

# *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda*

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## *Introduction*

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Why write another book on the Amin regime? The bookstalls are already full of books that thrive on the sensational, detailing the dictator's exploits in violence and sex. Like mindless computers, the authors of such books add up the number of deaths, tortures, assaults, robberies, wives, concubines and rapes indiscriminately, because they have market-value. Even a people's suffering is subject matter for the profit sharks. Such writing is, however, not simply in bad taste; it cannot be ignored or laughed off. It contains a definite message: the sensational twist hides the ideological content.

The trick is quite simple: a book on the Amin regime becomes a book simply on Amin, and instead of political analysis, we get an anecdotal biography. The author obscures the forces that brought Amin to power and kept him there for eight long years because his unstated premise is that fascism was no more than the person of Amin. The result of such 'scholarship' is, now that Amin is gone, though not the forces that brought him to power, the people are disarmed against a possible revival of fascism. But if the beneficiaries of fascism are obscured, an important question still remains: who was responsible for Amin? This is their unstated conclusion: the responsibility lies either with 'fate' (Ugandans are simply unlucky; you can't do much about it!) or with the people, who must be ignorant, cowardly, or both. This, the author implies, is what happens if Africans are left on their own. After all, he or she insinuates, was not Amin a purely local phenomenon, his political life extended at most by Arab (Libyan) or African (Kenyan) assistance?

Such is the 'scholarship' nurtured by the monopoly publishing houses and their 'sole agents' in our countries. Whether it is in the form of yellow journalism or respectable academia, this tradition is tied together by the thread of a single argument: blame the victim!

But our author will never admit this, not even with a whisper. On the contrary, he will lay claim to *neutrality*. He will argue that his interest is confined only to *facts*. But *which* facts? He will not say.

The author of this book makes no false claim to neutrality. Why false? Because *no* writer on social issues can be non-partisan. Writing about society is not like watching birds. The birdwatcher does not belong to any of the species he or she investigates – and classifies. The scientist in a laboratory has no natural preference for nitrogen over hydrogen or carbon over sulphur. But such is not the case with one who seeks to analyse society. An observer of society is part of what he or she

investigates. He is either a peasant, a worker, a student, a teacher, a trader, an industrialist, a soldier, you name it – but he cannot be all of them or none of them. In our society, all these groups divide into two camps: the oppressors and the oppressed. Each camp has its own interest, for or against oppression. Every social investigation either exposes or obscures that system of oppression. Every writer belongs to one of these great camps by the stand he takes: for or against oppression.

So, let there be no false claim to neutrality. This author proclaims his partisanship from the roof-tops: he is anti-fascist and pro-people.

This is not to ignore the people's suffering. But also not to turn it into cheap sensationalism. The point is to *explain* it. To examine the past to put it at the service of the present and the future. To dissect every nerve and muscle of fascism so as to identify the *conditions* and *forces* that made it possible so that we may be in a position to build a movement to identify, isolate and defeat these forces.

This study forms the first part of a project on transnational corporations (TNCs) in East Africa. But since TNCs are simply one of the many forms in which foreign interests organize themselves, to focus on their activities alone would produce a one-sided, even misleading investigation. A comprehensive analysis requires investigating all the forms which foreign intervention takes in our countries. It requires a focus on the question of imperialism itself.

Amin did not drop from hell or heaven. He was the product of Uganda at a definite stage in its history, subject to definite influences. The Ugandan historical background, from colonialism to neo-colonialism, is the subject of the first part of this study.

My object is to investigate the relation between fascism and imperialism, and although the emphasis is on the latter, it is not possible to understand this relationship without analysing the former. The second part hence focuses on the internal character of the Amin regime: the nature of fascism in Uganda in the seventies. Part Three is the core of the study, highlighting the role of different imperialist powers, not only in ensuring the survival of the regime, but also in guaranteeing its downfall.

This study will have succeeded if it dispels the myth that the Amin regime was just a local affair. Not only was the fascist regime the bitter fruit of Uganda's modern history, a history of imperialist oppression and exploitation; it could not have stayed in power for eight long years without the support of US and Soviet-led camps. This is my contention. Let the people read and decide.

## Part One

### *The Historical Background*

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# 1 *Colonialism and Anti-colonialism*

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Why were the people of Uganda colonized? In the struggle between two contending forces – British imperialism on the one hand, and the peoples who inhabited the lands that colonialism later demarcated as Uganda on the other – why did the former triumph?

Every peasant knows that British imperialism possessed, and still possesses, superior weapons. What he knows less is that the society that produced these weapons had concentrated most of its people in towns and cities, around workshops and factories; it was an industrial society with a level of organization and technology in which an hour of a worker's labour produced goods of a value that far surpassed what a Ugandan peasant could produce in days. The wealth and power of the owning classes in Britain was based on the advanced industrial organization of British society.

The strength of British imperialism was only one aspect of the colonial relationship. The other aspect was the weakness of our people. Whatever the differences in their level of social development, the colonized peoples had mainly an agricultural mode of existence. The world of the peasant was very different from that of the industrial worker. Here, people were scattered in the countryside, and towns were few. The few towns that existed were not industrial hubs but centres of trade or administration. The relationship between man and nature was heavily tilted in favour of the latter – man worshipped nature. When man thought of controlling nature, it was mainly in fantasy, magic and traditional tales. A person's social relations extended no further than the narrow circle of kith and kin, and, correspondingly, his social outlook was circumscribed and parochial.

While the people were scattered in smallholdings, their rulers were locked in endless petty conflicts. In the kingdoms of the south, the great chiefs fought one another for a share of the spoils and for control of the throne. It had been no different in feudal Europe, but in the late nineteenth century Europe was no longer feudal – it was capitalist.

When the European colonial powers came to Africa, they found feuding chiefs ready to be patronized and supported against local rivals, only to be subdued after 'victory'. As a consequence, in Buganda the big chiefs came to be divided into factions, each taking its name from a foreign 'protector': the Ba-Inglesa were allied to Protestant England, the Ba-Fransa to Catholic France.

The colonial policy of divide-and-rule could only have been fostered in a society where divisions existed in the first place. The revolt against colonialism was first and foremost a struggle for unity among the colonized. From popular resistance to colonialism in the early stages, this revolt later developed into a struggle for political sovereignty. It was, nevertheless, a struggle under new conditions created by colonialism itself, conditions which were far more favourable to carrying out this task than had been the case in the nineteenth century.

### The economics of colonialism

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the 'Scramble for Africa' was at its height. Imperialist powers crowded into the continent. Bit by bit, through conflicts and agreements, the continent was sliced into the domains of rival imperialist powers.

The Anglo-German Agreement of 1890 brought Uganda into the British sphere of influence. A trading company by the name of the Imperial British East Africa Company was given a royal charter to trade with, and administer, Uganda. Three years later, by the Uganda Agreement of 1893, Britain took full control of the country's administration, and declared it a 'protectorate'.

Who was being 'protected' and from whom? Certainly not the people of Uganda; surely not from British imperialism. But the term was not quite meaningless. It meant that henceforth British interests in Uganda would be protected from the interests of rival imperialist powers. But real protection for the interests of imperialism in Uganda could not come from a paper agreement, nor from the physical presence of the British in the colony. The long-term interests of imperialism in Uganda could only be protected by a socio-economic and political system that would tie Uganda up in the web of imperialist interests.

All political power is directed to specific economic ends, and there is no such thing as power as an end in itself. The power of the colonizer served the interests of the colonizer; in the case of Uganda, the first priority was to turn the country into a reservoir of cheap raw materials for British industry, and consequently, a market for its finished goods. Having established the mechanism of exercising political power, Britain proceeded to reorganize economic life in Uganda to suit its interests. Through administrative and economic measures, the peasant's time and land were divided in such a way that he would produce crops for his own consumption, and export crops for British industry.

The main reason behind the introduction of cotton in 1903 was the 'cotton famine' in the Manchester textile industry following the American Civil War. Similarly, it was the alarm sounded in Britain about its over-dependence on the US-dominated South American

market for its coffee supplies that led the colonial state to increase coffee production in Uganda in the 1930s. Is it any surprise that these two crops accounted for over 80 per cent of Uganda's exports by independence?

While the raw-material base was developed in Uganda, the manufacturing industries which turned these commodities into finished products were based in England. Attempts by other capitalists, such as the Indians and Japanese, to invest in Ugandan industry were officially discouraged. The little manufacturing that developed in the country was to service the export-import economy and the consumption needs of resident administrative and business interests. Cotton ginneries and coffee processing works reduced transport costs and protected the quality of the raw material. A network of repair shops serviced the road and rail equipment needed to transport the raw material to the coast. Building materials, such as cement and brick, had to be produced locally because their high weight-to-value ratio made importation uneconomic. Bakeries, butcheries, creameries and light industrial plants providing soft drinks, ice cream and beer produced perishable commodities for consumption by the middle classes. Local crafts which had existed before colonialism were destroyed either through administrative measures, or by competition from cheap foreign products. These crafts included the mining and smelting of iron for the production of hoes, the basic instrument of labour in the local economy. Walter Rodney observes that the African peasant went into colonialism with a hoe, and came out of it with a hoe. He should have added that the hoe the peasant went in with was locally manufactured; the hoe he came out with was imported!

For an economy based on 'export-import', foreign trade was the lifeline of colonial Uganda. This trade was controlled, in the main, by British export-import houses such as Mitchell Cotts, Mackenzie, Dalgety and A. Baumann, and was serviced by British banks: Barclays, National and Standard. Through their numerous trading and financial operations, these concerns controlled and siphoned out the bulk of the country's investible surplus.

Uganda's banking system and foreign exchange control were linked to those of Britain through the East African Currency Board, and the London headquarters of locally established British banks. For every shilling of legal tender issued by the currency board in East Africa, a shilling's worth of gold had to be deposited with the Bank of England as reserve. Because of this mechanism, a large proportion of Uganda's, and East Africa's, investible surplus was unavailable for local investment. The commercial banks were also required to deposit reserve funds with their headquarters. In 1952, for example, these banks had balances worth Shs. 177.6 million abroad. Even without taking into account the gold deposited with the Bank of England, this money alone represented

as much as 22 per cent of Uganda's total exports for that year! This heavy and continuous drainage of our resources was at the expense of the real growth of our economy. It heavily undercut local savings, local investment and, therefore, local accumulation. The result was that any major investment had to rely on foreign 'aid' or foreign investment to be realized. Such was the case when, following the post-Second World War crisis in the British economy, a textile industry was set up in Uganda to undercut Japanese and Italian imports into East Africa. The bulk of investment and technical personnel for the industry had to come from outside.

The education system also served the ends of British colonial policy: the emphasis was not on technical studies but on general elementary education. Less than four per cent of the African pupils enrolled in educational establishments in 1949 were in teacher-training, technical or vocational post-primary schools. The intelligentsia produced by government and mission schools were faithful admirers and executors of the British system; they were hardly the type of people needed as agents of economic growth in our country. A satellite economy cannot but breed a satellite mentality.

In 68 years of colonial rule, Britain systematically cultivated and firmly established an intricate system that would keep Uganda dependent on imperialism, British or otherwise, even after political independence. Britain was the main outlet for Uganda's exports, and the main source of imports of essential goods and services; Britain was the source of technology and of investment funds. An entire stratum of our society—importers, exporters, commercial farmers, big bureaucrats, import-substituting industrialists, and an associated intelligentsia—was nurtured to act as a conveyor belt for this satellite economy, whose fortunes were tied up with British imperialism and the imperialist network. As a popular anti-colonial saying goes, if they sneezed in Britain we would catch a cold in Uganda!

### The politics of colonialism

The political impact of British rule was two-sided. It had a conscious side which the colonialists sought to bring about wilfully and methodically. This involved exploiting whatever divisions existed among the people, building on these, and multiplying them with a view to dividing the people further, and winning over a small minority as junior partners in sustaining the external domination of Uganda. Colonialism had an unconscious side, too, an unintended consequence of colonial policy. Born out of the common oppression of the people, this side created new conditions for realizing the unity of the people on a new basis: anti-colonialism.

The starting point of the colonial politics of division was the very manner in which boundaries of sub-Saharan states were drawn up at a conference in far-away Berlin in the late nineteenth century. These demarcations reflected the balance of power between European imperialist countries, not the historical processes within the continent. The result was that a single arbitrary act brought within the fold of one country peoples at different levels of social development and without close historical contacts, while splitting nationalities and tribes into, or among, several countries. This state of affairs provided a most favourable starting point for the colonial tactics of divide-and-rule which were applied in an all-round manner. To pit one region against another, one nationality against another, one religion against another, and one race against another to ensure the unity of the rulers and the division of the ruled—that was the conscious purpose of colonial policy. We can see this clearly by analysing the organization of both the administrative and coercive arms of the colonial state structure, and of economic life in the colony.

Administratively, the colonial power created a social class which acted as an instrument of colonial rule, and whose socio-economic status was raised sufficiently above that of the majority so that they could act as shock-absorbers. In the process, the country was divided into two. Where social and political inequality had already developed in the pre-colonial period, such as in the kingdoms of Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro, Busoga and Ankole, the British simply maintained the most pliable of the previous rulers as agents. Where no institutionalized authority had developed, mainly in the north and the east, colonialism introduced its agents from without.

The administrative system was first established in Buganda. The 1900 Agreement won over the majority of great chiefs by giving them land grants measured in square miles, and entrenched religious divisions among them by favouring Protestant over Catholic over Muslim chiefs. The resulting hierarchy of landlord-chiefs, from the parish up to the county level, all paying homage to, and taking orders from, the colonial government, was basically Protestant. Once established, this 'Buganda system of administration' was extended to the rest of the country. Those Baganda who functioned as colonial instruments received land grants and appointments as chiefs even outside Buganda. They were later withdrawn in the face of mounting popular resistance. Buganda-type 'agreements' were signed with traditional rulers in the other kingdoms, while local chiefs were set up in the remaining districts. But, even in its final form, the local personnel for the central administration were mainly recruited from the Buganda Protestant establishment. Even in the provincial and district administrations, chiefs were drawn mainly from converts to Protestant denominations. In the colonial period, protestantism was a state religion.



The army and the police were also given a pronounced sectional character. At the outset, Lugard used, at the Battle of Mengo, Nubian troops which Emin Pasha had originally deployed in northern Uganda. When these mutinied, troops were brought in from India to restore order. When larger numbers were required to subdue the resistance of other nationalities so that colonial boundaries could be enlarged, a Baganda army was organized under the 'loyal' General Kakungulu. But when the focal point of anti-colonial resistance shifted to Buganda, where peasants rebelled time and again against colonially-appointed landlord-chiefs, this same army was reorganized with recruits from the north of the country. The colonial view that northerners were 'martial' peoples was simply racist hogwash; the simple truth was that northern peasants were put in uniform to crush the resistance of the southern peasantry.

The north-south division of the country was further entrenched by the way economic life was organized in the colony. Building upon pre-colonial differences, Britain turned the southern part (Buganda, Busoga and Ankole) into cash-crop growing areas. But cash-crop production was officially discouraged in northern areas (West Nile, Acholi and Lango), and in Kigezi in the west which were developed as labour reserves, from whence were recruited not only soldiers and policemen, but also workers for factories and plantations in the south.

In the commercial sector, Britain encouraged the entry of thousands of immigrants from India. Legally barred from owning land, they were purposely channelled into commerce. There were two reasons behind this move. First, Indian merchants who controlled the overseas trade of nineteenth century Zanzibar traded in British commodities. Their penetration into the newly conquered East African inland territories would hence be an extension of the market for British merchandise. Secondly, if the main trading group came from outside the region - from another colony - it would have little historical contact with the colonized masses. The colonized trader learns his nationalism in the market place; his anti-colonialism is a demand for control over the national market. But a non-national trading class which was isolated from the people would fall back on the colonial state for support; it would be politically neutralized. And so it was.

Every institution touched by the hand of the colonial state was given a pronounced regional or nationality character. It became a colonial truism that a soldier must be a northerner, a civil servant a southerner, and a merchant an Asian. Ironically, the very rule which sought to divide the people, to prolong its own life, created some of the very conditions necessary for the unity of the same people in the long run.

The vast majority of Ugandans are peasants. Besides growing food for their own consumption, all had to grow something for export to overseas monopolies. When it came to selling his cotton or coffee, every peasant

confronted government-set prices and monopoly-buying associations. High profits for the associations and high revenue for the government meant low prices for the peasants. Even before marketing boards were created in the post-war period to squeeze the peasant dry so that Britain's international economic position might improve, a peasant was paid only 39.8 per cent of the export price of cotton, and 39.6 per cent of the export price of robusta coffee. The wealth of the property-owning classes and the revenue of the government derived from the sweat of the peasantry. This fact, more than any other, accounted for the unity of the large mass of peasants, regardless of nationality or religion. This unity took many varied forms. The main economic association, though, was the co-operative movement. First formed in the 1920s to struggle against monopoly exploitation, co-operatives brought together different strata of the peasantry and even some large commercial farmers. By 1961 there were 1643 such societies with 252 378 members.

Not only was the world of the peasant growing, a new type of social group was also being created. This was the working class. Its growth went hand-in-hand with the expansion of commodity production. Roads and railways converged from centres of commodity production to the towns, where commodities were accumulated for export. Kampala was a cotton town until the 30s and then a coffee town, too. Cotton ginneries, coffee pulpries and tobacco factories were constructed to process these raw materials for export. The working class grew up in the truck depots and railyards, factories and godowns, quarries and mines, the municipal works and plantations. This was a class that was gradually breaking its old ties to the land, progressively meeting on common ground, step by step becoming disciplined by the whip of a common employer, and learning in the process the art of organizing itself into unions to protect and further its common interests. The first important union was that of motor drivers, the Buganda Motor Drivers' Association, formed in 1939. By 1961 there were 47 trade unions with 39 862 members. Though small in numbers, this class had great political potential because of its organizational skills and social outlook. It was to play a crucial role in the anti-colonial struggle.

With the growth of the commercial economy, there developed a third social group, gradually detaching itself from the mass of the peasantry. It was found in the most varied occupations. What linked its members socially and economically was the ownership of small property, or the possession of jobs that gave them comparable social status. These small proprietors (the petit bourgeoisie) were found in production (rich peasants in the countryside, independent craftsmen in urban areas), in trade (retail traders in the town and country), and in administration (clerks, clergy, interpreters, teachers and technicians). Severely constrained by monopoly associations of wholesale traders and crop buyers, by government policies such as trade and crop-buying licences

favouring big property-owners, and by official racial practices, the small proprietors had their own specific grievances against the colonial order. From their ranks, particularly from the intelligentsia, came the initiative to form the first political associations and, later, political parties for an organized struggle against colonialism.

The only social group which did not take part in the anti-colonial struggle as a class were the big proprietors (capitalists) and their counterparts in administrative and social life. These were the owners of processing industries, big businessmen in wholesale trade, big chiefs and wealthy professionals. It is not that they had no grievances against the colonial order. Certainly, in a colony where British banks and British industries controlled the key centres of the economy, their opportunities for further growth were severely constrained. But among the colonized, the capitalists had the most to lose in any anti-colonial struggle. The main aspect of their relationship with the colonial rulers was hence one of collaboration. Their political attitudes ranged from ambivalence to the anti-colonial struggle, to outright collaboration with the authorities.

Common conditions beget a common consciousness, and when these are conditions of oppression and exploitation they beget a consciousness of struggle. The development of this consciousness was not, of course, even throughout Uganda; the conditions that gave rise to it were themselves uneven. Also, the new developed out of the old. A common anti-colonial consciousness developed within nationality and religious bounds at the same time as it shed these, little by little.

#### *The national movement*

From the time British colonialists stepped on Ugandan soil, they were resisted by the people. Over time, this resistance grew into a national movement against colonialism. The national movement was a coalition of classes. The point of unity was a common interest in ending colonial rule, but these classes did not have the same interest in combating colonialism. There were those who only wished to step into the shoes of colonial administrators and inherit their privileges, while keeping intact the system of imperialist oppression and exploitation. Then there were the popular classes, the workers and peasants, whose demands required nothing less than the uprooting of the whole system created by imperialism.

The different interests led to a sharp conflict in the national movement on three key questions: which class would lead the national movement; what would be the demands of the movement; and what methods of struggle would be employed to realize these demands? The key question was that of leadership; as leadership changed hands, the national movement changed course.

The anti-colonial movement went through three stages. The first was the early resistance to the establishment and consolidation of colonial

rule. Leadership of resistance movements came from one or another section of pre-colonial rulers from different nationalities. In the second stage, the leading tendency was that of compromise. It was articulated by the upper sections of the petty bourgeoisie, who wanted petty reforms which would allow them room for growth in the new colonial order. The third stage was that of militant nationalism. It saw the rise of popular movements which threatened the very foundations of the colonial order.

Early resistance to colonialism was localized and divided; it lacked a clear forward-looking orientation. It began with the resistance of patriotic kings and chiefs, such as Muwanga in Buganda and Kabalega in Bunyoro, to the very establishment of colonial rule. When a colonial administration was set up, resistance continued, with leadership shifting to clan heads. Non-cooperation with the colonialists was built up into active opposition and, finally, erupted into armed revolt. Examples are many. The Banyoro rose up in 1905, and then again in 1907. In Kigezi, violent opposition surfaced in 1914 and 1915. The tenant peasantry in Buganda fuelled the Bataka movement in the early 1920s. But the early resistance movements failed to unite into a single national force. The only struggle to cross nationality boundaries was the Lamogi Rebellion of 1911-12 which began in Acholi and spilled over into Lango and Teso. These movements lacked a clear direction for two reasons: when they occurred, the division of the people into tribes and nationalities was still as sharp as it had been in the pre-colonial period. The people had yet to take steps on the road which would gradually forge different tribes and nationalities into a single nation. This weakness was compounded by the character of the movements' leadership. The leaders in the first phase were kings and chiefs who wanted to preserve the independence of their kingdoms and tribes. In the second phase, leadership came from clan heads who had their own special reasons for opposing colonialism. Unlike those traditional kings and chiefs who collaborated with the British, they had been denied positions in the new colonial administration. Instead, they were displaced by missionaries, the ideological wing of colonialism. Clan leaders thus tended to glorify the days before colonialism, when they enjoyed petty privileges, as a golden age. They wanted to return to the past, not to create a new future. Leaders who wanted to return to the days before colonialism naturally took nationality and tribal divisions for granted. They could not forge a united movement. For a national movement to arise, the people's struggle had to be led by a class with a forward-looking and national outlook.

A new situation developed after the First World War when colonialism created a commodity-growing peasantry. No matter which part of the country they came from, peasants had two common demands: an end to monopoly exploitation based on unequal exchange, and an end to oppression by chiefs appointed by the colonial administration. At the

same time, colonial exploitation gave rise to two other classes capable of leading the growing national movement: the petty bourgeoisie and the working class. Only the petty bourgeoisie developed its own political organizations in the period before independence. The working class had freshly moved out of the countryside into the towns, and had barely become organized into trade unions; it had no independent political voice, no party of its own, and was hence compelled to follow the leadership of another class. It was a set of tendencies from within the petty bourgeoisie, and the struggles amongst them, that mainly determined the direction taken by the national movement.

Between the two world wars, two different tendencies, both from within the petty bourgeois class, developed within the national movement. The first was a tendency towards compromise. The second was militant nationalism.

