

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISES IN UGANDA: REASONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND REFUGEES

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In the past three decades since Uganda gained independence from Britain, the country has experienced some of the worst human catastrophes in modern times — gross violations of human rights, amounting to genocide and generating millions of refugees and internally displaced persons; state sponsored terrorism, dictatorship, nepotism, corruption, ethnicity, civil wars, famine; total collapse of the economy; the disintegration and demise of the state. The magnitude and severity of the crises are comparable to those experienced by Afghanistan, Cambodia, Ethiopia and the Sudan. While both the short and long-term costs of the problems are devastating to the nation as a whole, the weight of the burden differs depending on gender, class, region, age group and the particular period. A number of important questions warrant investigation here: what are the origins of the crises? Why do they persist? What can be done to avert them?

There are many possible origins of violations. Given the current state of research on human rights in the country and the partial nature of literature, it is difficult to isolate any single factor from a series of other factors that seem to be equally important in addressing the issue. Again, causes and results of violations are not easy to empirically isolate. That is, whatever starts the

sequence off tends to change other qualities of life so that from a number of different starting points, following different trajectories of change, comparable results may ensue. This view seems to hold true for all the questions posited. Nonetheless, on the balance of the evidence, this paper contends that while the origins of violations of rights in Uganda lie in a blend of factors, colonialism and its lopsided socio-economic and political structures are central to addressing the question. This is not to suggest that origins of violations may not be located in pre-colonial African societies, but rather, as a territorial unit, Uganda did not exist before European partition of Africa.

These oppressive, exploitative and tension laden socio-economic and political structures, preserved in the main since the colonial era, go a long way in explaining the persistence of the crises. What this means is that the conventional overwhelming emphasis on the roles of rulers (Milton Obote, Idi Amin, Yusuf Lule, Godfrey Binaisa, Paulo Muwanga, Tito Okello and Yoweri Museveni) and their armies in those violations, often obscures rather than clarifies their functions in the broader structures.

This, however, does not mean that these rulers are mere victims who are helplessly constrained by the

dysfunctional nature of the system they inherited and maintained. Admittedly, theirs is a peculiar "autonomous" behaviour which contributes to gross violations of rights and the socio-economic and political decay of the state. Another factor that sustains the culture of crises is external to the country. Firstly, a number of governments, democratic and authoritarian, in the South and North, have directly and indirectly supported dictatorial regimes in the country. Through economic, diplomatic and military assistance the wheel of violence and dictatorship is serviced. Secondly, by treating the crises as essentially internal affairs of the sovereign state, the international community has done little to avert violations of rights. Finally, by maintaining the unjust and exploitative international economic system which violates the right to development, the international community directly violates the rights of Ugandans.

The point is, the economic underdevelopment of the country, which is a result of both internal and external contradictions (past and present) further reduces the capability of the marginal state in promoting and protecting universal human rights. That is, a close link exists between economic development and advancement of human rights. It is on this issue of development as a significant contributor to human rights that the commitment of Western democracies to human rights in Uganda and other underdeveloped countries, is quite suspect.

There are no simple solutions to the crises. Nonetheless, by way of suggestion, this paper maintains that it is vital to cast the problem of violations of rights in the context of the historical development of the country — because it is within such a perspective that the current issue of human rights and refugees may best be understood and tackled.

The international community — democratic governments, regional

and international inter-governmental organizations, NGOs, academic institutions and religious communities — should play an important role in bringing to an end the human tragedy in the country. This means that the international community should play a fundamentally new role — come to grips with human rights abuses in the country and stop treating violations of rights as internal affairs of the sovereign state. It also means that the rhetoric about the “new era” of human rights and democracy should be tested against actual policies and practice. Constant pressure should be exerted on any regime in the country to practice democratic pluralism and protect human rights. Also, it should be remembered that promoting and protecting human rights will require initiating self-sustaining and equitable economic development; a responsibility which the international community should not shy away from. It is on this issue that the question of debt crises and the policies of the World Bank and IMF and their implications for human rights should also be evaluated and tackled. Certainly, it is inappropriate and misleading to create a false and rigid dichotomy between internal and external initiatives, economic and political. Actions on all fronts should take place simultaneously. Unless this role is taken seriously, the international community will continue to address the symptoms rather than the root causes of gross human rights abuses and refugee flights from the country. Therefore it must be emphasized that only when human rights conditions in Uganda improve substantially, will current and future human rights abuses and refugee flows be averted.

This study will briefly cover the period immediately before the era of formal European colonialism up to the present day. In particular it will examine colonial strategies and tactics of socio-economic and political integration of various countries

which today constitute Uganda, the politico-religious wars, discriminatory missionary education, the formation of political parties, religious and ethnic discriminations and the problem of political legitimacy and the role of the military in violations of rights. It is hoped that this approach, though limited in scope, will help explore the questions.

THE COLONIAL BACKGROUND TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

An analysis of the history of human rights violations in Uganda must begin with an examination of the conflict-laden, oppressive and exploitative socio-economic and political structures fashioned and left behind by the colonial regime — because this is where the immediate root causes of contemporary crises may be located. Colonialism by its very nature is inherently authoritarian and exploitative — a flagrant negation of the fundamental rights of the colonized. To begin with, the arbitrary and artificial creation of colonial borders divided families, as well as ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups into different nation states. More specifically in the case of Uganda, this colonial design lumped together into a single administrative unit over forty ethnic groups which formerly had not developed much in common (Karugire, 3; Minority Rights Group, July 1989; Sathyamurthy, 1). Also, the colonial political strategy by which the various political units were integrated, rested on violence and political manipulation.

