists have not found it difficult to apply the concepts to varied situations and come up with useful results, both theoretical and practical. In fact, it will be argued later that the lack of formal definitions and the relative successes of the Marxist method of historical materialism are neither inconsistent nor accidental: They are built-in to the philosophical back-bone of that world outlook. For the moment, however, let us briefly look at the quotation which comes closest to a formal definition of class.

\*In any case, recent debates among metropolitan academic Marxists, unlike those of Lenin's time, have often been among those not involved in revolutionary practice and, therefore, of limited value to revolutionaries.

In Volume III of *Capital*, Marx just begins the discussion of classes before the manuscript breaks off. He says:

The owners merely of labour power, owners of capital and land-owners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground-rent, in other words wage labourers, capitalists and land-owners constitute the three big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production.<sup>3</sup>

This passage is popularly considered to be Marx's definition of class by many Marxists and non-Marxists. That is to say categorization of social groups according to the ownership of the means of production. In itself the idea of the ownership of the means of production needs some analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> *Capital* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), Vol. III, pp. 863-4. Clearly, he does not appear to be satisfied with this definition for in the subsequent passages he raises doubts.



In the narrower sense, ownership may be looked upon as a *juridical* concept fixed in law and defining the relation of man to thing (man-thing). It is usually a variant of the Roman law concept of ownership meaning the right to 'use, abuse and dispose of property'.<sup>4</sup>

Law is essentially a form which becomes most developed in the society dominated by the production and distribution of commodities, i.e. the capitalist society. Law reflects, as at the same time it facilitates, the commodity exchange-relations and entrenches particular property-relations.

It is true that in capitalist societies, the important aspect of the capitalist social-relations of production is expressed in the *juridical* property-relations. But these *juridical property-relations* should not be confused with the social-relations of production. Rather the very property-relations (i.e. legal-relations) themselves have to be analysed to reveal the real *substance*, that is, the social relations of production. Of course, the *form* and *substance* are not entirely independent of each other, there is a dialectical inter-relationship between them. What needs to be done therefore is to dissect the form so as to lay bare the substantive social relations rather than confuse the form and substance as being one. Thus, for instance, the state-ownership of the means of production, which is essentially a property-relation, does not in itself tell us whether that society has established the *socialist social*-relations of production. It does not even reveal the trends of a transitional – i.e. from capitalist to socialist-society. This task can be done scientifically only by and analysis of the class relations which are hidden behind certain legal relations. (For law, as part of bourgeois ideology, partially hides the real relations). It is this methodology of Marx which makes the analysis dynamic and enables it to discern the trends and tendencies of a phenomenon. Short of that the method would tend to be legalistic and static; it would be robbed of its political and historical dimensions. That would not be Marxist at all.

It is suggested that even where Marx uses the phrase 'ownership' it is meant to convey the idea of the relationship of man to man (man-man), a social relation, and not merely man to object. This is clear from Marx's political and historical writings on class struggles. In what he called the 'guiding principle' of his studies, Marx is categorical on this issue:

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<sup>4</sup> With the development of bourgeois society and various changes in that mode of production-welfarism, state intervention, etc. – even In bourgeois law the right of ownership is not as unlimited as the Roman phrase might suggest.

In the *social* production of their existence men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely *relations of production* ~~appropriate~~ to a given stage in development of their material sources of production.<sup>5</sup> [Emphasis added.]

**Marx** is clearly emphasizing the *social* production process and the social relations of production. While accepting this in theory, in its application many writers have tended to equate the relations of production with the ownership of the means of production. If ownership as a concept is to be consistent with other Marxist concepts it must include (whatever it means besides) the control and appropriation of the surplus by one social group from another. How, under what conditions, in what historically determined structures, such appropriation takes place, decide the important characteristics of a social formation; the '*form*' and '*manner of disposal*'<sup>6</sup> of the surplus determine the essentials of an economic system. Therefore, ownership as a relation to the means of production<sup>7</sup> enables the appropriation of surplus and that is the essential meaning of ownership as used by Marx. For Marx, while it may or may not include juridical ownership, it must definitely include appropriation of the surplus. Appropriation of the surplus itself expresses man-to-man social relations and not man-to-thing or juridical relations. 'The stages of development in the division of labour are just so many different forms of ownership, i.e. the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material instrument and product of labour'<sup>8</sup>

It may be concluded from the above discussion that the concept of class cannot be reduced to the question of the ownership of the means of production if ownership is considered in its narrower juridical sense. That ownership itself in the Marxist terminology is a much wider concept and essentially relates to social (class) relation. This brings us to the discussion of 'social relations' and further investigation into the concept of class.

