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# THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN UGANDA, 1962-1985

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## **Abstract**

The study of human rights is increasingly drawing a lot of attention in universities and other institutions of higher learning the world-over. But why the interest in human rights studies these days? This paper seeks to analyse human rights crisis using Uganda as a case study. Uganda's turbulent history provides a laboratory for studying human rights crisis in Africa and other Third World areas. Broadly stated, there are two sources of human rights crisis in Uganda. First, is the external or international environment. Second, is the domestic environment. The paper analyses the human rights crisis in Uganda from an historical perspective. The paper comprises of four sections. In the first section, an introduction is provided. Secondly, a definition of human rights is attempted. In the third section, an analysis of human rights violation in colonial Uganda is offered. Fourthly, the post-colonial era is examined in three phases, namely, the Obote I period, 1962-1971; the post coup era, 1971-1979 and the post liberation period, 1979-1985. The paper concludes that unless a radical transformation of the Ugandan state is attempted, genuine democracy and people's rights cannot be realised.

## **Introduction**

There is a dichotomy between the rhetoric adherence to human rights charters and the observance of human rights in Africa in general and Uganda in particular, a clear variance between commitment in observance and the practice.<sup>1</sup> The trend in Uganda has been more pronounced following the attainment of flag independence in 1962.

The case of Uganda has to date preoccupied the attention of scholars, the media, human rights organisations and even governments. Successive post-colonial governments have always been quick to either, as a result, pronounce their commitment to human rights observance, or react to accusations of violation of these rights. Thus, searchers into solutions to the crises have not been wanting.<sup>2</sup>

Scholars are generally agreed that after 1966, human rights violations started, especially the abuse of personal freedom and the rights of association and organisation, as the fortunes of the ruling party were exalted and that of the opposition

waned.<sup>3</sup> During the Amin era, the trauma of the period is numerically recounted and dramatised in the expulsion of 80,000 residents of Asian origin and the murder of over 500,000 citizens of Uganda.<sup>4</sup> In what is commonly known as Obote II, the Luwero triangle tragedy is normally pinpointed.<sup>5</sup> Such exposures, though brief, capture Uganda's human rights record in the post-colonial era.<sup>6</sup>

This paper, therefore, seeks to address the issue of human rights violations in Uganda not as an accumulation of isolated incidental occurrences, not as a documentation of abuse by abuse, but as a patterned interlinked scenario accruing from, or even exacerbated by imperialism. But first, a preview of what constitutes human rights is undertaken, then an analysis of the colonial roots of the human rights crisis and the situation during the post-colonial period. The contention is that in order to understand the observance of human rights or the lack of them, it is necessary to reflect on the concrete socio-economic conditions which nurture them, for human rights begin with breakfast.<sup>7</sup> What then are human rights?

### **What are Human rights?**

Human rights are generally categorised into three. First, is what is termed the conventional liberal conception of human rights born out of Western European ideas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries symbolised by the thinkings of John Locke.<sup>8</sup> This category of rights is also what is referred to as the first generation of human rights (i.e. civil and political rights) and associated with the English Bill of Rights of 1689, the American Bill of Rights of 1776, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, 1789. On the whole, the first generation rights tend to abhor state intervention and in the extreme American version, embody faith in the best government being that which governs least.<sup>9</sup>

The second generation rights are social and economic in character. The social and economic rights accrued from socialist Marxist reaction to exploitation and victimisation of fellow human beings. Unlike the first generation of rights which views rights generally in the negative, in terms of 'freedom from', the second generation rights is more positive as it recognises 'right to' and so advocates involvement in production, distribution and exchange of values. In sum, it is both collective rights and positive rights and its sustenance was buttressed by the United Nations Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural rights, 1966.<sup>10</sup>

Category three is the third generation of rights founded in the wake of the unfavourable situation in which the Third World found itself where there arose a need to redress the imbalance in a rivalry-ridden world so as to enhance 'peoples rights' or 'solidarity rights'. Thus, third generation rights entail, among others,<sup>11</sup> the right to self-determination of a people and a right to economic and social development. It is really a representation of a fusion and an improvement on the first and second rights.

