



Sir J.K. "Andy" Chande

A Knight in Africa: Journey from Bukene Part 1

By Sir J.K. Chande

On the surface, this is a story about what it's like to pour your life into your inherited family business, and suddenly to be told it has been nationalized, confiscated by the nation you've worked so hard to build.

That's the story line. On a deeper level, it's a deep character study of a profoundly wise and good man, former Academy Board Member Sir **Jayantilal Keshavji Chande**, known to countless friends around the world as Andy. Thanks to the recent action of one of those friends, Queen Elizabeth II (yes, it is true), he is now *Sir Andy*, Knight of the British Empire.



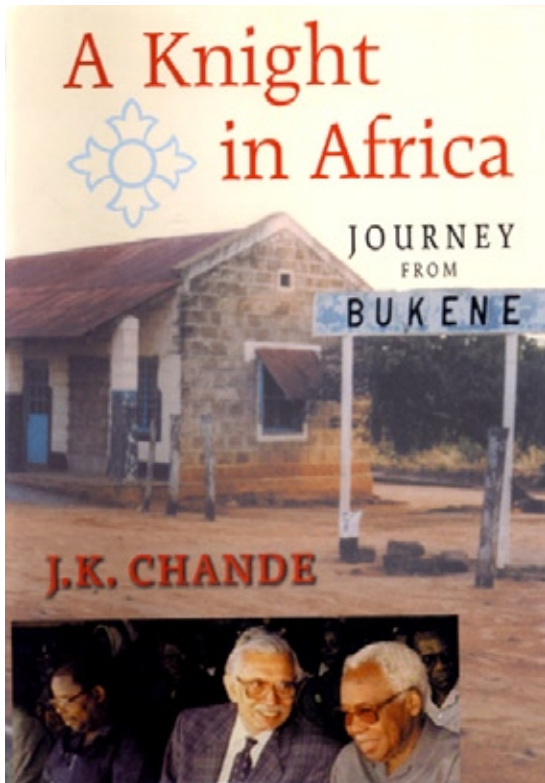
The story begins in a dusty one-road town, Bukene, in north central Tanganyika. Andy lost his beloved mother to malaria at a very early age. He thinks of her daily. The profits from this autobiography, *A Knight in Africa: Journey from Bukene*, will go to a charity that will fight this scourge of the developing world.

Like many Indians on a foreign continent, Andy learned to adapt, survive, and thrive. Born a British subject, he weathered the sudden independence of Tanganyika, its rebirth as Tanzania, its dalliance with African socialism, and its re-emergence in the post-Soviet world.

Through it all he has kept his dignity, his friendships, and his principles intact. In the ensuing 70-odd years since leaving Bukene, he has served as chairman of corporations involved in air travel, tourism, harbors, railways, newspapers, hotels, printing, milling, finance, agricultural exports, shoes, forestry, movies, water, wine, insurance, and more. This also leaves off the many charitable works which have left an indelible mark on his homeland.

The book is remarkably well written — often scintillating — erudite, informal yet well-mannered, engaging, funny, immensely human, wise, and kind. Like its author. It's a primer not just for business and international development, but for all that's best in human character.





A Knight in Africa: Journey to Bukene, may be purchased from Penumbra Press <http://www.penumbraexpress.com/book.php?id=254> or Amazon/Canada <http://www.amazon.ca/exec/obidos/ASIN/1894131894/702-7383411-7704058ASIN/1894131894/702-7383411-7704058>

Prologue: The twenty-four hours following the publication of the Arusha Declaration [*President Julius Nyerere's disastrous overhaul of the economic system, through African socialism — it called for self-reliance in locally administered villages through a villagization program*] saw rumour and counter-rumour swirling around Dar es Salaam. [*Sir Andy's wife*] Jayli and I had previously booked a trip to Mauritius to celebrate her birthday... but the new situation prompted me to cancel these plans. It was fortunate that I did, because in the late afternoon of the ninth of February, barely four days after the Arusha Declaration had been published, I was told to present myself at the office of the Minister for Commerce at eleven o'clock sharp the following morning.

THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONALISATION

I didn't get much sleep during the night of the ninth of February. Despite feeling tired and over-anxious, I went in to work the next morning as usual, to my offices alongside the milling operations on the old Pugu Road. I stood on the carpet in front of my desk, looking out

across the road at the site of the new Tazara Railway Station and wondering what exactly was going to happen next.

I didn't have to wait long before I found out. Just before eleven o'clock I presented myself at the front gates of the Ministry for Commerce and was ushered into an upstairs conference room. There, along one side of the table, were gathered many of my colleagues from the milling industry. Jack Jones, the CEO of the largest of the corporations (and head of the only company bigger than mine), was on hand, as were representatives of the other six milling operations. On the other side of the table were two empty seats. These were soon to be filled by Abdul Rahman Mohamed Babu, the Minister for Commerce, and by an officer from the Ministry for Home Affairs. Meanwhile, just outside the door, a man in plain clothes could be seen loitering, a policeman by the look of him, an intelligence officer almost certainly.

As soon as he came in and sat down, Babu opened the meeting without much ado. He wished us all good morning, in English, and then picked up the paper in front of him. It was a brief prepared statement saying that all the shares in our respective milling companies would henceforth be vested in the Treasury Registrar, effective noon that day. Existing shareholders would be given 'full and fair' compensation. That was it. Babu finished as abruptly as he had started. All of our companies had been nationalised in under a minute.

On our side of the table, we all sat looking ahead in stunned silence. I stared across at Minister Babu, in his open-necked short-sleeved shirt, and saw him looking down at an unopened packet of Sportsman's cigarettes on the table in front of him. Then, to my left, Jack Jones suddenly spoke up.



"Are we allowed to ask questions?" He sounded agitated, if not aggrieved.

"No," said Babu quietly, calmly spreading his hands out on the table. "Could we at least have a copy of the statement?" I asked. "I'll need it, in order to give an accurate briefing to Sir James Simpson, my company's chairman in Uganda."

Babu looked up and across at his colleague from the Ministry for Home Affairs. They stared at each other for a moment, as if transferring their thoughts back and forth, and then Babu nodded silently at his fellow minister. He turned back to us and addressed me in person. "Okay," he said, and the two men on the other side of the table got up and left the room to prepare a set of copies.

This being a government office in Tanzania in 1967, it took much, much longer to prepare the copies than it ever had to draft them and convey their original message. While Babu and his silent partner were out of the room, there was precious little in the way of conversation among the eight of us still sitting motionless on the other side of the table. We were all in shock, and besides, everything anyone could say had been said.

It was shortly before noon when we finally left the Ministry building, all clutching envelopes containing our respective copies of Babu's statement. We all went our separate ways, not stopping even to share commiserations, and I went back to my office, only to find armed uniformed policemen stationed around the building. They hadn't been there when I'd left at half past ten, I was sure of that. Their presence around me now, silent but menacing, was just another sign that the government would be leaving nothing about this particular nationalisation to chance.

The first thing I did when I got back to my office was to speak to my brother Chuni, telling him everything that had happened. Then I put in a telephone call to Sir James Simpson in Kampala. Sir James knew Tanzania well, having worked in the oil industry in Tanganyika prior to independence. But his response to my call that day betrayed a profound lack of understanding of the current situation. When I had recounted to him all that had happened that morning, including the fact that armed guards were around the building, his first words were, "This is outright robbery." He then advised me to go and see the President immediately to find out from him exactly which law gave him the right to summarily nationalise the milling industry. At that point, conscious of the painstaking preparation the government had made, which almost certainly included the tapping of my telephone line, I put the receiver down. But within a couple of minutes the indefatigable Simpson came back on the line, complaining that we had been cut off. I then explained to him that even if there wasn't a law explicitly sanctioning the nationalisation of the milling industry, it wouldn't take long to draft and pass one. I then rang off again and called Jayli's brother Jayant in Uganda.

To their enormous credit, he and his younger brother Manubhai understood the reality of the situation immediately. After all, President Milton Obote of Uganda had for some time been talking of something similar, a Common Man's Charter, which would put all of the means of production under the

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"No."



Merchants of Vision

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ownership of the state. He assured me that the Madhvani family would do whatever they could to assist me. They would send a plane from Uganda, not least to pick up the books of the other subsidiary companies in their group that had their headquarters in my building, such as Kilimanjaro Breweries. He would also talk to Edgar Wadley, a chartered accountant in the UK who had worked for him in the past. If there was anything else that needed doing on the financial side, Edgar would probably know about it.