Four important points are worth noting: firstly, the creation of strait-jacket colonial boundaries separated peoples of the same linguistic and cultural groups. The Banyarunda question, for example, has its genesis in the European partition (Clay, 1984; Catherine Watson, 1991). Secondly, colonialism was essentially imposed by military violence and/or through other forms of manipulation and coercion. This marks the

beginning of the contemporary history of violence and abuse of military might in “overcoming” the problem of political legitimacy in Uganda. Thirdly, by using Semei Kakungulu and his Ganda troops and administrators to spread colonial rule in other parts of the country, a new dimension was added to pre-colonial intergroup tensions and ethnic conflicts. The majority of the conquered subjects in other parts of the country saw the expansion of colonial rule as a vital part of Buganda sub-imperialism. It was therefore not surprising that Buganda rather than colonialism was perceived as the immediate enemy of the people (A.D. Roberts, 1962, 435-50; M.S.M. Kiwanuka, 1968, 603-19; I.R. Hancock, 1971, 305-23; Karugire, 1980); and finally, it was also at this point in history that a new class of political rulers and administrators emerged, whose power emanated almost exclusively from the illegitimate colonial state. Naturally, this ruling class was accountable to the regime, not the colonized masses (Mamdani, 1976).

The colonial policies of divide and rule and “indirect rule” further marginalized prospects for national identity and unity. By granting different parts of the country different political and economic status, the country shared only one thing in common, colonialism. It was also through this type of political arrangement that the Buganda or Uganda Agreement of 1900 became a source of new tensions within Buganda and between Buganda and the rest of the country (Sathyamurthy, 139; Mamdani, 1976, 120-88). This Agreement invariably forced other kingdoms and districts to “gang up” against Buganda during the move towards a federal union. Similarly, the transition from quasi-federalism to a unitary state led to increased tensions and political conflicts (G.S.K. Ibingira, 1973).

In order to understand the structural socio-economic inequalities created by the colonial regime, it is

imperative to highlight the basis of colonial economic policy, as summarized by Captain F.D. Lugard (Vol. I, 1893, 381; cf. Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, 1963) the first accredited representative of the Imperial British East Africa Company:

The 'scramble for Africa' by nations of Europe—an incident without parallel in the history of the world—was due to the growing commercial rivalry, which brought home to the civilized nations the vital necessity of securing the only remaining fields for industrial enterprise and expansion. It is well, then, to realize that it is for our advantage [emphasis in original]—and not alone at the dictates of duty—that we have undertaken responsibilities in East Africa. It is in order to foster the growth of the trade of this country and to find an outlet for our manufactures and surplus energy, that our farseeing statesmen and our commercial men advocate colonial expansion.

Mamdani has this to say about some of impacts of the colonial economic policy:

An analysis of how this country was integrated into the colonial imperialist economy would show that there were two forms of integration, depending on the region we may consider. The first was whereby an area was turned into a cheap labour reserve. This was the migrant labour system whereby the wife remained a peasant producing food in the village, but the husband migrated as a worker to a plantation. He was employed only part-time, the rest of the year, he returned to the village and lived off the food cultivated by his wife. The second term of integration was whereby an area was turned into a reserve of cheap raw materials. You take the above system, with wife producing food and the husband cheap labour, collapse the distance between husband and the wife... Now, in Uganda, there were quite a few cheap labour reserves at the outset of colonial rule: Lango,

Acholi, West Nile, Kigezi. But in the 1920s, as the Belgians increased exploitation in Rwanda, the Banyarwanda peasants began to emigrate to Uganda. In the late '50s once again there was out-migration from Rwanda due to a political crisis. As a result, the British introduced cash crop production in Lango and Acholi in the 1920s and then in West Nile in the 1950s. Today, the only remaining cheap labour reserve is Kigezi. The rest of the country continues to be a cheap raw material reserve. (Mamdani, 1985, 92-6)

A number of points emerge. Firstly, one of the central motives for the colonization of the country was economic. This led to the exploitation and oppression of the people and the creation of at least two economic regions under a single political administration. It is at this point that the north-south divide emerges more clearly as both political and economic. National unity or integration, it should be noted, is both political and socio-economic; neither has been achieved under this structural imbalance. This point is stressed only because non-statement of the obvious has tended in the past to derail debates on unity. Secondly, the colonial labour, land and taxation policies increased the oppression and exploitation of women in particular and the whole society in general; and finally, this lop-sided economic and political policies go a long way to explaining the persistence of famine in Karamoja and other parts of the country and the vicious struggle for political power (Mamdani, 1985, 92-6).

RELIGION, COLONIALISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Historically, it is not paradoxical to argue that religion can be and at times has been a cause of human rights abuse. This is not to suggest that religion is not or has not been a strong moral force for the promotion and protection of universal human rights. In the context of Uganda,

religion has played both roles. This section, however, deals only with violations. The first major foreign religion introduced into Uganda was Islam. In Buganda, Arab traders who came from the East African Coast took slaves and ivory in exchange for guns, clothes and ornaments. Soon this religion became closely associated with trade and political power. The relationship between the new converts and the kabaka's palace (king's), however, were not always harmonious. For instance, in a concerted attempt to curb the growing influence of the converts and Islam from undermining his power base in Buganda, in 1875 Kabaka Mutesa I ordered the execution of about seventy converts. It is important to bear in mind that Islam (like Christianity later) spread in Buganda starting from the top, among the central administrative cadres (F.B. Welbourn, 1965, 5).

On the other side of the Nile, in northern Uganda, Arab slave and ivory dealers, who were based at Gondokoro and Khartoum, in southern Sudan, did not attempt to "rigorously" introduce Islam. The failure of Islam to spread in this region, it has been argued, was partly due to the segmentary nature of the societies and the adventurous behaviour of the fortune seekers (Karugire, 56). By way of relevant digression, it is to be borne in mind that this part of the country suffered most from the slave trade (Karugire; John Beattie, 1971, 67). Surely, it was not because of Islam that the propagators of the religion became engaged in violations of human rights. The fact remains however, that among other things, Islam became closely linked to absolute political power, slavery and slave trade.

