

= Zanzibar Revolution =

The Zanzibar Revolution occurred in 1964 and led to the overthrow of the Sultan of Zanzibar and his mainly Arab government by local African revolutionaries . Zanzibar was an ethnically diverse state consisting of a number of islands off the east coast of Tanganyika which had been granted independence by Britain in 1963 . In a series of parliamentary elections preceding independence , the Arab minority succeeded in retaining the hold on power it had inherited from Zanzibar 's former existence as an overseas territory of Oman . Frustrated by under @-@ representation in Parliament despite winning 54 % of the vote in the July 1963 election , the mainly African Afro @-@ Shirazi Party (ASP) allied itself with the left @-@ wing Umma Party , and early on the morning of 12 January 1964 ASP member John Okello mobilised around 600 ? 800 revolutionaries on the main island of Unguja (Zanzibar Island) . Having overrun the country 's police force and appropriated their weaponry , the insurgents proceeded to Zanzibar Town where they overthrew the Sultan and his government . Reprisals against Arab and South Asian civilians on the island followed ; the resulting death toll is disputed , with estimates ranging from several hundred to 20 @,@ 000 . The moderate ASP leader Abeid Karume became the country 's new president and head of state , and positions of power were granted to Umma party members .

The new government 's apparent communist ties concerned Western governments . As Zanzibar lay within the British sphere of influence , the British government drew up a number of intervention plans . However , the feared communist government never materialised , and because British and United States citizens were successfully evacuated these plans were not put into effect . Meanwhile , the communist bloc powers of China , East Germany and the Soviet Union established friendly relations with the new government by recognising the country and sending advisors . Karume succeeded in negotiating a merger of Zanzibar with Tanganyika to form the new nation of Tanzania ; an act judged by contemporary media to be an attempt to prevent communist subversion of Zanzibar . The revolution ended 200 years of Arab dominance in Zanzibar , and is commemorated on the island each year with anniversary celebrations and a public holiday .

= = Background = =

The Zanzibar Archipelago , now part of the Southeast African republic of Tanzania , is a group of islands lying in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Tanganyika . It comprises the main southern island of Unguja (also known as Zanzibar) , the smaller northern island of Pemba , and numerous surrounding islets . With a long history of Arab rule dating back to 1698 , Zanzibar was an overseas territory of Oman until it achieved independence in 1858 under its own Sultanate . In 1890 during Ali ibn Sa 'id 's reign , Zanzibar became a British protectorate , and although never formally under direct rule was considered part of the British Empire .

By 1964 , the country was a constitutional monarchy ruled by Sultan Jamshid bin Abdullah . Zanzibar had a population of around 230 @,@ 000 Africans ? some of whom claimed Persian ancestry and were known locally as Shirazis ? and also contained significant minorities in the 50 @,@ 000 Arabs and 20 @,@ 000 South Asians who were prominent in business and trade . The various ethnic groups were becoming mixed and the distinctions between them had blurred ; according to one historian , an important reason for the general support for Sultan Jamshid was his family 's ethnic diversity . However , the island 's Arab inhabitants , as the major landowners , were generally wealthier than the Africans ; the major political parties were organised largely along ethnic lines , with Arabs dominating the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP) and Africans the Afro @-@ Shirazi Party (ASP) .

In January 1961 , as part of the process of decolonisation , the island 's British authorities drew up constituencies and held democratic elections . Both the ASP and the ZNP won 11 of the available 22 seats in Zanzibar 's Parliament , so further elections were held in June with the number of seats increased to 23 . The ZNP entered into a coalition with the Zanzibar and Pemba People 's Party (ZPPP) and this time took 13 seats , while the ASP , despite receiving the most votes , won just 10 . Electoral fraud was suspected by the ASP and civil disorder broke out , resulting in 68 deaths . To

maintain control , the coalition government banned the more radical opposition parties , filled the civil service with its own appointees , and politicised the police .

