

News from Ndinji

DR JULIUS K. Nyerere, the erstwhile president of Tanzania who remains chairman of his country's ruling (and only) party, is a remarkable man. He presided over the disastrous implementation of his blueprint for African socialism, with little or no damage to his reputation abroad. To this day Mwalimu ("teacher") pops up on various international committees which seek to put the world to rights. But Mwalimu now has a rival for this role: Dr Cicero B. Nyayaya, the president of the East African state of Ngombia, and known by his people as Filosofo, which is of course the Ngiiji word for Philosopher.

Thursday Msigwa spent a year in Ngombia. On arrival at the seedy harbour city of Ndinji, he received the traditional welcome. "Where are my presents," asked the customs officer, practising his trade under the ubiquitous portrait of a smiling, gap-toothed Brother-President of Ngombia, leader of the Party of the Mutualist Revolution. And Ndinji's Milikinjaru Hotel illustrated one of the travellers'

rules of Africa: the least congenial cities boast the most expensive hotels.

But Msigwa is not one of those professional travellers who compile books out of Africa's four D's - debt, drought, disease and disaster. He is a British accountant and Filosofo's Republic is his entertaining report on his year working as the financial controller of a plantation com-

FILOSOFAS REPUBLIC by Thursday Msigwa

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W2 1FA) £5.95, 123 pages*

pany. It tells us as much about the realities of the continent, whose people have been singularly ill-served by post-independence leaders, as any of the 4-D accounts. He encounters a mad missionary, corrupt party officials, light-fingered servants and a greedy bishop, and discovers that a belief in spirits, benign and malign, is a powerful force in Ngombia.

Unfortunately Msigwa did not meet Nyayaya, whose *Harisha Declaration* inspired a gen-

eration of Scandinavian aid-workers. Nonetheless, we learn much about the man. Like Mwalimu, Filosofo has combined probity in his personal life with well-meaning but inept economic policies. Like Mwalimu, he is eloquent and moving in his concern for the poor, but the reality issuing from this compassion is flawed.

Nyayaya's credo - "We should rather be poor but Mutualist than rich but immoral" - reaches beyond Ngombia. Kenneth Kaunda's teachings on "Humanism" owe much to Filosofo's doctrine of "Human Mutualism," while Robert Mugabe may also be under the spell of Filosofo. Human Mutualists call each other "brother". The correct form of address in Tanzania is Ndugu (also "brother") while Zambians and Zimbabweans prefer to call each other "comrade." But this slight terminological difference should not conceal the intellectual link between Messrs Nyerere, Kaunda, Mugabe and Filosofo Cicero B. Nyayaya.

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