

# The Impact of Walter Rodney and Progressive Scholars on the Dar es Salaam School

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The University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania faces the same problem of the contradictory nature of University education which is to be found in all States of Africa. Discontinuities between the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial patterns and methods of education continue as the present components of formal education strive to retain relevance to the needs of the society. The interconnections between education and various aspects of the life of the society remain problematic in so far as the structures, content and language of higher education in Tanzania and indeed the rest of Africa remain geared to the training of high level manpower. This requirement of skilled manpower meets the needs of the administration of the people but the needs of the producers are not immediately met by the University. Throughout the African continent, the educational needs of the vast majority of the toilers are met by the transmission of skills and agricultural knowledge accumulated over centuries and conveyed through practical experience rather than in a classroom.

The Universities of pre-colonial Africa developed out of the needs of an African ruling class to reproduce an ideology which justified the mode of economic exploitation and the system of social organisation. Higher education has always played a central role in the reproduction of knowledge and in the social reproduction of class divided societies. During the colonial era the racism of Europe precluded the development of African Universities for the production of knowledge, and the manpower needs of the colonial bureaucracy was the province of the metropolitan powers. The few known English Universities of Makerere, Fourah Bay, Fort Hare and Ibadan were started in the dying moments of colonialism when the British found that they needed to groom a responsible middle class.

Social reproduction in the newly independent states provided the societies with a challenge, either to continue the colonial project of educating a select few to rule or to develop new institutions which would serve to progressively harness the knowledge, the skills of the African masses and to link this with the advances to knowledge elsewhere in order to break the alienation and snobbery of colonial schooling. To embark on the latter project required a state and society which placed the question of social transformation as the number one priority.

In the post-colonial era, Tanzania in East Africa had become distinguished in its attempt to chart a course of development beyond the classical neo-colonial path. The articulation of the philosophy of Ujamaa and the attendant policy of education for self-reliance was a conscious effort to break the system of colonial education which buttressed social inferiority, political dependence and the ideology of individualism. An energetic attempt to develop a system of Universal Primary Education was the quantitative side of a broader project to

make the system and content of education more relevant to the rural peasants who constituted the vast majority of the population.

The University of Dar es Salaam though conceived as just another African University became enmeshed in the debates concerning Ujamaa and socialist development after 1967. Similar to other Universities in Africa, the teaching staff was predominantly expatriate Europeans and Americans for the colonial system did not train African University teachers. After 1966 when Kwame Nkrumah was deposed in Ghana, Tanzania attracted an unusually large number of progressive expatriate scholars from the traditional donors' but also from the Caribbean, from other parts of Africa and from the Socialist countries.

Walter Rodney was one of the progressive scholars who worked in Tanzania in the period when the liberation movements were struggling to establish themselves as political, military and ideological forces in Africa. Thus, the University had to grapple with a whole host of contradictory demands, the demand for skilled manpower, the anti-colonial thrust of the freedom fighters and the thirst for knowledge by the producing masses. Rodney in his work consciously sought the break the alienation of history and the social sciences within the specific conditions of the voiceless millions. His early scholarship on the *History of the Upper Guinea Coast* had been the beginning of a process of Rodney's own intellectual development and commitment to African liberation.

In the process of teaching, researching, learning, and writing on African History, Rodney was participating in the establishment of a particular intellectual orientation which came to be associated with the Dar es Salaam school. The debates, monographs and books on socialist development in Africa, on class formation, on disengagement, on underdevelopment, and slavery distinguished Dar es Salaam University from those Universities which were still teaching anthropology and the merits of modernisation. Even within the structure of the courses of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences there was a bold effort to break the artificial divisions between the various social sciences. The mystifications surrounding economic development, growth, and the division of labour between economics, sociology, political science, geography, anthropology and history were progressively broken so that the underlying determinants of social processes could be analysed.

An analytical framework was developed in this period and the pre-occupation with social transformation helped to mould the important study of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. This work sharpened the divide between those scholars who wanted to re-examine the purpose, structure and content of University education and those who saw education as part of the whole process of civilising the African. Such a division proved permanent in so far as the main financing of the University continued to be undertaken by Western States and foundations. In particular the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations in East Africa had big budgets for the training of African University personnel.

Yet despite the fact that the progressive scholars did not have the financial resources to match the foundations, their work left an indelible imprint on the intellectual traditions of Dar es Salaam. Walter Rodney left a lasting legacy in his work and in the placing at the centre of his concern, the humanisation of the environment, the dignity of labour and the self emancipation of the toiling masses. Western scholarship retreated to reformulate the crude theories of 'economic take off' and stages of growth into the ideas of 'redistribution with growth', 'basic needs', the informal sectors', 'access to services', 'women in

development' and 'structural adjustment'. Western scholarship fought a rear-guard battle for influence in the social sciences only to reemerge in the midst of the present crisis with the monetarist/militarist ideologies which are reproduced behind the humanitarian concern for Africa's dying children.

The crisis which emanated from Africa's place in the international division of labour did not await a neat resolution of the lines of analysis being drawn by social scientists. The full weight of the international capitalist depression was manifest in Africa in a huge and unpayable debt burden, shortages of basic commodities, famine and mass hunger. As a political correlate, the states strengthened their power over the poor with the deepening of the commandist and militaristic traditions. At the intellectual level the drought sharpened the need for disengagement and of the necessity to link theoretical work with the day to day struggles of the workers and poor peasants. Significantly the choice was being made for progressive intellectuals in that the thrust of monetarist ideas was to be intolerant of critical inquiry. It was partly the traditions of the University of Dar es Salaam which ensured that Marxism and critical social sciences continue to be taught and discussed.