In 1963 , with the number of parliamentary seats increased to 31 , another election saw a repeat of the 1961 votes . Due to the layout of the constituencies the ASP , led by Abeid Amani Karume , won 54 percent of the popular vote but only 13 seats , while the ZNP / ZPPP won the rest and set about strengthening its hold on power . The Umma Party , formed that year by disaffected radical Arab socialist supporters of the ZNP , was banned , and all policemen of African mainland origin were dismissed . This removed a large portion of the only security force on the island , and created an angry group of paramilitary @-@ trained men with knowledge of police buildings , equipment and procedures . Furthermore , the new Arab @-@ dominated government made it clear that in foreign policy , the Sultanate of Zanzibar would be seeking close links with the Arab world , especially Egypt and had no interest in forging relationships with the nations on the African mainland as the black majority wished . Slavery had been abolished in Zanzibar in 1897 , but much of the Arab elite who dominated the island 's politics made little effort to hide their racist views of the black majority as their inferiors , a people fit only for slavery . Memories of Arab slave @-@ trading in the past (some of the older blacks had been slaves in their youth) together with a distinctly patronizing view of the Arab elite towards the black majority in the present meant that much of the black population of Zanzibar had a ferocious hatred of the Arabs , viewing the new Arab @-@ dominated government as illegitimate .

Complete independence from British rule was granted on 10 December 1963 , with the ZNP / ZPPP coalition as the governing body . The government requested a defence agreement from the United Kingdom , asking for a battalion of British troops to be stationed on the island for internal security duties , but this was rejected as it was deemed inappropriate for British troops to be involved in the maintenance of law and order so soon after independence . British intelligence reports predicted that a civil disturbance , accompanied by increasing communist activity , was likely in the near future and that the arrival of British troops might cause the situation to deteriorate further . However , many foreign nationals remained on the island , including 130 Britons who were direct employees of the Zanzibar government .

= = Revolution = =

Around 3 : 00 am on 12 January 1964 , 600 ? 800 poorly armed , mainly African insurgents , aided by some of the recently dismissed ex @-@ policemen , attacked Unguja 's police stations , both of its police armouries , and the radio station . The Arab police replacements had received almost no training and , despite responding with a mobile force , were soon overcome . Arming themselves with hundreds of captured automatic rifles , submachine guns and Bren guns , the insurgents took control of strategic buildings in the capital , Zanzibar Town . Within six hours of the outbreak of hostilities , the town 's telegraph office and main government buildings were under revolutionary control , and the island 's only airstrip was captured at 2 : 18 pm . The Sultan , together with Prime Minister Muhammad Shamte Hamadi and members of the cabinet , fled the island on the royal yacht Seyyid Khalifa , and the Sultan 's palace and other property was seized by the revolutionary government . At least 80 people were killed and 200 injured , the majority of whom were Arabs , during the 12 hours of street fighting that followed . Sixty @-@ one American citizens , including 16 men staffing a NASA satellite tracking station , sought sanctuary in the English Club in Zanzibar Town , and four US journalists were detained by the island 's new government .

According to the official Zanzibari history , the revolution was planned and headed by the ASP leader Abeid Amani Karume . However , at the time Karume was on the African mainland as was the leader of the banned Umma Party , Abdulrahman Muhammad Babu . The ASP branch secretary for Pemba , Ugandan @-@ born ex @-@ policeman John Okello , had sent Karume to the mainland to ensure his safety . Okello had arrived in Zanzibar from Kenya in 1959 , claiming to have been a field marshal for the Kenyan rebels during the Mau Mau Uprising , although he actually had no military experience . He maintained that he heard a voice commanding him , as a Christian , to free the Zanzibari people from the Muslim Arabs , and it was Okello who led the revolutionaries ? mainly

unemployed members of the Afro @-@ Shirazi Youth League ? on 12 January . One commentator has further speculated that it was probably Okello , with the Youth League , who planned the revolution . During the revolution , there was an orgy of violence committed against the South Asian and Arab communities with thousands of women being raped by the Okello 's followers , much looting and massacres of Arabs all over the island . The American diplomat Don Petterson described the killings of Arabs by the African majority as an act of genocide .

