

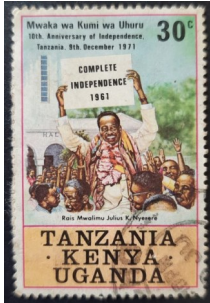
The TAZARA (Tanzania- Zambia) Railway

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The TAZARA Railway was once one of Africa's most vital transportation corridors. It is 1,860 km long, linking the port of Dar es Salaam in East Tanzania with the town of Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia's Central Province. The railway was surveyed and built between 1968 and 1975 to link the Zambian copperbelt with the Indian Ocean. TAZARA was known as the "Uhuru" (Swahili word for freedom) Railway, since it was built to eliminate Zambia's economic dependence on Rhodesia and South Africa, both of which were ruled by white minority governments.



Goods Train, Zambia 1976



Both Tanzania and Zambia gained independence in the 1960s, however, economic development in both countries faced enormous difficulties due to external blockade. In February 1965, the then Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, and Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda sought financial aid from Chairman Mao Zedong to build the railway. On September 5, 1967, the governments of China, Tanzania and Zambia signed an agreement in Beijing on building the TAZARA. China offered Zambia and Tanzania an interest free loan of \$500m to be paid over 30 years. At that time the TAZARA line constituted the largest ever foreign development project that China had undertaken.



In 1970 work commenced on the line in Dar es Salaam. China sent nearly 1 million tons of equipment and materials, as well as experts for the construction, management and maintenance of the railway and the training of local technicians.



Machinery Imports, Zambia 1976

After the construction officially began, China sent a total of 56,000 engineers and workers to the project, with as many as 16,000 Chinese workers on site at its peak. The work involved the construction of 320 bridges, 22 tunnels and 93 stations.



Export of Copper, Zambia 1976

The track became operational in 1975, and the first passenger train arrived in Dar es Salaam on 24 October 1975, the 11th anniversary of Zambia's independence from Great Britain.



Passenger Train, Zambia 1976

In the 1990s, the significance of the railway line began to diminish as Zambia now had other outlets to export its copper. Moreover, in the past decade, the TAZARA became prone to breakdown and delays. In 2011, China cancelled half of the debts it was owed by the TAZARA. The future of TAZARA remains uncertain due to its deteriorating capacity and infrastructure.