At the "request" of Kabaka Mutesa I in 1875, the explorer Henry Stanley asked missionaries to come to the kingdom. It is conceivable that Mutesa equated the whiteman with the power of the gun and it is therefore likely that his prime motive was to check Egyptian expansion-

ism from the north by enlisting the support of the Europeans (J. Taylor, 1958; C.C. Wrigley, 1959; D.A. Low and Pratt, 1960; Low, 1971). As a result of the "request", in June 1877, the Church Missionary Society from Britain ("Bangereza") reached the Kingdom. Less than two years later, in February 1879, the White Fathers, who were Roman Catholics, arrived from France ("Bafalansa").

The arrival of Christianity soon gave unprecedented prominence to religion as a factor in political rivalry and domination in the country. Military battles for political and religious supremacy were fought in Buganda by the three foreign religious groups with their own armies of local and foreign-backed converts. The politico-religious wars came to an end when Captain Lugard naturally threw his military might behind the numerically fewer Protestants (Karugire, 75; R. Oliver, 1956, 56). As a result of the Protestant victory, in Buganda the society became classified in descending order of importance, "Protestant, Catholic and Muslim" (Mamdani, 1976, 216). From 1893 to 1971, throughout the country both the "traditional" and the "new" leadership became firmly allied to the Protestant camp.

MISSIONARY EDUCATION

Education is a fundamental right, not a privilege. However, in all parts of the world, accessibility to and affordability of formal education remains more a privilege than a fundamental human right. To begin with, in the context of Uganda, "from the earliest years of the British Protectorate until 1925...formal education was entirely in the hands of voluntary agencies, mainly Christian missionaries who founded primary and secondary schools and teacher training colleges in many parts of the country" (*Education Policy Review Commission Report*, Kampala, 1989, 1). One of the primary objectives of missionary education, it is argued, was to train a

collaborating or accommodating class to serve the interests of the colonial regime (*Education Policy*). As cited in Low and Pratt the dual political usefulness of this form of education — technical training and ideological indoctrination, is summed up by Lord Lugard in a discussion of a similar form of education of sons of Fulani chiefs in Nigeria:

I hope that they would thus be taught not merely to read and write but to acquire an English Public Schoolboy's ideas of honour, loyalty and above all responsibility. It is by such means that I hope the next generation of Fulani rulers may become really efficient, reliable and honest co-operators with the British in the administration of the Protectorate. (Low and Pratt, 171)

In retrospect, Mamdani concludes that:

This was not education, but training; not liberation, but enslavement. Its purpose was not to educate a person to understand the objective limits to the advancement of individual and collective welfare, but to train a person to accept and even administer the limits in an 'efficient, reliable and honest' way. Such training could most effectively be imparted in a controlled environment. (Mamdani, 1976, 162)

Also, different missionary denominations established schools strictly for members of their religious sects. For example, King's College Budo and Gayaza were for Protestant boys and girls respectively, particularly those of the "royal blood". St. Mary's Kisubi, on the other hand was for Catholic boys — also predominantly from families of the chiefs (Welbourn, 8). As for the Muslims, since they had no missionaries who could provide them with schools, their position became even more precarious. This institutionalized discrimination and inequality was more complex and devastating in the north

and east where provisions of education were poorer than in the south; thus further dividing the country and heightening intergroup conflicts and breeding future uneven competition for scarce resources. It is imperative to indicate that educational discrimination was even more severe for women, whose position in patriarchal societies was already quite oppressive and marginal.

In the 1920s when the Government assumed more direct responsibility for education by providing financial help to missions and establishing its own schools, the situation seemed to improve a bit. However, religious, regional and gender discriminations remained essentially unchanged; government assistance towards education during this period reflects these contradictions (cited in Mamdani, 1976, 16). Since the *Binns Commission* (1951) and the *Report on African Education in Uganda*, drawn up by a committee under Bernard de Bunsen published in 1953, a series of commissions have been set up by various regimes to address the problem of equitable and relevant education (*Education Report*, 2). The situation today, however, indicates that the problem has been further complicated by decades of socio-economic and political anarchy. To make matters worse, the present IMF Structural Adjustment Programme in the country has made accessibility to and affordability of education a far-fetched dream for the majority of Ugandans. Also, in a situation of chronic anarchy, education seems to have lost its value.

INDEPENDENCE AND RETREAT TO DICTATORSHIP: 1962-71

At this juncture, it is imperative to remind ourselves of the close link between religion and politics in the country; this allows for a better understanding of the negative and parochial motivations for the formation of political parties on the "eve" of independence. As M.S.M. Ki-

wanuka (cited in Karugire, 161) correctly points out: "For a period of over seventy years, religion became the springboard to power, privilege and influence in Uganda. All hereditary rulers, all Secretaries-General, all District Heads, all District Chief Ministers were Protestant".

Uganda moved to independence without a political party that was national both in its composition and behaviour — "political parties and their leaders aimed at striking down some section of the country or uplifting some other section at the expense of someone else" (Karugire, 168). For instance, the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) was essentially anti-Buganda and predominantly Protestant (A.B. Mujaju, cited in Karugire). As for the Democratic Party (DP), it was predominantly Catholic and was formed to redress the power balance in their favour. As Karugire puts it, the party was formed "not as a step towards uniting the country under the umbrella of a single national, less still nationalist, party; it was a step towards conforming to the religious polarities that had existed in Uganda's public life since the turn of the 19th century" (Karugire, 162). The Kabaka Yekka (KY) the "King Alone" was formed by monarchists in Buganda who thought that by using the name that had great emotional and cultural appeal in the area, the movement would gain enormous support. The primary objective of the movement, however, was to ensure the removal of the DP from office before independence. Another objective was to carve some political space for the monarchy in an independent unitary state; this was a direct response to Buganda's failed attempts to secede from the country.