The first anti-colonial organizations developed among the upper section of the petty bourgeoisie. This happened in the 1920s and 1930s. What was remarkable about these organizations was that they never tried to mobilize popular support; they kept to themselves. Their demands were equally narrow, confined to requesting equal opportunities with colonialists in education and employment. Their method of struggle was also correspondingly polite; they addressed petitions to the colonial government; they requested; they never demanded.

Examples of such organizations were the Young Men of Buganda, the Young Men of Toro, the Young Men of Busoga, and the Uganda African Welfare Association. Without any base among the rank and file, these organizations posed no threat to colonialism: they were simply ignored. Their failure opened the way for radical nationalists with a popular set of demands and militant methods of resistance.

Militant nationalists drew their strength from peasants and workers, whom they organized into co-operatives and trade unions. Besides claiming the right to do so they also demanded higher prices for cotton and coffee, co-operatives to market these, and higher wages for workers. These were essentially anti-monopoly demands. Militant nationalists refused to be chained by the narrow confines of colonial legality; instead of writing polite petitions, they organized mass demonstrations, strikes and boycotts. Leading militant nationalists of this period included Ignatius Musazi and Semakula Mulumba, who organized the Uganda Farmers' Union; James Kivu, who formed the first trade unions; Father Spartus Mukasa, who led the African Hellenic Church in opposition to the colonial missionary societies and churches. Their orientation was both nationalist and internationalist. Mulumba joined hands with the Soviet Ambassador at the UN to expose British colonial exploitation and oppression before the peoples of the world; Kivu co-operated with socialists in Britain in opposition to British imperialism.

As the national movement grew, its centre of gravity moved to

Buganda, for three reasons. First, for a long time British colonialism had followed a deliberate policy of turning the north into a reserve of cheap labour and the south into a reserve of cheap raw materials. The south, and particularly Buganda, thus emerged as the centre of commodity production in the country. The petty bourgeoisie and the commodity-growing peasantry were concentrated here. Secondly, between the two wars (that is, before industry developed in Jinja), though workers came mainly from outside Buganda, they were concentrated in the region, where most processing and transport facilities were based. Finally, the seat of colonial government was in Buganda, and, naturally, the anti-colonial movement tended to gravitate to where the administrative machinery was physically situated.

In the 1940s the national movement developed from strength to strength as the contradiction between the people and colonialism became sharper. To solve its own crisis in the midst of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the ensuing world war, Britain tightened its squeeze on the colonized peoples. All sorts of ways—marketing boards and bulk purchase agreements, to name the two main ones—were devised to squeeze every available shilling out of workers and peasants as a 'contribution' to the British war effort.

The national movement reached two peaks, one in 1945 and one in 1949, when anti-colonial agitation spread to large parts of the country. Directed mainly at the local agents of colonial rule, chiefs, businessmen and cotton ginneries, this agitation soon turned into workers' strikes and peasants' uprisings. In 1945 workers staged the first general strike in the history of the country. Beginning with domestic servants at Entebbe on 1 January, the strike spread to every urban centre in the country. Masaka PWD (Public Works Department) labourers and tailors struck on 5 January; PWD labourers at Entebbe joined them on 8 January, and those in Kampala two days later; workers at the tobacco factory downed tools on 12 January; and on 15 January posts and telegraph, railway, bus and power workers in Kampala threw in their lot. The strike spread to Kojja, Jinja and Mbale on 17 January, to Masaka on 19 January and to Mbarara the following day. The general strike was really a great celebration of workers, and it shook the colony to the bone.

Peasants were not left out of this show of defiance. They had their own scores to settle. They pounced on the agents of colonialism: big houses owned by hated chiefs were burnt down, businessmen's shops were ransacked, and ginneries owners had their own petrol and lorries requisitioned. Representatives of the workers held a huge meeting at the Kabaka's palace and put forth two main demands: one, that the puppet Lukiko resign, and the people elect their own chiefs; and two, that growers gin their own cotton and sell it wherever they wish. Hard as he tried, the Kabaka could not get the people to disperse respectfully. From Mengo, word spread to the rest of the country: 'The people of Buganda

have revolted against their Kabaka. All quislings and puppets must go.' The cry of freedom spread like wildfire throughout the land. The people were in revolt. The rulers trembled.

On 27 May the Governor admitted that order had broken down, and that 'the situation was out of control'. He called in the colonial-trained army, the King's African Rifles. But arms could only silence the people temporarily. Though the uprising of 1945 died down, another one flared up in 1949. Once again, workers went on strike, and peasants settled scores with their immediate oppressors and exploiters. British imperialism realized that force alone was not enough, and sought a political solution by seizing upon the key weakness of the national movement—the class character of its leadership.

## 2 *Transition to Neo-colonialism*

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Militant nationalists had one fatal weakness. While they were able to rally workers and peasants in the political arena by putting forth popular demands, they could not give the resulting movement a clear direction. Militant nationalists defined the agents of colonialism, compradors (agent-capitalists) and chiefs, as the enemies of the people, but they did not clearly see the real power behind these agents, British imperialism, and the system of oppression and exploitation it had built. This weakness made it possible for British imperialism to step in and play the role of a referee between its own agents and the people; and then to re-form the system, by first discarding old agents for new ones, and later withdrawing from the scene physically, leaving the system it had built over 68 years intact, to be supervised by a new set of local agents. The only class capable of surmounting the weaknesses of militant nationalism, the working class, was too weak, young, and inexperienced to do so yet. Workers had neither independent organizations nor a political voice; they had no choice but to follow the leadership of another class.

By 1949 the militant petty bourgeoisie had exhausted its leadership potential, having failed to identify the enemy correctly, and the working class was still politically disorganized. It was in this context that British imperialism stepped in to seize the initiative. First the British tried to sever the link between militant nationalism and its grass roots: the mass organizations of peasants and workers, co-operatives and trade unions, from which it had drawn its popular support. Colonial rulers now sought to depoliticize these mass organizations by first fragmenting them and, later, turning them into strictly economic organizations under the control of a petty bourgeois bureaucracy.

The colonial government's assault on the working class came immediately after the trade union movement relapsed following an increase in the minimum wage. The government passed a new law, the 1952 Trade Union Ordinance. The main goal of this law, as proclaimed in its preamble, was to ensure that trade unions would never again be used for political purposes. To effect this, two important provisions were included in the ordinance. First, the law made it illegal for anyone to organize general unions, and required that separate unions be set up for each industry. (It must be noted that while general unions enhance the solidarity of the working class and express its general interests against the class of employers, separate unions divide workers into separate organizations, making it possible for employers to confront each union

separately.) Second, the ordinance allowed the state to police union funds and, consequently, union activities. It required that no funds should be spent for political purposes, and unions were required to submit financial statements to the government every year. These legal measures were supplemented by the 'trade union advisors' from the reformist British Trade Union Congress. These 'advisors' guided new unions away from politics. The 'advisors' were not really leaders of the British working class; they were bureaucrats who kept British workers confined to the economic battle for higher wages, while leaving political power in the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie. They were now brought to Uganda to do the same to the workers' movement in the colony.

After 1952, all attempts to form general trade unions in Uganda, like the attempt by taxi drivers to form a Transport and General Workers' Union, were declared illegal. As a result, small unions proliferated. By 1957 the only union with a membership of over 500 was the Railway African Union with 3000 members. Organized on a racial basis, it included wage and salary earners: both workers and civil servants. Within the various unions, control shifted from members to full-time, paid leaders, motivated to stay clear of politics. From this time onwards, a petty bourgeois union bureaucracy began to develop in Uganda.

The colonial state also used the law to divide and tame the co-operative movement. The Co-operative Societies Ordinance of 1946 introduced a series of regulations and controls, and British 'advisors' were installed in each co-operative. Apart from managing co-operatives' accounts they groomed a new leadership which the colonial state considered 'responsible'. This so-called responsible leadership ran co-operatives as if they were profit-making businesses, and not mass organizations of peasants. From then on, a co-operative union bureaucracy also began to develop in the country. Both the trade union and the co-operative movements underwent a change in content gradually. They were supposed to be organizations of workers and peasants in name, but in reality, their control was in the hands of a middle-class bureaucracy. By depoliticizing these mass organizations, the colonial state cut the political link between militant nationalism and the working people.

It was now time for a second manoeuvre—the growing of a new leadership to displace militant nationalists. These leaders were found in the upper stratum of the petty bourgeoisie; among those who had all along been itching to step into the shoes of colonial bureaucrats and agent capitalists; those who had been peddling a line of compromises for decades.

Why this sudden change in official attitude to this stratum which had after all first murmured its aspirations for a better life in the 1930s but had then simply been ignored by the colonial authorities? It was not simply that this stratum was, by itself, a negligible force at the time; in

the 1930s the mass of the people had yet to awaken. There was no need for colonialism to look for petty bourgeois allies in the colony; kings and chiefs were sufficient to ensure colonial law and order. But the situation was different in the 1950s. The sleeping giant, the working people, had begun to stir, and a militant tendency had already surfaced within the petty bourgeois ranks. Landlord-chiefs and compradors were exposed by the people; to save its skin, colonialism looked for new allies. Andrew Cohen, then the governor of Uganda, counselled his masters in London to actively encourage 'responsible' nationalism. This changed attitude reflected a new situation.

Translated into reality, the result was a comprehensive economic and political reform of the colonial system. Economic reforms were designed to expand the ranks of the upper petty bourgeoisie, and consolidate the tendency to compromise. Cotton ginneries and coffee factories were bought by the government from British and Asian comprador companies and transferred to the now depoliticized co-operatives. The system of racial discrimination, originally designed to block the advancement of the African middle class, was suddenly dismantled. Transport policy was changed to allow small African bus operators into business, a new land bank was set up to give loans to rich peasants who wanted to go into trade, traders were officially encouraged to form organizations to advance faster. An 'Africanization' programme was introduced in the civil service to upgrade and promote local civil servants. Political reforms designed to incorporate the upper petty bourgeoisie into the colonial political system followed. This stratum was now to replace the chiefs as the main pillar of the system. Elected members, allowed into the Lukiko, soon became the majority. With the working people politically disorganized, these members were inevitably financed and put up by the upper sections of the petty bourgeoisie. Outside Buganda, local government reforms in 1949 and 1955 allowed elected members into District Councils.

The entire process of reform was orchestrated by the colonial rulers, who had announced at the very outset that, 'The ultimate solution to the problem of supervision in this country lies in the emergence of a foreman class from amongst the Africans themselves.' A more accurate description of the purposes of reform was not possible!

### A neo-colonial independence

Political and economic reforms did not bear fruit immediately. This explains why the first political party in the country, the Uganda National Congress (UNC), was still led by militant nationalists. But this party did not take long to split into factions and eventually disintegrate.

Formed in 1952, the bulk of the UNC Central Committee came from the petty bourgeois intelligentsia. Its secretary-general was Ignatius

Musazi, the organizer of *Buna Ba Kintu* and the Uganda Farmers' Union. The bulk of its members came from areas where the commodity-producing peasantry was seething with discontent: Buganda, Lango, Acholi, Teso and Bukedi. At its peak, around 1955, the UNC had a membership of 50,000.

The crisis that broke the UNC was also the high-point of the post-war reform wave. The UNC had led the agitation for the return of the Kabaka of Buganda, who had been exiled because he had dared to oppose the establishment of a settler-dominated East African federation publicly. Falling back on popular opposition to colonial chiefs, this agitation soon swelled into a mass movement. To defuse it, the authorities allowed the return of the Kabaka, and announced electoral reforms which would allow the aspiring middle class to replace chiefs in the Lukiko. As these aspirants left the UNC, and started quarrelling among themselves on how to divide the crumbs on the table, the party disintegrated and new parties were formed. But, unlike the UNC which was militantly nationalist, these parties were by and large parochial and accommodating to imperialism.

Colonial reform was designed precisely to push the national question into the political background while bringing the nationality question into the foreground. The national question, the question of imperialist exploitation and oppression, united the people. But the nationality question, focusing on secondary differences like nationality, race or religion, divides them.\* The nationality consciousness was, and still is,

\* It is perhaps necessary to explain the concepts of tribe, nationality and nation, particularly since imperialist scholarship today insists on characterizing nationalities in Africa as tribes.

Tribal society is a classless, stateless democracy at an extremely low level of productive forces. There is no minority of non-producers that lives off the labour of the majority of producers by controlling their conditions of production. When tribal society disintegrates, and antagonistic classes and a centralized machinery of repression, the state, emerge, the tribe is transformed into a nationality. The choice of the concept tribe or nationality is not simply subjective; it makes an analytical difference. A tribe is classless; a nationality is differentiated along class lines.

The constitution of different nationalities into a single nation has historically taken place simultaneously with the development of capitalism. Capitalism develops a single market, the home market; destroys the natural 'subsistence' economy so characteristic of the economic life of nationalities; and dissolves their particularistic character in the crucible of exchange relations circumscribed by the boundaries of a single state.

A long historical period lies between the tribal stage of social development and the rise of nations. At the time the people of Uganda were colonized, the vast majority of what are referred to as tribes in imperialist literature were really nationalities, with clearly defined classes, and a state machinery to serve the interests of the exploiting classes.

most advanced among the compradors and the upper petty bourgeoisie precisely because the very institutions through which they sought to advance were structured along these nationality lines: the army was 'northern', the civil service was 'southern', and trade was 'Asian'.

As these petty bourgeois quibbled among themselves over the fruits of colonial reform, up to, and including, Independence, they not only defined their character along nationality lines, but also tried to organize and split up the peasantry on the same grounds. They were successful, at least temporarily, for two reasons: first the consciousness of the peasant is highly localized, since his existence is rooted to the soil. He depends on voices from the city to explain the world to him, and in those times the message from the city was invariably couched in nationality, religious or racial terms. Secondly, to organize peasants along narrow lines, actual and aspiring compradors were able to use equally parochial institutions, such as the Church and church-run schools, to reach deep into the countryside. Aspiring compradors set the people against one another, and hid the actual enemy from them. Unlike militant nationalists, they did not even pinpoint the agents of colonialism. Instead of pointing at the repressive colonial army, for example, they talked of 'northerners' as the enemy; instead of indicating colonial chiefs, they pointed at the 'Baganda' as the enemy; and instead of singling out compradors, they defined 'Asians' as the enemy. They divided the people and set them against one another, and the colonialists came in and played referee, again.

Opposition to militant nationalism took two forms. The first was organized outside the UNC, in direct opposition to its militant orientation, and was spearheaded by the Democratic Party (DP), marching under the banner of Catholicism and anti-communism.

The DP was organized by a coalition of Catholic landlords, the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Action Movement, comprising village priests and village teachers in denominational schools. Because Protestantism was almost a state religion, Catholic landlords and the Catholic petty bourgeoisie were discriminated against, and organized the DP on the basis of this special grievance. Secondly, opposition to militant nationalism grew within the UNC itself. After 1955 the party fell prey to forces unleashed by post-war reforms. Its leadership, captivated by the voice of property, began to divide among sectional lines. In only two years, the UNC was no more; its Buganda section was now the Kabaka Yekka (KY), and its non-Buganda section the Uganda People's Congress (UPC).

The Kabaka Yekka was openly sectarian and monarchist. In Buganda, where social differentiation was at its sharpest, the rise of the party reflected the growing strength of commercial farmers and rich peasants in the wake of post-war reforms. The centre of the anti-colonial struggle in the 30s and the 40s, Buganda became the centre of reaction in

the late 50s and 60s. The UPC, on the other hand, was a somewhat watered-down version of the UNC. In opposition to the DP, the UPC combined its nationalism with a Protestant flavouring; its ranks still contained members with a militant orientation, exemplified by its youth wing and its secretary-general, John Kakonge. These members were, nonetheless, in a minority.

The contrast between the national movement of the 60s and that of the 40s was sharp. The anti-colonial movement of the 40s was like a raging storm. By the late 50s, this movement had lost impetus. The masses were now side-stepped. Leadership remained within the petty bourgeois class, but it passed from militant nationalists to those who counselled moderation, or even collaboration, those whom Governor Andrew Cohen had termed 'responsible' nationalists.

The parties of the early 60s, defined by the dominant tendency within them, ranged from moderate nationalism (UPC), to outright collaboration with imperialism (DP, KY). Their differences, though, were secondary: a reading of their programmes and manifestos, and the Independence constitution that was agreed at the London Lancaster House Conference, where Britain acted as the referee between three rival political parties, shows an agreement on two fundamental questions. First, none of these parties questioned Uganda's continued integration into the imperialist system; they only wanted internal reforms. Their differences were in the degree of reform advocated by each party. But, without exception, they all called for 'a favourable climate for foreign investment' combined with 'the advancement of Africans', mostly in trade and education. Secondly, none of these parties raised any questions about the character of the state they were about to inherit. All agreed with the provisions of the Independence constitution that the new Uganda would inherit the colonial state machinery, with simply a change of personnel. Whether it was the army and the police that shot down workers and peasants in the 40s and 50s, and later went on to suppress the Mau Mau in Kenya, or the legal system that tried and imprisoned them, these were part of a God-given natural order to the leadership of these parties. It mattered little that these state institutions had been devised over half a century ago to keep the people in line. On the contrary, the new leadership was now ready to direct the same institutions against the people among whom they had stood until recently.

How, again, are we to understand an independence which leaves the key economic lifelines of a country in the hands of imperialist interests; which leaves intact the instruments of colonial repression; and leaves the colonial army untouched, simply changing its title from King's African Rifles to the Uganda Army; which preserves the colonial laws, courts, prisons and police forces, and gives them 'national' titles? Such an economy is a *neo-colonial economy*; such a state is a *neo-colonial state*.

Independence was, nevertheless, a step forward for the people. It testified to the weakness of imperialism, and was also a transit point in the growth of a democratic anti-imperialist movement. There was great rivalry within the imperialist camp. The USA, a late-arrival on the scene, wanted an end to the exclusive colonial monopoly of European powers; it demanded an 'open door' to British and other colonies; it called for, and obtained, neo-colonial independence for countries around the World. The colonial edifice had also been attacked from below, receiving blow after blow from movements ranging from the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the Chinese Revolution of 1949, to wars of national liberation in settler-colonies like Algeria and Kenya. In Uganda post-war reforms were forced out of British colonialism by the national movement of the 40s. While the struggle was not yet organized under an effective leadership, the purpose of reform was to prevent revolution. The final act in this process of reform was Independence itself.

It was in a situation of sharp inter-imperialist rivalry above and a gathering anti-imperialist movement below that neo-colonialism was born. But although imperialism was weakened, the people were not yet organized. This was a period of transition.

### Neo-colonialism in practice

Developments in Uganda after Independence moved well within the parameters established by the imperialist domination of the economy and penetration of the state machinery. This fact is clearly illustrated by economic and political developments in the 1960s.

In 1962, the year of Independence, the government invited the World Bank to send a mission to Uganda to advise on the drawing up of a development plan. The World Bank, a united front of western imperialist powers, sent a team comprised of 'experts' from a variety of western imperialist countries, chaired by an American agent. The team made three main recommendations. First, that everything possible be done to increase output in the commodity-producing sectors, those that produced raw materials for imperialist industries. Secondly, the team recommended that besides earnings from these exports, the government should rely on foreign state and private capital to finance the development plan. Thirdly, the government was asked to encourage the growth of local capitalists actively. All three recommendations were designed to increase the imperialist penetration of Uganda's economy.

When the Mission's report was published, it contained an introduction by the prime minister: 'My Government broadly accepts the recommendations in the report and has produced a development plan closely modelled on them,' he wrote. Uganda's first development plan relied, up to 52 per cent, on raw-material export earnings, and 48

per cent on imperialist finance.

Only in a neo-colony can the development plan be designed by the forces of imperialism! The World Bank is really a watchdog for the interests of US-led imperialism, providing a bridge for the latter's penetration into neo-colonies. The Bank's concern is overall economic planning in the neo-colonies; the actual penetration is the work of imperialist states and monopolies, mostly in competition, but sometimes in partnership.

Let us see how the recommendations of the World Bank were put into practice by examining the role of foreign interests in three key sectors of the economy: banking, manufacturing and 'aid'.

After Independence three British banks, Barclays, Grindlays and Standard, continued to control over 80 per cent of all commercial deposits in the country, as they had done before. The only change was that minority shares were bought in two of these banks by American banking monopolies. Through their control over local savings, foreign banks had an iron grip over the future direction of economic activity in the country: they channelled local savings to finance mainly those activities necessary for imperialist exploitation. In 1966, for example, 43.5 per cent of commercial bank loans and advances went to commerce, principally the export-import trade; 28 per cent to industry, setting up last-stage manufacturing plants under the control of western monopolies; and only 8 per cent to agriculture, restricted to 'crop-financing' in the form of seasonal credit to co-operatives to allow them to purchase export crops and transport them to processing plants. The control of commercial deposits by British banks (with minority US shares) both reflected and reinforced the fact that Britain continued to be Uganda's principal trading partner, followed by the USA.

The small manufacturing sector reflected the entry of new imperialist powers and their growing challenge to British hegemony in Uganda. A comparison of major manufacturing investments in the 50s with those in the 60s shows the decisive link between Uganda and western monopolies, and the declining influence of British foreign investments in this sector.

Most of these investments were really last-stage assembly plants. Raw materials and, quite often, semi-manufactured components, were imported from the parent monopoly overseas. The investments were like islands without any integral connection with the Ugandan economy; their only reason for being in the country was to acquire super-profits for the monopolies through access to cheap Ugandan labour and high tariffs which protected them from competition of rival monopolies; tariffs granted by the government because the companies claimed their products were 'made in Uganda'. Let us take the example of UGIL.

UGIL made, and still makes, cotton piece-goods like shirts, trousers, sheets, etc. but its factory merely cuts and stitches cloth imported

Table 1 *Selected investments from the 1950s (before Independence)*

Name of company	Foreign monopolies/states involved
1. Nyanza Textiles	Bleachers' Association (UK) Calico Printers' Association (UK)
2. Concrete Constructions (U) Ltd	British Steel Reinforcements Ltd (UK)
3. Universal Asbestos Manufacturing Co. (EA) Ltd	Universal Asbestos Manufacturing Co. Ltd (UK)
4. East African Distilleries Ltd	Duncan, Gilby, Mathieson Ltd (UK)
5. Uganda Meat Packers Ltd	A. Baumann and Co. Ltd (UK)
6. Kilembé Mines Ltd	Colonial Development Corporation (UK) Frobisher Ltd (UK)

Table 2 *Selected investments from the 1960s (after Independence)*

Name of company	Foreign monopolies/states involved
1. Tororo Industrial Chemicals and Fertilizers	International Ore and Fertilizer Corp. (UK) Falconbridge Nickel Mines (Canada) Imperial Chemical Industries (UK)
2. Steel Corporation of EA Ltd	Società in Accomandita Luigi Pominini (Italy) Società Per Azioni Fratelli Orsenigo (Italy)
3. Uganda Garments Industries Ltd (UGIL)	Marubeni-Ida Co. Ltd (Japan) Yamato Shirts Co. Ltd (Japan)
4. Uganda Fishnet Manufacturing Ltd	Nippon Rayon Co. Ltd (Japan)
5. Development Finance Co. Ltd of Uganda	Deutsche Gesellschaft (West Germany) Commonwealth Development Corporation (UK)
6. Lira Spinning Mill	Government of the Soviet Union

straight from Japan! It is really a glorified workshop, where a thousand or so tailors have been brought together under a single roof. In return, Japanese monopolies get not only payment for imported cloth, but also



royalties and related fees for sharing their shirt, trouser and sheet patterns with Ugandans!