All the three generations of rights appear in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, although variance has arisen over the years in the importance of one against the other. To date, the Third World in particular believes in the right to development as a precondition for the observance of other rights.

### **Human Rights Violations in Colonial Uganda**

Violation of human rights by no means started with colonialism. In pre-colonial Uganda, abuses did exist but the exacerbation of the abuses during the colonial times was systematically executed by the colonial economic exploitation rationale. The rationale embedded in the Berlin Conference on Africa<sup>12</sup> and supported by statements of early explorers like David Livingstone<sup>13</sup> showed what would follow the preamble and meant that from the outset, the role of the 'native' in human rights was marginalised. What Livingstone saw as free labour in Africa giving way to slave labour and what he perceived as the ulterior objects could not have meant well for the African who was now being subjected to conditions which would undermine his rights.

Uganda was declared a British protectorate in 1894 but only after a series of religio-political wars of the 1880s, encouraged by the British through Captain Lugard. Social and cultural differences were not only fanned, but the new religious commitments also divided the people even further. The division legacy thus bequeathed to Uganda by the British application of religion and the consistent use of force or fraud to obtain the subjugation of the colonised Ugandan people are matters which still plague post-colonial Uganda. The British never really tried to establish a nation state, for the obvious reason that effectiveness of British Colonial 'acceptance' thrived on a policy of divide and rule.<sup>14</sup>

In 1900, the Buganda agreement laid the foundation for the exacerbation of the stratification of society along economic lines. The creation of the 'landed gentry' and the belief of the architect, Sir Harry Johnston, that the agreement would enable the Baganda to identify their interests with the support of the British protectorate, provided little basis for an all round good will. The decisive intervention by Lord Lugard in the battle of Mengo in 1892 to exploit existing divisions created by the new religious sects led to the exaltation of the fortunes of Protestant chiefs. Thus in Lugard, the colonial regime had intervened and polarised existing relations, dished out land as gifts for collaboration and even positions of County Chiefs had been given out in a similar manner, on religious basis. Religion, therefore, became a political factor in Uganda, more so in the consciousness of the emerging class of landlords and chiefs.

Human rights observance was further undermined by the introduction of cotton in Uganda in 1903; more especially because of the method employed to boost its

production. Cotton was introduced in order to feed the British Lancashire mills but the manner in which its production was encouraged was by compulsion. The average peasant of colonial Uganda had more or less been driven into production by the colonial state, a matter which was of grave concern to the Ormsby-Gore Commission.<sup>15</sup>

The introduction of cash crops in Uganda, especially cotton and coffee, established firmly the foreign direction of affairs, not created as a response to the needs of the domestic economy. The political needs of the metropolitan state were paramount in any consideration of policy to deal with indigenous affairs. The solution of the British Foreign Office to 'manufacturing' cheap labour in the colony, for instance, was to apply the rod, reinforced by the 1900 Buganda agreement legislation gratefully acknowledged in the Annual Colonial Report of 1901. The hut tax of 3 shillings a year on the African population introduced by the agreement was geared toward compelling the peasant to seek wage employment with the ultimate intention of establishing in Uganda a plantation economy,<sup>16</sup> though the objective was never realised as subsequent events showed. The imposition of hut tax was, therefore, a violation of human rights.