= = Aftermath = =

A Revolutionary Council was established by the ASP and Umma parties to act as an interim government , with Karume heading the council as President and Babu serving as the Minister of External Affairs . The country was renamed the People 's Republic of Zanzibar and Pemba ; the new government 's first acts were to permanently banish the Sultan and to ban the ZNP and ZPPP . Seeking to distance himself from the volatile Okello , Karume quietly sidelined him from the political scene , although he was allowed to retain his self @-@ bestowed title of field marshal . However , Okello 's revolutionaries soon began reprisals against the Arab and Asian population of Unguja , carrying out beatings , rapes , murders , and attacks on property . He claimed in radio speeches to have killed or imprisoned tens of thousands of his " enemies and stooges " , but actual estimates of the number of deaths vary greatly , from " hundreds " to 20 @,@ 000 . Some Western newspapers give figures of 2 @,@ 000 ? 4 @,@ 000 ; the higher numbers may be inflated by Okello 's own broadcasts and exaggerated reports in some Western and Arab news media . The killing of Arab prisoners and their burial in mass graves was documented by an Italian film crew , filming from a helicopter , for Africa Addio and this sequence of film comprises the only known visual document of the killings . Many Arabs fled to safety in Oman , although by Okello 's order no Europeans were harmed . The post @-@ revolution violence did not spread to Pemba .

By 3 February Zanzibar was finally returning to normality , and Karume had been widely accepted by the people as their president . A police presence was back on the streets , looted shops were re @-@ opening , and unlicensed arms were being surrendered by the civilian populace . The revolutionary government announced that its political prisoners , numbering 500 , would be tried by special courts . Okello formed the Freedom Military Force (FMF) , a paramilitary unit made up of his own supporters , which patrolled the streets and looted Arab property . The behaviour of Okello 's supporters , his violent rhetoric , Ugandan accent , and Christian beliefs were alienating many in the largely moderate Zanzibari and Muslim ASP , and by March many members of his FMF had been disarmed by Karume 's supporters and the Umma Party militia . On 11 March Okello was officially stripped of his rank of Field Marshal , and was denied entry when trying to return to Zanzibar from a trip to the mainland . He was deported to Tanganyika and then to Kenya , before returning destitute to his native Uganda .

In April the government formed the People 's Liberation Army (PLA) and completed the disarmament of Okello 's remaining FMF militia . On 26 April Karume announced that a union had been negotiated with Tanganyika to form the new country of Tanzania . The merger was seen by contemporary media as a means of preventing communist subversion of Zanzibar ; at least one historian states that it may have been an attempt by Karume , a moderate socialist , to limit the influence of the radically left @-@ wing Umma Party . However , many of the Umma Party 's socialist policies on health , education and social welfare were adopted by the government .

= = Foreign reaction = =

British military forces in Kenya were made aware of the revolution at 4 : 45 am on 12 January , and following a request from the Sultan were put on 15 minutes ' standby to conduct an assault on Zanzibar 's airfield . However , the British High Commissioner in Zanzibar , Timothy Crosthwait , reported no instances of British nationals being attacked and advised against intervention . As a result , the British troops in Kenya were reduced to four hours ' standby later that evening . Crosthwait decided not to approve an immediate evacuation of British citizens , as many held key

government positions and their sudden removal would further disrupt the country 's economy and government . To avoid possible bloodshed , the British agreed a timetable with Karume for an organised evacuation .

Within hours of the revolution , the American ambassador had authorised the withdrawal of US citizens on the island , and a US Navy destroyer , the USS Manley , arrived on 13 January . The Manley docked at Zanzibar Town harbour , but the US had not sought the Revolutionary Council 's permission for the evacuation , and the ship was met by a group of armed men . Permission was eventually granted on 15 January , but the British considered this confrontation to be the cause of much subsequent ill will against the Western powers in Zanzibar .