Jayant rang off and I began to think about clearing up the papers in my office. I rang the buzzer on my desk to summon an office clerk. No one came. I rang again, and when nothing happened, the reality of what was happening to me finally hit home, triggered, as is so often the case, not by some profound event, but by the most mundane. I took a deep breath and stood up, looking out the window once more at the Tazara Station. My brothers and I were now in the same financial boat, up the same creek, if you like, and without a paddle between us, for neither of us had any financial assets other than the capital of the company that the state had just taken from us. Neither of us even had so much as a bank account, accustomed as we were to drawing money from the company accountant as and when we needed it. The company's cashier acted as our banker, receiving our monthly emoluments and making payments on our behalf.

My brother was younger, single, and perhaps more canny than I was. Unlike me, he had refused to take up the post-independence offer of Tanzanian citizenship, opting to remain a British citizen, with a British passport. Now, angered as he was by the government's decision to nationalise us, it didn't take him long to decide on his next course of action. He would leave Tanzania for good.

Having rung Jayli to put her in the picture, I stayed in my office on the old Pugu Road until around seven o'clock, separating out my personal papers from the commercial correspondence of the firms that were headquartered there. All too aware of the armed guards, who were still stationed outside the building, I made no effort to take my personal papers out of the office that evening. Instead I put them in a pile on my desk, alongside the other separated piles of business papers. As I left the building, I was acutely conscious of being watched, of having been formally put under surveillance.

By the time I arrived home that evening, I must admit that I felt close to the breaking-point. My mind was racing, and all manner of foolish speculations tumbled through my head. The one image that kept coming back to me time and again was of my father, and how everything he had achieved in Tanzania on the family's behalf had come to naught. Over forty-seven years, two generations of my family had laboured long and hard, painstakingly building up a business founded on thrift, a sense of fair play toward employees and suppliers alike, and what today would be characterised as a true sense of corporate responsibility. Like so many Indian businessmen, we had ploughed back almost every penny we had earned into the company, always prizing future growth over any thought of personal consumption; our efforts had generated several fortunes, but all of them had gone back into the business, and now those fortunes had been plucked by the state, like so much low-hanging



fruit. I found myself wondering if my belief in the willingness of the Tanzanian state to let me continue my business activities without any form of hindrance had been but a symptom of a wider naiveté on my part. After all, at least my brother had had the prescience to anticipate the possibility of some future disaster, and had hung onto his British passport. I, by contrast, was a fully fledged Tanzanian citizen, with no future means of support.

Such was my state of mind when I got home that evening. The world seemed to be closing in on me. I no longer knew what I was doing or thinking. But Jayli stopped me from losing my grip, from pacing the room, from pushing myself into an unreasoned frenzy. She talked to me, calmly, sensibly, articulately, and as the night wore on her wisdom and resilience and reassurance began to bring me to my senses. As she said at one point during our long conversation that night, what God has seen fit to take away, he will one day give back. I began to recall that life, after all, must have a divine purpose, that I had been through troubles before and surmounted them, and that it was paramount for me to stay calm and avoid rash decisions that I might always regret. Above all, Jayli brought home to me the fact that the education of our children, the most important thing in the world to the both of us, was already guaranteed by the trust fund my father-in-law had set up for this purpose. Everything else in our lives of a lesser priority would come back into perspective over time.

Thus steadied, I went in to work the next morning as usual, arriving at the building at around nine o'clock, again finding the building ringed by armed guards. Inside, in my office, a stranger was standing by my desk, bending over and carefully examining the contents of my waste-paper basket. As I walked in through the door, he quickly stood up straight and stepped forward to introduce himself. He said his name was Hironimus Msefya, and that he had just been appointed by the President as chairman of my company. I asked him whether he wanted to go out and about and meet the staff. "No," he replied. "I wanted to meet you first."

I spent much of the next hour talking to Msefya. It soon transpired that he was a purely political appointee, a former MP with no experience whatsoever of the milling industry. He was an amiable fellow, though, and showed no sign of any personal or, indeed, corporate malice toward me. After he left my office that morning, without ever introducing himself to the rest of the employees, I rarely saw him again around the building.