Moreover, in pursuance of the policy of divide and rule, another policy demarcating northern and eastern areas as labour reservoirs to profit the cash economy of the south was promulgated. The deliberate pursuance of colonial policy of dividing the country into 'producing' and 'non-producing' areas earned political capital for the architects. With a 'target force' from the labour reservoir areas as the driving force, the colonial Governor, especially after 1938, encouraged the migrant labour policy for the reason that it was least susceptible to being organised to defend its working interests, its rights, as they were migrant, short-term and highly mobile. Consequently, the benefit for the colonial state was that the objective conditions of migrant labour militated against mobilisation for effective self-determination to threaten the colonial power base.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the direction of the policy was fuelled by the capitalist economic motivation - the employers benefited economically as payment to the labourers was substantially below its value and right to fair remuneration evaded the colonial vocabulary.<sup>18</sup>

The heavy taxation of Ugandan Africans was, moreover, not ploughed into the betterment of their socio-economic life. The bulk of the expenses went into making 'law and order', maintaining the colonial administration and, therefore, keeping the people down. Mukherjee aptly cites a representative example of the colonial expenditure of one of the years thus:

.... one cannot fail to note how little was spent on the economic and cultural development of the people. And in that respect, in the year 1926, which was in no way different from any other year at the time, while 12.5 percent of the total expenditure was on police, prisons and military ..... the combined expenses for economic and cultural development was only 10.5 percent ....<sup>19</sup>

This percentage might not have been exorbitant by international standards, but weighed heavily on the Ugandan peasants who were the producers of wealth and yet they were exploited by the colonial state.

As late as 1951, whereas peasant production was the basis of agricultural production in Uganda, a fact which obtains to date, only 4 percent of the budgeted expenditure of 1951 was ear-marked for agriculture, while only 5 percent was earmarked for education, and for health, 6 percent. Out of the 6 percent, only 0.28 percent went to pay for labour, the bulk of the budget on health benefiting welfare schemes particularly for foreigners.<sup>20</sup>

The point in raising the issue of colonial expenditure is to reflect on the trend in the post-colonial period and to note that with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) engagements, later as instruments of imperialism,<sup>21</sup> and with the recommendations and conditionalities they imposed which almost always, tended towards cutting public expenditures especially on health and education, meaningful discourse on resolving human rights violations experiences difficulties. Almost concomitant with the above observation, over expenditures on the military and para-military organs are probably a derivative of colonialism as a necessary buttressing instrument for the vulnerable state (amidst poverty and squalor) as wealth is siphoned to the metropolitan capitals.

In the military quarters, the foundation of human rights violations was being made as the primary task of the army in Uganda was undergoing formulation. Uganda, it was decided, could not be administered without the backing of military force and the army, therefore, had to be expanded.<sup>22</sup> The substance of Ternam's proposal for expansion was contained in the Uganda Military Force Ordinance of 1898, paving the way for a new administrative structure in the protectorate. The most economic method of administering the protectorate, it was felt, was to merge the military and the civil administration<sup>23</sup> which Commissioner Berkeley made known in 1897, would assist a close and more extended association between civil and military authority throughout the protectorate. Although the arrangement was a transitional one, the lesson derived from it was not altogether lost to the post-colonial establishments.

With the primary role of the army defined and their near predominance over civil authority assured, albeit temporarily, the next object of the colonial establishment was to address the issue of recruitment. Whatever the reason for the British preferential recruitment in favour of the northern part<sup>24</sup> of Uganda, from about 1914, the policy accentuated divisionism and the tensions which were prompted in the post-colonial times were partly due to this policy. Similar to the increasing human rights crises of the post-colonial period, the tensions which the colonial government baptised 'troubles' or 'disturbances' reached monumental proportions increasing by day in the 1940s. In 1945, when 'disturbances' took place, Governor Whitley

recommended setting up a special branch of the Intelligence Bureau of the Criminal Investigation Department with a view to obtaining information on subversive activities.<sup>25</sup> Whitley further suggested the encouragement of social clubs, in the out district, clubs in which politics was outlawed. The repressive measures, special laws and ordinances promulgated, all failed to check the forces of nationalism, to the extent that in 1953, the Kabaka and the ministers of Buganda expressed their support for the demands of Ugandan Africans.

In the meantime, World War II had engaged over 70,000 Ugandans who after being enlisted had experiences in Europe, India and Burma. When the war was over, by the colonial report of 1947, only 3,000 could be employed. According to the report, it was realised succinctly that the ex-soldier was bound to find it difficult to slip back early into the village life he had found adequate to his needs before the war. It was this situation which made a considerable number obtain employment in the commercial sector of the economy. More importantly, their changed world view revolutionised the politics of Uganda.