Through the *marriage de convenance* between UPC and KY, the DP was blocked from gaining political power. With the victory of the UPC and KY, Dr. A. Obote formed the first independent government in 1962. It is important to indicate that the UPC/KY was an alliance of

individual elites from the two political camps, not an alliance of the regions where supposedly the parties were strong. Furthermore, both parties had divergent views on almost every conceivable subject (Karugire, 182; Ibingira). As part of the bargain, Kabaka Mutesa II became the president of the country; thus combining his hereditary and monarchical position in Buganda with the functions of a constitutional head of state in the country. This conflict-laden arrangement soon produced enormous tensions and conflicts between the Prime Minister and the President. Three important points should be highlighted. First, right from the time of their inception, political parties in the country remained based on sectarianism. Second, the UPC/KY alliance maintained the Protestant hegemony and allowed for the continuation of discrimination against the Catholics and Moslems in the country; and finally, the manipulation of ethnicity and religious allegiance by the ruling elites and those vying for political power became a prominent factor in post-independence Ugandan politics.

Obote's position from the very beginning was extremely complicated; his shaky regime was constantly haunted and entangled by divisive and complex colonial legacies. One such seething and divisive problem was related to the status of the "lost counties", which the colonial regime had seized from Bunyoro and transferred to Buganda (Sathyamurthy, 106; F.D. Lugard, Vol. 2, 1902, 235; J.R. Postcethwaite, 1947). Among other things, it was the referendum on the lost counties that dealt a fatal blow to the UPC/KY honeymoon. Without examining the details of subsequent developments, a number of significant events which occurred included: the dissolution of the UPC/KY alliance in 1964; power struggle between Buganda and the Central Government; the split within UPC; the split within the army between pro-Obote and anti-Obote forces; the

arrest and detention of five cabinet ministers in 1966; Obote's unilateral suspension of the 1962 constitution and dismissal of Mutesa as President in February 1966; the ultimatum by Buganda Parliament ordering the Central government to remove itself from the soil of Buganda before May 30, 1966; the attack on the Kabaka's palace by northern dominated troops led by Idi Amin; the murder and torture of thousands of Baganda by the troops; the flight of the Kabaka Mutesa into exile; the abolition of kingdoms with their special constitutional provisions in September 1967; the "anti-imperialist" move to the left by Obote. From this time on, the regime was surviving on borrowed time. The country had become a police state with Buganda suffering more pronounced violations of rights than any other part of the country (A.M. Obote, 1968; Nelson Kasfir, 1967, 52-6; Picho Ali, 1967/68, 11-3; Akena Adoko, 1967, 10-2; Abu Mayanza, 1967, 20-5; *Uganda Parliamentary Debates*, 1965-66; A.G.G. Ginyera-Pinyewa, 1974, 32-44).

A number of important points should be noted: firstly, the infant democratic institutions which emerged were immediately suffocated by the legacies of colonialism and the uncompromising quest for "absolute" political and economic power. Secondly, the use or misuse of the military to "resolve" internal political conflict continued as it had during colonialism. From then on, the survival of post-colonial regimes would be essentially determined by the army, not the masses of the Ugandan society. Thirdly, the various interest groups which had become disillusioned or disappointed by Obote soon allied themselves with some factions of the army. This alliance of domestic classes was strengthened by the support from some prominent western countries and Israel. The latter group in the coalition "feared" that Uganda was drifting to socialism or communism during the era of intense Cold War

rivalry. Obote's own stand against 'imperialist' penetration of neo-colonial Africa and western support to the apartheid state of South Africa forced the external interests to look for a friendly leadership in the country (Mamdani, 1983). Thus external forces exploited internal contradictions to remove Obote from power in 1971.

As the Obote regime became more dictatorial and repressive, abuse of human rights drastically increased. By using a predominantly Acholi-Langi based military (Amii Omara-Otunnu, 1987) against Buganda, the North-South divide widened. Drafting illegitimate constitutions which protect the interests of illegitimate regimes would now become a prominent factor in the Uganda political and constitutional history. In other words, constitutions, whether suspended or redrafted would have no meaning to regimes which do not adhere to a democratically instituted constitution. Ethnic tensions surfaced within the ethnic-based army, especially after the murder of prominent Acholi army officers — Brigadier Okoya and Col. Omoya. The Acholi-Langi military alliance became a distant and elusive myth.

GENERAL IDI AMIN: 1971-1979

Most accounts of the 25 January 1971 coup agree on one basic point; General Amin, who had been placed under house arrest, upstaged Obote, while the latter was away attending the Commonwealth Conference in Singapore (Ali A. Mazuri, 1975, 110-1). In keeping with the image military coup leaders in Africa present immediately after coups, Amin started off by sounding conciliatory and offered eighteen popular points for overthrowing the Obote regime. These points included: Obote's rule by emergency, detention of innocent people, restriction of various freedoms, corruption in high places, inability to curb *kondoism*, failure to organize popular elections, economic impolicy, burdensome taxa-

tion, the plight of cultivators of cash crops, Uganda's failure under him to cooperate with sister countries of the East African community, concentration of power in the hands of a tiny class of wealthy individuals, domination of all key offices in 'Uganda's political, commercial, army and industrial life' by Langi elements, the existence of a private army under the control of the Cabinet and dominated by the Langi and maladministration of the Armed Forces (*The Birth of the Second Republic*, Entebbe).