After he had gone, I continued the job of putting my papers in order. Meanwhile, in Karimjee Hall, the seat of the national parliament, my prediction to Sir James Simpson of the day before was coming to pass. In an emergency session of parliament, a new bill to nationalise the milling industry was introduced on the floor of the House by Commerce Minister Babu. The bill specified, in line with the prepared statement of the previous day, that "full and fair" compensation would be paid to all shareholders of the milling companies. It went on to state that employee emoluments and benefits under state ownership would be "no less favourable" than they had been previously. The bill concluded by calling on owners and management to comply with "the national interest" to ensure a smooth transition from the old regime to the

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a stranger
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by my desk,
bending over
and carefully
examining
the contents
of my waste-
paper basket.



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new. Debate on the bill was perfunctory and it was passed into law that day without a single dissenting vote. When I heard of this on the radio that evening, I couldn't suppress a wry smile. If I had taken up Mwalimu [*first name of Tanzania's then-president, Julius Nyerere*]'s earlier offer of a TANU seat in Tabora, I would have ended up being a party to my own bankruptcy.

On the following day, I was ready to get back to business. I called a meeting of staff, to talk to them about my future plans, but also to hear their concerns. I found the Asians among them still in a state of shock, worrying, as they were, about their own futures in the country. The local African staff were much more sanguine. Indeed, some of the African workers were so thrilled at the news that their government had begun to take control of the means of production that they no longer felt any need to do their daily work.

That afternoon, a Wednesday, I was summoned to State House to see the President. Unlike on previous occasions when I had called on him at home or in the office, Mwalimu was sitting at the table in the Cabinet room, and a young note-taker sat on a chair in the corner. And unusual for a Tanzanian President, Mwalimu didn't get up when I entered the room, instead motioning to me to sit down on one of the chairs near him.

He began the meeting with an apology. He told me how sorry he was that he had had to take the decision to nationalise my company, But I had to understand that the milling industry, in buying grain from the peasants for sale to consumers, played a sizeable role in the provision of the Tanzanian staple diet. Under the terms of the Arusha Declaration, this sector of the economy had to be brought under public ownership. Hence the rapid decision to nationalise.

He then went on to ask me about my future plans. Had I got any, and what were they?

I replied by telling him that in my view he had just made a great mistake. Nationalisation was not the answer to Tanzania's economic problems. History would be the judge as to which one of us was right.

Mwalimu visibly bridled at that. "Never mind history," he snapped. "What do you want to do? If you'd like a post in the government, perhaps in the foreign service, I'm sure that can be quickly arranged."

It was my turn to give a brisk answer. I had no interest in the foreign service (after all, I had recently turned down the offer of a job with UNIDO). "I want to continue to run this company, for as long as I am allowed to."

Mwalimu smiled at this. "*Endelea* [carry on]," he replied. He added that measures would be put in place to ensure that the family's claim for compensation would be settled fully, fairly, and expeditiously.

I went back to my office and found that the workers were still more interested in celebrating nationalisation than getting back to work. I immediately called a meeting of the shop stewards and told them, "Yes, the company now belongs to the state, but that means it belongs to you and me. If the workers cannot work as they did previously, then my position will be made untenable, and I will have to go back and talk to the President, who presumably will



bring someone else in to run the place. I asked the shop stewards to go and talk to the workers and put all this to them. They did, and from then on the workforce knuckled down, and never needed another reminder of their duty.

When I reached the end of another day, again I felt exhausted. Yet although it didn't feel as if we had returned to business as usual, and probably never would again for a long, long time, at least the company was up and running again, the closest approximation to normality there had been all week.

The following day my work was interrupted by yet another summons, this time from Minister for Finance Amir Jamal, a Tanzanian of Indian origin. Amir was a close confidant of the President, with a relationship that had been forged when Amir had helped in the funding of Mwalimu's successful defence team in a trial held in 1958. Amir's summons to me took the form of an invitation to take a late lunch with him at around half past three at his house in Seaview. I told him I had already eaten, but would come along all the same.