Besides urging the Uganda government to open its doors to every private foreign investor, the World Bank also recommended that the country should continue to rely on foreign 'aid' to finance economic development. Foreign 'aid' played an even more strategic role than private investments in ensuring foreign penetration of the economy.

UNCTAD (United Nations Committee on Trade and Development) studies have shown that the poorer a neo-colony, the greater the role of state-capital exports ('aid'), and the lesser the role of private-capital exports (foreign investment), in its development programme. Uganda is such a neo-colony. Despite its philanthropic connotations, 'aid' is really a business like any other. If it is a charity, it is given by the donors of an imperialist country to its own monopolies, not to the peoples of the neo-colonies. 'Aid' is usually a loan which is always 'tied', that is, the monies given must be used to purchase commodities from the 'aid-giving' country. To illustrate this further, let us take two examples: British and Soviet 'aid'.

In mid-1966, the Ugandan government proposed to the UK that it loan monies for joint investment in particular projects by the Government and British monopolies. The UK High Commissioner signified his agreement, but stipulated that 'at least 60 per cent of the amount of money lent would have to be used to purchase goods from Britain'.<sup>1</sup> Under this condition, charcoal and rubber projects were disqualified because they would use too much local material and too little of British imports.

Although Soviet aid is 'tied' like that of the United States, Britain, or any other imperialist country, it has been claimed to be particularly soft because of its low interest rate, and the possibility of repaying it in locally-produced commodities. It is useful to deal with the terms of Soviet aid in some detail, not because it was particularly significant in Uganda in the 1960s, but because it represents a different way of imperialist exploitation.

The major Soviet 'aid' project in Uganda was the Lira Spinning Mill. The loan for this project carried an interest rate much lower than that charged by western 'donors', only 2½ per cent per annum. But the fine print of the contract shows this rate to have been an accounting trick. The payment of interest on the loan was to begin a year after equipment was loaded on Soviet ships—even before the completion of the project! Fifty per cent of the output of the Lira Spinning Mill was to go directly to the Soviet Union as part repayment of the loan. The Soviet Union was, in other words, using its own equipment, but Ugandan labour and raw materials to set up a captive industry in Uganda to meet its own consumption needs! The rest of the loan was to be repaid by exporting to the Soviet Union any Ugandan commodity it demanded. Such a

commodity would, undoubtedly, be as good as the dollar, either saving foreign exchange on Soviet imports, or being re-exported for foreign exchange. This practice is common among all Soviet-bloc countries. In 1964, for example, Ugandan lint sold to Hungary on special terms was resold in the world market at a higher price. In 1976, when it was dissatisfied with the quality of Lira textiles, the Soviet Union demanded repayment of principal and interest on its loan in coffee.<sup>2</sup>

The function of 'aid' is to capture a slice of the local market for monopolies from the 'donor' country. The combined result of 'aid' flows and foreign private investments, as in Uganda in the 60s, was imperialist control of the major sectors of the economy. Once this overall framework had been taken for granted, the government had very little room for manoeuvre on the economic front. The government's initiative, as spelt out in the World Bank Report, was to actively encourage the growth of local capitalists. In the political language of the 60s this process was known as 'Africanization'. The demand for 'Africanization' had nothing to do with the control of foreign monopolies, only with the hiring of local personnel; it was not a call for an end to foreign exploitation, only for local capitalist participation in it. 'Africanization' was a scheme to promote the upper petty bourgeoisie who aspired to become compradors, and was irrelevant to workers and peasants, who were already Africans!

During the colonial period, Britain had restricted the comprador function to Asian entrepreneurs. After Independence, the African upper petty bourgeoisie demanded entry into this class. A whole range of programmes, from trade bodies such as African Business Promotions Ltd. to Trade Licensing Acts, and government administrative measures, were set up for this purpose. This concern with foreign monopoly and local comprador and upper petty bourgeois interests did not go unchallenged. The militant nationalist minority within the UPC demanded that the people also enjoy the fruits of Independence, and to show that they were serious about it, they organized wildcat strikes in several towns in 1963 and 1964. The official response was to disband the Youth Wing of the UPC; to replace John Kakonge, a militant nationalist, by Grace Ibingira, an anti-people American agent, as the secretary-general of the UPC; and, gradually, to bring trade unions under the control of the state machinery.

The way was now open for different factions of the petty bourgeoisie to struggle over the crumbs on the table. This was the real substance of the fierce intra-party struggles that followed the demise of the UPC 'left' wing. To gather maximum strength, each faction did two things. The first was to create a sectarian base among the people by organizing them, and thus dividing them, along narrow nationality lines. The second was to strengthen party ties with imperialist sponsors overseas. The Kabaka Yekka linked itself with British conservatism; the DP with German

Christian Democrats; the UPC 'right' wing, the Ibgingira faction, came to be known as the Dollar Faction; and even the UPC 'centre', with a moderate nationalist tendency, joined hands with German Social Democrats. Having been fed by inter-imperialist rivalries from above, and having divided the people below into rival camps, the feuding petty bourgeoisie pushed the country from crisis to crisis. The pace was set by the 1966 crisis, when, to maintain control over the instruments of power, moderate nationalists, the UPC 'centre', used the most immoderate anti-democratic methods. To silence the opposition, this faction resorted to the preventive detention of individuals, and imposed an unending state of emergency on a whole region, Buganda. These measures inflamed the nationality question. But by 1969, the moderate nationalist tendency was triumphant; all other tendencies had been politically silenced.

The victory of moderate nationalism was not the result of its connection with West German social democracy. At the time, this contact was limited to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, which partially funded the Milton Obote Foundation. The weapon the UPC 'centre' wielded with such telling effect through each successive crisis was the army. This was not a national army, but a neo-colonial instrument, which was the focal point of the imperialist penetration of the state machinery, both in the colonial period and after Independence.

Historically, the repressive machinery of the state, in particular the army, the police, and the security services had been groomed and sustained by Britain. Recruitment, training and arms supplies had been under British direction. After Independence, however, the Israelis gradually assumed what became a pivotal role in this direction.

The Israeli connection began as early as 1963 when President Obote paid a state visit to Israel. That same year the Israeli foreign minister, Golda Meir, came to Kampala. The strengthening of relations between the two countries was reflected by subsequent high-level visits by Israeli leaders to Uganda: Prime Minister Eshkol in 1966 and Foreign Minister Abba Eban in 1969. Before long, Israeli officers were training the police, the army and the intelligence services. By 1969, Uganda occupied a key role in Israel's Arab-African policy. Northern Uganda was used by the Israelis as a base, to supply arms to the Anyanya guerillas in the Southern Sudan.

The only dent in western imperialism's monopoly in shaping the Ugandan armed forces was an embryonic Soviet presence in the small air force. This began towards the end of the 60s when the Soviet Union supplied a squadron of MiG-17 fighter planes with a training team. The army, however, remained an off-shoot of western imperialism.

But, although a neo-colonial army can be used to silence local opposition, either from popular quarters, as in 1963 and 1964, or from rival factions, as in 1966 and 1969, it ceases to be a reliable instrument in

the event of a struggle against imperialist interests. This is what the regime learnt in 1971. In the very first attempt the Obote government made to reform the neo-colonial system, the army came down on it like a sledge-hammer.

### An imperialist coup

The more faithfully the government followed the World Bank's economic recommendations, the more it found itself in crises. The year 1969 brought forth a general convulsion, an attack of the disease neo-colonialism. Between 1962 and 1969, the government had opened all doors to foreign monopolies and encouraged the production of raw materials for export. The people had worked hard. Twice the amount of coffee was produced in 1969 as in 1962 and 50 per cent more cotton in 1969 than in 1962; and yet there was an economic crisis in 1969. The government was facing a shortage of foreign exchange, although it was exporting more than before. Inexplicably, commodities became scarce, prices rose, and the people found life more difficult. Why? Because imperialist exploitation had also increased. While peasants produced more than before, the price of cotton and coffee on the world market went down. As a result foreign exchange earnings from exports declined. At the same time, foreign monopolies began taking more money out of the country than they were bringing in. In 1969, 133.4 million shillings flowed into the country as 'aid'; 294.6 million shillings left the country the following year. The fact that Uganda had strict foreign-exchange regulations made little difference, because these restrictions only applied to small proprietors trying to send money overseas, not monopolies and their agents, who trade directly with overseas parent companies and can hence transfer huge sums through simple over-invoicing and under-invoicing of transactions.

The 1969 crisis had a political dimension, too. With prices rising and incomes falling, popular discontent surfaced. Without an active political party to organize and channel this discontent, the rightist opposition used the opportunity to try to assassinate the president. The attempt failed, and the regime moved to regain the initiative. For the first time, it tried to reform the system conceived by the World Bank, which it had inherited at Independence. This attempted reform was the 'Move to the Left' of 1970.

The 'Move' was characterized by two aspects: one was aimed at imperialism, the other at the people. Its anti-imperialist content was defined by three measures: changes in foreign policy, monetary reform and 'nationalization'. In foreign policy, the regime boldly took a more independent stand, cutting off Israel's access to northern Uganda as a bridgehead into the Southern Sudan, and supporting liberation

struggles in Southern Africa, especially the struggle against the Smith regime in Rhodesia. On the domestic front, it tried to gain control over monetary policy by setting up a national bank, the Bank of Uganda, and a national currency. The bank turned out to be national in name only. Even after it was set up, foreign banks continued to control 90 per cent of commercial deposits. British banks alone controlled 80 per cent of all deposits.

Finally, there were the 'nationalization' measures of May Day, 1970. Once again, the government was not demanding complete nationalization, but a partnership between the state and foreign monopolies, its terms being 60 per cent government control of assets, with 40 per cent remaining under monopoly ownership. In practice, this measure was not implemented consistently. A few days after the measure was announced, seven companies were dropped from the original list of 85, and, for the oil monopolies, the formula was revised to 50-50 - the terms the monopolies themselves had suggested before May Day! The formula was even reversed to 40-60 for some of the British banks. The government agreed to long drawn out negotiations, broken off by the January 1971 coup, in most other cases.

For US-led imperialism, the political implication of the 'Move' was most worrying. Except for the mainly American monopolies, which had earlier suggested a 50-50 partnership with the government, the May Day nationalization came as a surprise unilateral move to British banks and industry. Britain saw the 'Move to the Left' as following the trend set by the Arusha Declaration of 1967 in Tanzania, in effect isolating its own pet regime in Kenya, and posing a threat to its regional political interests. Politically, the 'Move' meant the Obote regime was beginning to show a measure of independence from US-led imperialism.

The second aspect of the 'Move' was, paradoxically, its anti-people character. Faced with rising unemployment in 1969, the regime simply decided to expel workers of Kenyan origin who made up nearly 10 per cent of the industrial work-force. This was the first mass expulsion in Uganda's history, but because those expelled were workers, the imperialist press did not breathe a word about it. Divide-and-rule tactics again: it happened exactly according to the text. When the nationalization measures were announced, strikes were also declared illegal. It was said that since workers were now masters of Ugandan industries, there was no point striking against themselves!

Middle-class nationalism was trying to fight simultaneously on two fronts: demanding concessions from imperialism and muzzling the people. Sandwiched between imperialism and the people, the regime became highly vulnerable. The coup of January 1971 underlined the limits of middle-class nationalism. The coup was engineered by an alliance of foreign imperialism and local reaction with the people standing on the sidelines. Their direct instrument was the military - the

rightist officers in the neo-colonial army, who since the early colonial days had been set up as a bulwark against any popular nationalist initiative. This is why the intelligentsia, suspected of having caught the virus of nationalism, was deliberately excluded from officer status.

The finest product of the colonial army was General Amin. His own career, built up during the colonial period, came to a full flowering under neo-colonialism. Initially trained during the anti-Mau Mau colonial campaigns - he once bragged to OAU Heads of State about how he used to kill Mau Mau guerillas - Amin became the key Ugandan link between the Israelis and the Anyanva in the Southern Sudan. This was revealed in the diary of the captured German mercenary, Rudolf Steiner. Amin's faction of the army had in fact been trained and backed up by the Israelis, during and after the coup. In the midst of the Entebbe Raid in 1976, the Israeli Colonel Bar-Lev, chief of the Israeli military team in Uganda in 1971, boasted to the *New York Times* about Israel's role in the overthrow of Obote, because he had 'turned anti-Israeli and intended to expel the Israeli delegation from Uganda'. The Israeli paper *Ha'aretz* reported:

Col. Bar-Lev, who headed the delegation and is still on good terms with Amin, said that Amin had approached him, saying that his loyal supporters were outside Kampala and that the President would be able to arrest and kill him before they could rescue him. Bar-Lev advised Amin to bring to Kampala those soldiers who were from the same tribe as Amin, and to make sure he had paratroopers, tanks and jeeps. So equipped, explained Bar-Lev, 600 men could overpower 5,000. These forces, which had been trained by the Israelis, played a key role in the defeat of Obote's army.<sup>3</sup> (emphasis added)

It was because Edward Heath, the then British prime minister, understood imperialism's pivotal role in the Ugandan state machinery so well that he predicted during the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in Singapore in 1971, that some of the fiery leaders sitting around the table would not be able to return home!

The 1971 coup in Uganda teaches two lessons. First, that it is not possible to use a neo-colonial army to reform a neo-colonial economy. Such an army is, in the final analysis, an instrument of reaction, not of progress. Secondly, it is not possible for middle-class nationalism to play an independent and leading role in the present era. Its own weakness must compel it to either join the working people or ally with imperialism, the two basic forces in the world today.

Direct British-Israeli sponsorship of the Amin coup was something the imperialist media bothered little to deny in the first year of the regime. But later, as the vicious nature of the regime became apparent, the imperialist media adopted a holier-than-thou attitude, parading

Amin as some sort of anthropological oddity, and his regime as a home-grown African affair. But, as history has shown, this was hardly true. Throughout his political career, Amin and the regime he headed drew strength from the sponsorship of one imperialist power or another.

#### Notes

1. See E. H. Cowrie, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, to Acting Secretary for Planning, Central Planning Bureau, 23.5.66; and Owen, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, to Chairman of Uganda Development Corporation Limited; both in Ministry of Commerce Files C. EO/4.
2. On the Soviet Union, see *Agreement between the Government of Uganda and the Government of the Soviet Union on economic and technical co-operation*, 30.11.1964, in Ministry of Commerce File C. TRE/18/18/1; *Summary of the report by the Uganda Government Goodwill Mission to USSR*, 9-15 January, 1972 in File TRE/18/18; G. W. B. Bosa, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Marketing and Cooperatives, to Secretary to the Treasury, Ministry of Finance, 2.7.76, in File C. TRE/18/18/1.  
On Hungary, see Y. M. B. Mafumba, Personnel Assistant to chairman of the Lint Marketing Board, to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 19.1.65, in File TRE/18/16.
3. 'Israelis helped Amin to topple Obote when he became anti-Israeli', *Ha'aretz*, 18.7.76.

## Part Two

### *Neo-colonial Fascism*

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### 3 *The Amin Regime*

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When Amin and his fellow army officers came to power in the coup of January 1971, they did not set out consciously to create a fascist system. They had no ready-made plan for building fascism; it is doubtful whether the Amin clique even understood the meaning of the word. What they understood were the immediate problems they faced. In attempting to solve what became a persistent crisis, however, the regime tried one solution after another, the total result of which was fascism. Why, then, term the Amin state a neo-colonial fascism? Is it simply a question of using the worst possible label we can think of for a regime we hate so much, or is fascism a particular type of system to which the Amin dictatorship corresponds?

The first cases of fascist rule were in Italy, Germany and Japan in the period before the Second World War. In these three countries, big capitalists desired colonies, for colonies meant cheap raw materials and protected markets. But since the world was already divided up, colonies could only be got by a re-division of the world. That meant war. The Second World War was over the imperialist re-division of the world among old and new powers. It was preceded by the construction of mighty war machines by the new imperialist powers, who also imposed harsh dictatorships on their people.

Fascist dictators came to power by exploiting popular discontent through the use of revolutionary slogans. In a period of economic and political crisis, they drew support mainly from the unemployed and small proprietors. Once in power, however, they concentrated on building up the war machine. In the interests of big financiers and armaments manufacturers, the kruppers of Germany and the zaibatus of Japan, they unleashed a reign of terror on the people. Ironically, when the fascists first came to power in Italy, many argued that fascism could only triumph in a relatively backward country with a large peasant population. The conclusion was that there was no danger of fascism in Germany. But when fascism did triumph in Germany, others argued that fascism was only possible in advanced industrialized countries, not in backward ones; and yet the next wave of fascist rule was in Spain and Portugal!

Fascism is neither a child of backwardness nor of advanced industrialization. It is really a product of imperialism in crisis. Those who have argued that fascism is only possible in imperialist countries have ignored the two poles of the imperialist system: the oppressor

imperialist countries and the oppressed neo-colonies. The crises of the system can come to surface at either of these two poles. Like any social phenomenon, fascist rule varies from one country to another in its details; in essence, it is the same.

The crisis that gives rise to fascism develops both in the camp of imperialism and among the people. The victory of fascism ensues from armed clashes between rival factions in the anti-people camp. It testifies to the weakness of the imperialist camp.

Through the crises of 1966, 1967 and 1969 in Uganda, the neo-colonialist camp was riddled with divisions. One faction overthrew another in an armed coup. To hide its true character, and to attract the people's support, the winning faction was compelled to use popular anti-imperialist slogans. But since it did not have the unity necessary to form a stable government, this faction was compelled to rule by proxy, through a fascist dictator who would satisfy its appetite for amassing wealth. A determined struggle against fascism is only possible if we recognize the essential weakness behind its iron mask.

But the weakness of fascism also bears witness to the weakness of the people's movement; it testifies to a confusion in the movement, exploited and compounded by opportunism.

The greatest weakness of the budding popular movement was its inability to break decisively from the camp of the rulers. It lacked autonomy. The opposition to the growing dictatorship of the first Obote regime included some learned opportunists, like the Kibedi-Rugumayo-Nabudere clique, who mouthed the most progressive phrases, but collaborated with the Amin regime. With sweet words and promises they pacified the people temporarily, but long enough to allow the fascist grip around the popular masses to tighten. With one face to the regime and another to the people, they sunk the emerging popular movement into the swamp of opportunism. Opportunism veils a line of collaboration with revolutionary phrases. To struggle against fascism is also to struggle against opportunism. It is to build a clear-sighted popular movement.

Fascism is an attempt by imperialism to resolve its internal crisis before the people have turned to revolution. Its methods are dual: brutal repression and sweet rhetoric. Through revolutionary-sounding rhetoric it tries to lull the masses to sleep; and through a regime of terror it tries to smash any organized opposition. Economically, fascism organizes the ruthless exploitation of the working people to build up a war machine for further plundering. Fascism is not simply a military dictatorship. Under fascism, the gun moves through all structures of the state and society, from the repressive forces, including the police and the intelligence services, to the courts, the civil service and the economy. Fascism is neither a tyranny of social riff-raff (the *bayaye*), who may form its rank and file, nor is it a dictatorship of small proprietors, who may cheer it in

the early stages. In a neo-colony, fascism is the dictatorship of the most chauvinistic agents of imperialism.

### **The period of transition: 'the economic war' and the role of opportunists**

Amin's 18 points, delivered on the morning after the coup, promised the people almost everything: security, the rule of law, elections, economic progress, and lower prices and taxes. Large sections of the people received the new regime favourably because they were disenchanted with the previous one, and expected a change for the better. The coup was received most enthusiastically by the petty bourgeoisie, mainly urban traders and teachers, in particular among the Baganda. This testified to the surfacing of the nationality question. The previous regime had undermined the Baganda petty bourgeoisie on the basis of nationality. The National Chamber of Commerce and Industry sent a message 'on behalf of African traders in the whole of Uganda' who 'have never enjoyed any fruit of our independence' because 'the economy of Uganda has been controlled by those so-called big men'. The Chamber hailed Amin 'as a saviour of fellow Ugandans'.<sup>1</sup> The Ugandan Teachers' Association also sent a congratulatory telegram to the military government.<sup>2</sup> Other petty bourgeois leaders were soon compelled to break their silence and send messages of support and congratulations, lest their silence be construed as opposition. The most notable exception were university students, who defied pressures from opportunists to welcome the military regime. Trade unions also hoped for better times. The secretary general of the Hotel and Allied Workers' Union was 'glad' that 'Amin does not believe in a one-party system'. He appealed to the new government to revise the salaries of workers 'since they are very low'.<sup>3</sup>

Soon, however, enthusiasm was transformed into action. The most organized section of the people, the workers, took strike action to demand their rights. Only seven months after the coup, several thousand city council workers defied their union leadership and went on strike in September.<sup>4</sup> A series of strikes followed in November. Police and soldiers were sent in to end a plantation workers' strike at Lugazi.<sup>5</sup> Faced with similar repression, Kampala taxi drivers spoke out against 'military and civil police brutality'.<sup>6</sup> 'We are fighting for our freedom, our rights and for the good of the whole nation,' chanted Kampala transport workers.<sup>7</sup> By the end of November Jinja garment workers were on strike and, at the beginning of December, workers at the Kilembe Mines put down their tools.<sup>8</sup>

The repressive character of the regime surfaced the minute it faced popular demands, after only a few months of honeymoon. Amin warned

that the government would not tolerate any illegal strikes, and advised trade union leaders 'to concentrate on economic productivity rather than indulging in political activities'.<sup>9</sup> On the political front, the regime issued a spate of decrees to clamp down on the clamour for democracy which followed the coup. All political activities were suspended for two years 'as a temporary measure'.<sup>10</sup> Soldiers and prison officers were given powers 'to search houses, other buildings, vehicles and aircraft' and to take possession of vehicles, stolen property and dangerous weapons – all in the name of curbing *kondoism* (armed robbery).<sup>11</sup> In the first six months, thousands of soldiers suspected of loyalty to the previous regime were tortured and murdered. Thus the new dictatorship was born, in repression and blood.

Internationally, the regime was left with few friends. As if to confirm the reactionary character of his government, Amin's first major foreign policy act was to telegraph Prime Minister John Vorster that he intended to send a ten-person 'fact-finding delegation to South Africa'.<sup>12</sup> The regime, facing isolation at home and abroad, was becoming desperate. It was in this hour of need that opportunists came to its aid. Wanume Kibedi was the foreign minister of the regime from the outset; Wadada Nabudere took up his post as chairman of East African Railways in June, after feasting 1500 people, including the acting brigadier commander of the 2nd Infantry Brigade, Col. William Ndahendekire, in Mbale.<sup>13</sup> In October 1971 Edward Rugumayo was appointed a deputy minister; and in December, the minister of education.<sup>14</sup>

Kibedi's services to the regime began on the morrow of the coup when he heralded Amin as 'a representative of the common man'.<sup>15</sup> A letter prepared by his ministry addressed to Nyerere, and publicly circulated for signatures, argued, 'The Coup is no longer an army coup, but the people's coup'.<sup>16</sup> The same theme was sustained when Kibedi represented and defended the regime at the OAU Conference in Addis Ababa. It was after the South African débâcle, though, that Kibedi took command of the foreign affairs propaganda machinery to steer the state out of international isolation. By early 1972 he was calling for 'direct intervention in Namibia by UN forces to expel South Africa from the territory'.<sup>17</sup> Kibedi initiated the rapport between Uganda and several Arab regimes, leading to the expulsion of Israel and the cementing of ties with Libya. Fresh from victories on the foreign front, the Kibedi clique now concentrated their attention on domestic affairs. It was on their advice that the 'economic war' was declared in August 1972, Amin's claim to divine inspiration notwithstanding.