The lasting contribution of the Dar es Salaam School has been to emphasise that capitalism led to historical arrest, backwardness and economic stagnation in Africa. But the awareness of blocked growth was not the same in terms of the movement towards clarity of the path forward. To formulate the requirements of reconstruction at the theoretical level remained the task of the committed intellectuals. But this task was of necessity bound up with the freedom, skill, knowledge and intellectual culture of the broad masses in the process of becoming active agents in the making of their own history.

Walter Rodney had perceived the limitations imposed on the expatriate and progressive scholar in a society which verbally declared for socialism but where education remained elitist and the principal arena for the reproduction of the petty bourgeoisie. In his effort to transcend the inbuilt contradictions of his professional training, he sought political involvement in the struggles of the working people in his quest to clarify the preconditions for the dignity of labour. This took form in the incomplete "History of the Guyanese Working People"<sup>22</sup>

In this work Rodney was able to centralise the concerns for humanising the environment and for the self emancipation of the oppressed. This was a major theoretical breakthrough and though this work was not produced in Dar es Salaam, it was the logical progression of his study on the technical conditions of the labour process in the plantation sector of colonial Tanganyika. The importance of this study on the labour process was to reinforce the inability of capitalism to develop 'free labour in its colonised sectors'. And this negated the work of those 'progressive scholars' who saw the process of development in Africa following the lines of the historical process in Europe. Such a preoccupation entered the social sciences in Africa through the ideas of Bill Warren.

Dar es Salaam continues to be a centre of active research, seminars, debates and writing though the reproduction of knowledge deteriorates in the midst of the real material poverty of the society. This sharpens the ideological divide and helps to separate the committed scholars from state intellectuals. At the same time the alienation derived from the nature of University work meant that new forms of idealism emerged as some scholars looked for new models such

as that provided by the theorists of 'socialist orientation.' The struggle for a common course in the late sixties which led to the Institute of Development Studies found expression in an idealism which must be foreign to those who battled to change the social science syllabus. For in essence, the concepts of 'non-capitalist path' and 'two stages of revolution' were really a more sophisticated 'take off' theory. These theories merged well with state policies for intensifying the exploitation of the rural poor. The experience of the teaching of this social science in the states of 'socialist orientation' such as Ethiopia and Mozambique has demonstrated that social theory of underdeveloped societies cannot be *uncritically* borrowed from other experiences. This is the concrete experience of the teaching of the social sciences in Mozambique.

It is in South Africa where the social engineering techniques of Western Social science comes up against the organised and spontaneous rebellion of the exploited black majority. There the race question will have to be creatively analysed. There the limits of capitalist development has barred its brutal methods before the blacks and it is there that Western social science is busy with new formulae to break the arrest and direct the energy of the poor into reformist solutions. Exploited, segregated and humiliated into living as second class human beings, the thrust of the African workers challenges the social scientists who justify apartheid. This struggle calls for a new type of social scientist whose scholarship will be pre-occupied with the process of human emancipation. The Dar es Salaam school even with its limitations has provided the embryo of an intellectual tradition which is part of the struggle of the African poor.

### **The Dar es Salaam Alternative**

When the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Dar es Salaam was established in 1964, there was a conscious attempt to define the mission of the University to make it more relevant to the perceived needs of the society. Prior to the articulation of the philosophy of Ujamaa and the Arusha Declaration in 1967, Tanzania and East Africa had been a relatively popular field of academic inquiry, with scholars who were committed to the virtues of modernisation. Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya attracted an unusually large number of scholars who began their work from the approaches of contemporary 'behavioral sciences'. An affirmation of the virtues of modernisation was viewed as the indispensable prologue to empirical research on aspects of social, political or economic change. The visiting scholars, researchers and planners started from the premise that economic development started with the arrival of colonialism.

Makerere University, which before 1970 served the whole of East Africa, was the centre of the East African Institute of Social Research where a lot of intellectual energy was invested in tribal studies and the development of the African entrepreneur. Studies on nation-building and plural democracy however, come up against the concrete fact that democratic traditions could not take root in a society where the history of force and extra-economic coercion was central to the alienation of labour power.<sup>2</sup> Even while the expatriate social scientists were teaching 'the rights of men' and the 'building of modern political institutions', the realities of regional differentiation, underdevelopment and the hoe economy, shook the fragile compromise which had been glued by constitutional experts and which disenfranchised a large section of the working people on the eve of independence. The force of the state which had been used to coerce

peasants to 'plant more crops', which had been used against striking workers and against political opponents, was ultimately used to settle class struggles and resulted in the process of the militarisation of the state and society.

The flexibility of Western social science and its girdle of modernisation was exposed during the military takeovers when the social theorists began to write that 'The military was the most modern institution in the new states'. The modern weapons consumed a large part of the resources of the poor and were capable of destroying the productive capacity of the societies and in the same instance destroyed whole communities. Bourgeois social science reduced the problems of Uganda to the failure of individual leaders and remained immune to the need for alternative conceptions which arose out of a more scientific study of political economy.

The University of Dar es Salaam was forced to confront the ideas of modernisation even though the structure of courses followed the outlines of Makerere. Once the Arusha Declaration spoke of the legacies of exploitation, the University became the scene of a battle between idealism and materialism. The move towards socialism in 1967 had behind it the power of the producing masses and this could not be kept out of the development of the University. Thus, the evolution of the University was distinguished by the rapid rise of scholars who sought to develop a body of knowledge and a methodology which was consistent with the struggle for socialism. Numerous accounts of the intellectual activity of this period attest to the lively spirit of critical inquiry which was to be found in the debates and writings at the University in Tanzania.<sup>4</sup>

A particular brand of radical scholarship developed in a context where there was an energetic section of the student body which had committed itself to the development of 'socialist revolutionary consciousness'. Studies which situated colonial and post colonial change within the framework of dependency, underdevelopment and class formation and which self-consciously grappled with the inadequacies of orthodox modernisation theories, became the most challenging pursuits of the period. This effort also benefitted from the fact that Dar es Salaam was the Headquarters of the Organisation of African Unity Liberation Committee. This meant that within the society were freedom fighters who posed the problems of African path to development not simply from the requirements of a relevant University. Inspired by the theoretical works of Amílcar Cabral and Franz Fanon the progressive scholars shook the confidence of bourgeois social science and raised the issues relating to the ideological direction of the struggle of the peoples of Africa.