Western intelligence agencies believed that the revolution had been organised by communists supplied with weapons by the Warsaw Pact countries . This suspicion was strengthened by the appointment of Babu as Minister for External Affairs and Abdullah Kassim Hanga as Prime Minister , both known leftists with possible communist ties . Britain believed that these two were close associates of Oscar Kambona , the Foreign Affairs Minister of Tanganyika , and that former members of the Tanganyika Rifles had been made available to assist with the revolution . Some members of the Umma Party wore Cuban military fatigues and beards in the style of Fidel Castro , which was taken as an indication of Cuban support for the revolution . However this practice was started by those members who had staffed a ZNP branch office in Cuba and it became a common means of dress amongst opposition party members in the months leading up to the revolution . The new Zanzibar government 's recognition of the German Democratic Republic (the first African government to do so) , and of North Korea , was further evidence to the Western Powers that Zanzibar was aligning itself closely with the communist bloc . Just six days after the revolution the New York Times stated that Zanzibar was " on the verge of becoming the Cuba of Africa " , but on 26 January denied that there was active communist involvement . Zanzibar continued to receive support from communist countries and by February was known to be receiving advisers from USSR , East Germany and China . Cuba also lent its support with Che Guevara stating on 15 August that " Zanzibar is our friend and we gave them our small bit of assistance , our fraternal assistance , our revolutionary assistance at the moment when it was necessary " but denying there were Cuban troops present during the revolution . At the same time , western influence was diminishing and by July 1964 just one Briton , a dentist , remained in the employ of the Zanzibari government . It has been alleged that Israeli spymaster David Kimche was a backer of the revolution with Kimche in Zanzibar on the day of the Revolution .

The deposed Sultan made an unsuccessful appeal to Kenya and Tanganyika for military assistance , although Tanganyika sent 100 paramilitary police officers to Zanzibar to contain rioting . Other than the Tanganyika Rifles (formerly the colonial King 's African Rifles) , the police were the only armed force in Tanganyika , and on 20 January the police absence led the entire Rifles regiment to mutiny . Dissatisfied with their low pay rates and with the slow progress of the replacement of their British officers with Africans , the soldiers ' mutiny sparked similar uprisings in both Uganda and Kenya . However , order on the African mainland was rapidly restored without serious incident by the British Army and Royal Marines .

The possible emergence of an African communist state remained a source of disquiet in the West . In February , the British Defence and Overseas Policy Committee said that , while British commercial interests in Zanzibar were " minute " and the revolution by itself was " not important " , the possibility of intervention must be maintained . The committee was concerned that Zanzibar could become a centre for the promotion of communism in Africa , much like Cuba had in the Americas . Britain , most of the Commonwealth , and the USA withheld recognition of the new regime until 23 February , by which time it had already been recognised by much of the communist bloc . In Crosthwait 's opinion , this contributed to Zanzibar aligning itself with the Soviet Union ; Crosthwait and his staff were expelled from the country on 20 February and were only allowed to return once recognition had been agreed .

= = = British military response = = =

Following the evacuation of its citizens on 13 January , the US government stated that it recognised that Zanzibar lay within Britain 's sphere of influence , and would not intervene . The US did , however , urge that Britain cooperate with other Southeast African countries to restore order . The first British military vessel on the scene was the survey ship HMS Owen , which was diverted from the Kenyan coast and arrived on the evening of 12 January . Owen was joined on 15 January by the frigate Rhyl and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship Hebe . While the lightly armed Owen had been able to provide the revolutionaries with an unobtrusive reminder of Britain 's military power , the Hebe and Rhyl were different matters . Due to inaccurate reports that the situation in Zanzibar was deteriorating , the Rhyl was carrying a company of troops of the first battalion of the Staffordshire Regiment from Kenya , the embarkation of which was widely reported in the Kenyan media , and would hinder British negotiations with Zanzibar . The Hebe had just finished removing stores from the naval depot at Mombasa and was loaded with weapons and explosives . Although the Revolutionary Council was unaware of the nature of Hebe 's cargo , the Royal Navy 's refusal to allow a search of the ship created suspicion ashore and rumours circulated that she was an amphibious assault ship .

A partial evacuation of British citizens was completed by 17 January , when the army riots in Southeast Africa prompted Rhyl 's diversion to Tanganyika so the troops she was carrying could assist in quelling the mutiny . In replacement , a company of the Gordon Highlanders was loaded aboard Owen so an intervention could still be made if necessary . The aircraft carriers Centaur and Victorious were also transferred to the region as part of Operation Parthenon . Although never enacted , Parthenon was intended as a precaution should Okello or the Umma party radicals attempt to seize power from the more moderate ASP . In addition to the two carriers , the plan involved three destroyers , Owen , 13 helicopters , 21 transport and reconnaissance aircraft , the second battalion of the Scots Guards , 45 Commando of the Royal Marines and one company of the second battalion of the Parachute Regiment . The island of Unguja , and its airport , were to be seized by parachute and helicopter assault , followed up by the occupation of Pemba . Parthenon would have been the largest British airborne and amphibious operation since the Suez Crisis .