Amir's efforts to get the meeting off to a friendly and informal start didn't fare too well. When he said to me that he'd heard I'd been to see the President the previous day, I replied that I'd been summoned to State House, and had not just dropped by for a chat. Sensing my mood, Amir quickly turned to the business at hand. The President had asked him to oversee the rapid settlement of the Chande family compensation claim. A committee for this purpose was going to be appointed, and the Permanent Secretary in the Finance Ministry, Amon Nsekela, would soon be in touch with me to let me have more details of membership and remit and suchlike. I thanked Amir for this and waited for Nsekela's call. What Amir had failed to tell me, however, was that he had personally instructed the chief cashier of Chande Industries Ltd. to refuse to hand over any more money to me (or to my brother) until further notice. Similar instructions had gone out to the cashiers of all the other nationalised milling companies.

It was no surprise to me that the committee to oversee the "rapid settlement" of my family's claims was anything but rapidly appointed. Eventually, after a delay of several weeks, the Deputy Secretary to the Treasury was appointed as chairman, with a representative each from the ministries for industries and Finance added to the ranks. The last member to be appointed was Steen Hansen, a Danish accountant who had been seconded to the Tanzanian government by the government in Copenhagen as an adviser to the Treasury, and who later was founding CEO of the Tanzania Audit Corporation. This was hardly good news to me, given Hansen's growing reputation for his doctrinaire, almost punitive approach to the compensation issue. In the meantime, the cashier's instructions not to give me any money had been faithfully obeyed, which meant that neither my brother nor I had any money at all to pay for the daily costs of living.

Friends, especially Europeans and Africans, rallied round us. Many of my Asian friends stayed away at first, perhaps nervous of "guilt" by association. But the efforts of friends could not keep the financial wolves from the door. Then Jayli's family came to the rescue again. Her brothers sent two cheques for twenty thousand Tanzanian shillings, one each for my brother and me, drawn on the Standard Bank of South Africa Limited in Jinja. This money, together with the

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continuing material assistance of many of our friends in Dar es Salaam, kept the family just above the water line until a more substantive solution to our money woes could be found.

Before long, the very process of privatisation that had ruined me became, ironically enough, a source of additional employment. The nationalisation of the banking sector followed hard on the heels of the Arusha Declaration, and for reasons best known to the Tanzanian government, perhaps because of my appointment in 1966 as Chairman-designate of the proposed East African Board of Barclays Bank DC&O, I was asked to become the CEO of the new National Bank of Commerce. I declined this offer, pointing out that until recently I had never even had a bank account. But the government persisted in wanting me to become involved, so eventually I agreed to become a member of the new board, with responsibility as vice-chairman of the Loans and Advances Committee.

The first acting general manager of the new bank, Robert Stott, was a central banker with little substantive commercial experience. It soon became clear that the combination of his obvious Englishness and his commercial inexperience was not a winning one for the Tanzanian government, and Stott was quickly shunted aside in favour of another central banker, this time a Dane named Jacobson. He did all that he possibly could under the circumstances, but found himself, like Stott before him, being constantly second-guessed in his decisions by the Board. At that time, the Board included the likes of Professor Konradsen, a Scandinavian academic whose views on the economy made Mwalimu look like a monetarist, and Professor Reginald Green, a legendary, some would say infamous, American academic who had spent several years seconded to West and East African governments thanks to the largesse of the Ford Foundation. There is a book to be written about the influence of the likes of Professor Green in Africa in the 1960s, but this is not it, and I never want to be the person to have to write it. Perhaps it is sufficient for me to point out here that, at least in the eyes of the business community in Dar es Salaam in the sixties and seventies, academically brilliant but inexperienced and sometimes perhaps misguided people such as Green gave a false veneer of credibility to some of the stranger experiments that were being conducted in the name of African Socialism.

The ongoing problems with Konradsen and the Board led Nsekela, the Chairman of the Board, to make an approach to me for help in finding an experienced new chief executive. I used my contacts in America and Europe, including David Rockefeller in New York and Francois Gavotty in Paris. The latter recommended one Jacques Gerbier to me. A banker with experience at the Banque Nationale de Paris who spoke fluent English, Gerbier had just finished an assignment in Madagascar, so he already had experience of working in (admittedly francophone) Africa. After Gerbier was interviewed by Ambassador Katikaza in Paris, Nsekela invited him to meet us in Dar es Salaam, and we got him to come on board. Though an odd character, strangely diffident for one so successful, he proved to be an extremely competent banker. This he needed to be, because the new National Bank of Commerce was by then the third-largest bank in the whole of Africa.