During the period now characterised by 'radicalism on the bill 1967-1978' outstanding scholars such as Issa Shivji, Tomas Szentes, Justinian Rweyemamu, Henry Mapolu, Clive Thomas, John Saul, Lionel Cliffe, Walter Rodney and countless others attempted to develop an ideological orientation which was now required to orient students into a definite political outlook on Tanzania. The University had been profoundly affected by the change in the ideological shift in the society. It became clear that the inherited course structure in the area of social science was inadequate to give expression to the declared egalitarian outlook of the political leadership under President Julius Nyerere. Future research on the contradictions inherent in the structure of the University and need for an academic context where the theoretical basis for progressive ideas could be developed will in the future help to underscore tensions which arose over the study of Tanzanian socialism.

Differences between sections of the progressive staff did emerge over the

question of the restructuring of the course content of the social sciences in Dar es Salaam. These differences were sharp, tense and reflected the seriousness which emerged in the continuous process of evaluation of the substance of social science teaching. After much debate and some degree of acrimony, it was agreed to mount a common course which would be compulsory for all undergraduates. This common course would serve to subsume and contain the narrow perspectives emanating from the different disciplines within a wider framework of understanding, so as to avoid production of technicians and technocrats with highly specialised knowledge but little or no comprehension of social development as a unitary process.

To have been able to fundamentally transform the course content and syllabus of the University then would have required an organisational base beyond the fragile student-teacher alliance which had been effected through the University students African Revolutionary Front. And not even this alliance nor its publication *Cheche* could survive because the commitment to scientific socialism among the University radicals ran counter to the socialism without class struggle of the political leadership of the state. Weekly ideological classes, positive identification with peasants through weekend work in Ujamaa villages and visits to the liberated areas of Mozambique were positive, but could not replace the fundamental contradictory position of a University with less than one thousand students in a society of over sixteen million people.

It is now possible with hindsight to see some of the limitations of the attempt to abolish or restructure the departmental basis of social science teaching and to situate the discussions and conferences which took place between 1967-1973 on the role of the University in Socialist Tanzania. For even the limited achievements of the acceptance of a common course and an interdisciplinary approach to the social sciences was turned into the requirements of state ideological training. More importantly because the University was on the whole financed by western capital, the radical foundation course on 'East African Society and Environment' (EASE) was financed by an American foundation. Thus, even the lasting impact of the intellectual work of Clive Thomas and Justinian Rweyemamu on economic planning and disengagement from imperialism could only have significantly affected state economic policies if the working people had the social weight to give credence to the building of socialism.

The Tanzania state allowed ephemeral changes and debates in so far as the University related to the formal requirements of state ideological reproduction. Hence, the students journal, *Cheche*, through which students and teachers were developing, was banned on the grounds that:

"*Cheche* which is the Kiswahili translation of *ISKRA* (The Spark), the Leninist theoretical journal of the Russian Bolsheviks, tended to give the impression that Tanzania was building Russian socialism and not the Tanzanian Socialism. Authorities stated that TANU and TYL had always been ideologically self reliant and thus such borrowing from foreign ideologies could not be tolerated."

- But even with the banning of *Cheche* the embryo of progressive ideas was maturing and this found expression in the journal of the Youth League of the Party, *MajiMaji*. So important was this duplicated tract that University Libraries all over the world of African Studies felt it necessary to subscribe to this journal. The decline of this journal followed state intervention against progressive intellectuals, rigid state control over representative student organs and

nation and retreat after the 1978 student struggles with the state. It was significant that one of the last major efforts to bring out *Majimaji* was the commemorative issue on the work of Walter Rodney within the University.<sup>9</sup>

### **Rodney's Contribution in Dar es Salaam**

Walter Rodney was one of the many progressive scholars who worked at the University of Dar es Salaam when the radical traditions of the University were developing. Coming from the English speaking Caribbean where the concept of African liberation had deep roots among the working class, Rodney carried with him to Dar es Salaam the intellectual culture of the Caribbean working peoples. He also took with him the confidence of a generation who were no longer dazzled by the vaunted Euro-American culture - a generation which wanted to go beyond the contributions of Arthur Lewis and Eric Williams. Rodney's political education and development within the Dar es Salaam debates has already been the basis for a number of scholarly articles monographs and essays.<sup>10</sup> The focus on the impact of his work still centres around the study of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* not only because of the clear methodology and content of this study but because it was most definitely committed scholarship. For the study of the discipline of social science, one reviewer declared that the book stood as a 'critique and in opposition to the fragmentation of reality', and as 'a comprehensive treatment of the relationships of underdevelopment which were not only historical, but include the interaction of economic, political, sociological and psychological factors.'<sup>11</sup>

*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* served as a landmark in African scholarship and the book became a classic for literate Africans who wanted to confront the racism and distortions of colonial scholarship. State functionaries incorporated the concept of underdevelopment in order to barter for better terms and conventions with Europe. But the emphasis of Rodney was on a brand of scholarship which was far more profound than the short term needs of University teachers and students. For Rodney had been concerned with the dignity of labour and wanted to separate his work from the safe intellectual pursuits of the state. This work was sharply critical of the theories of 'labour aristocracy' and he demonstrated how colonialism underdeveloped one of the most important of the productive forces, the working class itself.