Understandably, aggrieved parties — national and international, were jubilant at the overthrow of the Obote regime. In the streets of Kampala, for example, thousands of people celebrated what they thought was the passing of the era of dictatorship and anarchy. At the international level, Britain and Israel rushed to recognize and promote the regime, which was partly their own child. The position of the British government was echoed by the British press. Consider, for example, a position advanced by *The Daily Telegraph* on 12 July 1971, that Amin: *provides a welcome contrast to those African leaders ... who bring African rule into discredit in their own countries ... Dr. Obote who violated Uganda's Independence Constitution and was justifiably ousted by Gen. Amin, was in that category ... Gen. Amin, always a staunch friend of Britain, has been quick to express this in his country's policy. His request now for the purchase of equipment for re-building of Uganda's defences deserves the most sympathetic consideration from every point of view.* (Cited in Omara-Otunnu, 109)

Immediately after his major public campaigns, aimed at creating some breathing space for his regime, Amin embarked on restructuring the military for the sole purpose of political survival.

Having temporarily resolved the perceived threat from within his military, Amin moved swiftly to im-

pose his machinery of repression and coercion on the civil society. As in the military, his first targets were the Acholi and Langi — to the rest of the country and the international community, by and large, business continued as usual. However, in 1972 when Amin ordered forty thousand Ugandan-Asians, holding British passports, to leave the country in ninety days, the international community "discovered" that the regime was violating human rights and formally protested against the decision (cf. Twaddle, 1975). This seemingly contradictory response was essentially due to the fact that the resettlement of the expelled Asians became the responsibility of Britain and the international community. Ironically, at a time of increased state terrorism, overt repression and anarchy, Amin became the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity. A report by the U.S. Committee For Refugees makes a similar observation:

In February 1977, Amnesty International estimated that killings under Amin's regime numbered 40,000 to 30,000 but the UN Commission on Human Rights shelved a British attempt to have the atrocities investigated. In May, Uganda itself was actually voted a member of the commission. It is an irony of this period that, while the international human rights community condemned Amin's massacres and governments deplored his belligerent statements, life under Amin continued normally for many who were in regions not touched by the violence. (1985, 7)

The only factual error in this statement is, by 1977, every region in the country had been visited by Amin's violence. What differed was the degree of violence and those affected by it. It was in this same year that the murder of Archbishop Janani Luwum and two cabinet ministers turned the international community increasingly against the regime. With increased dissention in the military, Amin's attempted "annexa-

tion" of Tanzania's Kagera in October 1978 and Tanzania and the exiles' counter-attack in January 1979, the stage was set for the overthrow of the regime; this was completed in May after the capture of the West Nile province.

Although the "numbers game" in human rights is complex and controversial (cf. Michael Stohl, David Carleton, George Lopez and Stephen Samuels, 1986, 592-606; Robert J. Golstein, 1986, 607-27), the report by The Minority Rights Group (1989, 7) estimates that between one hundred thousand and five hundred thousand people were massacred during Amin's rule. Hundreds of thousands fled the country and thousands were internally displaced. There was also a total breakdown of the economy and social services — including health care and education.

CLASS, IDEOLOGICAL AND ETHNIC CONFRONTATIONS: CONTINUITY OF ANARCHY AND REPRESSION UNDER THE UGANDA NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

After a decade of military despotism under which the mass of the people had to bear the brunt of fascist oppression and continued imperialist penetration, the promise of a return to democracy once again gave rise to popular enthusiasm, even as Amin's false promises to liberate the Ugandan people from the yoke of tyranny that they had endured under Obote drew enormous crowds of jubilant people to the streets over eight years before. But the sufferings of the mass of the people have continued unabated ... (Sathmurthy, 658)

In order to understand why the hopes and aspirations of Ugandans were again betrayed by the ruling elites who filled the power vacuum created by the overthrow of Amin, the formation of the new regime, its ethnic, class and ideological base and political agenda should be under-

stood. The Uganda National Liberation Front which was formed on 26 March, 1979 to "replace" the Amin regime, brought together at least twenty-two diverse ideological, religious and ethnic exile groups (G. Kanyeihamba, 1989). The only two things the group agreed upon were: first, that Amin must be overthrown. In order to do that, there was a need for a loose coalition which would coordinate opposition to the regime. This was also a pre-condition for Tanzania's support which would finally lead to the overthrow of the Amin regime; and secondly, that the power vacuum must be filled by them.

Like its political wing, the UNLF, which consisted of rival clusters of influence, the fighting force, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) was essentially a military umbrella of personal armies without any commitment or loyalty to the nation. The military coalition comprised the personal armies of: Obote and David Oyite-Ojok, Tito Okello, Yoweri Museveni, Akena P'Ojok and Col. Omaria. Since the majority of exiles who fought were from the North, the UNLA was dominated by people from that region. In other words, the military was once more dominated by the North. It must, however, be indicated that people from West Nile, who are traditionally considered part of the North, were not in this northern-dominated army.

With Amin the "common enemy", ousted, an intense and vicious power struggle rocked the UNLF and the National Consultative Council (NCC). As for President Lule, a Muganda, he continued to broaden his power base by strengthening the Baganda clique in the new government at the expense of equally power angry cliques. What Lule forgot was that he lacked the military backing of the UNLA or the Tanzanian Peoples' Defence Forces (TPDF). Moreover, he was just a "consensus" nominee to a provisional presidency. Less than two months

into his presidency, President Lule was voted out of office by powerful factions within the quasi-parliament, NCC (*New African*, September 1979, 12-3; *Africa*, July 1979, 22-3).

Any credible attempt to grapple with the questions of democracy, human rights, refugees, national unity, stability and development, must be informed by the historical development of the country.

Although it was the leftist elements, led by Professor Wadada Nabudere, which were largely instrumental in instigating the removal of Lule, it was "the clout of segments of the Front representing the interests of UPC and FRONASA (led, respectively, by Paulo Muwanga, a Muganda and Yoweri Museveni, the Defence Minister) that really prevailed in the decision to remove Lule from power" (Sathyamurthy, 662). Sectarian politics had once more re-emerged. The governing body continued to use the old repressive state apparatus which it inherited without altering it in any substantial way. As a matter of fact, repressive laws were used whenever they suited the convenience of the ruling elites.