On the other hand, the political consequences of the 1945 and 1949 'disturbances' manifested themselves in the British supervised 'democratisation' of the Lukiko, and through the Kabaka crisis of 1953-1955, with the emergence of nationalist activities, and the already alluded to World War II effects, the stage was set for independence. Unfortunately, as developments prior to the granting of independence showed, there was little evidence of British commitment in ushering independence to Uganda on a silver plate. During the first meeting of the 1961 Legislative Council, the Governor's speech provided clear evidence of British determination to leave Uganda without a strong central government.<sup>26</sup> The speech unduly emphasized the interest of all parties towards the resolution of nationality and regional differences as a precondition for granting independence, and so tended to fan sectarian claims in the Uganda Constitutional Conference that was to take place later in 1961. Thus, the colonial regime was leaving the country but its vested interests and that of its kith and kin would be left behind. The only way to protect such interests was to leave behind a weak central government which would not be in a position to challenge the guardians of the vested interests left behind.<sup>27</sup> That the 1960 Ministerial Committee was detailed, among others, to specifically address such matters as the preservation of special relationship existing between Her Majesty's Government and His Highness the Kabaka's Government and the Native Government of Bunyoro, Ankole and Toro<sup>28</sup> shows the reluctance of the colonial regime to relinquish entirely its grip on post-colonial Uganda.

Additionally, the 1961 London Constitutional Conference was convened to handle vital issues on the road to Uganda's political independence. That the conference had to take place in London really meant that the self-determination it intended to grant Uganda was in itself a myth.<sup>29</sup>

The venue apart, some of the compromises were done in disregard of the predominant opinion of the conference delegates. On the 'Lost Counties', for instance, Bunyoro insisted that the problem had to be solved by the Conference. In spite of the British 'compromise', most other delegates were of the view that the fate of the 'Lost Counties' had to be determined by the British before the granting of independence.<sup>30</sup> In any case, it was the British themselves who had created the problem. But the voice of the majority of the delegates did not carry the day.

After the politically expedient compromise between the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) party and the Buganda based *Kabaka Yekka* (King alone) party following the general elections of April 1962, independence was achieved in October 1962. The smouldering problems which the British left unsolved were, however, to create the basis of dissent and continued human rights abuse in the post-colonial era.

### **The Post-Colonial Era and Human Rights Issues, 1962-1971**

Despite the granting of independence in 1962, the predominant role of Britain in particular, and foreign interests in general, continued to cast its shadows over the post-colonial state. The persistence of such interests became obstacles both to democratic rights pursuits and to bolstering the country's independence.<sup>31</sup> Nabudere argues quite convincingly, corroborating the harm that the 1961 London Conference (a distant conference) did to exclude the people of Uganda from discussions and resolutions, thereby denying them their democratic right and also preparing the ground for military intervention which further compounded human rights problems in Uganda.

Between 1962 and 1966, however, the literature on the abuse of human rights in Uganda is relatively silent, to the extent that in many respects, this was a lull period.<sup>32</sup> Other scholars writing about human rights in Uganda at the time regard it as one in which most civil and political freedoms were generally respected by the government and the judiciary.<sup>33</sup>

In most of the appraisals of the Ugandan post-colonial human rights situation, little is made of the economic conditions which sustained the observance and which at the same time determined the gradual degeneration of human rights during the Amin period. The Ugandan human rights record, in reality, reflects the wider continental socio-economic and political crisis. Economic underdevelopment poses the greatest threat to the progress of human rights.<sup>34</sup>

According to the World Bank report on Africa, there have been in Africa, three broadly distinct periods reflecting the economy of the continent: 1962-1972, when incomes per capita grew; 1973-1980, a period of stagnation; and 1981-1987, years of decline.<sup>35</sup>