While the long-term significance of the expulsion of Asians in 1972 was, as we shall see later, a change of masters and of agents, its immediate significance was two-fold.

First, it was the fascist regime's way of rewarding its supporters and

expanding its ranks. The property expropriated from Asian capitalists and small proprietors was distributed to big business and military circles. Committees formed to distribute the loot were headed by military officers and opportunists. The Brigadier commander of the 2nd Infantry Brigade, Major Maliyamungu, for example, was put in charge of 'abandoned shops' in Masaka to 'ensure the fair distribution of business'. Edward Rugumayo became the chairman of the allocation committee for North and South Karamoja, Teso and Sebei.<sup>18</sup> Thirty officers from the Uganda army and air force were to work with the committees 'in checking and distributing to Ugandans businesses which were left by the British Asians'.<sup>19</sup> Thus was born a new social group, the *mafutamingi*, a class of persons for whom fascist terror provided a framework for quick enrichment. These were the main local beneficiaries of the Amin regime. Their differences with Amin were merely family squabbles. They may have differed among themselves but against the people, they were one.

Secondly, by representing the 'economic war' as a crusade against imperialism and its agents, fascism appealed, in a demagogical way, to the most urgent needs and demands of the people. The trick was to identify imperialism with British imperialism, and exploitation by local agents with Asian exploitation. Fascist demagogy had a dual character. On the one hand, it played upon the sentiments of the people with its anti-imperialist rhetoric; on the other hand, it inflamed certain historically-ingrained prejudices with its racist rhetoric. The combination allowed fascism to cast exploitation as a racial attribute, not a class relationship. By driving anti-imperialism into narrow nationalist channels, fascism pre-empted the anti-imperialist and revolutionary upsurge of the people.

Fascism also presented the 'economic war' as a solution to the country's ills. The 'economic war', Amin told Makerere University students, would create 'black millionaires'. The belief that everybody would become rich after the 'economic war' was very strong. No wonder that the Uganda African Traders' Association publicly demonstrated in support of the expulsion of Asians.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the true political character of fascism was hidden, allowing the regime to gain temporary support beyond its beneficiaries, especially from small proprietors and parochial nationalists. The 'economic war' created the illusion that some sort of national capitalism could be built in Uganda, thereby giving imperialism a longer lease of life.

In the period 1971–72, when the military regime was evolving into a fascist dictatorship, opportunists gave it valuable support. They taught the regime how to use the weapon of demagogy – how to employ the language of the people to keep the popular masses on a leash. A Liberation Appeal Fund was launched during the 'economic war'. The regime publicly declared support for the Provisional Revolutionary

Government in South Vietnam, Frelimo, the Palestinians, and South African liberation movements. 'The people must be mobilized at all levels to oppose the imperialists,' chanted Kibedi.<sup>21</sup> Amin offered to send soldiers to fight in the Middle East, and presented himself as 'a vanguard commander of a liberation war in Africa'.<sup>22</sup> The opportunists had by now made themselves dispensable. Amin had become a better demagogue than Kibedi! When the two disagreed on how to distribute the spoils of the 'economic war,' the opportunists had to go.

True to their character, the opportunists wanted to sugar-coat the fascist pill, so they called for certain window-dressing reforms, whose economic consequences directly affected how the spoils of the 'economic war' would be divided. But the military regime had come to power without any popular mandate, and was thus unwilling to throw even crumbs to the popular masses. It had come to power through the gun and it could envisage no other way of staying in power.

When the time came, all three leaders of the opportunist clique sent in their resignations from Nairobi. Even at this late hour, they could not view the situation from the people's point of view. Rugumayo described his reasons for leaving as 'purely personal and moral'; he could still say to Amin: 'I thank you for having appointed me Minister'; and he could still admit: 'I have very much enjoyed working for the Republic of Uganda as a Minister'.<sup>23</sup> Nabudere's reasons for resigning – the disappearance of four railway officials in Kampala and the lack of an official inquiry – were equally narrow.<sup>24</sup> It did not even occur to these 'learned' opportunists that in the past two years of officialdom, they had helped build a fascist state which would terrorize millions of people and butcher thousands more, as it had started to do during the period of their service.

Two points need to be stressed here. First, the Kibedi clique's collaboration with the Amin regime was not a simple mistake, or error in judgement. That the parts they played from 1971 to 1973 developed along further opportunist lines is demonstrated by their collaboration with the Lule and Binaisa cliques in the two UNLF governments immediately after the fall of Amin. The only change was that in 1979 the best known, and hence the most exposed, member of the clique, Wanume Kibedi, was dropped and two new members were added. The important point, though, is to expose the opportunist line, and not merely the individuals who articulate it. Opportunism is bound to surface at every stage in the growth of a popular anti-imperialist movement. No matter what its specific attributes, opportunism will always try to undermine the independence of a popular movement by hitching it to this or that clique of compradors.

#### Notes

1. *Uganda Argus*, 9 February 1971.
2. *Uganda Argus*, 5 March 1971.

3. *Uganda Argus*, 30 January 1971.
4. *Uganda Argus*, 18 September 1971.
5. *Uganda Argus*, 5 November 1971; 6 November 1971.
6. *Uganda Argus*, 12 November 1971.
7. *Uganda Argus*, 1 February 1972.
8. *Uganda Argus*, 9 and 11 November 1971.
9. *Uganda Argus*, 23 December 1971.
10. *Uganda Argus*, 29 January 1971.
11. *Uganda Argus*, 19 March 1971.
12. This was the major foreign policy initiative in the first six months after the coup.
13. *Uganda Argus*, 29 June 1971 and 15 June 1971.
14. *Uganda Argus*, 22 October 1971 and 1 December 1971.
15. *Uganda Argus*, 8 February 1971.
16. *Uganda Argus*, 30 January 1971.
17. *Uganda Argus*, 1 February 1971.
18. *Voice of Uganda*, 8 December 1971.
19. *Uganda Argus*, 29 November 1972.
20. *Uganda Argus*, 18 August 1972.
21. *Uganda Argus*, 17 May 1972.
22. *Voice of Uganda*, 25 September 1973.
23. *Voice*, 22 February 1973.
24. *Voice*, 30 April 1973.



## 4 *The Fascist State*

The state is more than the government. It comprises all the instruments which are set up to enable a particular class to rule, and includes the forces of repression (the army, the police, the intelligence), regulation (the courts) and administration (the civil service). Even in a bourgeois democracy, the elective principle is confined to the sphere of government. All other instruments of the state remain non-elective. These instruments are the real embodiment of class rule. Positions in this sector are filled by direct appointment. This is why parliamentary democracy is just one form of bourgeois rule.

A military dictatorship, which arises when the armed forces take over the function of government, is another form of bourgeois rule. But when the bearers of arms take over control of all instruments of the state, a military dictatorship is transformed into a fascist dictatorship. The first step in the development of Amin's military dictatorship into a fascist dictatorship was the militarization of the state.

As a result of the January 1971 coup in Uganda, the army became the supreme organ of the state. The cabinet, now under a military head of state, was concerned simply with the conduct of day-to-day affairs. In August 1971, the predominantly civilian cabinet members were drafted into the army as cadets. According to Amin, they were now to be 'disciplined' according to the Armed Forces Act and Regulations.<sup>1</sup> In another year, the cabinet had been recomposed, and consisted mainly of army officers; its importance had also declined, since it was subordinated to the Defence Council and to the Junta set up in August 1971 to advise the Council.<sup>2</sup>

The army, which consolidated its powers over the state machinery between 1971 and 1973, went through a three-step transformation in as many years.

The first step was a brutal purge within the ranks, designed to consolidate the hold of fascist officers. In the army, as among civilian contenders to power, the government and the opposition were defined strictly in nationality terms. The coup had been carried out by only a section of the army; dissidents and suspects ran into thousands, both within the army and the Special Forces, an armed unit directly under presidential control in the previous regime. Members of the Special Forces were asked to hand in their arms after the coup, and were later integrated into the army. Those in the newly expanded army with suspect loyalties were formally dismissed and later unceremoniously slaughtered.

The next step was to centralize all the forces of repression under the army. The Inspector-General of Police was thus replaced by a Police Council, whose members were army officers, except for the Police Commissioner. The Council made military training compulsory for all police officers.<sup>3</sup> The distinction between the army and the police, between those supposed to guard the rulers against external threat, and those supposed to maintain law and order internally, became merely formal.

The third step was to alter the character of the army, giving it a predominantly mercenary and lumpen character. Much attention has been given to the recruitment of mercenaries from Southern Sudan and Eastern Zaire into Amin's army. As a result the fascist army has been seen as a non-Ugandan force; but it really was not. More important than the recruitment of mercenaries from outside was the recruitment of urban riff-raff into the army. In the first three months after the coup this recruitment was haphazard, through a sort of open-door policy. The organized and large-scale incorporation of the urban unemployed into the army began after the 'economic war' in 1973. Dressed up in typical fascist fashion, it was dubbed as an anti-imperialist and anti-fascist gesture. About 6,000 unemployed persons were gathered in City Square Kampala, where Amin addressed them as 'volunteers who registered recently to go and fight alongside their brothers in the Middle East', and immediately recruited them into the army.<sup>4</sup> At the same ceremony Amin announced a 'new nationwide programme', whereby 'priority for training facilities was going to be given to jobless volunteers in order to curb the unemployment problem.'<sup>5</sup>

From then on, recruiting the urban riff-raff into the army became government policy. The mercenary and lumpen composition of the army soon gave it a new dimension, peculiarly fascist. The fascist army was not just a neo-colonial army that functioned as the repressive arm of the state; it did not use terror simply to defend a class dictatorship. Individual members of the armed forces used terror to eliminate all obstacles that stood in the way of their search for wealth.

Two intelligence-gathering units, the State Research Bureau (SRB) and the Public Safety Unit (PSU)—the latter allegedly set up to curb *kondalism* (armed robbery)—were established under the control of army officers. The several thousand full-time agents of the units, plus several times as many part-time informers, came from every nationality and religion in the country, and from both sexes too. Penetrating every aspect of the country's life, these agents and informers were the eyes and ears of the fascist regime. As one commentator has put it: 'The SRB was really like God, for it was found everywhere.'<sup>6</sup> Like the army, the SRB had a dual character. On the one hand, it functioned as an institutional arm of the state, designed to detect any opposition in action or speech. Anyone, neighbour, friend or relative, could be an agent or an informer. As a

result, political discussion outside official circles was silenced. On the other hand, there was an individual dimension to the terror unleashed by the SRB or PSU agent. The SRB card endowed its owner with the power of the state. The individual agent used this power to settle private scores and to silence, or eliminate, rivals in personal relations, business, or government. Whatever the agent reported to his or her boss was never doubted. Fascist terror had both an institutional and individual aspect: class violence in defence of the state, and individual violence for personal gains. Both modes of violence were unleashed by the same individuals, and both were made possible by the manner of organization of fascist instruments of terror: the arbitrary power of fascist intelligence-gathering organizations could not be challenged, and was based on speculation.

Now, certain learned professors have tried to split the institutional aspect of fascist terror from its individual aspect, to limit fascist responsibility to the former ('centralized' violence) while divorcing fascism from the latter ('decentralized' violence or 'anarchy'). To do so is not only to become an unconscious apologist for Amin's fascism; it is also to apologize in advance for every future fascist regime, thus paving the way for it.

The conflict between the military regime and the judiciary came to a head during the 'economic war'. This was highlighted by a ruling made by Chief Justice Kiwanuka against the Uganda Government in a writ of *habeas corpus* brought by the British High Commissioner concerning a Mr Donald Stewart, the British manager of a local comprador firm, then being held in custody by the military. A week later, the Chief Justice was dragged from his chambers in handcuffs by military policemen while the East African Court of Appeals was in session. That was in September 1972. Soon after, military tribunals took over from civilian courts. And yet Amin regularly asserted that the independence of the courts in Uganda was 'absolute'.

The regime proceeded to fill top positions in the judiciary with foreigners, mainly from Pakistan. From Mohamed Saied who replaced Ben Kiwanuka as Chief Justice, to High Court Judges like Mohammed Akber Khan, and resident chief magistrates in Masaka and Mbarara, most top cadres in the Amin judiciary were foreigners.<sup>7</sup>

The fascists played the tune, and the judges danced. Most legislation consisted of presidential decrees, and major violations of the law were 'judged' by military tribunals. The judges handled petty cases and sat on harmless commissions of inquiry that rubber-stamped official decisions.

Just like the army, the SRB and the PSU, the courts under fascism developed a new function: they became a moneymaking institution for individual members. A lively trade in suspects developed. Suspects were arrested or released on the payment of bribery. Human life itself was at stake in petty grievances involving petty sums.

Fascism gave its own twist to the civil service in three connected moves. First came the appointment of fascist army officers as ministers and heads of parastatals; then came the despatch of thousands of SRB agents and informers in every part of the civil service; the process was completed by the economic crises that began surfacing in 1974-75.

The economic crisis divided the civil service into two. To remain politically safe and economically buoyant, senior civil servants and bosses of parastatals sought connections with fascists. They were involved in big-time *magendo* (black-marketsteering) with impunity. The junior staff had to make do with petty *magendo*. As an institution, the civil service performed only under two conditions: either when it was commanded at gun point, or when it was 'given tea' (i.e., bribed).

As the fascist state apparatus was consolidated, democracy was choked to death. The process was clothed in the language of deceit and duplicity. Promises made on one day were torn up on the next, and remade on the third - that was the Aminist style of politics. The military regime started out with paper promises, the 18 points, and concrete action, the release of detainees. The people cheered the latter because they thought this was the beginning of the restoration of democratic liberties. But only four months later, a new decree empowered the Minister of Internal Affairs to detain, indefinitely, any person suspected of being 'dangerous' or of 'endeavouring to excite enmity between the people of Uganda and the government'.<sup>8</sup> Opposition was now a crime. By September, the government was empowered to detain a person 'without issuing a formal detention order or having cases reviewed'.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever extra-legal powers the government took, it did so in the name of the people. Unlimited powers of search and arrest, given to the armed forces and prison officers in March of 1971, were justified as 'part of the campaign to stamp out the scourge of *kondoism*'.<sup>10</sup> Two years later, in August, these powers were repealed, but another decree issued on the same day gave general powers of arrest to the Military Police. And yet a third decree, on that same day, reduced the period after which a missing person is presumed dead from seven to three years.<sup>11</sup> In other words, persons who went missing during the January coup would be legally presumed dead by the end of the year!

In his speech announcing the release of detainees after the coup, Amin had promised 'full political activity by everybody in Uganda' in future; but, for the moment, he said that 'all political activity was suspended with immediate effect'.<sup>12</sup> Within a week parliament was dissolved, and Amin assumed both legislative and executive powers. He would henceforth rule by decree. A month later, political activities were suspended for two years 'to allow the military government time to reconstruct the economy, reorganize the administration and restore public order and tranquility'.<sup>13</sup> And two years later, he issued 'an appeal to Ugandans never to engage in political activities because they have a

bitter end'. This 'bitter end' was painted in crimson colours when anti-fascist guerrillas were publicly executed around the country on 24 January and 12 February 1973.<sup>15</sup>

When Amin pledged to scrap 'Obote's one-party system immediately', little did people suspect that the replacement would be his no-party system. The main intention of the fascist dictatorship was to coerce and cajole the people into leaving politics as an activity fit only for their rulers, while concentrating their attention on production. The fascist idea of utopia is a neat division of labour between a silent people, who work like mute beasts of burden, and their rulers, who freely decide how to utilize the fruits of this labour. The fascist state apparatus was organized towards that end.

### Fascism and the economic crises

The second and final step in the development of the military regime into a fascist dictatorship was the militarization of the economy: the organization of economic activities towards the building of a military machine. This meant greater state control of, and supervision over, economic activities. The concrete manifestation of this process cannot be the same in a fascist imperialist country, such as pre-war Germany, Japan or Italy as in a neo-colony, where the producer goods' sector is either very limited or practically non-existent.

The economic conditions imposed two major limitations on the militarization of the Uganda economy. A lack of heavy industry meant that armaments could not be produced within the country; they had to be imported. Amin argued in his first address on defence policy that 'Uganda must investigate the possibility of filling some of its own arms needs by local manufacturing,'<sup>16</sup> but he soon found out that this was a pipedream. As the economy was subordinated to the needs of the military, export revenue was increasingly utilized to import arms and other commodities for the armed forces.

The second limit to the militarization of the economy was the class character of Ugandan society. In a society where the majority of producers are industrial workers, and where the bulk of production is carried out in few, but large and concentrated enterprises, state control over economic activity is relatively easy to establish. But where the majority of producers are peasants, and the bulk of production is carried out in millions of small, scattered units, centralized control can only be limited to a few large-scale units of production such as manufacturing units and plantations, and to the export-import trade. The largest industrial enterprises in Uganda, including the Coffee Marketing Board, were put directly under the control of fascist officers. Colonel Suleiman took charge of the ECTA bus company, renamed Peoples Transport Co.;

four non-commissioned officers from the Malire Mechanized Reconnaissance Specialist Regiment were promoted to be general managers of various industries; the Commissioner of Prisons, Okware, took over direction of the Lugazi Sugar Estate and factory; and after the mine workers' strike in 1975, Amin himself took over the chairmanship of Kilembe Mines Ltd., with Major Galla as his managing director.<sup>17</sup>

The economic problem that resulted from militarism was an intensified neo-colonial crisis. We can see this by comparing the crisis that surfaced during the Obote regime in 1969-70 with that which surfaced during the Amin regime in 1974-75. However dissimilar in appearance, they were really two sides of the same coin.

A neo-colonial economy is essentially locked in a narrow grid of export-import relations. Even the import-substituting industries created after Independence operated within this same nexus. But this imperialist connection, no matter how smooth and well-oiled, inevitably leads to crisis because the reason behind imperialist trade with, and investment in, a neo-colony is to pump out the surplus. This is why a neo-colonial economic crisis most often appears as a financial crisis, a balance-of-payments problem, as in Uganda between 1969 and 1971.

The 'economic war' was in essence, a change of agents, but this change could not be immediate or smooth. With the old set of agents, the Asian bourgeoisie expelled, and the new set, the *mafutamingi* yet to consolidate their position, foreign monopolies were without reliable, tested local 'sole agents'. The *mafutamingi* neither inherited the foreign connections of the Asian bourgeoisie, nor did they have any independent international credit-worthiness. This is why after the 'economic war' such international trade practices as the use of letters of credit practically came to a halt; most international transactions had to be in cash.

This, the relationship between the regime and foreign monopolies, was one side of the coin. Its other side was the relation between the regime and the people.

Militarization also brought the contradiction between the regime and the people to a head. Whereas it had been apparent that the welfare of the rulers depended directly on the performance of the export-import connection, it now became clear to the people that their own welfare hinged on their ability to break out of the narrow confines of export-import relations. In the absence of organization, popular attempts to break out of the straight-jacket of export-import could only be individual, not collective. In these two developments lay the seeds of the economic crisis of fascism.

The regime's single-minded concentration on arms imports was clear from the start. This is evident from foreign trade figures for 1971: imports increased by 20 per cent, and according to the Bank of Uganda, these were 'particularly for strengthening internal security and defence'.<sup>18</sup> And since exports for 1971 declined by 9 per cent there was a trade deficit

of Shs. 43m for the year—the first such deficit since Independence. But the regime was not deterred. It immediately issued a decree empowering the government to increase its short-term borrowing from the Bank of Uganda and lowering the statutory minimum of the bank's gold and foreign currency reserves.<sup>19</sup>

With the foreign exchange earned from exports being spent mainly on the import of arms, manufacturing industries, which had been set up under the overall command of foreign monopolies, suffered badly; they could not operate normally without raw materials, component parts and spares from overseas. The decline in manufacturing output is evident from the table:

Table 3 *Output of selected manufactures: 1970, 1975, 1977-78*<sup>20</sup>

Manufactures	Unit	1970	1975	1977-78	
				1977-78	as % of 1970
Cotton and other fabrics	linear metres	54.6	39.1	30.3	55
Blankets	'000s	1164	322	165	14
Soap	'000 tonnes	12.9	3.6	1.2	9
Cooking Oil	'000 tonnes	13.0	6.1	1.5	11
Paints	'000 litres	1660	858	586*	35
Matches	'000 cartons	49.3	31.4	8.1	16
Cement	'000 tonnes	191	98	73	38
Super-phosphates	'000 tonnes	24.8	4.0	0	0
Corrugated iron sheets	'000 tonnes	11.9	1.4	0.8	7

\*Note: refers to 1977; all others are for 1978

As manufacturing production declined, and with its state revenue from taxation, the regime resorted to the most modern of ways to intensify the exploitation of the people. It began to print money, almost at will.

When a government begins to print money out of all proportion to the increase in commodity production, it debases the value of money in the hands of the people, while transferring purchasing power from the people to itself. Below we compare the expansion of money supply in Uganda from 1971 to 1978 with that in Kenya and Tanzania, bearing in mind that material production in Uganda was at its lowest level during the same period.

While production in manufacturing was declining, the money supply under the Amin regime increased over six-fold! The result was an inflationary spiral. But inflation, like every economic phenomenon, does not have the same significance for all classes. This is clear from the cost of living index for 1976 and 1977. During 1976, the cost of living index rose

Table 4 *Growth in money supply in East Africa, 1971-78*<sup>21</sup>

	1971	1975	1978
Uganda	100	280	611
Kenya	100	175	356
Tanzania	100	207	341

by 104 points for high-income groups, 167 points for medium-income groups, and 224 points for lower-income groups. The corresponding figures for 1977 were 119, 261 and 432 points.<sup>22</sup> The poorer you were, the more expensive it became for you to live. The prices of essentials was rising faster than that of luxuries. The main victims of fascist exploitation were, therefore, the poor and wretched majority of the people.

This majority began to stir. It utilized the nearest weapon it could find. Workers moved from absenteeism to strikes and sabotage. All the major sugar plantations were burnt down by workers at some point. Strikes at the biggest industries, like the Kilembc Mines and UTC, turned into bloody affairs, with the fascist army mowing down unarmed workers. But the workers were also in a weak position; the decline of manufacturing led to a decline in employment. The result was movement from town to countryside. Peasants, too, were doubly hit. They paid more for what they bought (seeds, hoes, soap, salt, medicine, cloth, etc.) but were paid less for the cash crops they produced. The table below shows how much the coffee-grower got from the export price of his coffee.

Table 5 *Distribution of coffee crop value (%)*,<sup>23</sup> Uganda 1972/73-77/78

Year	Farmer	Miller	Coffee Marketing Board	Surplus taken by the state
1972/73	39	10	11	40
1973/74	27	7	8	58
1974/75	32	8	10	50
1975/76	19	5	7	69
1976/77	15	4	6	75
1977/78	28	6	6	60

The peasants' response was to move from the export economy as far as possible, abandoning the production of those crops marketed by state agencies in favour of those that could be marketed privately. The result was a sharp decline in export crop production.