The power struggle between the left and the right within the UNLF led to the election of a compromise candidate, Godfrey Binaisa, to replace Lule. The elevation of Binaisa to power was greeted by demonstrations in Buganda. The point is, with the removal of Lule, the Baganda lost faith in the new administration. More important, Binaisa who had been Obote's first Attorney General, was seen as one whose central job was to pave the way for the return of

Obote. During this initial but major period of political crises, the majority of the twenty thousand Tanzanian troops and the vastly expanded UNLA engaged in gross violations of human rights. Hundreds of thousands of Ugandan women were raped, thousands of people were murdered in cold blood, civilians lost their property and political opponents were either murdered, detained without trial, or forced to flee the country. The situation was particularly bad in two parts of the country, Buganda and West Nile.

In Buganda, the protest against the removal of Lule brought massive military repression on the people. Also in Bombo area, where the majority of Moslems from West Nile had settled, women, children and the elders were murdered, moveable property seized, houses, hospitals and schools blown up by TPDF and the UNLA. In West Nile, those who had not fled into Southern Sudan or Eastern Zaire were massacred by the combined troops. As in Bombo, houses, hospitals, mosques and schools were destroyed in West Nile by the soldiers (*Minority Report*, 9-11).

In a desperate attempt to stop potential candidates from campaigning on party platforms in the elections scheduled for 1980, Binaisa insisted that elections would be organized under the umbrella of the UNLF. This move was vehemently rejected by the UPC, DP and Museveni's FRONASA. As if that was not enough warning of impending danger his divided government faced, Binaisa went ahead and:

committed the fatal mistake of dismissing the army chief (whom he offered the Ambassadorship to Algeria) after making a vain and secret appeal for Kenyan military help in order to ensure Uganda's security. Nabudere and his political followers in NCC, well realising that the end was drawing nigh, simply fled the country ... Binaisa was swiftly out-manoeuvred by the armed forces and placed under

house arrest for several months in the President's House in Entebbe, while the Military Commission replaced UNLF as the interim government pending national elections in December 1980. (Sathyamurthy, 668)

Binaisa was removed from office and the Military Commission led by Paulo Muwanga and his Vice Chairman, Yoweri Museveni, assumed power.

FOGGY ROAD TO DEMOCRACY: THE 1980 ELECTIONS

Under such tense socio-economic, political and military conditions, the 1980 general elections were held. Four political parties participated in the campaigns. The UPC led by Obote continued to receive its major support from the Protestant communities in Acholi, Lango, Teso and Bugishu. It also obtained some support from Bushenyi in Western Uganda. The DP, led by Dr. Paul Kawanga Semogere, maintained its support in Buganda, Western Uganda and among Catholics in other parts of the country. The Conservative Party (CP), led by Joshua Mayanja-Nkangi, an up-dated version of the KY, acquired its tiny support from the monarchists in Buganda. The Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM), led by Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, a small break-away UPC faction, attracted very limited support from young people in Buganda and Western Uganda (Sathyamurthy, 699).

The elections were characterized by intimidation and violence meted out by the UPC against its opponents. As a matter of fact, on many occasions during the campaigns Obote challenged the leadership of the DP to parade its army, if it had one. Clearly, Obote sent two important messages to the nation. First, that UNLA was a UPC army, not a national army; secondly, that the support of the army would be the critical deciding factor in the contest for leadership in the country. It was therefore not surprising that the UPC-

dominated UNLA blocked some DP candidates from being nominated for the elections. In the North, for example, supporters of DP were either harassed or lost their property. The utterances and actions of the leadership of UPC made it apparent that the party was determined to "win" at all costs.

Despite the dubious move by the Chairman of the Military Commission, Paulo Mwanga, to personally announce the results of the elections, the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) Report described the elections as generally free and fair and the results in which the UPC was declared victorious, valid. It was declared that the UPC won seventy-two seats, DP, fifty-one and UPM, one. Existing evidence indicates that either the DP would have won the elections or the UPC lead should have been by a much smaller margin. The point is, the COG Report gave international legitimacy to the regime, not internal legitimacy.

Instead of going directly to the "bush", the DP gave military and logistical support to groups engaged in a war against the UPC government. It was a faction of the UPM, led by Yoweri Museveni that was the first to declare war against the regime. A number of possible explanations may be advanced to suggest why Museveni, whose infant political party lacked support in the country, went to the "bush". Firstly, since he was among the few with personal armies opposed to Obote, he chose to lead a military opposition to a regime that had rigged the elections. Secondly, having tested political power right from the overthrow of Amin until his defeat at the hand of a very popular DP candidate during the elections, Museveni saw only one avenue left for "recapturing" political power: the military overthrow of Obote.

OBOTE II: FURTHER BREAK-DOWN OF LAW AND ORDER

Faced with the intractable problem of internal political legitimacy, Obote had to rely substantially on the insti-

tutions of coercion. Obote's self-inflicted dilemma was further complicated by guerilla wars, especially in Buganda and West Nile. The war in West Nile which followed the overthrow of Amin was devastating to the area. By 1983, it was estimated that there were sixty thousand refugees from West Nile in Eastern Zaire and three hundred and fifty thousand in Southern Sudan. Furthermore, there were over three hundred thousand displaced persons, most of whom had settled areas near the borders controlled by the UNRF. It is also estimated that tens of thousands of civilians were murdered in Koboko, Aringa, Arua and Moyo. The majority of these people, it is believed, were murdered in the war of revenge by the UNLA and government militias from Acholi, Lango and Teso. Reports indicate that the guerillas in this region were also involved in committing atrocities against the civilian population, especially people who did not support the insurgents (*The Minority Group*, 9-11).