In Uganda, the World Bank which represents the mechanism for hegemony of



Western domination, was invited in 1962. True to its imperialist tasks and objectives, its recommendations were first, that emphasis be put on commodity-producing sectors of the economy. The second area of emphasis involved reliance on foreign states and private capital for development plans, and lastly, the government was to encourage the growth of local capitalists.<sup>36</sup> The gates of Uganda were then flashed open to foreign capital. With the Obote I government lured into Africanisation with the specific purpose of nurturing local capitalists, reactions within the ranks of the UPC, the party then in power, became manifest. The party was divided into acquiescents and opponents. Kanyeihamba has noted the attempt during the Gulu Conference to expel one of the party's leading radicals from its top leadership on the ground that he was too socialist.<sup>37</sup> It also observed that many party leaders felt that it was one thing to applaud what their leader was saying and quite another to implement it. This was prompted by the attitude of the leaders, few of whom looked beyond self-enrichment. The scene was thus set for the exacerbation of division not only within the party ranks as events later proved, but it at the same time engaged the factions into the drive for foreign patronage and a resort to narrow nationalist tendencies. The same race for imperialist patronage obtained in the ranks of other parties like KY and the Democratic Party (DP). The start of the high-handedness in the treatment of political opponents, the preventive detention of individuals and the state of emergency imposed later on Buganda must be seen in this context.

The army was another aspect of the human rights crisis that shaped the history of Uganda. Reference has already been made to the World Bank recommendation for the encouragement of local capitalists, what in the political language of the 1960s, was known as 'Africanisation'. The army mutiny of 1964 was ostensibly in protest against existing conditions of service and a demand for Africanisation.<sup>38</sup>

Whatever may be said about the mutiny of 1964, its ramifications were wide. The mutiny provided rationale for the revision of army conditions of service and the speeding up of the pace of Africanisation within the military. But most significantly, it prompted the revision of Uganda's policy in the international arena. The opposition to British supremacy in the officer corps called for a reassessment of Uganda's policy towards military assistance. Uganda realised it needed to diversify sources of military assistance. It was therefore, decided to extend the links to Israel, India, Pakistan, Ghana and the Sudan.<sup>39</sup> Israel was later to exploit the relationship by helping Amin carry out his coup thereby setting the stage for the gross violations of human rights during the military dictatorship of the 1970s. Internally, the lesson drawn from the mutiny was a balance of military instruments and thus the General Service Unit (GSU) was established to somewhat oversee the army and therefore ensure security of the administration. The GSU was under the tutelage of Israel whose role in the training of the police was also prominent.<sup>40</sup>

Concomitant with the neocolonial drama unfolding in relation to the military, the 'Lost Counties' issue which the colonial regime had shelved began smouldering. In November 1964, a bill for a referendum was passed. The intolerance of the President of Uganda, Sir Edward Mutesa, reflected in his refusal to sign the bill, prepared the ground for confrontation. Independence had only earned for the new rulers a series of problems: unity was fragile, Buganda's fears of being submerged in the new Uganda had not been allayed, while the non-Buganda population remained suspicious. But above all, the economy continued to be lopsided.<sup>41</sup>

The World Bank recommendations of 1962 were at the same time taking their toll. The emphasis on the 1962 production for export had led to the doubling of coffee production by 1969. So did cotton production double. However, there was no commensurate relief because of the foreign exchange shortage caused by the government. Life, therefore, became increasingly difficult as the World Bank perforated government structure.<sup>42</sup>

On December 19, 1969, the Common Man's Charter was adopted by the UPC delegates conference. The Common Man's Charter was reminiscent of Tanzania's Arusha Declaration of 1967. The Charter's major concerns were the increasing urban-rural polarization, continued dependence on foreign markets, persistent neglect of the potential rural-backbone of the country's economy and the growth of new inequalities among the strata of the population. Its intention was to reverse these trends.<sup>43</sup>