<sup>5</sup> Preface to A contribution to the critique of political economy (London; Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> These phrases are taken from Shigetetsu Tsuru, ed., *Has capitalism change?* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1961), p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> It is significant that Lenin in his definition of class (see below page 19) uses the phrase 'relation' rather than 'ownership'.

<sup>8</sup> Marx, *The German ideology in Marx and Engels, Selected works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), Vol. I, p. 21.

### 1.3 Class and Class Struggle as Dialectical Concepts

To reduce the concept of class simply to the question of the ownership or the non-ownership of means of production excludes its integral limb, the concept of class struggle. One need hardly recall that the philosophical back-bone of the Marxist method is dialectical materialism and its analytical categories themselves fully reflect this philosophy. Thus, there cannot be an exploited class (for instance) without its opposite nor can motion of development be explained but in terms of contradiction between the opposites. A class society therefore by definition includes struggle of the opposites in whatever forms and, however, 'impure' this may be. Built-in to the concept of class is the inseparable idea of the *political* struggle of classes. 'The separate individuals form a class only in so far as they have to carry on a common battle against another class otherwise, they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors'<sup>9</sup>. Thus social class as a category probably remains a theoretical concept and becomes actual and complete only in the political struggle, i.e. when it becomes a class for itself.

The combination of capital has created for this mass (workers) a common situation, common interest. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have noted only a few phases this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interest. But the struggle of class against class is political struggle.<sup>10</sup>

And a political struggle is waged against the instruments of political power of one class over another. Hence political relations are not merely an aspect of class relations but the core of it. Our use of the term social relations above covers this important political relation. In fact, in a class analysis political relations should be built into the class relations for the two are inseparable. But when one talks about political relations one brings in the question of state and the state apparatus as the seat of political power and class domination. 'Since the power of the ruling class is always concentrated in the organization of the state, the opposed class must aim directly against the mechanism of the state. Every class struggle is thus a *political struggle* which in its objectives aims at the abolition of the existing social order and at the establishment of a new social system'<sup>11</sup>. To separate the question of state power from

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>10</sup> Marx, *The power of philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis L. Lorwin, 'Class Struggle' in *Encyclopedia of the social sciences*. Quoted in O. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), p. 55 (emphasis in the original).

that of class struggle is most misleading. Lenin's profound observation that 'politics is a concentrated expression of economics'<sup>12</sup> conveys the important fact that the various class contradictions find their most mature and *condensed* expression in the struggle for state power. As Marx observed: 'the political state represents the table of contents of man's practical conflicts. Thus, the political state, within the limits of its form, expresses *sub specie rei publicae* (from the political standpoint) all the social conflicts, needs and interests'<sup>13</sup>.

Oliver Cox<sup>14</sup> goes so far as to separate completely the concept of social class from that of political class. This is definitely inaccurate. But otherwise, his making of the political struggle an integral part of the definition of class is most important and must be grasped thoroughly.

While class struggle constitutes the motive force in history, it is not always clear and pure as *class* struggle and may take varied forms under different concrete conditions. In non-revolutionary situations much of the class struggle is latent and even unidentifiable as such at any particular moment. ~~Taking~~ about class struggle at such times is really registering the fact of class struggle *ex-post facto*. The development of classes and class struggle can only be talked about tendentially, in terms of historical trends. In fact, classes hardly become fully *class* conscious except in situations of intense political struggle. Class consciousness does not ~~full~~ dawn upon individuals until they are locked in political battles. It is not surprising to find bourgeois critics of Marx always pointing to the proletariat's lack of class consciousness as an incontrovertible proof of the falsity of his theory. Actually, such conclusions are only too easy to arrive at by interviewing a few hundred workers in the non-revolutionary situations and by computing unfavourable answers as evidence that workers are not class conscious. But this hardly proves anything. From what we have said above it can be readily appreciated that the conclusion is derived from a wrong premise through a wrong method. On the other hand, many writers have attested to the fact that in all historical revolutionary situations, contending classes have shown ~~except-tionally~~ high-class solidarity and class consciousness<sup>15</sup>. Political

<sup>12</sup> 'Once again on the trade unions, the current situation and the mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin', in Lenin, *Selected works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), Vol. III, p. 534.

cf. also Mao's call to put 'politics in command', albeit in a different context.