In Buganda, three main guerilla movements engaged the UNLA in bitter military battles, especially in the Luwero Triangle. The best organized and most effective of these was the National Resistance Army (NRA) led by Yoweri Museveni. This group comprised the Baganda, Banyankole, Banyarwanda, Bakiga and Rwandese refugees (cf. Watson; Edward Khiddu-Makubuya, 1991). The NRA attempted to close the Kampala-Gulu Road (Bombo Road) by destroying military and civilian vehicles. The result of this military strategy led to the murder of hundreds of innocent civilians travelling between the North and Buganda (Lance-Sera Muwanga and Andrew Gombya, 1991). Supporters of the UPC and able-bodied persons who did not join the NRA in Luwero were also reported killed, abducted or tortured (A.M. Obote, 1990). According to various NRA reports, most major campaigns by the UNLA were repelled with heavy losses of lives and military equipment on the government side.

Since it could not achieve any decisive military victory against the NRA, the UNLA adopted a counter-insurgency strategy of cutting off human and material support for the insurgents in the Triangle. It destroyed granaries, drove people away from Bombo, rounded up civilians (those who survived were put in UNLA and Special Force "protection" camps). At the height of the crisis, in 1983, thirty-six overcrowded "resettlement" camps were identified in the Triangle by aid workers, with a total population of between one hundred thousand and one hundred and forty thousand. After unsuccessfully denying that gross violations of human rights existed in the Luwero Triangle, the government finally indicated in its appeal for international emergency aid that there were seven hundred and fifty thousand internally displaced persons in the Luwero area resettled in one hundred and twenty five thousand nearby camps. Reports of atrocities committed by the UNLA indicate that hundreds of thousands of people were massacred, including those who were in the UNLA "protected" Kikyusa camp. Tens of thousands were reported detained in various military camps, prisons and police cells. Hospitals, schools, churches, mosques and houses were reduced to rubble. Moveable property was appropriated, children and elderly men tortured and women raped (various Amnesty International Reports, 1980-85).

Another group that faced persecution under Obote's regime was the Banyarwanda. In September 1982, the UPC establishment in Western Uganda, under the leadership of the Minister of State in the Office of the President, Chris Rwakasisi, evicted and tortured an estimated seventy-five thousand Banyarwandas from their homes. Some forty thousand fled to Rwanda and thirty five thousand took refuge in UNHCR refugee camps. A number of possible explanations may be advanced for the persecution of this group. Firstly, in the 1960s, the majority of the Banyarwanda (who were Catholics)

and Bahima allied themselves with the DP. Following the overthrow of Obote I, some of them left refugee camps and settled on land in Ankole. A large number of Banyarwanda also joined Amin's security service. However, after the overthrow of Amin's regime, some of the refugees returned to refugee camps because they feared a backlash from the UPC Bairu and people whose land they had earlier occupied.

As a result of their association with the Amin regime, the Banyarwanda were accused of having contributed to the survival of the brutal military regime. Ironically, many "Ugandans" who worked for Amin were freely roaming the streets of Kampala and other cities. As a matter of fact, some of these "Ugandans" had declared their "allegiance" to the UPC and even occupied powerful positions in the country. The point is, in a situation of internal crisis, it is very easy to use refugees as scapegoats. Perhaps a more convincing charge labelled against the refugees was that they were supporting Museveni's NRA. What this charge, however, fails to point out is that most of the refugees joined Museveni's group when the persecution became unbearable (Clay, 17).

As at the end his first administration, Obote's regime would be overthrown by the military. During the war in the Luwero Triangle and following the death of Army Chief of Staff, Brigadier Oyite-Ojok, a big rift developed within the Acholi-Langi military hegemony. Obote's attempts to create a new military alliance between the Langi and Itesot heightened military confrontations within the UNLA and finally led to the overthrow of his government in July 1985.

THE REGIME OF GENERAL TITI OKELLO

The Okello regime moved swiftly and granted general amnesty to all political prisoners. By striking a military alliance with factions of Amin's former army to overthrow Obote, the war in West Nile ended and thousands of refugees returned to

their war ravaged region. The regime also reached a temporary peace with every fighting and political group, except the NRA. From early September to December 17, 1985, the Nairobi Peace Talks, which aimed at bringing the NRA into an interim government with other groups, took place. Although the Peace Agreement was signed under the chairmanship of President Daniel Arap Moi, the cease-fire soon collapsed and war continued between the UNLA and the NRA. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that neither side was really committed to peaceful resolution of the Ugandan conflict.

During this period, violations of human rights continued in areas controlled by the two major protagonists. In south-western Uganda, where the NRA/NRM had established its military and civil administration, those who did not readily lend support to the movement were either murdered or tortured. The NRA/NRM, however, attempted to improve its relations with civilians by meting out summary "justice" to some of its soldiers who did not obey the central command. The UNLA on the other hand, continued with its acts of atrocities; indiscriminate rape, looting and murder. As a matter of fact, the Okello regime had no control over the various factions of the fighting groups it had reached an accord with. During this short period, as Mamdani puts it, Kampala resembled Beirut, a capital city under siege and controlled by different military factions.

THE REGIME OF LT.-GENERAL MUSEVENI

Immediately the NRA successfully fought its way to power, on 25 January, 1986, the massacre in Southern Uganda came to an end. It is important to note that as the UNLA was fleeing the city, hundreds of Acholi — children, women and old people were killed by the NRA and its supporters using "Kandooya" or "three-piece tying" in which a person's arms

were forced behind him or her and tied so tightly at the elbows and wrists that the chest walls were strained and breathing interfered with to a point of fatal death. However, by and large, the NRA remained disciplined throughout the country. As a result of this relative discipline, the NRA gained support in otherwise hostile terrain, the East and North.