Although the economic crisis had prompted the charter, the crisis had a political overtone too. With prices rising and incomes falling, popular discontent surfaced; hence, the attempt to assassinate the President, and the promulgation of the 'Move to the Left' strategy.<sup>44</sup> Criticism has been cast on the effectiveness of the Common Man's Charter. Foreign banks for example, have continued to predominate despite nationalisation. Moreover, nationalisation itself was not seen as total, neither was it implemented in such a manner that it would have made the people gain.<sup>45</sup> In spite of the criticism, however, what is important is that the moves prompted changed perspectives on the basic issue of Uganda's problems. The basic issue was now revealed to be the adverse trends of socio-economic development in Uganda, and as Kabwegyere indicated, the charter in broad terms, professed the rejection of foreign exploitation.<sup>46</sup> It was specifically the implication of the 60 percent take-over of all foreign commercial enterprises which brewed hostility from foreign business and irked Britain. Britain saw the 'Move to the Left' as following the Tanzania example, isolating its puppet regime in Kenya and hence threatening its political interests in East Africa.

Moreover, Obote's scathing attack on Britain's sale of arms to South Africa - describing it as racist - made Edward Heath, the British Prime Minister retort in a manner which sealed Obote's fate, making it certain that the coup against his government in 1971 was already well accomplished.<sup>47</sup> In the meantime, the

increasing pro-Arab stance taken by Obote, appears to have decided Israel's role in assisting the Amin coup. Hence the coup of January 25, 1971 and the subsequent denial of human rights on an unprecedented scale can only be understood in the context of the struggles against imperialism.

### **The Post Coup Era, 1971-1979**

The imperialist grounds for aiding and abating human rights abuses in Uganda have already been established. The economy of Uganda during the period reflected the World Bank diagnosis of the continental economic trend of the time, namely stagnation.<sup>48</sup> With an initially firm British and Israel backing, Amin ruled Uganda with an iron hand. Political activities were suspended, the armed forces empowered to arrest or shoot on sight any suspected opponents and in May 1972, the judiciary and the police were in effect rendered impotent. The series of strikes by workers towards the end of 1971, demanding their rights, was quickly reprimanded and the workers were told to concentrate on economic activities rather than indulging in political activities.<sup>49</sup>

As the fascist state resorted more to brutal means to instil subservience, what is little often explained is the role of external forces in sustaining the regime despite its monumental scale of abuse of human rights which became self-evident. Amin had become aware that within Uganda itself, Obote had substantial support both in the army and nation-wide.<sup>50</sup> He, therefore, relied on outside support especially for the supply of weapons which he badly needed.<sup>51</sup> Amin's conclusions were not altogether without validity. The coup had been greeted favourably by Britain which was encouraged by Amin's pro-British statements. Britain hoped for the revival of its economic interests in Uganda and took the lead in drumming up world support for the regime.

Israel also benefited from the change of leadership and Amin's first state visit outside the country was to Britain but he stopped over in Israel on his way to Britain and at least in the first year, pursued an anti-Arab policy. The significant aspect of the tour, however, was that the regime secured weapons from Britain amounting to £1.5 million and an offer to set up a military academy in Uganda and to provide a loan of £10 million. On his way back, in France, he secured pledges for the supply of weapons to Uganda. Israel also accepted to sell arms worth \$1 million. The Bank of Uganda statistics has evidence that in 1971, imports increased by 20 percent geared towards strengthening internal security and defence.<sup>52</sup>

It is of interest that throughout the first year of the regime, the murders of, for example, the Langi and Acholi ethnic groups so elaborately portrayed by Kyemba,<sup>53</sup> won little attention in Britain and other Western capitals. From Britain, by the end of 1971, Amin could order and be sold medals for some of his officers. The only time Britain and the West felt the regime was not toeing the chartered course was

when Amin expelled the British High Commissioner in Uganda, Richard Slater, who had been his friend at the time of the coup. More significantly, Amin issued a decree nationalising certain British companies and estates in the country under the Properties and Business (Acquisition) Decree 32 of 1972.<sup>54</sup>