Subsequent to the appearance of this book, Rodney intensified his study of labour by immersing himself in the Tanzanian archives to study the technical conditions of the labour process which generated poverty, poor safety conditions at work, low wages, poor health and the absence of democratic rights. Furthermore, this work analysed how the plantation form was able to aggregate large quantities of relatively unskilled and cheap labour under a regime of rigid industrial control. Forms of labour recruitment and the links between cash crop areas and migratory forms of labour were aspects of the colonial economy which continue in the post-colonial era. This orientation on the study of the labour process was a major departure from those studies on the state and labour which were concerned with the legal framework of industrial relations or the amount of 'man days lost through strikes'. Slowly the students of plantation labour were able to dispel the notions of the dual economy which had been accepted as conventional wisdom in the studies of the African town and country. The connections between different sectors of the colonial economy were outlined

as parts of the totality of capital accumulation; in so far as;

"the wide British experience of colonialism in various parts of Africa confirmed that for Tanganyika the co-existence of plantation and peasant was the most feasible arrangement."<sup>12</sup>

The expansion of capitalism into the Village community was part of an overall process but with different forms over the continent of Africa. What social science theory masked was grand models which masked the specificities of the conditions of the working people. Under the influence of 'activists' of the University students Revolutionary Front (USARF) there had already been a shift in the focus to study of the relationships between management and workers.<sup>13</sup> Rodney's work on the plantation form and migrant labour in Tanzania was to be part of a process where he was seeking to clarify the issues involved in the scholarship devoted to the emancipation of labour from colonial and neo-colonial backwardness.

"Because sisal plantations drew most heavily on the resources of the labour reserves, they are presented in this study as an integral part of the courses of the increasing backwardness of the readily identifiable labour reserves. Yet, the backwardness of the sisal sector is equally noteworthy. The plantations removed land from potential food production, sterilised that land and polluted water supplies. Low productivity and retarded technology were closely related to the reliance on transient and relatively unskilled labour. The sisal work force earned through piece work; it embodied a high proportion of child labour; and its industrial contracts included penal sanctions which had fallen into abeyance in nineteenth century Europe. High mortality on the plantations from German times and well into the modern period is another index of underdevelopment within the agro-industrial centres of the Tanganyika colonial economy. Such features serve to confirm that colonial accumulation was "primitive" or "primary" throughout most of the years that it was operative - a situation made inevitable by the fact that capitalists (in alliance with the colonial state) had simultaneously to destroy the relations between Africans and their 'previous mode of production and to guarantee profitable returns from labour before the capitalist system had achieved a monopoly of labour in the colony."<sup>14</sup>

This long quotation summarises many of the main themes which were for Rodney the new areas of research and understanding. The themes alluded to above brought out the specific effects of the form of capitalism in underdeveloped Tanganyika, and to reinforce the conditions of backwardness generated by underdevelopment. This discussion on the stunted forms of labour was also to be able to draw attention to the tempo of working class activity as workers took initiatives towards bettering their conditions by stabilising the work force with all the attendant consequences for housing, health, education, and political organisation.

Underdevelopment for Rodney was, then, not simply an abstract formulation which located Africa's place in the development of modern imperialism. An awareness of underdevelopment and the dehumanisation of Africans was to be a prerequisite for the African masses becoming active agents of history; in the words of Cabral, "for the African people to return to history".<sup>15</sup> From this elementary work on the labour process and on the impact of the plantation form in Tanganyika, Rodney struggled to centralise this problem of the history of working people in his work. Understanding the workings of the colonial economy and laying bare all the information of the planters to expose better the actual locations and operations of plantations was for him necessary and instructive. This was evident in the task that Rodney assigned himself in the archives of Guyana and his work in several research institutes to edit and introduce *Guyanese Plantations in the late Nineteenth Century*.<sup>16</sup> The preparation of this document was a necessary clearing ground for studying the history



of the Guyanese Working People. This study was part of the process which had begun in Rodney's work in Dar es Salaam<sup>17</sup> but which acquired form and greater purpose when Rodney began to engage his energies as an activist in the Working Peoples Alliance of Guyana. The ensuing study on the History of the Guyanese Working People showed the conscious effort to break the boundaries of intellectual alienation. This is evidenced in the words of George Lamming in the preface to this book:

"It is the supreme distinction of Walter Rodney that he had initiated in his personal and professional life a decisive break with the tradition he had been trained to serve... He worked on the assumption that men deserved to be liberated from those hostile forms of ownership that are based exclusively on the principle of material self interest that negate the fundamental purpose of work. At the deepest levels of man's being it cannot make sense that he should voluntarily labour for those whose style of thinking declares them to be his enemies and whose triumph in the management of human affairs remain a persistent threat to the dignity of his person.... It was the last contribution Rodney would make during his life to our understanding of the history of labour and in the transformation of his country and to our perception of the role of class in the continuing struggle for social justice."

### **The Retreat and Flip Flop of Social Science (Women in Development)**

Social scientists working Africa and outside could not ignore the positive impact of Rodney's work. Both Marxists and non-Marxists had to come to terms with this new body of theory which was growing in African Universities. Some scholars who were drawn by the terminology but did not understand the real basis of the work attempted to use the terminology of the Dar es Salaam School to seem relevant in the intellectual world of African Studies. One researcher admitted that,

"They were confusing years: Field work conceived and executed to a functionalist paradigm was written up to a radical mode, often with devastating effects. What started out as a routine inspection of agricultural modernisation, for example, bristled with kulaks and appropriated surpluses."<sup>18</sup>

The flip flop of orthodox social scientists who wanted to be relevant could be seen in the scholarly output of the seventies. The gap between orthodox development theory and the reality of Africa was so great that even its defenders had to modify and relax their position and to seek reformist solutions to the crisis situation. It was this reformist thrust which gave rise to successive World Bank, ILO and other social democratic research - cum policy oriented projects on 'redistribution with growth', 'basic needs', 'integrated rural development', 'access to services', 'women in development' and 'structural adjustment'.