Table 6 *Production of major export crops, 1970, 1975, 1978<sup>24</sup> ('000 tonnes)*

	1970	1975	1978
Tobacco	5.0*	3.6	1.5
Tea	18.2	18.3	10.9
Cotton	76.3	13.8**	11.1***
Coffee—Arabica	16.2	14.0	5.0***
—Robusta	159.3	123.1	75.0***

*Note:*

\*1972

\*\*1976/77

\*\*\*excluding output not sold through official channels

However, this was not the end of the peasants' woes. By 1975 the *mafutamingi* were beginning to flex their muscles. The spoils of the 'economic war' had whetted their appetites. With the backing of the state, they now turned to the countryside. The groundwork for the plunder of the countryside was laid by the administrative reorganization of the country, demarcating it into ten new provinces. Each province was now headed by a military governor whose writ would henceforth be law. The province was for the military governor like a feudal fiefdom. It was his own hunting ground for personal aggrandizement. The military governors were like warlords, under only nominal control from the central government. They organized the collection of export produce from their 'own' provinces, smuggling the bulk under armed convoys to neighbouring countries.

On the heels of the administrative reorganization of the country followed the Land Reform Decree of June 1975, bringing all land under the control of the state. Both 'absolute ownership of the land' and 'the power of the customary tenant to stand in the way of development' were abolished. All land was henceforth to be held on a 99-year lease. With the stroke of a pen, the 'customary tenant' became a tenant-at-will of the state. Where the landlord system existed, as in Buganda, the tenant became a sub-lessee and the landlord a lessee of the state. The Land Commission was empowered to terminate any lease on 'undeveloped' land and grant it to a potential 'developer'. Such a lease-holder was 'free to evict any tenant occupying any part of the leasehold granted to enable him to develop the land'.<sup>25</sup>

The decree enabled the *mafutamingi* to grab land particularly in those parts of the country where land scarcity and social differentiation were relatively advanced, as in Central and Western Uganda. Quite often, square miles of land were demarcated, peasants driven off, and the whole area fenced. The new owners of the land were not capitalist farmers ('developers') but absentee landlords. The *mafutamingi* were hardly the

pioneering capitalists of eighteenth century England. The wealth they amassed did not increase the productive forces of the economy. Their relationship to the economy was parasitic. This is clear from an examination of the overall economic trends in the country during this period.

Table 7 *Rates of growth, 1973-76 (%)*<sup>26</sup>

Year	GDP	Monetary economy	Cash agricultural output
1973	-1.2	-3.6	-6.2
1974	-2.0	-4.0	-12
1975	-2.2	-4.8	
1976	-0.4		-0.4

Up until the coffee boom of 1976-78, the monetary economy was moving in reverse gear! In the vacuum created by declining commodity production, stepped in the *magendo* trade. It was a lucrative business that became a systematic black-market distribution system as economic conditions worsened. This trade prospered because it was the immediate result of fascist mismanagement and also served the interests of the *mafutamingi*, who controlled it, and were the social backbone of the fascist regime. There was a contradiction between the interests of this class and that of its individual members. The individual *mafutamingi* turned the crisis of the regime into an opportunity for earning a handsome profit. The fascist regime attempted to bring the inflationary spiral under control and to stamp out *magendo*, but failed, because at the root of the crisis was fascism itself.

The regime's anti-*magendo* drive went through two phases: 1974-75 and 1975-76. By 1974, commodity scarcity and price rises were becoming evident. The campaign against inflation began with verbal threats. Amin denounced 'those businessmen who overcharge the masses so that they can become rich quickly', and declared that 'overcharging, hoarding or cheating in any way would be treated as treason and any businessman found guilty will face the firing squad'.<sup>27</sup> A decree was passed making it a criminal offence to hoard essential goods. The police force was set in motion to effect the decree. Five days after the decree was issued, five Kampala traders landed in court. In Masaka, hoarders of essential commodities were caught and paraded before the people at the Golf Club. Premises of traders and butchers found overcharging were closed down and 're-allocated to other Ugandans who were ready to serve honestly'.<sup>28</sup>

The target in these campaigns was the small entrepreneur, mainly

hawkers. Time and again, police swooped on hawkers in Kampala's South Street and Nakivubo area and confiscated their items. Hawkers were detained, questioned and tortured. The operation, said police sources, was intended 'to unearth the mystery surrounding the unavailability of essential commodities in the country'.<sup>29</sup> When it became clear that the results were paltry, the campaign was stepped up.

The second phase began with the passage of the 1975 Economic Crimes Tribunal Decree. The decree set up tribunals in each province 'with exclusive powers' to try those involved in 'smuggling, hoarding, corruption, embezzlement, overcharging and stealing foreign exchange'.<sup>30</sup> With the decree, the police moved backstage and the army stepped in. With all the fanfare befitting a victorious general, Captain Nassur took charge of the anti-hoarding operation a day after becoming the governor of Central Province. He warned 'big-headed businessmen to reduce their prices or face appropriate action', appointed 'price enforcement officers' and went on an inspection tour of trading centres.<sup>31</sup> Prices came down, but only for a brief period. By the time Nassur was removed from his governorship, *magendo* was once again on the march. His replacement, Captain Odongo, organized his own 'anti-overcharging operation' and closed some shops. This time, too, the results were not encouraging.

The whole operation, lasting two years, was bizarre. It was like the thief chasing his own shadow, or the disease fighting its symptoms. At the end of it, however, the regime had gained a measure of self-consciousness. Amin turned right around, now warning that 'people who are operating their business successfully should not be interfered with or harassed'. Anti-business attitudes, he argued, were harboured by those 'brainwashed by foreign philosophies' who 'would rather cause chaos'.<sup>32</sup> In June 1977, businessmen were told they were 'free to buy their commodities from wherever they could get them and fix their prices'. The government declared it had 'no intention of plugging the trade inlets at her borders through which they (traders) obtained their goods'. Prices, declared Amin, 'would automatically drop when the market is flooded with commodities'. Then came the final word: 'The word *magendo* has now lost meaning and should be discouraged'.<sup>33</sup>

Theft had gained respectability. Fascism had embraced its consequences.

### Fascism and society

Rapid social changes in history have always been facilitated by violence. Violence is never aimless: it is always directed to a specific end; it always serves the interests of a particular group, or individual, and undermines that of another. Violence has a class character: it is

either the reactionary terror of the oppressor, or the revolutionary violence of the oppressed.

Fascist violence in Uganda was reactionary terror. The local interests it served came to the surface during its first major operation: the 'economic war', when fascism expropriated one section of property-owners and distributed their property to its own supporters. Shielded by fascist terror from both the previous owners and the people, the *mafutamingi* were born. These children of fascism were not unaffected by the terror they benefited from, and helped to consolidate. The wealth they acquired with so much ease, they could not keep easily, and most were never quite secure with their ill-gotten possessions. The competition that exists within any propertied class was particularly severe among the *mafutamingi*. A *mafutamingi* competitor employed against his *mafutamingi* rival the very instruments the *mafutamingi*, as a class, directed against the people: the SRB, the PSU, the army, the prisons and even the firing squads. Property changed hands continually. But while individual robbers came and went, the pack remained.

The experience of 'easy come, easy go' gave the *mafutamingi* a very short-run perspective, strengthened by the continued instability of fascism. *Mafutamingi* investments were directed towards high-risk, quick-return activities. They preferred commerce to productive investments, and *magendo* to legal commerce. The most lucrative activity was a combined investment in *magendo* and long-distance transport. *Magendo* profits were high when scarcity was greatest. Scarcity was not the result of lack of planning; it was planned by the *mafutamingi*. The *magendo* trade rose in direct proportion to the decline in industrial production, and as wage employment declined, the numbers of the *bayaye* rose. The *mafutamingi* seldom employed workers: he distributed his stock to 'his' *bayaye* to retail at every nook and corner of the town at *magendo* prices.

The life style of the *mafutamingi* was marked by incessant and conspicuous consumption. They lived like a declining nobility, determined to make as big a show of their wealth as possible. Each competed with the other to deck 'his' women with the most expensive jewellery around, to drive in the latest and slickest car available, and to own the most spacious mansion. Show-off, decadence and waste - these were the hall-marks of *mafutamingi* life.

The *mafutamingi* and their apologists argue that everyone was involved in *magendo*; everyone was therefore responsible for it. This is only a half-truth. *Magendo* meant different things to different classes. To the wealthy who benefited from it, it was a way of enrichment; to the poor who were its victims, it was a last straw in the struggle to survive.

Fascism's most negative effect on the working people, particularly those in urban and semi-urban areas, was that it lumpenized them. There was increasing disregard for productive work, because productive work paid less and less. People came to accept a way of life where any means of

making money was acceptable provided it succeeded. Even those involved in regular employment spent more and more time outside their places of work, 'chasing' commodities. Fascism idealized the *bayaye*, the ignorant, the rough and the tough, and these qualities paid better than productive labour. Not only did the *bayaye* population of the towns increase, *bayaye* thinking and *bayaye* traits affected the rest of the town population, and that part of the rural population closely connected with the *magendo* economy, particularly in the border areas. The youth increasingly drifted away from schools, into *magendo*.

Related to the lumpenization of the working people was their brutalization. In the midst of fascist terror and disorder, life became a kind of war. In the midst of scarcity, the poor fought one another to get hold of necessities, the oppressed came to accept premature death as simply a fact of life: living conditions disunited and divided the oppressed as never before. Fascist attempts to divide the people included utilizing every historically ingrained prejudice found among them. The two most conspicuous ones were racism and male chauvinism.

Racism in the modern era is a by-product of imperialism. Imperialism utilized the oppressed of one race as its instruments among the oppressed of another race, and then it created petty racial privileges to keep the oppressed divided. Petty nationalism capitalized on these petty privileges to turn anti-imperialism into a racial crusade. Once the 'economic war' was concluded, Amin mounted a campaign against those born of inter-racial marriages. He castigated 'half-castes' for creating 'class distinctions', and warned them not to think that 'they are of higher status than the indigenous Ugandans'.<sup>34</sup>

Fascism tried to hide its anti-women practices under a cloak of morality. In mounting a moral crusade, it tried to utilize the people's dislike of imperialist cultural influences. At one time or another, Amin banned mini-skirts, 'hot pants', 'maxi-skirts with a V-shaped split in the front', long trousers, 'tights and such like dresses', abortion, 'beautifying and skin-toning creams and lotion which change the natural beauty of women and make them look like half-castes', and so on.<sup>35</sup> Each decree became a major operation. The enemy were women now! When hooligans used these decrees as an excuse to molest women, the fascists argued that 'the Government is not to blame'.<sup>36</sup>

And yet no class in society treated women as sexual objects, as sexual prey and sexual display, as much as the fascists and the *mafutamingi* did. Also, imperialist cultural influences are not confined to women; they plague both men and women. The real carriers of those influences are the fascists and the *mafutamingi*; they cannot be the cure. To eradicate imperialist cultural influence is not possible through state repression; it requires political education. Doing away with imperialist cultural influence is not possible in isolation; it requires that a popular national culture be developed simultaneously.

### The search for a social base

No oppressive regime can survive for long unless it manages to win support from beyond the narrow confines of the class whose interests it serves. To do this, it may employ a series of methods, ranging from nationalistic chauvinism and demagoguery, to petty reforms and privileges for a section of the oppressed. The fascist regime tried all these methods.

There was no shortage of demagoguery. Starting with appeals on the national question ('anti-imperialism and anti-zionism'), it moved on to the social question, the question of class struggle. The best example was Amin's speech to workers on May Day 1974:<sup>37</sup>

We do not believe in sharp and artificial divisions between workers and so-called employers as you find in imperialistic capitalistic countries. We are all joined together by a common bond of brotherhood and have the common goal of achieving prosperity and well-being for all our people.

In the Second Republic of Uganda, there is no room for workers and so-called employers to regard each other as belonging to two warring camps. Both the workers and the managers must continue to regard each other as comrades-in-arms, each making their own contribution in their own way towards the desired goal. It is therefore imperative for both the workers and the managers to unite together and fight the common enemies of poverty and unemployment.

It could just as well have been Hitler or Mussolini. Demagoguery, however, was beginning to have diminishing returns. Anti-'half-caste' and anti-women operations had no more than a passing effect. The Fascists now attempted to create a more secure social base through a programme of Islamization.

At the outset, the regime presented itself as a congregation of the pious. Amin declared that all his major policy decisions had been inspired from above. A department of Religious Affairs was set up in the President's Office; religious instruction in schools was promoted through state funds. Different denominations received state assistance: the Archbishop of Rubaga received a million shillings for the Namugongo Martyrs' shrine; the Uganda Orthodox Church got shs. 500,000; and the Church of Uganda was given shs. 200,000 'to assist in spreading the gospel and developing its projects'.<sup>38</sup> On their part, Church leaders at times went beyond ritual prayers for the Head of State's 'good health and long life'. One such occasion was a 1974 memorandum from the Church of Uganda to Amin, professing loyalty and pledging strict adherence to Romans Chapter 13: 'There is no government anywhere that God has not placed in power'.<sup>39</sup>

But the courtship between the regime and the Church did not last

long. As the antagonism between fascism and the people surfaced, the regime looked for other allies. It put the power of the state behind institutionalized Islam, turning it into a semi-official religion, while alienating other religions. Church leaders who spoke out against the worst ills of fascism were struck down. Archbishop Luwum was murdered by fascists on 17 February 1977, not because he was a devout Christian, but because he was an ardent nationalist.

To understand why the regime used Islam successfully, we must understand the historical dimension to the question of religion in Uganda. Religion was a weapon colonialism often used to divide the people. Christian denominations benefited from state patronage, in one way or another. The role of the Church was even stipulated by the law in some cases. In Buganda, for example, the king, the prime minister and the treasurer had to be Protestants, while the Chief Justice had to be a Catholic. During colonial rule and after, Protestantism was a sort of official religion. The most oppressed religious group in the country was the Muslims. It was this factor that Amin utilized for his own purposes. To do so successfully, institutionalized Islam had first to be brought under the control of the fascist clique. This was done in two phases. First, dissident Muslim leaders said to be 'working as confusing agents' were purged. Later, Amin directed a military team 'to tour all districts and select persons who would be members of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council'.<sup>40</sup>

Arabic broadcasts were introduced on radio and television, and Arabic was made one of the languages on the passport. An Institute for Islamic Studies was set up at Makerere, and a master plan was commissioned to set up an Islamic University of Uganda. The Islamic Friday was declared a public holiday. Conversions to Islam became semi-official policy as fascist officers led *mauledis* to celebrate mass conversions, and to collect funds for the new National Mosque in Kampala. Simba battalion, Mbarara, held a *mauledi* where 455 people were converted. The 'Suicide Mechanized Revolutionary Reconnaissance Regiment' held its own 'grand *mauledi*'. There was a special *mauledi* for traders to contribute for building the National Mosque. A *mauledi* was even held when the new Governor of South Buganda Province, Captain Kassim Ramadhan, celebrated his entry into his residence at Masaka.<sup>41</sup>

Those who gained most from Islam's semi-official status were its leaders, not the broad masses of Muslims. After the 'economic war', the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council became one of the largest private landlords in the country. It now controlled all the mosques, housing estates, schools, dispensaries, and even a few factories, previously owned by Asian Muslim organizations throughout the country. UMSC became an economic power in its own right. Its leadership was prized by the high and mighty. The Minister of Finance, Brigadier Moses Ali,

was its chairman. Rank and file Muslims were temporarily misled and isolated from the rest of the people.

But the base the regime gained through the use of Islam was still too narrow. Fascism never ceased trying to broaden its base. There was no shortage of grandiose plans: one called 'for a countrywide mass mobilization aimed at creating national consciousness and increasing discipline'; another was designed 'to form a national party in the country to be known as the National Union of Uganda'; yet another decreed that 'everybody in Uganda must act as a member of the intelligence service for the security of the country'.<sup>42</sup> Eventually the regime settled for a plan more closely tailored to its capacities. From 1977 on, a series of National Forums were held. Its participants were hand-picked by provincial governors: they were national only in that they came from different parts of the country—they were the voice of the *mafutamingi*.

Except for the first few years of its rule, when its fangs were not yet bare, fascism never became rooted among the popular masses of Uganda. Even in the beginning, the regime's popularity was greater among small proprietors and the unemployed than among other classes in society. After 1974, support for the regime was confined to isolated pockets. Opposition grew, but remained disorganized and, hence, ineffective. The real reason for the eight-year survival of this neo-colonial fascist regime lay, not in any local foundation, but in the support imperialism gave it.

#### Notes

1. *Uganda Argus*, 7 August 1971.
2. *Uganda Argus*, 20 August 1971.
3. *Uganda Argus*, 12 June 1971.
4. *Voice*, 24 October 1973.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Adamu-Muwafa, 'Aminism: what is it?' in *Forward*, vol. 1, no. 4 1979. Kampala.
7. *Voice*, 24 September 1974.
8. *Uganda Argus*, 12 May 1971.
9. *Uganda Argus*, 21 September 1971.
10. *Uganda Argus*, 19 March 1971.
11. *Voice*, 28 August 1973.
12. *Uganda Argus*, 29 January 1971.
13. *Uganda Argus*, 24 March 1971.
14. *Voice*, 16 April 1973.
15. *Voice*, 24 January 1973 and 12 February 1973.
16. *Uganda Argus*, 8 July 1971.
17. *Voice*, 11 February 1975 and 3 March 1975.
18. *Uganda Argus*, 4 March 1972.
19. *Uganda Argus*, 20 July 1971.
20. Commonwealth team of experts, *The Rehabilitation of the Economy of Uganda*, vol. 2, Table 1.3, p. 28.
21. *Ibid.*, Table 1.11, p. 32.



22. *Voice*, 17 June 1977.
23. *The Rehabilitation of the Economy of Uganda*, Table 4.2, p. 61.
24. *Ibid.*, Table 1.5, p. 29.
25. *Voice*, 2 June 1975.
26. Compiled from annual budget speeches as reported in *Voice*.
27. *Voice*, 9 January 1975.
28. *Voice*, 15 January 1975.
29. *Voice*, 25 April 1974.
30. *Voice*, 26 March 1975.
31. *Voice*, 18 January 1975 and 25 June 1976.
32. *Voice*, 17 June 1977.
33. *Voice*, 24 June 1977.
34. *Voice*, 21 January 1974.
35. *Uganda Argus*, 29 May 1972; 31 May 1972; 15 January 1973; 30 July 1973; 23 November 1974; 6 May 1975; 29 March 1977.
36. *Uganda Argus*, 6 July 1972.
37. *Voice*, 1 May 1974.
38. *Voice*, 7 February 1975; 29 April 1975; 9 February 1974.
39. *Voice*, 2 March 1974.
40. *Uganda Argus*, 14 April 1972.
41. *Voice*, 28 October 1976; 8 August 1977; 11 April 1978.
42. *Voice*, 31 January 1973; 26 August 1975; 20 December 1977; 3 January 1978.

## Part Three

### *Neo-colonial Fascism and Imperialism*

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## 5 *A Period of Transition: 1971-73*

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The first two years of the Amin regime were stormy. The honeymoon with its erstwhile sponsors, Britain and Israel, was short-lived. It lasted hardly over a year. The year after the coup brought drastic changes, initiated by a series of expulsions. First came the expulsion of official and unofficial Israeli interests. Then followed the expulsion of Asian merchants and industrialists, citizens or non-citizens, some of whom were solidly tied to the British connection. The final episode was a two-phased expulsion of most British interests, but not all. From the regime's point of view, this was a period of transition in international relations.

At the time of the 1971 coup, Britain was the leading imperialist power in Uganda. This fact was reflected in every aspect of the country's economic, political, cultural and military life.

The economic predominance of British interests was clear in finance, trade and manufacturing investment. Three British banks controlled 80 per cent of all commercial deposits in the country. Britain was Uganda's principal trading partner. Locally, this trade was managed by subsidiaries of British trading monopolies and by Asian-owned export-import companies. There were important British investments in manufacturing: British American Tobacco, Chillington Tools, Brooke Bond, Dunlop and the Mitchell Cotts monopoly of tea plantations.

Culturally, urban life, especially in the affluent circles, was stamped 'Made in Britain' or 'Made in the USA'. The only English-language daily newspaper was owned by Lonrho. Newspapers and magazines, learned societies, the theatre, the cinemas and television, schools and colleges, churches and missionary societies, all drew their inspiration from either Britain or the USA.

The military, likewise, was a child of British imperialism. Its officers were either trained in British academies, or by British officers in the heat of colonial wars (Amin was a graduate of the anti-Mau Mau campaigns). The Uganda Army was a child of the colonial King's African Rifles: the same men, the same discipline, the same orientation, the same weapons, only different uniforms.

Britain's leading position in the country had, however, to decrease in the first decade after Independence. American banks had acquired minority shares in both Barclays and National & Grindlays banks, and American oil monopolies were rubbing shoulders with Shell and British Petroleum. The American-financed garrison-state of Israel provided the 'advisors' who shaped the army, the police and the intelligence services

of the 'independent' state of Uganda. The Canadian monopoly, Falconbridge, controlled the mining of copper, and Japanese monopolies had investments in textiles and fishnets. Britain was, nevertheless, the principal imperialist power in Uganda.

The presence of the Soviet Union in Uganda in 1971 was embryonic and confined to a few economic projects like the then new Russian-built agricultural college and farm at Busitema in Tororo district, and the Lira Spinning Mill. The Soviet presence in the military was confined to a training team, and a very recent connection with the Air Force.

This balance of forces was reflected in the British-Israeli sponsorship of the 1971 coup. In the first year after the coup, the British-Israeli connection was highly visible. The British government was the first to recognize the Amin regime. The British ambassador even sat in on cabinet meetings, while the Israeli ambassador regularly dined at State House, habitually toasting with Amin 'Uganda's special place on [Israel's] map'. In the very first month after the coup, Amin expelled the Russian military team that had come under Obote, except for a few who remained to maintain seven MiG-15s and MiG-17s. Their place was taken by a 700-member Israeli team.<sup>1</sup> A few months later, in July 1971, Amin flew to Israel, and then to Britain, begging help in hand. In both capitals he made the same plea. He had come 'to seek further aid in helping to raise the standard of the Uganda Army and Air Force', Amin told reporters at Tel Aviv airport. In Britain, he said he wanted 'help in training his country's military forces as well as economic aid'.<sup>2</sup> The plea was for guns and butter, in that order.

But he got very little. Israel obliged with an arms sale of \$1 million, and no more.<sup>3</sup> The British government even tried to discourage the general's visit, not wanting to associate itself so early and so openly with the new regime. But the client was having problems, and the master had no option but to come to his assistance.

Amin's problem lay in the enormous swelling of the army following the massacre of pro-Obote soldiers. Trebled by recruitment in less than a year, Amin's army was rife with indiscipline. Only one officer had had previous commanding experience. Junior and warrant officers had shot up to the rank of lieutenant-colonel overnight. There was an acute shortage of instructors to train the many platoons and companies of raw recruits.