The dismay of Britain was especially more felt with the expulsion of Asians. The Asian question came at a time when Britain was already sufficiently troubled by the immigration issue. As the Asian question had its impact on Britain, there was too, the internal dimension. With near total collapse of the economy accruing from the expulsion, economic crimes gained prominence as an agenda for government action. In 1975, the Economic Crimes Tribunal was promulgated with exclusive powers to try those involved in smuggling, hoarding, corruption, embezzlement, overcharging and stealing foreign exchange. With the decree in force, its implementation directly led to the usurpation of the police role as the task for implementation increasingly became an army affair.<sup>55</sup>

Relations with Israel too, reached a low ebb as Amin moved closer to the Arab world from where, hardly three weeks following the severance of diplomatic relations with Israel, Gaddafi of Libya offered Uganda economic and military aid with an estimated £2 million.<sup>56</sup> The significance of the coverage and analysis of the Amin regime's relations with Britain, Israel and later shift to Libya, is to show that the roots of the human rights crisis in the period is ultimately imperialism.

Despite the deterioration in relations particularly between the regime and Britain, the strong interest of Britain in Uganda was not altogether annulled. Nabudere provides a synopsis of the 'fraternity' of the relationship in monetary terms. Against the evidently deteriorating human rights record of the regime, by 1977, the bolstering role of Britain was clear but not surprising as the real interest of Britain was economic profit. In the first two months of 1977 alone, Uganda bought £1,900,000 worth of goods from Britain and most of it went to the army, prisons and police. Official British policy was, in spite of increasing evidence of violations of human rights in Uganda, not to interfere with commerce between the two countries.

Equally vivid was the role of the United States in buttressing the regime of Idi Amin despite conspicuous evidence of gross violations of human rights. The U.S. purchased 20.6 percent of Uganda's coffee in 1973. By 1976, the figure had gone up to 33.5 percent. Figures for the first half of 1977 were 40,918 tons up from the 30,808 tons of 1976. The 'secret' IMF talks in Kampala in May 1977 with Amin and the acceptance to loan the regime £33 million sterling had the American hand.<sup>58</sup>

Within the country, the two intelligence organisations, the State Research Bureau (SRB) and the Public Safety Unit (PSU), which terrorised the Ugandan population, had direct links and support of the U.S. Evidence of training of many of the agencies' staff by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) continued to show well into 1977.

The sensitive nature of the training meant that they had to be either directly controlled or supervised by the CIA. Details of various instruments that the CIA provided for the intelligence are revealing.<sup>59</sup> While the Americans provided the SRB with the necessary spying tools and offered the necessary training to handle them, the British gave surveillance equipment and radios to be installed in SRB vehicles for the smooth functioning of the intelligence organisations.

The international denunciations which contributed to the erosion of support for the regime combined with the efforts of the Tanzanian Peoples' Defence Forces and the Ugandan National Liberation Army eventually removed the regime in April 1979. But the crisis of human rights abuse was not removed from the post-liberation Ugandan situation.

### **The 1979-1985 Period: The Hope that was Not**

Given the traumatic years of the Amin era, Ugandans were more expectant of the peace and progress pronounced at the time than the euphoria they received. They were hopeful of a new era guided by respect for human rights, at least of a civil and political nature. After the fall of the Amin regime, the crisis of the state continued under the presidency of Yusuf Lule, and then during that of Godfrey Binaisa, and later under the Military Commission Government of Paul Muwanga. In 1980, elections were held and amidst allegations of fraud, the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) declared UPC victorious. To COG, the election results represented 'a worthy and valid conclusion'.<sup>60</sup>

The results were, however, not supported by the other parties, namely the Democratic Party (DP), the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) and the Conservative Party (CP). The post-election period in Uganda has been described by Colin Legum as a period characterised by politics of violence. In Legum's view, the violence was intensified by the decision which UPM took, i.e to take up arms.<sup>61</sup>