Having thus used my influence to good effect in respect of one nationalisation, you might be forgiven for thinking that the government might go easier on me back at the milling corporation. But you would be wrong. In March 1967, four weeks into the new regime, I received a message from Deputy Secretary Mayisela, from the Treasury, telling me that he wanted to see me immediately. I didn't need to be a soothsayer to know that this meeting would not be about any future plans for the milling industry, but about the Chande family's financial past.

Needless to say, I was right. When I arrived at Mayisela's office, he showed no interest at all in how the business was now running. Instead he produced company documents that he'd obtained from our accounts department showing that both my brother and I had in the distant past been granted low-interest loans from Chande industries in order to purchase our respective homes. That sort of practice might have been okay then, Mayisela went on, but the fact was that we were all now in a different ball game. My brother and I now had to repay these loans forthwith, and I was to inform my brother accordingly.

By now I was becoming more adept at playing the new game. "Fine," I replied. "I perfectly understand. You can take the repayment of my old loan out of the 'full and fair' compensation you will soon be paying me for nationalising my assets." At this Mayisela, to give him his due, smiled in acknowledgement of my gambit. He then went on to tell me, in confidence, that in calling in the loan he was only acting under instructions. To take matters forward, I should now therefore write to the Permanent Secretary, setting out my proposal for deducting the loan from the compensation payment I was soon to receive.

This I did, and was not entirely surprised to hear nothing more about the loan. The following month, however, Mayisela called me in again. This time he wanted to talk to me about my company car – an off-white Toyota Crowne de Luxe. It was hardly a luxury vehicle, even in those days, but it did have the advantage of being equipped with an air conditioner and a tiny fridge in the boot. Mayisela told me that this car rightly belonged to the state and had to be surrendered. Once I had complied with this, the new milling corporation would provide me with an alternative vehicle for official use. There was, however, one other option. If I wished I could of course buy the Toyota back from the state, at a purchase price to be set by the government.

This time I wasn't in the mood to adopt a softly-softly approach. I as good as told Mayisela where he could put his car. A few weeks later I decided to give up the Toyota and get a car that was a good deal better than might have been on offer from the government. Taking advantage of the hard times in the milling industry, I relieved my fellow victim of nationalisation, Jack Jones, of his old cream-coloured Mercedes (TDK 305) at a bargain rate, mindful of the fact that he was winding down his affairs in Tanzania.

These monthly interventions by the government did nothing for my morale. Having got their pound of flesh the first time round, they now seemed to be after the bones as well. Many of my former colleagues in the business saw in these provocations a concerted campaign to squeeze them out of the country, and most of them called it quits. Within three years of nationalisa-

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tion, there was not one European left in a senior management position in the entire industry. Asians too, were thinner on the ground. But having made the momentous decision to stick it out, I personally had no problem fending off these monthly opportunistic attacks. The fact that I had been appointed as manager of my old firm on my previous salary just a week after nationalisation was, to my mind, as clear a signal as I could get that Mwalimu had been sincere in asking me to endelea. Moreover, the generally sympathetic approach taken by Mayisela was in keeping with a policy that was going to squeeze the fruit as dry as it could, but not bin it altogether. Beside, if they hadn't known that they needed me around to run the business at the time of nationalisation, they certainly did now. The workers wanted to work for me, whatever their rank or race. And the market had spoken for me as well, at home as well as abroad.

I received
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The first days of nationalisation had been tough for our network of international suppliers and consumers. As soon as they'd heard what had happened, they suddenly became very risk-averse. Previously I had bought almost everything I needed in the way of machinery on generous lines of credit. In February 1967, days after nationalisation, these lines of credit suddenly dried up, and the company did not have the capital reserves to make up the shortfall. My word had been my bond, but now, in the new situation, suppliers were no longer willing to accept it, arguing with some justification that as I was now a mere employee who might be around in the future when the bills came due but just as easily might not, they no longer wanted to have anything to do with credit. Indeed it was not until October 1967, when suppliers seemed finally to conclude that I was going to be around for good, that I was able to put the international side of our operations back on a sound footing. And all the time that I was trying to convince our markets of the wisdom of continuing to trade with us, the petty harassments, including phone-tapping and surveillance, didn't stop.