British military assistance came in the form of both equipment and training. Britain agreed to supply £1 million worth of around 20 Saladin armoured vehicles. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, they were 'to put down possible anti-government guerrilla movements backed by the country's exiled President, Dr Milton Obote'. In addition, 50 Ugandan soldiers were recruited for officer training in British military academies.<sup>4</sup> British economic assistance was limited. It extended to no more than a £10 million loan, matched by a commercial credit of the same amount

announced by the deputy chairman of National & Grindlays Bank, who came to Kampala to proclaim his confidence in the post-coup government.<sup>5</sup>

The regime's performance as a lap-dog of US-led imperialism was also reflected in the alignments it initiated. Its most notable foreign policy initiative was a step towards rapprochement with South Africa, announced brazenly as the visit of a ten-person delegation 'to study and find out the problems which face black people in South Africa'.<sup>6</sup>

In this first year, the regime took every initiative open to it, within the confines of being a British-Israeli stooge, but it could not wriggle out of the tight squeeze in which it found itself at birth. Domestically, there was pressure from striking urban masses below, and propertied interests above. The former expected an improvement in living standards; the latter wanted more room for expansion under an open right-wing regime. Regionally, soldiers loyal to ex-president Obote were organizing for a comeback in training camps in neighbouring Sudan and Tanzania. Internationally, the regime's isolation, initially the result of its British-Israeli connections at the time of the coup, was complete with its overtures to South Africa.

This dilemma provided an opening for the opportunist supporters of the regime. Led by Foreign Minister Wanume Kibedi, they counselled the general to initiate a realignment of the regime's international relations. Effectively, this was an attempt to change masters. The end-result of this strategy was to move one foot into the Soviet-led camp. This transition, which took a year, enabled the regime to break out of its isolation, both at home and abroad, temporarily.

The first opportunity in the regime's search for allies came with Nimeiri's attempt to resolve the civil war in Southern Sudan peacefully. A key factor in this resolution was to be Uganda, which Israel had used as a base to supply Southern Sudanese guerrillas with arms and supplies. Only in October 1971, Kampala's Lonrho-owned daily, *The Uganda Argus*, had reported from Jerusalem that 'Israel was to develop the Karamoja District of Uganda'.<sup>7</sup> Israeli philanthropy was understandably whetted by the fact that Karamoja, a semi-arid region of 7.5 million acres, larger than the state of Israel itself, bordered Southern Sudan. If it could cut off the direct Israeli supply line to the Anyanya in the south, Sudan had a reasonable chance of achieving a peaceful resolution to the civil war.

The groundwork for the Sudanese-Ugandan rapprochement was prepared by intensive contacts between the Sudanese, Libyan and Ugandan regimes. In early February 1972, Amin visited Libya. Whatever else transpired during that visit, its success as an initiative can be assumed; that same month a Libyan military delegation came to Kampala. Headed by a member of the Libyan Revolutionary Command Council, it promised 'every assistance to the Ugandan Army'. A second

delegation followed on its heels, this time headed by the Libyan ambassador to the Sudan.<sup>8</sup>

The agreement ending the civil war in the Southern Sudan was signed in late February. Less than a month later, Amin informed the Israeli ambassador that all Israeli nationals would have to leave Ugandan soil in four days.

For the military regime, the results of the Israeli expulsion were a great boon internationally. Relations with the Sudan improved dramatically, since the Israelis could no longer use northern Uganda as a corridor for their supply line to the Anyanya in the Southern Sudan. The Nimeiri government reciprocated by closing down all facilities it had previously granted to pro-Obote guerrillas. That June, the regimes in Khartoum and Kampala signed a military pact. Exiled anti-Amin forces were henceforth restricted to only one sympathetic neighbour, Tanzania. With a political settlement in the Southern Sudan, many of the ex-Anyanya guerrillas became willing recruits for Amin's fast-expanding army.

The regime also reaped its harvest from the newly found Libyan connection. Gaddafi of Libya had a monetary conception of how to counter Israeli influence on the African continent. As expounded later at the Non-Aligned Nations' conference in Algiers in 1973, Libya offered to compensate generously any country for the financial loss it might sustain by breaking links with Israel.<sup>9</sup> We shall have occasion to detail the exact nature of Libyan 'compensation' to Amin later. Suffice it to note here that there was a flurry of military and trade delegations between Kampala and Tripoli in the four months between April and July 1972.<sup>10</sup>

Only a year after the Soviet military team in Kampala had been asked by the general to pack up unceremoniously and go home, to be replaced by an Israeli team, the wheel had turned the other way around: the Israeli team was out, and the Soviet Union was due to begin a six-year relationship with the Amin regime. Libya had no doubt acted as a half-way station to the Soviet Union. In late July 1972, a 30-member Ugandan military delegation flew to Moscow for talks with Soviet defence officials. Headed by the acting army commander, Colonel Francis Nyangweso, it was dubbed 'the most powerful military mission ever sent out of this country' by diplomatic officials in Kampala. Following that visit an 'undetermined number' of Ugandan soldiers began arriving in Moscow for military training.<sup>11</sup>

At this point, though, Russian influence in the military was only just beginning. With the expulsion of the Israelis, the main military connection was still with Britain. The British despatched a military training team of 17 officers to Uganda at about the same time. In typically condescending colonial fashion, the delegation was led by a Lt.-Col. H. Rogers, who had been Amin's commanding officer in the days of the colonial King's African Rifles!<sup>12</sup> In the next six months,

however, there was a sharp deterioration in relations with Britain, but this was largely a consequence of the Asian expulsion, an event whose impetus was generated mainly by internal forces.

### The break with Britain

In the second half of 1972 the regime moved to expand its social base at home. Once again, the initiative came from the Kibedi group. Fresh from victories on the foreign policy front, this opportunist clique now sought to ease the domestic pressure on the regime. The Asian expulsion was an attempt to respond to domestic pressures, from both above and below: to the regime's supporters in the propertied classes, the expulsion provided unexpected booty; to the popular masses below, it was presented as a decisive anti-exploitation measure.

British economic interests in Uganda, particularly trade relations, were mediated through an agent-class that was predominantly of Asian origin, and the expulsion eliminated this class in one single sweep. The effect on Anglo-Ugandan relations was inevitably adverse. Anticipating British moves to replace him, Amin demanded that the British military team leave Uganda in three days. Soon after Ugandan soldiers began leaving for military training in the Soviet Union.

The Asian expulsion took three months, from September to November 1972. On 1 December Britain cancelled all aid to Uganda: the £10 million given to the regime after the coup, and a technical aid programme of £1.7 million.<sup>13</sup> The military regime responded by nationalizing 41 foreign-owned firms, of which 15 were British. Most of the remaining concerns were small-scale plantations in Western Uganda, owned by Greek settlers. But very few of the big monopoly British investments in Uganda were included in this nationalization move. The nationalized firms later lodged compensation claims amounting to £30 million with the Foreign Office in London; a third of which were claimed by two monopolies: Mitchell Cotts (£7m) and British-American Tobacco (£3m).<sup>14</sup>

It is more interesting to take note of the British concerns which were *not* nationalized. The most important of these were the three banks: Barclays, National & Grindlays, and Standard. It is true that their internal operations were considerably diminished, since all 'blocked' accounts (those belonging to nationalized Asian and British enterprises) were to be moved from foreign banks to the state-owned Uganda Commercial Bank, UCB, but this did not change the control these banks had over Uganda's foreign transactions.<sup>15</sup> The manager of the UCB pointed out in a letter to the governor of the Bank of Uganda that, 'it is no secret in banking that foreign transactions constitute lucrative business for banks,' and that this business was still in the hands of British banks.

By state decree, all raw-material imports were the sole responsibility of the Uganda Advisory Board of Trade, and the board's bankers were Grindlays; since raw-material imports accounted for most of foreign business, this left very little for the Foreign Department of the UCB.<sup>16</sup>

Besides the banks, surviving British interests in Uganda included the oil monopoly (British Petroleum), the Unilever trading companies (Mackenzie-Dalgety, Gailey & Roberts), Mowlem Construction Company, and the two paint-manufacturing concerns of Leyland and Robbialac.

The December nationalizations left the principal *direct* UK investments in Uganda untouched, but coupled with the Asian expulsion, they constituted a devastating blow to overall British interests in the country. Official relations between Uganda and Britain reached an all-time low between 1972 and 1974. On 13 October 1972, the *Uganda Argus* reported that the general had asked the British High Commissioner to Uganda, Mr Richard Slater, 'to leave Uganda with the last batch of British Asians when he completes dealing with their requirements for departure within the 90-day deadline'. When Slater's replacement arrived, the general 'refused to receive the British High Commissioner any more to discuss matters connected with British Asians or British firms expelled'.<sup>17</sup>

By late 1972, the general was loudly castigating 'the British imperialists who are still milking the country's economy'. On their part, Britain and Israel launched a campaign to topple the regime by precipitating a crisis through an embargo on Uganda's foreign trade until 'adequate compensation' was paid for lost assets. When this attempt failed, Britain confined itself to less ambitious assaults, mainly on the propaganda front. The BBC was piously eloquent as it denounced a regime it had suddenly discovered was responsible for 'a reign of terror worse than anything in recent African history'.<sup>18</sup> On his part, the general breathed fire and brimstone, threatening to expel all British nationals from Uganda in only 48 hours! President Kenyatta of Kenya intervened at the eleventh hour, and the threatened expulsion failed to transpire. This was but one instance of the Kenyan leadership intervening on Britain's behalf. Britain was, however, compelled to reassess relations with the Amin regime, which had, after all, survived two years in spite of British-Israeli attempts to overthrow it.<sup>19</sup>

While Amin was full to the brim with anti-imperialist rhetoric, he simply moved from one imperialist master to another, from a power that was spent (the UK) to others that were mightier (the USA and the USSR). After 1972, the fascist regime moved further into the orbit of the super powers. That was the secret of its survival, a fact Britain took into account, belatedly, in 1974.

#### Notes

1. *Uganda Argus*, 30 April 1971, p. 1; *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 August 1972.
2. *Uganda Argus*, 12 July 1971, p. 1; and 14 July 1971, p. 1.

3. *International Herald Tribune*, 13 July 1971.
4. *Financial Times*, 12 September 1972; *The Observer*, 25 July 1971; *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 June 1971; *The Guardian*, 10 July 1971.
5. *Uganda Argus*, 23 October 1971, p. 1; *Financial Times*, 11 January 1972.
6. *Uganda Argus*, 29 September 1971, p. 1.
7. *Ibid.*, 28 October 1971, p. 1.
8. *Ibid.*, 2 February 1972; and 22 February 1972; and 10 July 1972; *The Egyptian Gazette*, 24 February 1972 and 21 April 1972.
9. *Foreign Report*, London, No. 1310 of 12.9.73, pp. 3-4.
10. *Uganda Argus*, 15 February 1972; and 22 February 1972; and 10 July 1972; *Financial Times*, 12 September 1972.
11. *The Times*, London, 31 July 1972; *The Egyptian Gazette*, 31 July 1972.
12. *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 April 1972; *The Times*, 19 May 1972.
13. *The Guardian*, 1 December 1972.
14. *Financial Times*, 19 December 1972.
15. *Financial Times*, 28 December 1972.
16. Managing Director of UCB to governor, Bank of Uganda, 10 March 1975 in Ministry of Commerce files C. EO/6/1. vol. 1.
17. *Uganda Argus*, 13 October 1972; *The Voice of Uganda*, 20 March 1973.
18. *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 December 1972.
19. *The Guardian*, 7 June 1974 and 8 June 1974.

## 6 *The Army and the Soviet Connection: 1973-78*

When the Soviet Union turned to Africa in the sixties, it found the continent already overrun by western imperialist powers. This situation called for methods of penetration different from those adopted by the early imperialists. An appropriate strategy was devised and suitably modified whenever local conditions called for it.

Where there were progressive movements that continued to believe that the Russia of Khrushchev and Brezhnev was a continuation of the Russia of Lenin and Stalin, the Soviet Union penetrated these and cultivated them discreetly. Where there were no such movements, the Soviet Union sought friends within the state machinery. This strategy was most successful where there were local conflicts to exploit. Here, the Soviet Union could pick a side, arm it fully, and call for a military solution. In the process, it would create a highly militarized state apparatus and turn it into a 'natural ally'. But should the wind change, so would the alliance. Examples are numerous: first Egypt, then Libya; at one time Somalia, later Ethiopia.

In 1972, when the Amin regime was looking for new patrons, the Soviet Union was also in search of new allies in eastern Africa. The Soviets had suffered a setback in the Sudan in the same year when a pro-Soviet coup was aborted. The search for new allies bore fruit, first in Somalia, later in Uganda. In both cases, the Soviet Union utilized local conflicts to gain a dramatic and rapid entry into the local scene. In the former case, it was the Somali-Ethiopia conflict; in the latter, it was the Uganda-Tanzania conflict. The cutting edge of Soviet penetration was the provision of massive military hardware in both cases.

The economic and cultural assistance given to the Amin regime by the Soviet Union was insignificant. It amounted to no more than a few doctors (20 in 1973, 'several' in 1974 and 'more' in 1976), and a few teachers in 1974. The real significance of the Soviet connection was military. For five years, from 1973 to 1978, the Soviet Union was the major arms supplier to the fascist regime. To bolster its presence in Uganda, the Soviet Union built Amin the most powerful and technically advanced military machine in the region. In the process, it fanned the flames of the Uganda-Tanzania conflict, and paved the road to Kagera.

In the six months after the expulsion of the British military, the Amin regime also flirted with another potential arms supplier: France. In early

1973, two Ugandan military delegations visited Paris. The first was led by Major Baker Tretre; the second by the head of the Air Force, Major Toko. Rumours of major French arms sales to Uganda were rife in the British press. Tanzania protested. The French government replied that it was only going to provide spares for the eight second-hand Fouga-Magister training and ground-support planes Uganda had earlier bought from Israel.<sup>1</sup> French hesitation was really on financial grounds. Could the Amin regime afford to pay for sophisticated military hardware like Mirage jets? The deal went ahead when Libya's Gaddafi agreed to pay on behalf of the military regime. For a single transaction, the deal was quite substantial. The British press detailed it as 60 APCs and 12 Mirage jets.<sup>2</sup> The arms were flown from Paris to Libya, and then straight to Entebbe, without going through the usual Mombasa-Nairobi surface route.

This was the last time Gaddafi paid in advance for Amin's arms purchases. It is not clear exactly how long the Mirages stayed in Uganda, but it is widely held that they eventually found their way back to Libya. It was also the last time France sold arms to the regime. The Mirages had in fact arrived only a week before the first squadron of MiGs arrived from the Soviet Union.

The groundwork for the flow of Soviet arms was prepared by two military delegations. The first, as already noted, was 'the most powerful mission ever to be sent out of [Uganda]'. Headed by the acting army commander, Colonel Francis Nyangweso, it included at least five lieutenant-colonels and a dozen majors. That was in July 1972. The next April, a return visit was paid to Kampala by a high-level Soviet military delegation, led by Major-General Nikolai Rossikin, another general and a colonel.<sup>3</sup> The build-up of Soviet arms in Uganda took place over a period of two years, between November 1973 and November 1975. The Soviet Union concentrated on building up the army and the airforce, although Amin had also wanted a powerful navy on Lake Victoria.

The backbone of Amin's military machine was the army. In those two years (1973-75) there were four known consignments of Soviet arms to Uganda. All of them arrived by ship at the Kenyan port of Mombasa, and then by road to Kampala. The first consignment of Soviet arms was delivered in November 1973. On the first of that month, the Soviet freighter *Klim Voroshilov* arrived unannounced off the Kenyan coast at Mombasa. The captain radioed that he had arms for Uganda on board, and the docking area was sealed off. The Nairobi-based *Daily Nation* quoted 'port sources' as saying the shipment included 58 light tanks. *The Times* quoting the same 'port sources', detailed the rest of the consignment as comprising 60 armoured personnel carriers (APCs), bombs, rockets, seven helicopters and 750 cases of small arms.<sup>4</sup> Prior to that, the Uganda army was known to have only 14 APCs and four

Sherman World War II tanks, given to it by the Israelis.<sup>5</sup> The cargo off-loaded from the *Klim Voroshilov*, newspaper commentators contended, would surely make the Ugandan army the most powerful in East Africa.

The second consignment came only four months later. Two Russian ships, the *Mig* and *Korosh*, docked at Mombasa in early March 1974. The London *Financial Times* reported that the arms offloaded from the two ships included 36 armoured troop carriers, and added that 'the consignment may also include MiG-17s, tanks, anti-aircraft guns and trucks'.<sup>6</sup>

It is possible that western sources exaggerated the extent of Soviet arms supply to the Amin regime, but we have Amin's own words to show that very seldom was there serious exaggeration.<sup>7</sup> Only a few days after the *Mig* and *Korosh* docked at Mombasa, Amin publicly told the Soviet ambassador that he was 'very grateful for the free gifts such as tanks, armoured personnel carriers, mobile trucks, a squadron of Mig-17 fighter planes that the Soviet Union had given to Uganda'. He went on to say how 'happy' he was 'that the Soviet Union had supplied the Mechanized and Artillery Regiments of the Uganda Army with new weapons'. Reporting this, the *Voice of Uganda*, as the new state-owned *Argus* was called, pointed out that Soviet experts were already at Magamaga, Jinja, 'to train Ugandan armed forces on the maintenance of equipment'.<sup>8</sup>

The dictator had ample reason to be satisfied. The Soviet supply, he boasted, would make the 'balance of power good in East Africa'. Amin's army had suffered a major setback when the crack Malire Mechanized Regiment was broken up as a result of a rebellion in the ranks, and it was only the supply of Russian and Czech modern armour which made it possible for the regime to build up several mechanized battalions between 1973 and 1975. Hundreds of Soviet and Czech experts flew to Uganda to do on-the-spot training, and according to the *Voice*, over 700 Ugandans were being trained in the Soviet Union and nearly 200 in Czechoslovakia.<sup>9</sup>

By late 1974, Ugandan-Soviet relations were riding the crest of the wave. To express their satisfaction with this development, the Soviets sent yet another military delegation to Uganda. Led by Colonel Popov, the delegation brought a personal message from the chief of the Soviet general staff, and presented Amin with a sword in appreciation of the 'excellent relations' between the two countries.<sup>10</sup> These delegations had another purpose: like punctuation marks between two separate consignments, they presented an opportunity for the Soviet Union to make an on-the-spot assessment of what military hardware the fascist regime needed. From then on, the technical sophistication of Soviet military cargo to Uganda was constantly stepped up. The third major consignment of Soviet weapons arrived in the 7,300-ton freighter, *Dmitry Gulia*, which docked at Mombasa in mid-February 1975. Once again,

'harbour sources' reported, the cargo included TU 54/55 tanks, many of them amphibious. The Nairobi press published photographs of Uganda-registered transporters carrying the tanks under tarpaulin covers.<sup>11</sup>

The TU 54/55 is a well-armoured tank with a 100 mm gun, and it formed the backbone of Arab armies in the October 1973 war. It outclasses the armoured cars and light personnel carriers which then constituted the mechanized element in the armies of neighbouring states like Kenya and Zaire. The real purpose of the tanks was to neutralize the 20 Chinese T-59 tanks (a copy of the TU 54/55) in Tanzanian hands. The TU 54/55 was only the centrepiece in a whole range of military hardware, including a mobile bridge and a ferry. While the Soviet ambassador to Uganda continued to repeat *ad nauseam* that their 'aid' was in the interest of 'the peace and security of all peoples', the Ugandan dictator gleefully noted the real significance of this latest consignment of arms. *The Voice* reported Amin's inspection tour of the new weaponry.<sup>12</sup>

President Amin yesterday inspected new military equipment and weapons which included a number of amphibious and ordinary tanks. Among the equipment was a bridge capable of carrying tanks and a ferry which can be used to cross swamps and rivers like Kagera. (My emphasis) General Amin and the security officers were shown how a tank carrier bridge can be placed over a river in about 5 minutes and make it easy for tanks and military vehicles to cross.

The allusions were not even guarded. Amin was making no bones about how he intended to guard 'the peace and security of all peoples'. The stream of Soviet weaponry continued, turning into a flood.

The fourth major consignment arrived at the Kenya coast in June 1975. Kenyan police stopped five tank transporters on their way to Kampala. Five accompanying Soviet technicians were escorted to Nairobi airport and asked to leave by plane for Entebbe. After a day's consultation with the Kampala authorities, the new shipment was allowed to pass through. Its contents: amphibious troop carriers ideal to cross 'rivers, like the Kagera'.

Amin's army now had TU 54/55 tanks to counter the Chinese-made T-59s in Tanzanian hands, and several bridgeheads and amphibious troop carriers. Furthermore, according to Uganda Radio, there were now an estimated 500 Soviet experts and civilian technicians to train Ugandans in the maintenance and use of these sophisticated war machines.<sup>13</sup>

To complement the army, the Russians and, to a smaller extent, the Libyans, built the fascist regime what in regional terms was a formidable air force. The first consignment for the air force came in February 1974 when the Soviet Union supplied a squadron of MiG fighters through

Somalia.<sup>14</sup> The second boost to the strength of the air force came in February 1975. Part of the contents the freighter *Dmitry Gulia* coughed up from its belly were supersonic MiG-21 jets. True to form, Amin boasted, and the *Voice* reported:

The President was also shown MiG-21 fighter bombers which are being assembled and are nearing completion. General Amin *wanted to know the time it takes a MiG-21 bomber to reach Dar es Salaam from Gulu and back*. He was informed that a MiG-21 travels 1500 miles in an hour and it would take about 20 minutes to fly to Dar es Salaam and back.

The Soviet experts explained to the President that the MiG-21 carries with it 150 rockets and many bombs. (My emphasis)<sup>15</sup>

Two months later, Amin visited two radar stations designed to detect high and low flying objects; both were manned by Ugandans trained in the Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup> He also attended what was dubbed 'the first historic new-model MiG-21 plane test flight - by a Soviet hero pilot'. Though the regime boasted that 'Uganda is now the only country in Africa south of the Sahara with such a plane', the facts surrounding these 'new model MiG-21' are not clear. Details about who was flying these fighters, and how long they stayed in Uganda, are still shrouded in a veil of mystery. At one point it was widely believed that the planes were being piloted by Palestinians. The *Voice* of 22 January 1976 actually published a photograph with a caption: 'Field Marshal Amin greeting Palestinian pilots'. According to a news item in the *Voice* of 1 November 1978 during the Kagera war, Soviet personnel flying the air-force MiGs had left for home. Did they re-assemble and return with the MiG-21s?

The Soviet arms build-up in Uganda undoubtedly initiated a mini arms race in the region. Tanzania actually protested about Soviet armour supplies to Uganda, but the Soviet ambassador did not reply. For Amin, this was another opportunity for demagoguery. The arms, he said, would 'be used for the defence of Uganda and for the liberation of our brothers still under the colonial yoke if we are asked to assist'.<sup>17</sup>

### Strained relations over the Angolan crisis

There were two reasons behind the temporary rupture in Soviet - Ugandan relations in 1975. One was the question of debt payment; the other was super-power arrogance.

In spite of Amin's frequent talk of 'free gifts' from the Soviet Union, the Russians insisted on payment. According to western sources,<sup>18</sup> the payment for the first consignment of arms was due in 1975. How was the regime paying for the endless stream of military hardware it was

receiving from the Soviets? Most possibly with the dollars it got from the coffee trade with the western imperialist countries, particularly the United States. The regime was, however, failing to repay all its debts, and they were piling up.

The Soviet authorities resorted to two tactics. The first was to put the squeeze on the regime by shutting off the supply of spare parts. Amin complained bitterly that the Soviet Union was no longer supplying spare parts for the MiGs. The second tactic was to demand political concessions as a price for the delay in settling debts.