This reformism was most explicit in the area of social science teaching on 'women studies' and 'women in development' which became one of the most important growth areas for research after the first International Womens Conference in 1975.<sup>19</sup> There was a quantitative increase in the number of studies made on women, and women in development, as an ideology, was promoted by all the major transnational agencies. While hiding behind the perspective of African women who wanted to see social science teaching and research done explicitly from a female perspective and with a commitment to the betterment of women's lives, the old dualism of modernisation was brought in to study how rural peasant women could be brought into the modern cash crop sector. Ultimately this question is tied up to the broader question of the exploitation of women by all the inequalities of backwardness but the 'women in development' thrust was to mask the class differences among women and to see this

as one way to deepen capitalist relations in the rural areas.

The World Bank, the ILO and other international agencies such as USAID supported the 'Women in Development' ideology as part of their own effort to reproduce ideas relating to 'access to credit', 'population control' and 'women in traditional societies' or those themes which had been removed with the critique of anthropology. At the level of research by expatriate social scientists on women, one local writer underscored the imperial traditions which were carried forward by women social scientists from Europe and North America. Commenting on the position taken by African women to 'decolonise' women's studies, she wrote:

"The position is a response against the onslaught of foreign women descending on African and other countries to appropriate whatever knowledge they can acquire in order to build up their careers as WID experts."<sup>20</sup>

It is the radical traditions of Dar es Salaam which continue to generate studies and critical evaluation of the reformisms of the practice of expatriate scholars who sought to develop a new area of penetration and domination. A sensitive researcher summed up her review of women's studies in Tanzania:

"It is 'necessary to incorporate women's studies in the mainstream of scientific thought in all fields of learning, both in terms of theory and method, instead of isolating them into a body of "Women's knowledge", only of concern to women. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that at this time in history, there is a need to challenge and question all the one-sidedly male-centred exercises in the production of knowledge. This calls for a transformation of scientific thought itself so that it will help all human beings to an overall transformation of ideas and practice, relations of production and human reproduction."<sup>21</sup>

But not even the reformist solutions or the new studies could postpone the depth of the crisis which affected African men and women who toiled to produce the surpluses for Europe. The untransformed colonial economies which called for more cash crop production did not figure that with the hoe, there were limits to which the rural peasants could intensify its labour and the means of production available, land and cattle. Once these limits were reached the very reproduction of the population was threatened and this led to the massive drought, famine and deaths all over the continent. And even with the publicised disaster, the thrust of orthodox social science was to, by and large, follow the humanitarian initiatives with the call for agribusiness and those efforts which in fact precipitated disaster.<sup>22</sup> The famine and deepening poverty in Africa helps to underscore the view of Rodney that: "the present socio-economic conditions of the Third World constitute the real material conditions and refutation of the basic teaching of the social sciences as they exist. The requirements of, and the practical tasks of transforming, - thus clarifying those socio-economic - conditions constitute the promise of the rectification of social science in their orientation as well as objects."<sup>23</sup>

### **The drought of social science**

As far back as the late sixties are concerned, social scientists in the metropolises brought together a critical collection of articles on *Ideology in Social Science*. This collection graphically documented the intellectual roots of the social science of oppression which conduct research from the vantage point of the ruling classes in Europe. Recalling the links of intellectuals to the atrocities of Vietnam through *Project Camelot*,<sup>24</sup> this intervention had an impact on young scholars who were students in this period. In Africa the direct links between Universities and foreign foundations and the dependence on grants and equipment meant that or-

thodox bourgeois social science held away, even if it retreated behind new terminologies.

Africa is viewed as the last frontier, so expatriate social scientists were to be the modern missionaries in gathering information on how to speed up the flow of surplus overseas. IMF stabilisation projects and World Bank Structural Adjustments Programmes are the pivot of the old forms, for imperialism cannot now brazenly say that they are in Africa to civilise and modernise Africans. Actual declines in agricultural output and food shortages are not analysed as the consequences of Africa's integration into the world system, but as the product of bureaucratic state controls. Thus the main stress has been to intensify the colonial forms of production, essentially those forms that the African poor resisted in the struggles for independence.

In Tanzania where the Dar es Salaam School and the threat of socialism stood as a beam of light in Africa, the World Bank and the agencies of the West eagerly supported the forced villagisation programmes which replaced the concept of democratically controlled Ujamaa villages. A new project to decentralise the administration of the state to facilitate integrated rural development gave increased powers to Western capitalism in rural Tanzania.<sup>25</sup> The representatives of foreign capital traversed the rural areas in the push to deepen the dependence of the people on Western Food Aid, Western technology and to quieten those elements from the working class and rural poor who aspired toward genuine self reliance. Following the struggles for interdisciplinary studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Western donors initiated a major interdisciplinary research project in the social sciences on *decentralisation*. This followed the imperatives of the American Consultancy report for the decentralisation of power to seek more efficient rural management. Changes in the course structure of the departments led to new courses in 'rural development', 'development management' and 'public administration' reflecting the explicit concern of the Tanzanian state to command the peasants to 'Plant More Crops' at a time when commodity prices were falling.