In October 1967, at a time when I at last felt that the crisis on the business side had passed, my wife and I were invited to take a trip to New York as a guest of Trans World Airlines, which had recently broken into the local market. I did not hesitate to accept their offer, because by that time I was really in need of a break. A number of other Tanzanians had been invited as well, including Hasnu Makame, the Minister for Tourism and Natural Resources, and we all flew off together in high spirits. On the third day of our trip, just after we had arrived in New York via Athens, I received a message from the President's secretary in Dar es Salaam. Mwalimu wanted to see me immediately. I got back to the secretary and told him to explain to the President that I was out of the country, and that I'd see him as soon as I got back. But as is so often the case in such situations, the secretary didn't want to tell his boss the bad news that I couldn't see him immediately, let alone the reason why. In desperation, I sent a message back to the Permanent Secretary in the State House, explaining that I was in New York as a guest of TWA; that I was more than prepared to leave immediately for Dar es Salaam, but that I would have to travel by another airline (the TWA flights were weekly) and would have to spend money I didn't have to travel at full fare. Eventually, after an agonising wait, a message came back telling me to stay on in New York, and come see



the President on my return to Dar es Salaam.

Unsurprisingly, the rest of my stay in New York was pretty miserable. What should have been a break turned into another four days of torment. Try as I might, I couldn't work out why the President wanted to see me so urgently, and my mind filled up with all sorts of awful hypotheses. When the week was finally up, I travelled back to Dar es Salaam in a state of high anxiety, and on landing I immediately phoned State House. It turned out that the President wasn't there, having left Tanzania for a summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. He had, however, left instructions with his office for me to go and see Derek Bryceson, the Minister for Agriculture. When I got to Bryceson's office I found that he too was unavailable, being in a meeting with the Swedish Ambassador. But David Mawakosya, the Permanent Secretary at the Agriculture Ministry, noting my obvious agitation, not to mention my jet lag, sat me down in the outer office and told me that the President had instructed the Minister to tell me that he wanted my help in creating a homogeneous unit out of the eight nationalised milling companies, and in managing it.

After all of the agonies I had been through in New York, this news came as something of an anti-climax. After nine months in which I had been pestered and pilloried and made penniless, I was unprepared for such an eventuality. Never in my wildest imaginings in New York had I considered the possibility that the summons from the President would be for anything other than a dressing-down, or a further rebuff. Instead, I was now being asked to become CEO of a new national milling conglomerate, with the terms and conditions of the contracts to be handled directly by the President.

When I was finally ushered in to see Bryceson, I told him that I'd need time to think about the offer before getting back to him. Bryceson looked surprised. "Why do you need time to think it over?" he asked.

"Because I need to think through the concept of amalgamation," I replied.

"Do you have any other reservations?" Bryceson asked, though he didn't look as if he wanted to hear any.

"Well," I continued, "Mine was only the second-largest of the milling companies. At the largest, there are still five people on secondment from the former parent company. The moment all of the firms are consolidated these will leave, and much know-how will be lost. For example, I know nothing of provender milling, the manufacture of foodstuffs for farm animals and domestic pets."

"What else?" It was Bryceson's turn to grow agitated.

"Well, a circular has just been sent out by SCOPO [the Standing Committee on Parastatal Organisations]. This in effect revises downwards the salaries in the nationalised industries in line with the new national prices and incomes policy. If employers stick to the letter of this new circular, then the prospects for promotion for staff are zero."

Bryceson fell silent. But Mawakosya, his Permanent Secretary, piped up. "Anything else?"

"Yes."

After nine months in which I had been pestered and pilloried and made penniless, I was unprepared for such an eventuality.



I had stood powerless as everything my family had worked so hard to build up over two generations had been taken away from us at the stroke of a pen.

"What?"

"The Labour and immigration departments are taking between four and six months to process applications for work permits. I can't recruit the staff I need that way."

"Send the applications to me from now on. I'll see them through," said Mawa-kosya, "Anything else?"

"I still need time to think it over." Bryceson's face fell still further.