The arm-twisting tactics of super-powers are well-known. Let us cite an example here to show how they are employed even in the most trivial instances. Just as the British ambassador had been 'king' in Uganda in 1971, so was the Soviet ambassador by 1974. That year, the State Trading Corporation refused to open a letter of credit for a new consignment of salt from the Soviet Union until previous orders had been honoured. Instead of settling this petty commercial dispute through commercial channels, the Soviet ambassador went straight to Amin. The director of the State Trading Corporation wrote to the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry: 'We are also perturbed by the Embassy officials approaching us direct for various issues which should have gone through our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Instead, they have persisted in coming to us and using the ambassador to go direct to His Excellency the President on matters which should have been done in your office.'<sup>19</sup>

In the arms-payment case, a suitable opportunity for arm-twisting came with the 1975 African Heads of States' Conference in Kampala. It was the year of the civil war in Angola. Thousands of Cuban troops had joined the MPLA forces in the war zone; South African troops had crossed the border in support of UNITA forces. The civil war in Angola was the main item on the agenda at the Kampala conference, and Amin was to chair that conference. African heads of state were bitterly divided on the issue.

Thinking that he had the regime firmly tied with the golden strings of debt, Shylock, in the person of Soviet Ambassador Zakharov, demanded his pound of flesh from the new chairman of the OAU. This was a miscalculation on the part of the Soviets. On the eve of the OAU deliberations on the Angolan civil war, Amin said Zakharov was 'a criminal' who was 'trying to dictate' to him, and demanded his right to an explanation on Soviet policy in Angola from the highest authorities. And an explanation he did receive in the form of a personal communiqué from Brezhnev.<sup>20</sup>

Why was Amin able to rebuff the Soviet Union? Certainly not because of his maverick personality, as many western analysts have concluded. The reason was that in spite of its presence in the military field, the Soviet Union was not a hegemonic foreign power in Uganda. An



examination of the totality of Uganda's foreign relations shows that the country was still a battleground where super-powers contended for hegemony. In November 1975 the super-powers learnt that Amin still had room for manoeuvre, that he could still rely on the US-led camp to distance himself from the Soviet Union if necessary. The Soviets had two choices: to break relations with Uganda, or to patch-up their differences.

After a lull of less than a year, the Soviet Union decided to make the second choice. The weakness of the regime following the Israeli raid on Entebbe, and the extent of Soviet investment, must have been influencing factors. Only three months after the Entebbe raid, a high-level Soviet military delegation led by Major-General Vasilevsky visited Kampala. The flow of Soviet arms, directed particularly at replenishing the air force which had suffered a crippling blow during the July raid, was resumed. In six months, Amin was thanking the Soviet Union for 'replacing all military equipment lost in last July's Israeli raid on Entebbe airport'.<sup>21</sup> By 1977, relations between the regime and the Soviet Union were once again warm.

The regime was now in the throes of a deep internal crisis. Even the unity within the officer corps was cracking. The crisis was thoroughly exposed externally following the brutal murder of the Anglican Archbishop Janane Luwum in February 1977. Western countries were beginning to explore alternatives to Amin. Finding his options closing, Amin moved ever closer to the Soviet Union. And the Soviet Union obliged. That October, Amin commissioned two new full fighter squadrons of MiG-17s and MiG-21s, and witnessed the passing out of Ugandan pilots, who, the regime claimed, were now fully trained to fly these squadrons.<sup>22</sup>

Its military strength withstanding, the regime was in a corner, politically. It could no longer play off one super-power against another, easily, because the other super-power, the United States, had begun searching for a replacement to Amin. The *Voice* reported Amin's discussions with the new Soviet Ambassador, Evgeni Moussiyo:<sup>23</sup>

President Amin has reiterated that Uganda as a sovereign state can sign any treaty whether it be military or otherwise with any country ... In this connection, the President might soon consider signing an agreement with the Soviet Union for the establishment of the most modern nuclear reactor in Uganda, as well as for the establishment of the biggest soviet military base on the African continent to be in Uganda.

The man was proclaiming from the rooftop that he was free by proposing to be a slave!

### The Soviet justification

How did the Soviet Union justify its support of the Amin regime, when *Pravda* had denounced the 1971 coup as inspired by 'internal reaction and representatives of foreign capital'?<sup>24</sup> Was it because the regime, which had replaced a Soviet military mission with an Israeli one, had booted out the Israelis the following year and turned to the Soviets? Could a regime be 'progressive' simply because it was pro-Soviet, regardless of the character of its relationship with 'its' people?

Soviet propagandists were unabashed in their support of the regime in its early years. O. Tsvetaev, editor of the *Polar Star*, told the *Voice* during a visit to Kampala that the 'economic war' had brought a 'revolutionary transformation' in Uganda, and 'opened the road to economic and social progress'.<sup>25</sup> Such open support was found to be embarrassing later. When the editor of a leading Soviet magazine, *Abroad*, was questioned by reporters in London in 1977 about his country's support for fascism in Uganda, he had no more to say than that 'the Soviet Union never supplied arms to reactionary regimes'.<sup>26</sup> One is hence forced to conclude that, in Soviet eyes, Amin's regime was not reactionary!

None of this, however, explains the Soviet perspective. An explanation for Soviet support of the Amin regime is to be found in the writings of Soviet theoreticians, and not the statements from its propaganda or from diplomatic circles. In an important article published in 1974,<sup>27</sup> the Soviet political analyst, F. N. Andraasyan, argued that military dictatorships, which are 'the rule rather than the exception' in 'backward countries', could help to pave the way to socialism:

At the outset, the military regime helps to build a backward society around the revolutionary system, to concentrate weak and scattered economic organs, and does not allow exploiter classes and their parties to make use of the low level of political awareness of the population in their own interests and lead it to the ballot boxes with the slogans of bourgeois democracy.

Among others, Andraasyan cited Somalia under Siad Barre as an example.

We may make a number of observations. First, there is no conception here that popular interests cannot be advanced unless the people are organized as an autonomous force: instead, the Soviet theoretician argues the the military regime should take the lead in organizing the people. Secondly, since the revolutionary conception of an independent popular movement is absent, 'bourgeois democracy' is seen, subjectively, as simply allowing 'exploiter classes and their parties to make use of the low level of political awareness of the population in their own interests'. A military dictatorship is preferred to bourgeois democracy.

What is not realized is that political freedom also presents popular forces with an opportunity to organize the people. Finally, the military itself is seen as having no anchorage in society. An institution set up in the colonial period and built up in a neo-colonial context is therefore taken as independent of, and even opposed to, the best organized interests in society, which are admitted to be those of the 'exploiter classes'.

When it comes to dealing with neo-colonies, both the Soviet Union and the United States see the military as the only well-organized, disciplined force 'to concentrate weak and scattered economic organs' around. But the USSR has a greater preference for highly militarized regimes. Because its own economy is highly militarized, it is in the field of military technology that the USSR can compete successfully with the United States.

In Uganda, the Soviets were looking for a more reliable ally than Amin from the outset. Their preferred method of replacing Amin with such an ally would have been an armed coup. Amin took this possibility into account, and viewed with particular suspicion those who went to the Soviet bloc for military training. In 1974, he killed the minister of foreign affairs, Ondoga, who had recently been ambassador in Moscow. The same fate was meted out to Brigadier Charles Arube of the air force, who had attempted a coup soon after his return from the Soviet Union. From then on, Amin viewed the Soviet-trained air force with particular suspicion.

From 1973 to the time of the Kagera invasion, the Soviet Union was such a highly visible ally of the regime that Western propaganda circles capitalized on this, suggesting that the Soviets were really the principal supporters of the fascist regime. This conclusion ignored the totality of the regime's foreign relations. It ignored the fact that the Ugandan economy still moved within the orbit of Western imperialism, and that a part of the regime's repressive machinery (the SRB) could simply not have functioned without an active Western connection. To focus exclusively on the Soviet connection would make the political analyst an apologist of US-led imperialism.

#### Notes

1. *New York Times*, 28 March 1973; *The Observer*, 25 March 1973.
2. *The Observer*, 22 April 1973.
3. *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 April 1973; *The Times*, (London) 28 April 1973.
4. *The Guardian*, 10 November 1973.
5. *The Times*, London, 40 November 1973.
6. *Financial Times*, 12 March 1974.
7. I have avoided mention of the few cases where no other source could corroborate western information. One example is a report filed by *The Sunday Telegraph*, and repeated by *The Observer*, that the Soviet Union had supplied Uganda with Sam-3 ground-to-air missiles. This would have made the Amin regime the first in Sub-Saharan Africa to have these

- weapons. *The Sunday Telegraph*, 10 November 1974; *The Observer*, 17 November 1974.
8. *Voice of Uganda*, 7 March 1974.
  9. *Ibid.*
  10. *Voice*, 19 October 1974; *Observer Foreign News Service*. 'Why the Soviets are aiding Uganda', 11 November 1974.
  11. *The Guardian*, 28 February 1975; *International Herald Tribune*, 27 February 1975.
  12. *Voice*, 18 March 1975, p. 1.
  13. *The Times*, London, 27 June 1975; *The Sunday Times*, 29 June 1975; *The Egyptian Gazette*, 17 November 1975.
  14. *The Christian Science Monitor* (London Edition), 12 February 1974.
  15. *Voice*, 18 March 1975.
  16. *Voice*, 7 May 1975.
  17. *Ibid.*
  18. *International Herald Tribune*, 27 February 1975; *The Guardian*, 10 November 1975.
  19. See correspondence in Ministry of Commerce files C. TRE/18/18/1: Trade Agreement with Russia.
  20. *Voice*, 10 November 1975, 11 November 1975; *The Times* (London) 10 November 1975, 12 November 1975; *The Egyptian Gazette*, 17 November 1975.
  21. *Voice*, 22 October 1976, 1 January 1977.
  22. *Voice*, 13 October 1977.
  23. *Voice*, 13 May 1977.
  24. *Morning Star* (London), 28 January 1971; *The Standard* (Dar es Salaam), 29 January 1971.
  25. *Voice*, 8 October 1974.
  26. *The Guardian*, 31 March 1977.
  27. F. N. Andreasyan, 'Contradictions and currents of non-capitalist development', in *Peoples of Africa and Asia*, no. 2, 1974.

## 7 *The State Research Bureau and the US-UK Connection*

Super-power rivalry in Uganda permeated the state machinery of the Amin regime. While the Soviet bloc supplied and shaped the army and air force, US-led imperialism had the upper hand in the State Research Bureau, the Public Safety Unit and the police. The only difference was that while the Soviet connection was highly visible, the role of Western imperialism was skilfully camouflaged by front agencies, or highly secret cloak-and-dagger operations by the intelligence services.

The US connection with the police was also quite open in the early years of the regime. Six months after the 1971 coup, the US announced the sale of six Bell helicopters to Uganda at a cost of about £700,000.<sup>1</sup> In May 1973, two helicopter instructors from Bell Helicopter Company were attached to the Uganda Police Air Wing for a year.<sup>2</sup> According to a *Washington Post* columnist, Jack Anderson, one of these was a CIA agent.<sup>3</sup> The supply of these instructors, it must be noted, was arranged a month after the US claimed it had stopped all 'aid' to the Amin regime. The last direct consignment of US equipment for the police was in August 1975, when \$287,000 worth of helicopter engines were sold to the regime.<sup>4</sup> From then on, with diplomatic relations between the American government and Amin regime severed, the supply of US equipment and training for the general's repressive machinery was removed from the public eye. The Bell Helicopter Company simply shifted its supply centre from the USA to its subsidiary in Italy. In November 1975, the president of Augusta Bell of Italy, Count Corrado Augusta, visited Amin at State House.<sup>5</sup> Two years later, Augusta Bell began supplying the fascist regime with military versions of Bell's civilian helicopters.<sup>6</sup>

The training of pilots was carried out in the US as an undercover operation. Amin's men entered the US as civilians on Uganda government scholarships, and then proceeded to a whole assortment of para-military training facilities, disguised as civilian flight-training schools. The first group of 'up to a dozen' pilots took 'refresher courses' at Bell's own school in Fort Worth, Texas.<sup>7</sup> Another 'score of Ugandans', who had earlier been trained at Perth in Scotland, but had been asked to leave by the British government following the breaking of diplomatic relations with Amin in 1976, went to the Flight International School in Vero Beach, Florida.<sup>8</sup> One of these was Major Haruna of the SRB, the chief intelligence officer at Entebbe airport from 1975-77.<sup>9</sup> A

third group, including a cousin of Amin also working with the SRB, went to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida.<sup>10</sup> Very few of those who went to the US for training were directly identified as SRB or PSU agents. Most were classified as policemen. The dividing line between the police and SRB, or PSU, agents in the fascist regime was, however, very thin.

As the US connection with the regime's intelligence agencies became stronger, the training of agents passed from private monopolies like Bell to the CIA, and was now done in government-run institutions, usually called 'police academies'. One such training institution was a US government-financed institution called the International Police Academy in Georgetown, an exclusive suburb of Washington DC. Though ostensibly operated by the USAID (Agency for International Development), this academy was 'secretly supplied by the CIA' according to the *Washington Post*. By the time it was closed down in 1975, the academy had trained 'more than 5,000 police agents from 77 governments'.<sup>11</sup>

At least ten of Amin's hand-picked henchmen got 'special police training' at this academy. Afterwards, three of them went on to take 'post-graduate courses' at International Police Services, Inc., yet another 'academy' hidden away in a Washington brownstone mansion. The official identity of CIA-sponsored trainees included a 'PSU agent', an 'assistant commissioner of police', a 'CID investigator', a 'police officer', and a 'former police officer'. When later asked about the usefulness of training Amin's agents, a CIA official explained to the *Washington Post*: 'By training Amin's men, we were able to have some influence over Amin. It was also a possibility that we could go back to the trainees later for intelligence operations.'<sup>12</sup> In other words, the agents the CIA picked and trained were supposed to become double agents, serving the fascist regime and US imperialism simultaneously.

The training of SRB agents in the US continued well into 1977, when the US began looking for an alternative to the Amin regime. In 1977, 82 Ugandans entered the US on diplomatic visas. One of these was Francis Itabuka, by then the chief of the State Research Bureau. Itabuka headed a group which was to receive 'satellite communications training' from the Harris Corporation in Melbourne, Florida.<sup>13</sup> The US connection was further tightened following the strain in Soviet-Ugandan relations at the time of the OAU summit in Kampala in 1975. Given their highly sensitive nature, most operations were either directly controlled, or supervised, by the CIA. The CIA even went beyond training agents, and thus securing double agents for itself, to the supply of materials through third parties. The whole chain would hence become much more difficult to trace.

The third parties were usually either ex-CIA agents or ex-US army personnel, now set up as independent entrepreneurs in the underworld

of intelligence operations. The case of Frank Terpill, the principal intermediary in the CIA-Amin link after 1975, is typical. According to the CIA, Terpill was 'unfavourably discharged' from the CIA in 1971, after which he is said to have established himself as an independent operator. In 1973, Terpill made his first contacts 'with Libyan and Ugandan intelligence officers who were in US training at a CIA-run International Police Academy—in Washington'.<sup>14</sup> Terpill first surfaced in Libya, and later in Uganda. According to testimony brought before a court in New York, Terpill 'contracted in 1976 with Gaddafi to provide bombs in the form of ashtrays, lamps, exploding desks, along with timing devices and former American Special Forces personnel to help train Libyans'.<sup>15</sup>

In 1979, Terpill and a collaborator, George Korkala, were arrested in New York. They had been conned by two detectives, posing as Latin American revolutionaries, to whom they had agreed to sell 10,000 elderly sten-guns. The guns were found in a house in England. Lawyers for both Terpill and Korkala argued 'that their clients had done extensive legitimate work for federal agencies such as the FBI, the Secret Service (the CIA), and the federal Aviation Administration'.<sup>16</sup> Terpill and Korkala fled the country after being released on bail. Terpill's collaborator, George Korkala, was previously a member of the US Special Forces. When arrested in 1979, he was driving a car with diplomatic number plates registered in the name of the Uganda Mission to the UN.<sup>17</sup>

The Terpill-Korkala connection with the Amin regime can be dated to around 1977. Supplies came from Terpill's Paris-based firm, Intercontinental Technology. A contract marked secret, and dated August 1977, was found by western journalists in SRB files after the fall of the Amin regime, and is in the possession of the *Washington Post*.<sup>18</sup> The contract details the contents of the agreed consignment. For a payment of \$3.2 million, Terpill's company guaranteed a whole assortment of James Bond-type gadgets. Included in a rather long list were: disguised antennae, attaché cases fitted with tape recorders, exploding attaché cases or pens or cigarette lighters, silencers for rifles, remote radio detonators, and night-time photographic surveillance equipment. Perhaps the most expensive item on the list, a 56-channel telephone-tapping system, was found in the upstairs room of the SRB office after the fall of Amin. According to *The Observer*, this must have been 'the most sophisticated phone tapping system operating in Black Africa'.<sup>19</sup>

The Terpill contract also included a pledge by Intercontinental Technology to train 'selected students in the art and tradecraft of intelligence, sabotage, espionage, etc.'. 'The students,' it promised, would 'be fully trained, versed and confident in the implementation, use and configuration of various explosive devices utilized in general psychological warfare practices'.<sup>20</sup>

Equipment supplied by Intercontinental Technology was always sent from Britain, never from the United States. Employees at Stanstead Airport remember Terpill 'personally supervising the loading of Uganda Airlines planes', according to *The Observer*. Trunks and attaché cases he brought 'were addressed directly to Major Farouk Minawa, head of SRB'.<sup>21</sup>

### The British connection

While US contacts supplied the SRB with hit-and-run James Bond-style gadgetry, along with the training necessary to handle them, Britain was the source of the communications technology that made the spying activities of the SRB possible.

After a period of two years (1972-74) when Britain tried in vain to undermine the Amin regime, the UK government was compelled to come to terms with the regime in the short term, though it never gave up the search for an alternative. While British capitalists looked for an opportunity to turn a quick profit, the UK government was seeking a presence in the fascist state machine.

The UK-SRB connection was in two phases. The main UK supplier to the SRB in the first phase (1975-77) was a Leicester-based firm called Contact Radio Telephones (CRT). According to *Amnesty International*,<sup>22</sup> CRT 'produces communications equipment for surveillance purposes and is a (UK) government-approved supplier to police forces in Britain and abroad'. CRT clinched its first deal with the Amin regime at the time of the OAU summit conference in Kampala in 1975. It installed radio communications systems for the conference. When the regime went shopping for surveillance equipment later, CRT was a natural choice. According to a CRT executive, the first order of radio equipment was 'for the SRB or the police'. A second order worth 'some £900,000' was secured to equip SRB vehicles and agents with over 300 VHF radios called 'Merlin transportables'. When the SRB building at Nakasero was first opened after Amin's overthrow, at least 70 contact radios were found, waiting to be tested and installed.<sup>23</sup>

A second SRB supplier was a firm called Security Systems International (SSI), registered in the Isle of Man. According to a *Sunday Times* 'Insight' team, SSI procured 'security apparatus for the SRB consisting of telephone-tapping devices, night-vision equipment, burglar alarms and anti-bomb blankets' in 1976.<sup>24</sup> Testing equipment from another British firm, Dyer Electronics Ltd of Watford, was also found in SRB rooms after the overthrow of Amin.

The second phase of UK-SRB connections began in 1977, when Pye Telecommunications Ltd, a Cambridge-based electronics monopoly, supplanted Contact Radio Telephones as the major British supplier for

the SRB. Pye's contacts with the regime actually began in late 1974 when it supplied two-way mobile radio equipment to the president's office. The firm supplied another batch of radios and allied equipment for the SRB communications network through its East Anglian distributor, Wilken Telecommunications Ltd in 1976. When the political climate in Uganda changed and it became politically undesirable to have links with the fascist regime, Pye adopted a circuitous route to conceal its links with Amin from the public eye. Major SRB purchases from Pye were, however, not made until 1977 and 1978. SRB files show a 1977 purchase, initiated by Colonel Francis Itabuka, the bureau's boss, for transmitters, pocket radios, PC controllers, antennae and battery chargers. In 1978 Pye supplied base stations, ground-to-air radios, 'Mascot 70' Pye control sets and VHF radio-telephone communications systems, again through Wilken. When the SRB was stormed after Amin's fall, Pye equipment was found on the first floor.<sup>23</sup>

A secondary British supplier to the army was British Leyland. In July and August 1977, press reports in England contained details of a sale, through the Crown Agents, of two British Leyland Land-Rovers and 38 Bedford trucks to the Uganda army. After leaving the Leyland plant, these vehicles were sent to a local specialist firm, Reynolds Boughton, of Little Chelfont, for alterations. When vehicles arrived in Entebbe, they were complete with 'artillery guns to fit'. In the face of a public outcry, the UK government argued it was powerless to stop the transaction because it did not involve 'military equipment'.<sup>24</sup>

Amin's terror machine was hardly a home-grown phenomenon. In spite of public protestations to the contrary, there was an active working relationship between western imperialism and the fascist regime that included both supplying equipment for the SRB and training its agents.

#### Notes

1. *The Observer*, 25 July 1971.
2. *Voice of Uganda*, 4 May 1973.
3. Jack Anderson, 'US helped train Amin henchmen'. *Washington Post* 19 July 1978.
4. *International Herald Tribune*, 13 August 1978.
5. *Voice*, 19 November 1975.
6. *International Herald Tribune*, 8 November 1977.
7. *Ibid.*
8. John de St Jorre, 'The Ugandan connection', in *New York Times Magazine*, 9 April 1978.
9. Anderson, 'US helped train Amin henchmen'.
10. de St Jorre, 'The Ugandan connection'.
11. Anderson, 'US helped train Amin henchmen'.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Anderson, 'Idi Amin still flying high', *Washington Post*, 27 November 1978.
14. NA Investigative Report Article 37 LN.

15. *Washington Post*, 7 January 1980.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *The Times*, London, 24 December 1979.
18. *Washington Post*, 28 May 1979.
19. *The Observer*, 30 December 1979.
20. *Washington Post*, 28 May 1979.
21. *The Observer*, 30 December 1979.
22. Amnesty International, Parliamentary brief, *Tools of Repression for the Likes of Amin?*. London, July 1979.
23. *New Scientist*, 10 May 1979.
24. *Sunday Times*, 20 March 1977.
25. All information on Pye Telecommunications Ltd compiled from the following sources: Amnesty International, Parliamentary brief, *Tools of Repression for the Likes of Amin?*, London, July 1979; *New Scientist*, 10 May 1979; *Sunday Telegraph*, 1 August 1976; *Sunday Times*, 26 September 1976 and 20 March 1977.
26. *The Observer*, 14 August 1977; *The Times*, London, 9 July 1977 and 12 July 1977. The information contained in this chapter is culled from random sources and is possibly only the tip of the iceberg.

## 8 *The Economy and US-led Imperialism*

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The sharp inter-imperialist rivalry which allowed the fascist regime to survive in the face of concerted British-Israeli opposition was also reflected in the economy. Every imperialist power saw Britain's withdrawal from Uganda as an opportunity for advancement. Although it created the impression that it was cutting down relations with the fascist regime, the United States became Uganda's principal trading partner. US monopolies were, in fact, an important source of aviation and telecommunication technology. West European countries and Japan also saw the crisis of British imperialism as an opportunity to acquire new markets. Instead of the united front of western imperialism it had sought against Amin, Britain was now faced with a new scramble for Uganda; it discreetly returned to the fold, but was this time left behind in the continuing loot of Uganda.

