



Joran Lwehabura Bashange

Deputy Director for Organisation Civic United Front

Engineer by profession. Got his second Master's degree in sugar technology in Cuba. Worked 14 years in a sugar factory, then, after having been sacked, joined the central administration of the Civic United Front (CUF) in Dar es Salaam as deputy director for organisation. He ran for a seat in the last parliamentary elections of 2005, but came only as second with 28.5% of the total votes of his constituency in Mikumi (his major competitor, Clemence Beatus Lyamba of the Revolutionary State Party (CCM) got 68.2% of the valid votes.¹

Interview with Joran Lwehabura Bashange²

Multiparty democracy in Tanzania?

Political will missing

István Tarrósy (IT) After Tanganyika gained independence in 1961, then, two years later, Zanzibar achieved the same status from Britain, Julius Nyerere came up with the idea to form a union between the two independent entities, so, in 1964 the United Republic of Tanzania came into existence. Following the first three decades of one-party ujaama Socialism, and to my view, under substantial pressure from the international community, Tanzania amended its constitution in 1992 allowing other parties to be set up and join the political arena. Many scholars say that despite this change, there is no real (functioning) multiparty democracy in Tanzania. There are a number of parties in opposition, among which the Civic United Front (CUF, pronounced as [kʌf]) is the strongest, with the largest number of supporters. With reference to the last presidential and general elections in December 2006, what were the major elements of your manifesto, with which you tried to raise awareness among the voters for the sake of gaining as much support as possible?

Joran Lwehabura Bashange (JLB) Our major aim, very similarly to all other parties, is to get into power so that we can have the power needed to be able to deliver towards the citizens. Tanzania is a poor country, it has been lagging behind other African, as well as other developing countries, and we want its economy to be boosted. We have a lot of natural resources,

which should be used in a better way. CUF aims at developing the economy so that the people can be able to meet the demands of our global world.

IT What would be your approach, the economic philosophy to boost the economy?

JLB To use all the resources of the country for a really working economy. At present, these resources are being sipped out, unfortunately, as bribery is endemic to the system. Many of the mines are privatised, resources sucked out. We intend to revise all the national policies connected with, for instance, privatisation, diamond mining, and others focussed on our national resources. You must note that 80% of the people living in our country are peasants, and the methods they use to cultivate land are not right. We want to modernise.

As for our political manifesto, we have a number of core issues: apart from the reform of our economy, education and health are key areas. We stress upon accountability and responsibility in general, together with to improve the general standards of living, to fight for Human Rights. We are convinced that the country lacks accountability, which is crucial for any better democratisation and sectoral developments.

We also want to reform our party, especially, our administration so that we better communicate and organise ourselves. At present, we have approximately 1.5 million supporters, and we surely need more to overcome the governing force, i.e. Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM).

IT The 1992 constitution opened up the political space for competition, at least theoretically. Among the many parties, not talking about CCM, CUF is the strongest opposition party. There are others in opposition, so why have not you formed a coalition with them, as the Kenyans did with their Rainbow Coalition, and with that they could win the elections?

JLB In Kenya it was possible, but the Tanzanian constitution does not allow forming election coalition between two political parties! However, in 2000 CUF tried it. It was not easy to put it clear which party the common candidate was standing for. If you make a coalition, and you happen to win, the candidate comes into power, but the problem arises how to govern the country or lead the government.

Regarding the constitution, even in the preamble today: Tanzania is still a socialist state. So, you see that reforms are badly needed to change the mindset of the political elite.

IT Then, it is a vicious circle! I do not think that it is possible to change your constitution unless the governing party agrees to; but they do not seem to take this step because they do not want to risk their deeply “fixed” position. How can you imagine your future without such a political will to change the constitution?

JLB We are drafting a memorandum of understanding for a new constitution. We will present it to the voters and to the government very soon. We want to initiate a referendum.

IT How can you communicate your ideas towards the citizens? Is there a real opportunity for you in the Tanzanian political communication sphere to reach out and articulate your thoughts and views?

JLB The media are heavily dominated by CCM. They do not give other parties a chance to get into the daily flow of information. We launched our own party magazine, a weekly paper entitled *Fahamu*. We produce 7,000 copies of each issue per week. It is rather expensive, and we have been trying to make relationship with other media. At least, we would like some articles to be written about us and our activities. Quite recently we got some hours in some radios where they make interviews with our chairman. You know, sometimes they are afraid to give opportunity to other parties. If you want to enjoy the support of the government, you need to explicitly support CCM. If you want to have a job, you need to support CCM. In 2000 I was sacked when I explicitly supported the opposition.

As for other forms of communication, we go out to villages, to meet and talk with the people, to make them understand what CUF fights for. We also develop an Internet site.

In general, I am saying that different views are to be heard and articulated. In our young democracy this is very much needed! But the problem is that the ruling party has no political will to implement a real multiparty democracy.

IT Although Tanzania has been regarded as one of the most politically stable African countries since its independence, any time you have elections, there are riots and violence on the island of Zanzibar. How do you view the whole process from within your own party, which definitely has a stronghold in the islands, especially in Pemba?

JLB Zanzibar was terrible during the last elections. People were ready to be killed, and the government was ready to kill. Many monitoring teams were following the elections with great care. The East African Community (EAC) election observers said that everything was fair. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) monitoring also stated everything was OK. There seem to be some kind of an agreement with the government of Tanzania to save their interests.

IT Do you think at anytime Zanzibar wants to be cut out of the union?

JLB If the union government, which means again that the ruling party allowed this, Zanzibar would go for it; Zanzibar would separate itself from the union. Zanzibar feels to be oppressed, and that former Tanganyika overrules the island. It does not feel that redistribution of wealth is done in the right way! Almost 96% goes to Tanganyika. However, I do not think that this separation would be equal to the destruction of the unity. There are ways for co-operation. I say that three independent governments are needed: one for Zanzibar, one for former Tanganyika, and one for the union, in which Zanzibar is not only semi-autonomous, but has real autonomy. I do not want Zanzibar to be regarded only as a “province” (or region) of Tanzania. A government of national unity is needed, but this depends on the ruling party, which does not want it. CUF says that they should give others responsibility, and make them responsible, too, about the major and fundamental problems and matters of our country. A common political will in this direction must be formulated!

Conclusion As Vibeke Wang underlines, “there has been little commitment on the part of the ruling party to ensure progress towards democratic consolidation other than holding regular multiparty elections (Tripp 2000:193; Hyden 1999:146-147). The system still vests tremendous powers in the executive, and lacks the checks and balances a strong parliament could provide (Ewald 2002:5; Tripp 2000:198), a problem which remains one of the greatest challenges to Tanzanian democratisation.”³

NOTES

- ¹ All data of all the constituencies can be downloaded from the website of the National Election Commission at: <http://www.nec.go.tz/results/2005-parliamentary-election-results-candidates.pdf>
- ² The interview was made on 21 November 2006 at the HQ of CUF in Dar es Salaam by István Tarrósy.
- ³ Wang, Vibeke (2005). The Accountability Function of Parliament in New Democracies: Tanzanian Perspectives. Bergen: CMI Working Paper 2005: 2. 1. From the Internet: <http://www.cmi.no/pdf/?file=/publications/2005/wp/wp2005-2.pdf>