On returning home, I felt restless and troubled. At the end of a troublesome week, and at the end of a transatlantic journey, I was not in the best state of mind to make momentous decisions. At a time when officials in several government ministries were making it very difficult for me to run my own milling operations, I was being asked to take on the massive additional task of consolidating and rebuilding the entire industrial sector. I talked things through with Jayli, and that helped a lot, though my mind was still far from being made up. But sleep proved elusive, until finally, at two o'clock in the morning, I resorted to taking some sleeping pills.

The next day, a Saturday, I didn't wake up until around midday. I felt awful, still jet-lagged, and under the influence of sleeping pills I wasn't used to taking. But when I got up and went into the shower, I suddenly realised that I had at last made up my mind as to what to do. There is a Gujarati proverb that says that if a barber has already shaved half of your face, you should let him finish the job, irrespective of any dangers you might run. It was like Hobson's choice, really. I had no option but to do what the President was asking me to do.

The following Monday, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry for Agriculture called me into his office. He said that he had heard of my concerns about the proposed appointment and he sympathised with them. He then went on to list a number of things that the government was prepared to do to help me out. First, they would ask me, and not some government official, to prepare the first draft of the legislation creating this new consolidated corporation. It didn't matter if I didn't use the correct legal terminology. The important thing was to get the content right, to make the draft bill my charter of operations, and to let them worry about the legalese. Secondly, the government would sit down and talk to me at length before any names were put forward for the new corporation's board of directors. Thirdly, the government would take a pro-active approach to the new SCOPO directive on wages in nationalised industries. If necessary they would hold special meetings with the workers in the milling industry to see what could be done to improve promotion incentives.

I thanked him for all this, and said that the assistance offered would almost certainly be needed. I then went on to say that I had decided to take the job.

Thus ended the most turbulent nine months of my life. In that time, I had stood powerless as everything my family had worked so hard to build up over two generations had been taken away from us at the stroke of a pen. I had seen my brother take the momentous decision to leave Tanzania for good. I



had seen my family suffer the torments of not knowing how we were going to keep a roof over our heads. And having lost pretty much everything I had owned, including my own company, I now found myself agreeing to run the entire milling industry on behalf of the very government that had nationalised my assets.

They say that experience is the best teacher. Well, I learned a lot that year, about myself, about Jayli, about the young country of which I had become a citizen. In going through such torments, I came to appreciate much more keenly than ever before what was important in my life and what was not. Throughout 1967, Jayli had remained calm and focussed and strong when all around her was in chaos, and that strength of character of hers helped pull me through. I too discovered previously unfathomed depths of fortitude, an ability to weather a storm without compromising on matters of principle. Perhaps most important of all, I came to recognise that the journey that had started all those years before in Bukene [*Sir Andy's birthplace*] could not be broken, even by a cataclysm such as this. Tanzania was my home, my country, for good and for ill, and in order to be re-baptised as a true Tanzanian, I had had to experience vicariously, if only for a few months, the life that has been the lot of so many of my fellow countrymen since the first colonial incursions into East Africa. By sharing the harsh experience of so many of my countrymen, I finally came to comprehend that their reality consisted of an uncertain present and an even more uncertain future. Like them, I learned to accept my lot, whatever it might be, with patience, with dignity, without rancour, and with hope for the future.

One last ironical postscript relating to the events of 1967 is worth recording. The only treasured possession that we had in Tanzania that we were not prepared for the government to get its hands on was Jayli's jewellery. They weren't worth that much, just a few trinkets that I had given her, or had been passed on through her family. But these few items were of priceless sentimental value, and we both wanted to keep them safe. And so we arranged for them to be sent out to Jayli's family in Uganda, to be held by them until such time as we were ready for their return. Little did we anticipate the advent of Idi Amin, who in 1971 ordered the entire Asian community out of Uganda on twenty-four hours' notice, with only one suitcase per person. Thus it was that Jayli's jewellery was finally lost, a further reminder, if ever we needed one, of the rightness of Jayli's fatalistic philosophy concerning God's granting and then taking away again.

Next week: Tanzania and the environment

Little did we anticipate the advent of Idi Amin, who in 1971 ordered the entire Asian community out of Uganda on twenty-four hours' notice, with only one suitcase per person.

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