<sup>13</sup> Cited by Lenin in 'What the "friends of the people are" and how they fight social-democrats', *Collected works* (Moscow: Progress Publisher), Vol. I, p. 162n.

<sup>14</sup> *Class, Caste and Race*, op. cit., Ch. 10 on 'The political class'.

<sup>15</sup> See for instance the classic by John Reed, ~~ten~~ *days that shook the world* (London: Penguin Books, 1966).

struggle, propaganda, and the conscious organization of the potential classes for class struggle are part of the very process of the development of classes: '...every movement in which the working class comes out as a *class* against the ruling classes and tries to coerce them by pressure from without is a political movement. For instance, the attempt in a particular factory or even in a particular trade to force a shorter working day out of individual capitalists by strikes, etc. is a purely economic movement. On the other hand the movement to force through an eight-hour, etc. law, is a political movement'<sup>16</sup>. (Marx)

Thus, the concepts of both class and class struggle are much more complex than has been imagined. They are neither merely sociological nor merely economic but integrated in them are both the Marxist methodology of dialectics and its political philosophy. It is only the complex and varied nature of these concepts that can explain the most perceptive way in which Marx applied them in analyzing practical situations like those in France. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* is in this sense, a classic of political writing. The use of the concepts of class and class struggle in that work would not fit any of the formal definitions of class propounded by many writers. Given the nature of the concept it is probably not amenable to formal definition at all. What is important for any revolutionary who wants to apply Marxism is Marx's methodology. It is this that needs to be fully grasped.

The dogmatic use of Marxist concepts versus the creative application of the Marxist methodology and further re-appraisal of Marx became most focused in the China-USSR debate of the 1960s and the Chinese Culture Revolution in the same decade. Deeper analysis of the Cultural Revolution is needed but such discussion as there has been has further enriched the Marxist theoretical apparatus. This further elucidation, in my opinion is extremely promising if creatively applied to the 'third world'.

While we have touched on some theoretical points rather abstractly, it may be worthwhile here to discuss some of those which the Chinese Cultural Revolution sharply brought into focus.

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<sup>16</sup> Marx's letter to F. Bolte, 1871 in Marx & Engels, *selected correspondence* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), pp. 270-1.

## 1.4 Some Theoretical Lessons of the Cultural Revolution

~~Social~~ society covers a considerably long historical period. In the historical period of socialism, there are still classes, class contradictions and class struggle, there is the struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road, and there is the danger of capitalist restoration. We must recognize the protracted and complex nature of this struggle. We must heighten our vigilance. We must conduct socialist education. We must correctly understand and handle class contradictions and class struggle, distinguish the contradictions between ourselves and the enemy from those among the people and handle them correctly. Otherwise a socialist country like ours will turn into its opposite and degenerate, and a capitalist restoration will take place. From now on we must remind ourselves of this every year, every month and every day so that we can retain a rather sober understanding of this problem and have a Marxist-Leninist line<sup>17</sup>. (Mao Tse-tung).

The present Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is only the first of its kind. In the future such revolutions must take place..... All Party Members and the population at large must guard against believing...that everything will be fine after one, two, three, or four cultural revolutions. We must pay close attention and we must not relax our vigilance<sup>18</sup>. (Mao Tse-tung).

In their theoretical writings the Chinese insist that the Cultural Revolution was not only, scientifically a Revolution; it was also a class struggle between the capitalist ~~readers~~ and the proletariat. Hitherto, the understanding of many Marxists has been that the climax of the class struggle is reached when the proletariat seizes state power from the bourgeoisie, followed by the period of socialism during which there are only non-antagonistic contradictions among friendly strata and classes. Further, that with the ownership of the means of production being in public hands (in practice meaning state-ownership), the bourgeoisie is overthrown as a class. Hence, the question of class struggle receded to the background. This position went further in its dogmatism in the Soviet Union and the East European countries which, in the process of their economic development, built up rigid state and legal structures

<sup>17</sup> *Important documents on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970).