This period of discipline, however, soon came to an end as the NRA started raping women, looting, torturing and indiscriminately murdering innocent people in the North and the East. Two points should be established at this juncture. First, after its military victory in the North and the East, factions within the NRA embarked on revenge against people from Acholi, Lango and Teso; and second, the collapse of discipline within the NRA coincided with insurgencies in the North and East. Both the NRA and the various armed groups in the areas continued to attack and kill civilians. As a matter of fact, the same strategies of gross violations of human rights the UNLA had used in the Luwero Triangle and West Nile are being used by the NRA in these areas. Hospitals, schools, churches, granaries and houses have been destroyed by the the NRA. The insurgents have likewise looted, raped and murdered people from their own home areas. *Amnesty International Report* succinctly summarizes this point:

Major human rights violations have occurred in Uganda since 1986 and have continued to be frequent in 1991. They have been particularly acute in areas where the NRA is fighting armed insurgents — and in 1991 there have been especially serious problems in the north — but are not restricted to those areas. When the current government took over in January 1986 it inherited a legacy of gross human rights violations from previous governments. There was immediate improvement in human rights situation in many

parts of the country. Six years further on it seems that the authorities have grown to tolerate a persistent and serious level of human rights violations by the NRA. The continuing abuse of the rule of law suggests that the government no longer regards strengthening respect of human rights as a priority. The government is failing to take decisive steps to prevent NRA human rights violations. The repeated failure to take prompt action to investigate reports of NRA human rights violations effectively means that despite a public commitment to respecting human rights, the authorities in fact condone human rights violations ... Furthermore, it has been government policy to entrust the NRA with a major law-enforcement role throughout the country, at the expense of the ordinary police or others ... The continuing violation of human rights by soldiers suggest that there are significant weaknesses in operational procedures within the NRA and that the army does not regard itself as accountable to the civil society. (Amnesty International Report, 4 December, 1991, 21-2)

The only problem with the report is that it tries to create a false and rigid dichotomy between the NRA and the NRM.

It is important to briefly examine the circumstances under which large waves of "voluntary repatriation" took place during 1987-88 (The Minority Rights Group, 22). As soon as the Museveni regime came to power, over three hundred thousand from Gulu and Kitgum fled to Southern Sudan. Inadequate living conditions in refugee camps and continued military attacks on those camps, forced over two hundred and fifty thousand people to return to the war zones in the North. The notable point is that the repatriation was not based on a perception of improved situation in the areas where refugees had originated, rather it was due to an equally terrible war situation in the Southern Sudan. In other words,

most of these people preferred to die in their home country than in Southern Sudan where many had been killed the Sudanese People's Liberation Army and epidemics.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to show that there is a continuity of violations of human rights in Uganda. The root causes of violations, it has been pointed out, may be found in the oppressive and exploitative socio-economic, cultural and political structures. These structures were put in place by the colonial regime and "developed" by neo-colonial administrations. In a world of increasing inter-dependence, external factors have continued to significantly contribute to the crisis. Therefore, any credible attempt to grapple with the questions of democracy, human rights, refugees, national unity, stability and development, must be informed by the historical development of the country. There is an imperative need to build viable civil institutions; allow for the emergence of democratic institutions and rule; create a truly national, disciplined and productive army; promote and protect universal human rights; and initiate self-sustaining and democratic economic development. While the bulk of these initiatives lie in the hands of the chained and voiceless Ugandans, promotion and protection of universal human rights is the responsibility of the international community.

The United Nations, the Commonwealth Organization, the Organization of African Unity, European Economic Community and other regional and international inter-governmental organizations should stop treating human rights violations in Uganda and anywhere else as an internal affair of a sovereign state. The point is, the practice of "non-interference" in the "internal affairs" of a sovereign state, undermines the authority, effectiveness and credibility of such organizations from addressing gross violations of hu-

man rights. Yet, refugees who flee such repressive regimes become the subject of international concern.

The strong statements made by the Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney, tying development aid to human rights at the Commonwealth and Francophone summits, for example, deserve some credit. However, official declarations of intent will not do the trick. Policies and practice must be consistent with stated position. It is, however, imperative to indicate that Canada, like many Western democracies, has been conspicuously silent about continuing gross violations of human rights in Uganda. On this note, a more coherent and consistent policy than the one applied to Kenya, may help exert pressure on the Museveni regime to open up the political process and hold free and fair elections to be contested by all political parties. The question of acceptable human rights practices must be central in dealing with the regime. In other words, the Western nations should support democratic rule and respect for human rights, not dictatorship and gross human rights violations.

The international human rights groups, and academic and religious communities should pay increasing attention to conditions of violations of rights in the country. Historically, most of these organizations or institutions wake up too late to effectively influence positive change in the country. Also, some journalists and scholars who should expose violations of human rights, have consistently refused or failed to do so because of ideological and/or personal reasons. Surely, without information, the role of the international community in promoting and protecting human rights becomes diminished.

It is common knowledge that there is a close link between human rights and economic development. In that respect, the economic underdevelopment of Uganda imposes further constraint on the capability of the

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state to perform its role in the area of human rights. Surely violence, corruption and militarism affect the development of the economy. At the same time, the unjust international economic system violates the rights of the people's development. Therefore, it is imperative that the international community should critically examine and change the exploitative international economic system.

Also, in this light, the roles of the World Bank and the IMF should be re-evaluated in terms of development and human rights. In other words, we should avoid a major flaw in human rights debates which assumes that there are two separate or semi-autonomous stages in the struggle for human rights, political and then economic, internal and then external. Effective and genuine action now will assure a positive move towards democracy, improvement of human rights practices and economic development. This will help to avert the creation of future refugees.

Note

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