Whatever point of view is taken in regard to the validity of the election results of 1980, it is important to note that the parties which took part in the elections had significant external support. Bwengye has attempted to show the foreign monetary support given to the various parties that contested the elections. Multi-national companies are said to have rushed to Uganda to assist parties of their choices in the elections. Bwengye himself, the then DP Secretary-General, acknowledges such assistance to the DP from M. Madhivan and the Christian Democrats in Germany and Italy.<sup>62</sup> What can be deduced from the assistance to the parties in question is that the fate of Uganda was already firmly entrenched in foreign interests. The IMF also came back to the Ugandan scene after the elections. It influenced an exchange rate that benefited it as was reflected in the 1981 budget. In April 1982, the government presented to donors in Paris an IMF sponsored recovery programme which was subsequently revised in October 1983. The development plan was to cover three

years and listed about one hundred projects. Donors welcomed the project approach and by the end of June 1985, they had committed a substantial amount of money to the projects.<sup>63</sup>

The IMF commitment provides an interesting case for the study of the dilemma of the human rights crisis in Third World countries in general and Uganda in particular. An element of double standards by the West was evident. But much more interesting, while disbursements to Uganda were being ritualised by the Paris Club as late as 1984, in the words of Elliot Abrahams, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, the human rights record of the Second Obote term (1980-1985), was 'horrendous'.<sup>64</sup>

On another plane, the dual exchange rate introduced in August 1982 was meant to counter-balance the unofficial market, i.e. the *kibanda* market. The 'window one' exchange rate was introduced to import priority products and 'window two' for other products. In June 1984, the two 'windows' were merged. Despite all the measures adopted, the Ugandan shilling continued to lose value against the dollar. The consequence was that the IMF ultimately introduced recovery measures, and adversely affected Uganda's civil servants and industrial workers including those in the large parastatal sector. After the float of the shilling, retail prices eroded the income of those on fixed income.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, after the instigation of the recovery programme, before the close of 1984, conflict arose in the process of implementing the programme. The frustration which emerged as a result of the long-term objectives of the IMF programme reveals the significant role such a programme played in the human rights crisis, especially at the social and economic levels. The fate of public servants was more often sacrificed at the altar of long-term objectives and their living standards degenerated as the idealised goals were stressed.<sup>66</sup>

In the meantime, following the declaration of the UPC victory, the UPM resolved to stage a bush war. Similarly, the other dissatisfied groups like the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM), among others, resolved to overthrow the new government by force of arms. The determination of these two groups, it would appear, cemented the resolve of the post-election government to react firmly and decisively through the army to maintain internal security. In order for Obote's administration to survive, it was felt that a large portion of government budget be allotted to the army. For the year 1981-1982, therefore, the army received about 23 percent of total government expenditure. In comparison with other ministries, the Ministry of Defence had the highest estimated expenditure.<sup>67</sup> In addition, many Cubans were recruited in 1981 and later, North Koreans, to train the army. In 1985, Britain increased its military team in Uganda from 13 to 24<sup>68</sup> at a time, when to the Americans, the human rights record of the regime was horrendous.

On the other hand, the National Resistance Army (NRA), a creation from the

UPM and other fighting groups opposed to Obote, received military assistance and enormous financial support both from Libya and from Lonrhu. The UFM received assistance from various Western countries.<sup>69</sup> In the light of the assistance received by both sides from abroad, conflict was escalated in the 'Luwero triangle'. These external links heightened violation of human rights of a civil and political nature.

### Conclusion

Mazrui<sup>70</sup> has noted that no country in Africa has had a wider range of Heads of State than Uganda and yet in reference to the human rights crisis, there has been no abating. By 1985, leaders had failed to answer the expectations of the people. External factors such as imperialism and the activities of financial agencies such as IMF were factors in the human rights crisis; so were internal factors such as heightened class struggles, nationality interests, collaboration with imperialism, etc. Finally, unless a radical transformation of the Uganda state is attempted, genuine democracy and people's human rights cannot be realised. Additionally, human rights education becomes imperative.

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### Notes.

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