One of the legacies of the debates in the early seventies is the fact that there are scholars with an independent outlook who can penetrate and expose the thrust of orthodox social science and their translation into policy directives. H. Mapolu's work on the peasantry in Tanzania demonstrated how the strategies devised to raise agricultural production proved the contrary. At a time when the economic crisis all over Africa and the importation of food into Tanzania led to sharp discussions overseas, Mapolu's work showed that the substance of the policies adopted in the heady days of Ujamaa were not substantially different from those attempted elsewhere in Africa nor from these attempted earlier on by the British in the then Colonial Tanganyika.<sup>26</sup>

The political and economic imperatives of the IMF/World Bank programmes were clear to the progressive scholars as the impact on the poor was increased poverty. What is less clear is how to penetrate those studies which flipped between the functionalist paradigms and the radical language of underdevelopment. Those who made concepts like the 'development of the productive forces' a fetish, blamed Tanzania for holding back the development process, a process which would better be undertaken by capitalism because of the failure of Ujamaa. Others who felt that the state had not been strong enough felt that the problem of Tanzania was because of the 'uncaptured peasantry' and the 'economy of affection'<sup>27</sup> Out of this body of knowledge was appearing the

resurgence of bourgeois ideas masked in the language of capitalist development in Africa. The new industrial states of South East Asia became models of successful capitalist development and the work of Bill Warren on *Imperialism, Pioneer of Capitalism* became the main critique of the ideas of underdevelopment. This was especially so in Europe where the reality of a Marxist tradition in the social sciences had to be confronted. From this body of thought one could even read that Africa was 'underdeveloped because it was not exploited enough'<sup>22</sup>

The convergence of Marxist/World Bank prescriptions is now even more pronounced in the wake of the present capitalist crisis. Part of the drought of social science in Africa has been the inability to challenge the ideology which hid behind the humanitarian efforts of popular forces in Europe and America to feed starving Africans. The famine strengthened the transnational corporations in agriculture and the food aid agencies which were in business to change the dietary habits of Africans. At the same time there was the stress that aid should be given to African capitalist farmers, or progressive farmers who would incorporate the technology and land use patterns of Europe and North America.

Social science teaching and research on Africa is confronted with the realities of famine, drought, desertification and food shortages as Africa's share of the present depression. Metaphysical concerns that the problem lay in rainfall has deflected the energies of some while others are pulled to the booming industry of studying food aid and famine relief for Africa.

"Advising Africa has become a major industry, with European and North American consulting firms charging as much as US\$180,000 for a year of an expert's time. At any given moment, sub-Saharan Africa has at least 80,000 expatriates working for public agencies under official aid programmes. More than half of the 7-8 billion spent yearly by donors goes to finance these people."

Drought famine and starvation in both 'Socialist' Ethiopia and 'capitalist' Sudan showed that the question of food needs to be posed within the capacity of the toiling masses to transform their material environment rather than to simply break down the traditional patterns of farming and animal husbandry in Africa. The model of high technology agriculture has long term consequences for the producers on the land and these pose great challenges for the progressive social scientists. Unfortunately while the social science of oppression retreats from modernisation into monetarism many young scholars have become pre-occupied by new forms of idealism.

### **New Forms of Idealism in Social Science**

The retreat of orthodox Western social science proved to be temporary and short-lived. By the end of the decade with their immense resources to shape the course content and research, projects such as the interdisciplinary study had a negative impact on the University. Changes in the course content was a prelude to undermining limited gains which were witnessed in the 1967-1970 period. Under the guise of austerity the fourth term project, which attempted to link the University to the rural experience, was cut. The state and the party sought to sanitise the discussions in the University, even to the point of withdrawing the contracts of some expatriates to rid the University of 'foreign ideologies'. The whole territory was divided into Regionally Integrated Development projects with each donor agency or state carrying out its own research linked to their own aid priorities. The Tanzanian state refused to regulate or to ensure control over these projects for this mini-partition of the society served the overall interest of a ruling class which was aligning itself to foreign capital while

demobilising the popular masses with the slogans of nationalism and anti-imperialism.

Small initiatives such as the Participatory Research Network in Africa set out to consciously link research in the social science with wider social movements. Democratic interaction with the popular masses was premised on 'the political participation of the exploited and oppressed classes in society in conducting research on the causes of their exploitation with a view towards overcoming this exploitation.'<sup>30</sup> By asking the question, which class interest are researchers objectively going to serve; this effort was unique in a continent where such ideas would be considered subversive. Thus despite the concrete and physically run down condition of the University, with shortages of books, paper, poor working conditions and chronic water problems, the University of Dar es Salaam incorporated vestiges of the Rodney impact.

Critical accounts on the exodus of radical social scientists and the clamp-down by the state are still needed to ask fundamental questions regarding the basis and the substance of the University in Africa. Could the University sustain a radical tradition when there was no organic link with the working poor? How could the progressives repair the isolation of their work from the struggles of the people from such commandist projects as the destructive villagisation thrust? The fact was that the intellectual culture of many of the progressives, despite its radical bend, did not arise out of the history of the African poor. The reproduction of this intellectual culture, through books in the English language, through debates in international journals and through the organisational structure of the University, marked a sharp division between theory and practice. The radicalisation of many of the scholars had been through the reading of socialist literature, without a scientific application of these ideas to the broad struggles of the producing masses.

Walter Rodney in taking the decision to return to the ranks of the working people of Guyana was making a fundamental break with the limits imposed on progressive expatriate intellectuals in African Universities and the realities of his own bourgeois training. In 1974 when he left Tanzania he reflected:

"Overtime, I came to recognise that, like all of my contemporaries and like scholars who have come out of the womb of bourgeois society, I had certain bourgeois values. I saw the world in the way the capitalists intended that I should see the world. Or at any rate my attempt to see the world for myself and on behalf of other peoples was severely restricted by frames of references which I had acquired - precisely in the educational ladder and moving towards a more skilled position. So that the struggle to disentangle this commitment on my part from the ideological framework with which I started, and to try to develop an alternative vision of the world which was more in tune with... that emotional or gut commitment to our own people. And once one got into this seriously, it was quite obvious that there are only two world views with which we are faced. One must deal with metaphysics or the idealist formulations of the bourgeoisie, or one must move towards scientific socialism."<sup>31</sup>

To confront one's intellectual training and to move to a position of commitment needs to be concretely linked with the organisation and political efforts of the oppressed. This could not come only from books. Rodney found this out and in his concern to develop a scientific socialist outlook he battled to develop a creative and independent outlook from the point of view of the historical process of conditions in his society. Hence the study of the working people.