Following the revelation that the revolutionaries may have received communist bloc training , Operation Parthenon was replaced by Operation Boris . This called for a parachute assault on Unguja from Kenya , but was later abandoned due to poor security in Kenya and the Kenyan government 's opposition to the use of its airfields . Instead Operation Finery was drawn up , which would involve a helicopter assault by Royal Marines from HMS Bulwark , a commando carrier then stationed in the Middle East . As Bulwark was outside the region , Finery 's launch would require 14 days ' notice , so in the event that a more immediate response was necessary , suitable forces were placed on 24 hours ' notice to launch a smaller scale operation to protect British citizens .

With the merger of Tanganyika and Zanzibar on 23 April , there were concerns that the Umma Party would stage a coup ; Operation Shed was designed to provide for intervention should this happen . Shed would have required a battalion of troops , with scout cars , to be airlifted to the island to seize the airfield and protect Karume 's government . However , the danger of a revolt over unification soon passed , and on 29 April the troops earmarked for Shed were reduced to 24 hours ' notice . Operation Finery was cancelled the same day . Concern over a possible coup remained though , and around 23 September Shed was replaced with Plan Giralda , involving the use of British troops from Aden and the Far East , to be enacted if the Umma Party attempted to overthrow President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania . An infantry battalion , tactical headquarters unit and elements of the Royal Marines would have been shipped to Zanzibar to launch an amphibious assault , supported by follow @-@ on troops from British bases in Kenya or Aden to maintain law and order . Giralda was scrapped in December , ending British plans for military intervention in the country .

= = Legacy = =

One of the main impacts of the revolution in Zanzibar was to break the power of the Arab / Asian ruling class , who had held it for around 200 years . Despite the merger with Tanganyika , Zanzibar retained a Revolutionary Council and House of Representatives which was , until 1992 , run on a

one @-@ party system and has power over domestic matters . The domestic government is led by the President of Zanzibar , Karume being the first holder of this office . This government used the success of the revolution to implement reforms across the island . Many of these involved the removal of power from Arabs . The Zanzibar civil service , for example , became an almost entirely African organisation , and land was redistributed from Arabs to Africans . The revolutionary government also instituted social reforms such as free healthcare and opening up the education system to African students (who had occupied only 12 % of secondary school places before the revolution) .

The government sought help from the Soviet Union , the German Democratic Republic (GDR) , and P. R. China for funding for several projects and military advice . The failure of several GDR @-@ led projects including the New Zanzibar Project , a 1968 urban redevelopment scheme to provide new apartments for all Zanzibaris , led to Zanzibar focussing on Chinese aid . The post @-@ revolution Zanzibar government was accused of draconian controls on personal freedoms and travel and exercised nepotism in appointments to political and industrial offices , the new Tanzanian government being powerless to intervene . Dissatisfaction with the government came to a head with the assassination of Karume on 7 April 1972 , which was followed by weeks of fighting between pro and anti @-@ government forces . A multi @-@ party system was eventually established in 1992 , but Zanzibar remains dogged by allegations of corruption and vote @-@ rigging , though the 2010 general election was seen to be a considerable improvement .

The revolution itself remains an event of interest for Zanzibaris and academics . Historians have analysed the revolution as having a racial and a social basis with some stating that the African revolutionaries represent the proletariat rebelling against the ruling and trading classes , represented by the Arabs and South Asians . Others discount this theory and present it as a racial revolution that was exacerbated by economic disparity between races .

Within Zanzibar , the revolution is a key cultural event , marked by the release of 545 prisoners on its tenth anniversary and by a military parade on its 40th . Zanzibar Revolution Day has been designated as a public holiday by the government of Tanzania ; it is celebrated on 12 January each year .