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in P.M. Sweezy, ~~The transition to Socialism~~, *Monthly Review* (New York), Vol. 23, No. 1, (May 1971), p. 16.

with the attendant shunning of the question and discussion of political power<sup>19</sup>. The question of class struggle then became irrelevant since, in 1936, Stalin declared that there were no classes in the USSR<sup>20</sup>. And in 1962 Khrushchev declared that Soviet society had entered the stage of building communism and that the state had become an 'all people's state'<sup>21</sup>. Now, in the Marxist theory, state is essentially a *class* category. To continue strengthening the state as a powerful apparatus isolated and apparently existing above people (which is the case in the USSR), under the guise of it being the state of the 'whole people' is really to gloss over some real contradictions, even class contradiction, existing in the society.

In any case, what is important for our purposes is that the two historical examples – the Soviet Union and China – may enable us to clarify certain theoretical questions. The important theoretical precepts derived from them, and which we have discussed elaborately may be tentatively summarized as follows.

Class relations are essentially *social* relations with the control of the state by the dominating class being one of the most decisive elements. Therefore 'what is decisive – from the point of view of socialism – is not the mode of "regulation" of the economy, but rather the nature of *class in power*<sup>22</sup>. The institutional set-up of the state apparatus (and other apparatuses: educational, ideological, etc.) and the relation of the state to people becomes decisive. In fact, this is much more so in a situation where state power has been seized from the bourgeoisie by an armed revolution and the private ownership (legal) relations have been changed to state ownership.

The state that is seized by the proletariat and its allies is essentially a bourgeois state. This needs to be smashed. The proletarian state<sup>23</sup> which leads the masses in their further struggle is a different phenomenon both

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<sup>19</sup> I cannot go into the details of the big debate that is raging as regards how to categorize the Soviet Union and the East European countries. It is not necessary for our present purpose which is only to discuss briefly what light the Cultural Revolution throws on the concepts of class and class struggle. But see Bettelheim and Sweezy, *On transition to Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

<sup>20</sup> For the relevant quotation, see I. Lapenna, *State and law: Soviet and Yugoslav theory* (London: Athlone Press, 1964), pp. 37-9. (I do not necessarily agree with Lapenna's interpretations).

<sup>21</sup> See the 1961 Party Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

<sup>22</sup> Bettelheim, 'More on the society of transition', *Monthly Review*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Dec. 1970) p. 11 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>23</sup> Bettelheim has questioned whether this should be called a *state* at all. In any case, it is this 'state' which withers away with the advance of Communism and *not the bourgeois state* which has to be smashed. See Lenin, *State and revolution in Selected works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), Vol. II, p. 298.

conceptually and as a political and institutional entity. The smashing of the bourgeois state apparatus is a continuous political (class) struggle in which the masses themselves are fully involved. It is not the same thing as the changing of ownership (legal) relations which can be done on the morrow of the seizing of state power.

While the debate mentioned above has been mainly with respect to the transition period between capitalism and socialism, it appears to me to have been important in clarifying the question of class relations generally. It is precisely in the period of transition that the apparent identity between juridical property relations (private ownership) and the social class relations (private ~~appropriate~~) is ruptured. The Chinese Cultural Revolution brought this rupture into sharp focus in a concrete way. It is this which has helped to clear the theoretical distortions which had been piled up by revisionist theories on two very important and central aspects of Marxist theory: the question of the *social* relations of production as distinguished from legal property relations; and the centrality of the state in class relations and class struggle. Both these aspects have become crucial in trying to understand two different concrete situations: the period of transition between capitalism and socialism which some of the 'socialist' countries are supposed to be undergoing; and the underdeveloped capitalist countries where state ownership under some variants of 'socialist' ideology have become increasingly dominant. In the former case, the state ownership of the means of production and the importance of the 'political party' have made the political instance most dominant. In the latter case, the embryonic nature of the classes and therefore the importance of the state in buttressing their economic interests, have brought forth the state as a dominant actor on the stage. None of these situations can be understood scientifically without a clear understanding of the Marxist theory of state and class relations.

The current upsurge in the discussion of the theory of state is both a reflection of the concrete situation as well as a most welcome theoretical development. This could not have been possible without a concrete historical event like the Cultural Revolution. This is no place to go into the controversies surrounding the theory of state. Hopefully, the following analysis of the concrete Tanzanian situation, where the central role of the state is in no doubt, will contribute to this important discussion.



At this point it may be useful to discuss the applicability of the Marxist theory to the African situation and try to answer some of the objections raised against it.