In East Africa, because the working people were not organised to intervene decisively in the political process, the attempt by some radicals to develop a socialist outlook was marked by new forms of idealism and alienation. The positive experience of socialist transformation stood as a positive model in the dis-

ussions on socialist transformation, but many uncritically borrowed formulations from other societies where the internal evolution of social forces were quite different. Socialist transformation in China under inherited conditions of material and social backwardness provided a positive example of the possibilities of socialism in Africa. Specifically in the social sciences and social science research the ideas of Mao that, 'development was the question of education through participation for the vast masses of the people, so that they could become fully conscious of their own development potential', were influential.

However, for some, an uncritical study of Chinese literature meant that they wanted to find in Africa the same social reality which formed the basis of the thoughts of Mao. A certain brand of Marxism sought to throw slogans around without a careful study of the history of Africa. They would thus use the same empirical material of the structural functionalists and then attach labels such as kulaks or national bourgeoisie to this work. Discussions on the national democratic stage of the revolution did not disaggregate what the 'nation' or 'democracy' or revolution meant in differing African societies.

The alienation and limitations of this borrowing was to be most evident in the undemocratic and strident debates which dogged the University in the late seventies while the state was coercing the peasants into development villages. The subsequent book on *Class State and Imperialism* did very little to add to the general understanding of the social processes in East Africa.<sup>32</sup> This is not to say questions on imperialism and the national question were and are not relevant. But for critical ideas of imperialism to take root, it needs to be analysed beyond its polemical use to be able to illuminate the particularity of imperialism in specific societies.

By the end of the seventies when the leaders of the cultural revolution had been incarcerated, those who were partaking in a trend literature on Albania and North Korea began to appear. This is not to say there were no scholars who continued to study the Chinese experience in order to be better able to understand the evolution of that society. Such scholars were in the minority in East Africa.

If the Chinese experience posed one model, then the other model which served as an important reference point was the debates on and the actual content of the Soviet experience. Soviet theoretical formulations found a place among progressive students in Dar es Salaam. The availability of books from *Progress Publishers* in a period of foreign exchange crisis meant that formulations from Soviet theorists on the 'non-capitalist path' and 'socialist orientation' were well known. What was less well known were the debates in the Soviet Union on Socialist planning, on Socialist construction and the issues of the Bolshevik Revolution. In fact the literature from Progress Publishers presents the problems of the political economy of socialism as if there were no major questions for social scientists and progressive scholars from the Soviet Union and outside.

Tanzania's non-aligned position meant that there were scholars from the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic and Hungary who taught social sciences in the University. Most of the teachers were cornered in the Development Studies course, the compulsory course for all first and second year students in the University. The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) within the University had the unfortunate experience of having one of the top party officials foisted on it with the wish to turn the Institute into a Party Ideological Institute.<sup>33</sup>

For some of the expatriate social scientists from the socialist societies, the ories of the 'non-capitalist path' were repeated again without the clear origins or meaning of this formulation. States such as Guinea or Mozambique were categorised as 'non-capitalist' in so far as the state took measures to nationalise property and to develop the productive forces. The questions of democratic participation and or expression were not mooted and by 1985, it was no longer clear whether Guinea was on a non-capitalist path after the death of Sekou Toure and the coup subsequent to his burial.

The experience of the teaching of these ideas in Mozambique wa devastating. In Tanzania the experience of the Dar es Salaam School meant that scholars from the GDR had to confront a body of literature. They found students who had read Rodney, Shivji, Thomas, Saul, Rweyemamu and others who had used the Tanzanian experience to add to the store of human knowledge. These scholars had to confront this body of knowledge and to come to terms with the theoretical basis of the idea. Hence, scholars such as Tomas Szentes and Attila Agh from Hungray as progressive social scientists in the Dar es Salaam School learned from and contributed to the School.<sup>34</sup>

In Mozambique where colonialism did not develop an educational infrastructure for local intellectual reflection, the expatriate social scientists from the GDR attempted to teach Marxist methods which were in keeping with their reading of Soviet Social Science. A debate on the need to specify the formulations of this social science in the particular conditions of Mozambique led to the undemocratic solution of the closing of the debate.

"The debate pitted indigenous Mozambique social scientists against non-indigenous social scientists, mainly from the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The issue arose partly because it was becoming increasingly clear that the cooperantes from the GDR were not relating their Marxist-Leninist theoretical formulations to Mozambique realities, with the result that their approach appeared extremely abstract to their students. A result of the debate was that the teaching of Marxism-Leninism has been suspended at the University in the absence of an acceptable curriculum and approach to the teaching of the subject."<sup>35</sup>

The experience of the teaching of progressive social science in Mozambique exposed the constraints of research and teaching in a state which uses progressive rhetoric to stifle creative and critical thinking. Inside Tanzania the same pressures against critical ideas exist but the positive traditions of open, critical discussion has a firm place in the University and this ensures that scholars like Shivji and Napole can still write and publish critical books.<sup>36</sup>

### **Social Science of Emancipation:**

The links between the teaching of social science and the liberation struggles are now part of the history of the University of Dar es Salaam. It is for this reason that subsequent intellectual developments in societies such as Mozambique are still relevant to a discussion on Tanzania. Because most of the liberation movements were based in Dar es Salaam, the discussions and lines developing in the University were keenly followed. Walter Rodney, one of the most articulate and outspoken supporters of the liberation struggle, could not escape being enmeshed in intellectual debates at moments when freedom fighters were attempting to clarify their own ideas. The question of race was to be an area of sharp divergences.

Walter Rodney, as a scholar from the history of slavery attempted to lo-

cate race consciousness as an important component of the class consciousness of the African masses. And he wanted to develop these ideas to make them an integral part of the teaching of social science. But because the struggle for a scientific appreciation of race in the international communist movement has been a long and incomplete process, Rodney's ideas elicited hostile responses from those who were always uncomfortable with the question of race. Rodney was consciously seeking to end the polarisation of race and class which had developed in the social science. But for the rigid materialists, Rodney was simply a nationalist at best, if not a racist. Others even suggested that his ideas were counter-revolutionary.

But whether Rodney was simply a nationalist cannot be accepted simply on the basis of the writings of some of his contemporaries in the University. This question must await the verdict of the history when the toiling masses imprint their experiences and evaluation on the production and reproduction of knowledge in Africa.

Whatever the many differences between the scholars in the Dar es Salaam School, their debates and vigilance helped to expose the research efforts of social scientists who had sinister motives for studying the liberation movements. Robert Molteno, in an article on "Hidden Sources of Subversion" gave some indication of the tremendous energies expended to mount studies on the liberation movements from Dar es Salaam and from Zambia.<sup>37</sup> The social science of oppression and counter-insurgency was thus forced to be more overt with its links with the think tanks and Institutes of the S.African apartheid state. This was clearest in the elevation of the ideas of the social scientist Chester Crocker in the State Department of the U.S.A.

The South African society provides a good example of the limits of orthodox social science and the social engineering which develop from these ideas. Apartheid's method of social control necessitated sociological justification for separation and discrimination. The insurrectionary violence and uprisings initiated a clear path of self organisation and self emancipation. The intellectual correlate of this thrust of self expression through violence must be the unleashing of an intellectual culture which begins with the activities of the popular masses who are at the forefront of the call for a new social order.<sup>38</sup> This requires the development of a social science which illuminates the real quest of the toilers for change and not simply as a by-product or responses to the development of the white ruling class.

## Conclusion:

"History has fortunately given to mankind outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to society and who, in fact are outstanding because of the significance of their contribution. It is the task of the rest of us to make a proper analysis of the role of these individuals." (Eusi Kwayana)

Rodney's influence and example within the context of the University of Dar es Salaam was analysed in this paper, not to venerate him as an individual, but to underscore the positive contribution of Rodney to the development of social science which was partisan to the producing masses. This was of course difficult in the elitist context of University education and training, and the fact that positive intellectual tradition had been developed was a major challenge. As he himself had commented in numerous fora, "Scholars who mature in the



womb of bourgeois society cannot develop an alternate vision of the world without a commitment to changing the social system.”

The discussions, debates, and writings in Dar es Salaam also reinforced the fact that knowledge production like all production is social, thus the full impact of this knowledge will be related to the overall process in society. The progressive intellectual bases on their social training had to grapple with the reality around them by using a definite frame of reference which placed at the centre of the universe the relationship between man and his natural environment. And to move from this to understand the social relations of production and the various forms of alienation in society. The central one being the alienation of labour. But in Africa it was necessary to specify the other cultural and political features which stemmed from that alienation. Thus for our focus on Rodney, the question of the dignity of labour involved those problems such as the purpose of work and the complete degradation and dehumanisation of the African. Developing alternative frames of reference for the study of social science was the conscious attempt of the progressive scholars in Dar es Salaam. Walter Rodney was modest enough to realise that progressive expatriates cannot define and chart a course for the reorganisation of the social sciences in Africa. He understood that expatriates, however progressive must be humble enough to allow the Africans to develop their own agenda. For this, he has been villified simply as a ‘nationalist’, ‘black power thinker’<sup>39</sup> The carefully worked out proposals for the reorganisation of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in keeping with the thrust of socialist transformation will be part of the discussions in the future when the working poor of Tanzania are integrated into the formal processes of the reproduction of knowledge.

*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* has a wider impact than the structuring of courses in the University. Sharp debates on underdevelopment disengagement, on class struggles and on liberation took root in the University and gave it a particular identification as a centre for radical discussion in Africa. These debates were part of a wider debate on the essence of development. The influence of this school challenged the modernisation theories to the point that these ideas retreated only to re-emerge in the form of monetarism on the right and capitalist development on the left. However, the questions of what socialist development should mean were engaged. And the problems of the self expression of the toilers were emphasised to distinguish the content of socialism from the declarations of Arab, African or other socialisms which were in vogue in the heady day of decolonisation and armed struggles for independence. Fundamental problems of the impact of bourgeois social science and modernisation theories still remain. For example, what should be the attitude and outlook of the progressive intellectual to hunters and gatherers? What is the adequate form for improving the livestock yield of pastoralists? How can new scientific skills be introduced in the village communities of Africa without destroying the skills and knowledge of the African peasant farmers?

The racism of colonial scholarship suggested that Africa had nothing to contribute to the development of humanity. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* challenged this. The intellectual work of the Dar es Salaam school reinforced this challenge and inspired young scholars all over the world. The discussions on capitalism exposed the destruction and arrest of the productive forces. This destruction is now clear to the world with famine drought, mass hunger, apartheid and militarism. And even in this clear disaster, the social science of oppres-

sion seeks to blame the weather, blame inept African agricultural practices and support IMF programmes whose project is to continue to devalue the labour power of the African poor.

The present crisis in Africa, undoubtedly, has long term implications for all social scientists. Tanzania has become a veritable laboratory for breaking down the resistance of the rural poor to the exploitation embedded in the so called programmes of modernisation. This developed as a challenge to the project of socialism. Thus in the University of Dar es Salaam social science teaching and research has had a rich history, in the short space of twenty years. The impact of Walter Rodney and other progressive intellectuals has been to lay the foundations for an intellectual culture which raises social questions from the point of view of those who want to escape being *The Wretched of the Earth*.

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