### Trade relations

The coffee trade was the regime's economic lifeline. By 1977, it comprised 93 per cent of Uganda's total exports. Although the volume of coffee sales, like that of all exports, had shrunk over the years, its financial significance had increased. Coffee prices climbed massively from around July 1975, paused a little in 1976 at £2,700 a ton, and then reached the £3,000 a ton barrier in 1977.<sup>1</sup> The US purchased a fifth (20.6 per cent) of Uganda's coffee in 1973. By 1976, the figure had gone up to a third (33.5 per cent). Figures for the first half of 1977 show the US buying 40,918 tons; up from 30,808 tons for the same period in 1976. The jump was even greater in financial terms. While coffee bought from Uganda by US firms over 1975 and 1976 was valued at \$156 million, the value of coffee purchased in only the first nine months of 1977 stood at \$220 million.<sup>2</sup> The US had, in a few years, risen to become the fascist regime's principal trading partner. The regime's trading partners included the biggest US coffee-trading giants. According to US Customs data released by Congressman Pease of Ohio<sup>3</sup> the five main importers of Uganda coffee in 1975-76 were: Folger Coffee Co. (a subsidiary of Proctor and Gamble), General Foods Corp., Nestle Co., Saks International Inc., ACLI Sugar Co.

These cosy trade relations were hidden behind a turbulent diplomatic front. On the surface, US-Ugandan relations were undergoing a crisis similar to that in UK-Ugandan relations. The Peace Corps was evacuated following the killing of one of its members by a soldier. When a US company, International Television Sales, was nationalized along with British companies in December of 1972, the US threatened to suspend all aid unless full compensation was paid. All US aid projects were in fact halted on 30 June 1973. The regime expelled marine guards from the US embassy the following October and the US State Department advised all US citizens in Uganda (about 2,000) to leave. Finally, in November 1973, the US closed its embassy in Uganda, but permitted Amin to retain his embassy in Washington.<sup>4</sup>

Initially, the US government attempted a most flagrant deception of its people. According to the *International Herald Tribune*, when Amin made public remarks in favour of 'Hitler's method of dealing with the Jews', after the Munich massacre, the State Department announced that a loan to Uganda was going to be held up because of these utterances. At the same time, the department asked the US ambassador in Kampala to inform Amin that the delay was on technical grounds, and had nothing to do with his remarks on Hitler.<sup>5</sup> Amin insisted on making this fact public, much to the chagrin of his benefactors. State-to-state relations were wrecked on the stormy seas of diplomacy later, but trade relations between the two countries prospered without any let or hindrance. Amin turned to US corporations for sophisticated aviation and telecommunication technology, and got it, quite often with explicit State Department approval.

### The setting up of Uganda Airlines

Uganda had four planes in all. One of these was Amin's own personal jet, a Grumman Gulfstream II. The other three, a Lockheed transport C-100-30 and two ex-Pan Am Boeing 707s, constituted Uganda Airlines. The complicated transactions involved in their purchase illustrate two facts. First, that in order to conceal their dealings with the fascist regime, US monopolies used several front organizations and intermediaries: the principle ones were Page Airways of New York and Zimex Aviation of Zurich. Secondly, Western intelligence agencies were actively involved in the setting up, and operation, of Uganda Airlines.

The first plane bought by the regime was Amin's personal executive jet. The jet was sold by Grumman Corporation to Page, which passed it over to Amin in 1974. Its cost amounted to about \$5 million, and included the training of a Ugandan pilot and crew at the Grumman plant in Houston, Texas.<sup>6</sup> Uganda's second purchase was the Lockheed C-100-30, a version of the C-130 Hercules transport. Lockheed sold the

jet to Alaska International Airways, which sold it to Page, which sold it to the Uganda Government—all in 1975! Lockheed supplied ground support equipment, maintenance services, spare parts, personnel services, etc. through Page and Sabena Airways of Belgium.<sup>7</sup>

Page also operated widely publicized shuttles from Melbourne, Florida, and Stanstead, Essex, to Entebbe. Deliberately and continuously publicized by the Western media as innocuous 'whisky shuttles', these flights were really the regime's emergency corridors to the UK and USA, bringing in delicate, sensitive equipment for its repressive machinery. The Stanstead shuttle brought supplies mainly for the SRB; while the Melbourne shuttle concentrated primarily on telecommunications equipment supplied by Harris Corporation of Florida.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of their names, neither Page Airways nor its subsidiary, Page Gulfstream, were airlines. Both were marketing agencies. In April 1978, the Securities and Exchange Commission of the US Government charged Page with failing to disclose some \$2.5 million in secret payments to foreign officials in Africa and Asia, allegedly paid in connection with the sale of Grumman Gulfstream II planes. The recipients of these bribes, it was alleged, were President Bongo of Gabon, the Ivory Coast ambassador to the US, Saudi and Moroccan third parties, and Amin, who received a Cadillac Eldorado. But the case was dropped in April 1980 because, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, testimony may have revealed 'national security secrets'. 'It is probably the Ugandan connection ... which the CIA is anxious to keep from the public eye,'<sup>9</sup> suggested the newspaper.

What was the CIA anxious to hide? According to *Africa News* of North Carolina, Page had, in 1975, subcontracted a part of its Ugandan business to Southern Air Transport, a Miami-based airline which was owned by the CIA from 1960 to 1972. Although the airline was sold to private interests in 1973, 'suspicions of agency ties remain' according to *Africa News*.<sup>10</sup> What the agency was anxious to hide was a possible Page-CIA connection. Page's chief executive, James P. Wilmot, owns another company called Wilmorite Inc., which built the \$6 million Uganda Mission to the UN. Wilmot's second-in-command, Charles Hanner, was made an honorary Uganda citizen by Amin for his services, and was appointed Honorary Uganda Consul in the United States. Hanner functioned as Uganda's contracting agent in the US.<sup>11</sup>

After the purchase of the Lockheed transport C-100-30, the regime bought two passenger Boeing 707s to complete the fleet of Uganda Airlines. The purchase of these two Boeings illustrates the collaboration between the CIA and the Israeli intelligence agency, MOSSAD, on the one hand, and the fascist regime, on the other. At the centre of this collaboration is a company called Aircraft Trading and Services Inc. (ATASCO). Set up in 1971, ATASCO was then a joint partnership between an Israeli tycoon called Shaul Eisenberg, the Israeli Ministry of

Defence, and the US Export-Import Bank. Eisenberg and the Israeli Ministry of Defence put up \$500,000 each. The Ex-Im Bank put up the major part of the investment, amounting to 'several million dollars'.<sup>12</sup>

Eisenberg is an Israeli international arms dealer, and ATASCO is only one of 80 or so companies under his control. His influence in Israel is underlined by a law which exempts certain companies that do business abroad from paying taxes. Because the law suits Eisenberg's dealings, it is known as Eisenberg's law. He bought out the shares of the Israeli Ministry of Defence in ATASCO after the 1973 war.

The two Boeings bought by Uganda Airlines initially belonged to the Pan American Airways fleet. According to a *Washington Post* writer, Bernard Nossiter, writing in the *New Statesman*, Pan Am sells all its used Boeings to ATASCO because 'it was instructed to do so by the CIA'.<sup>13</sup>

ATASCO sent its first 707 to the Amin regime through a Zurich-based company, Zimex Aviation, a front company for MOSSAD. The company's president, Hans Ziegler, for 15 years a MOSSAD agent, was a frequent visitor to Uganda. His picture used to appear quite often in the *Voice of Uganda* in the presence of various government officials, including Amin himself.

By the time Amin decided to buy a second Boeing, dealing with the regime directly would have been too embarrassing, so ATASCO sold Pan Am's 'Clipper Undaunted' to Ronair Inc. in March 1977, and the company leased the plane to the regime. Interestingly, Ronair shares its New York office at 4, East 39th Street with ATASCO. Pilots for Uganda Airlines were supplied by Aviation Technical Assistance and Service Co. (AVTEX) of California, another company with an Eisenberg connection. Spares came from Pan Am, while navigators were supplied by the CIA free of charge. During their twice-a-week shuttle from Entebbe to Stanstead, Uganda Airlines planes stopped over in Benghazi. This stopover was also a reconnaissance mission. According to the *New Statesman* reports from the navigators were shared between the US, the Israeli and the British intelligence services.<sup>14</sup> Another reportedly CIA-connected airline, Seaboard World Airlines, with offices in New York and New Jersey, ran a coffee shuttle between Kampala and Djibouti. In the beginning of May 1977, for example, Seaboard World Airlines sent a DC-8 freighter on 57 round trips between Entebbe and Djibouti, ferrying out 50 tons of coffee each time.<sup>15</sup>

### Transport and telecommunications: a new bonanza

Other imperialist powers which were able to turn Britain's partial withdrawal from Uganda into a profitable proposition were West European countries and Japan, but it was not until the break-up of the East African Community in 1976 that they were able to exploit this

opportunity fully. France and West Germany had high hopes in the early years of the regime.

No sooner had Amin announced the nationalization of British companies in December 1972, than the French ambassador began warming up to the new regime. 'France is prepared to increase its aid,' announced the ambassador publicly.<sup>16</sup> With almost a thousand British teachers leaving Uganda at the end of 1972, British newspapers complained bitterly that French teachers were being exempted from National Service to go to Kampala to take up jobs vacated by their counterparts from across the channel.<sup>17</sup> But French hopes were pinned on something far more lucrative: they hoped to enter the arms market in East Africa. This turned out to be a non-starter, as we have already seen.

West German interest in Uganda had been rekindled much earlier by the clearly rightist character of the Amin coup. The German-Africa Society (Deutscher Afrika-Verein), comprising industrialists and businessmen with interests in Africa, listed five countries in the continent as 'reasonably safe for German investment': Kenya, Tunisia, Togo, the Ivory Coast, and Amin's Uganda.<sup>18</sup> Until then, German interests in Uganda had been confined to trading channels: the supply of household goods like fridges and cookers (Achelis Ltd.), medicine (Pfizer, Jos Hausen), and a shipping and forwarding company to service this trade.

The first major breakthrough for West German investment in Uganda was the Lake Katwe salt factory. The factory was to be built by a German company and financed through a German loan of Shs. 64 million. It was to produce between 45,000 and 50,000 tons of sodium chloride per annum, with elemented sulphur as a by-product. A delegation from the German Development Bank visited Uganda in December 1973 to make an appraisal of the project.<sup>19</sup>

The salt factory turned out to be a one-shot deal. Uganda's economy was declining and the East African Community was still functioning, though in a patched-up manner. While these trends continued, there would be few other opportunities for big-time profits outside the arms and the coffee trade. Adverse economic conditions led to delays in the repayment of earlier German loans, and relations between Uganda and West Germany became cool. They were chilled further by the Entebbe Raid of July 1976, in which West Germany was heavily implicated. Two German employees of Achelis Ltd, including the company's general manager, were summarily deported, and its Ugandan acting general director, Mr Mubiru, was arrested by the authorities. Mubiru was found dead in the outskirts of Kampala a week later. When Paul Etiang, the Minister of Transport and Communications, visited Germany in September that year, high government officials refused to see him.

Events took a decisive turn in 1976. The last nail in the East African Community coffin was hammered that year. The demise of the Community provided western monopolies with a new bonanza.

The East African Common Services Organization had encompassed rail, air and water transport and telecommunications in the region. During the colonial era, it had served as an institutionalized framework, guaranteeing a monopoly market for British industries serving the transport and telecommunication network in East Africa. The disintegration of the Community made Uganda's position as a landlocked country painfully clear. Since the death of the Community was protracted, stretched out over a number of years, western monopolies had time to jostle into position. Minor contracts had been granted before 1976, but the death of the Community opened up fresh opportunities for investment.

The most strategic and, probably, lucrative sector in Uganda's landlocked economy is the railways. The break-up of the East African Railways meant that Uganda needed to purchase new locomotives and set up its own railway workshop immediately. Both contracts were won by the West German monopoly, Henschel Export GMBH, which signed an agreement worth several millions for 26 diesel locomotives. It was also commissioned to construct a railway workshop worth 236 million shillings.<sup>20</sup> This was just the beginning of a long-run opportunity for Henschel Export which survived the collapse of the Amin regime in 1979. Henschel Export went on to corner even more lucrative contracts, shared with French interests.

A second slice from this bonanza went to Belgium. The Belgium Shipbuilders Corporation was commissioned to improve water transport, principally involving the building of floating dry docks at Port Bell on Lake Victoria. As is the customary practice, a Belgian loan worth 131 million shillings went along with the contract. Separate orders were later signed for the assembly of three wagon ferries and the supply of 150 covered wagons.<sup>21</sup>

The Amin regime awarded three major contracts, each bigger than the previous one, to Japanese auto and truck manufacturers. The first contract was signed when a Ugandan trade delegation visited Japan in October 1974. Fifty Nissan diesel trucks, worth over \$40 million, were ordered from the Nisho-Iwai Corporation. A second delegation, led by the Minister for Power and Industry, Colonel Sabuni, visited Japan in July 1976, and concluded a major deal for Honda cars. According to an economist working with the ministry then, the fleet of Hondas which Uganda received had originally been shipped to the United States without any spare parts. When the US refused to accept them, the Uganda ambassador to the US stepped in, and the cars were re-routed to Kampala. The last contract was signed in 1977 with Isuzu Motors. The contract was for 145 heavy-duty and 20 small trucks and was dubbed by *The Japan Times* as 'one of the largest contracts Isuzu has won recently'.<sup>22</sup>

Italy's share of heavy-duty transport vehicles went to Fiat. Once again, it was Colonel Sabuni who finalized the contract. The deal,



comprising 510 lorries (140 15-tonners and 370 7-tonners), and 90 trailers, was financed by an Italian loan in November 1976.<sup>23</sup>

The third major beneficiary of Uganda's transport crisis was the Indian monopoly, Tata. The company's trucks were originally built in technical co-operation with Mercedes. Originally known as Tata-Mercedes, Tata had managed to purchase the technical know-how from the German company by the late 1960s. It manufactured all the component parts and put its own stamp on the truck; whether the raw materials were imported, or not, is not clear.

Tata began its dealings with the Amin regime in 1974 with a major contract involving the supply of over 1,000 vehicles (lorries, tippers, buses, mini-buses, etc.) worth over 80 million shillings and 100 ambulances worth 4 million shillings.<sup>24</sup> Its second major contract came with the launching of the 'Action Programme' in 1977. Congratulating the regime on this 'revolutionary programme', which called for the importation of 4,000 lorries, 500 buses and spare parts, Tata management submitted to Brigadier Moses Ali a proforma invoice for 100 tippers, 250 trucks and 50 buses, along with spare parts, amounting to nearly 70 million shillings.<sup>25</sup> By 1978 Uganda had become the fourth largest overseas market for Tata vehicles, after Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Libya.

The last slice in this veritable harvest by western monopolies was in the field of telecommunications. Two earth satellite stations were built in Uganda; one by a Japanese firm, the other by a US concern. Details of the Japanese investment are not available, but the US contract was worth \$4 million. This satellite station was built by Harris Corporation in Amin's home town, Arua. Harris also trained Amin's men in communications technology at its home facilities in Melbourne, Florida, and in Rochester, New York.<sup>26</sup>

During the Amin regime, opportunities for big-time profits were confined to three fields: the arms trade, the coffee trade and the transport and telecommunications infrastructure. All three had been British monopolies, in colonial Uganda, but this control had begun to erode by the time of the 1971 coup, although Britain still held a leading position in all three areas. By the end of the Amin regime, the British monopoly had eroded completely; rival imperialist powers had stepped in: the Soviet Union in the arms trade; and Western countries, led by the US, in the coffee trade and the communications network.

#### Notes

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3. Congressman Pease, 'Missouri in perspective', 16 January 1978, p. 8.

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14. *Ibid.*
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17. *Daily Express*, 13 December 1972.
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22. *Japan Times*, 19 January 1977.
23. *Voice*, 22 November 1976.
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## 9 *The Relation with the Neo-colonies: Its Real Significance*

The 'news' that finds its way into magazines, periodicals, newspapers, and radio and television in East Africa, and most other neo-colonies, is generally produced by agencies based in, and controlled by, financial circles in Western countries. This media generally portrayed the Amin regime as a local affair, and took great pains to highlight relations between Uganda and other neo-colonial states, particularly Arab regimes and neighbouring Kenya. The empirical facts publicized by the Western media were usually correct, but they were often seen in isolation, removed from both the historical context and the overall situation. This analytical failure sometimes stemmed from an outright pro-imperialist orientation, at other times from the use of incorrect methods. But the result was the same: a gross exaggeration of the neo-colonial connection, thereby concealing the real forces that ensured the survival of the Amin regime.

### **The Arab connection**

With the break in relations with Israel, the Amin regime developed warmer ties with Arab governments, in particular with Libya and Egypt. The Cairo connection amounted to very little in the final analysis, because of a sharp and dramatic change in Egypt's foreign relations following the October War. The Sadat regime steered Egypt out of the Soviet orbit into the US-led camp. The result was an Egypt-Israel rapprochement. Gaddafi's government was inclined to take Amin's 'anti-zionist' and 'Islamic' credentials more seriously. The same credentials, combined with Amin's almost natural right-wing bent, appear to have been the motivation behind the Saudi contact.

Arab assistance to the Amin regime was in three different phases, each centred around a specific political development. The first followed the September 1972 invasion of Uganda by pro-Obote guerrillas based in Tanzania. Four hundred Libyan troops were flown to Uganda where they functioned as a training team. Tripoli also provided 300 military scholarships for Ugandan military personnel to train in Libya. The Libyan-financed purchase of a squadron of French Mirages was about

the same time. The flow of assistance was capped by a state visit to Uganda by Gaddafi.<sup>1</sup> Military aid at this time also came from Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The Saudis gave a 105 million shillings grant to the Ugandan military, while the Iraqi government offered to train a group of commandos and paratroopers.<sup>2</sup>

Economic assistance<sup>3</sup> was secondary to military aid. Though the Saudis pledged a £2.65 million loan, the Libyans were once again in the forefront: they provided a grant of 25 million shillings, combined with a loan of 60 million shillings, and offered to build, equip and maintain two hospitals. The Libyan-Arab Uganda Bank for Foreign Trade and Development was also set up in 1972, with the Gaddafi government holding 51 per cent of the share capital, worth 65 million shillings. But the bank hardly made any impact on the Uganda economy. Its foreign operations were confined to Libyan-Ugandan bilateral trade, itself limited to a trade treaty of minor proportions.<sup>4</sup> It was not until 1977 that the Libyan-Arab Bank ventured into Ugandan internal trade, by setting up several subsidiaries: Upper Nile Cement Company, South Busoga Sugar Development Co., Uganda Livestock Co., Kyoga Agricultural Development Co. and Soritica Interland Transport Co. Ambitious and comprehensive as this venture may sound, it did not go beyond the drawing boards, and no evidence of any practical activity could be found.

The second phase of Arab assistance came at the time of the OAU summit conference in Kampala in 1975. This time some of the largest financial commitments Arab regimes ever made to the Amin government were instituted; Saudi Arabia and Kuwait took the lead. Could it have had something to do with Amin's refusal to toe the Soviet line on Angola at the OAU summit conference and the subsequent bad spell in Soviet-Ugandan relations? Was US imperialism behind the Saudi and Kuwait commitment? The Saudi grant of 70 million shillings, and a loan of 210 million shillings, coupled with a Kuwaiti loan of 213 million shillings enabled the regime to purchase telecommunications equipment and a fleet of Mercedes Benz, plus other paraphernalia that goes into the staging of an OAU conference. The Libyan government also gave the regime a loan of 35.67 million shillings.<sup>5</sup>

After the OAU conference, the fascist regime sank into an even deeper economic trough. Although Amin tried hard to play the Islamic card and lure some oil money his way, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait acted shy. What began as a flow of Arab money at the time of the OAU conference dried up into a trickle, just enough to maintain an Arab presence on Ugandan soil. In 1976 came two grants: 16 million shillings from Qatar and a 2.3 million shilling flood relief donation from Saudi Arabia. There were two loans in 1977: \$10 million from the United Arab Emirates and 36 million shillings from OPEC. But there was only one loan in 1978: \$5 million from Qatar.<sup>6</sup>

The last phase of Arab assistance to Uganda was in the wake of the October 1973 war. While Libya injected troops and arms to help shore up a tottering regime, Saudi Arabia and the others deserted Amin. We shall examine this phase in the next chapter.

### The search for technical personnel

The Amin regime had to turn to those neo-colonies which had a relative surplus of qualified technical personnel. For the most part, the flow of technical personnel was the result of strictly commercial transactions.

The need for technical assistance was the result of the 'economic war'. By the end of 1972, a series of expulsions had resulted in an outflow of thousands of Asian teachers, technicians, accountants and doctors, followed by British volunteer teachers. The regime obtained assistance from two quarters to replace these. In December 1972, an Egyptian team of 14 doctors, two sugar technicians and two cement engineers arrived in Uganda. Reports of a further recruitment of Egyptian personnel appeared in the British press in early 1973, but it came to nothing.<sup>7</sup> In 1973, 45 teachers arrived from Ghana.<sup>8</sup>

The dearth of trained manpower intensified as educated Ugandans began to flee the country. When the expected inflow of Egyptian and Ghanaian expatriates did not materialize, the regime began looking for a more reliable and consistent source of personnel; it found this in India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh. In April 1974 a Ugandan delegation went to Pakistan to interview prospective applicants in Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi. The flow of Pakistani expatriates into Uganda followed soon after. A second delegation was sent in November 1977, resulting in the arrival of nearly 400 doctors, engineers, accountants and professors the next January.<sup>9</sup> Other technical personnel, like the engineers at the National Sugar Works in Kinyala, came from India and Bangladesh. The least significant assistance in material terms, was that from certain popular movements, particularly Palestinian and Afro-American groups. This was, however, the most publicized, for reasons we shall soon see.

Like many progressive movements and individuals in Africa, these groups were, for the most part, unsuspecting victims of the regime's 'anti-imperialist and anti-zionist' rhetoric. The best known of these was the PLO. Its relations with the Amin regime warmed up with the signing of an agreement for technical, economic and scientific co-operation, whose results only became clear in 1976 when Amin handed a certificate of allocation of 'about 5,150 acres' of land donated to 'Palestinian martyrs' over to the PLO representative in Kampala. The PLO agreed to build a pharmaceutical factory to be financed by the Afro-Arab Investment and Contracting Company in Kampala in 1977.<sup>10</sup>

On the military side, there were occasional reports of Palestinian pilots flying Ugandan MiGs. The *Voice of Uganda* of 22 January 1976, published a photograph on Page 6 with the caption: 'Field Marshal Amin greeting Palestinian pilots'. Western propaganda circles, however, inflated the Palestinian involvement out of all proportion.

Among Afro-American groups successfully cultivated by the regime was the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Through its mediation, a 10-person Ugandan delegation visited the San Francisco Bay area in February 1973 to recruit technical personnel. The following August, Roy Innis announced the imminent departure of 50 black American technicians for Uganda. But this project failed to materialize, cancelled by the regime for reasons never disclosed. Roy Innis and three other CORE members, nevertheless, received Uganda citizenship for their services.<sup>11</sup>

The Amin regime derived great propaganda advantage from its connections with popular anti-imperialist movements. This was particularly true of the PLO contact. It was a propaganda boon for western imperialism, too. Propaganda, it must be realized, is most effective when it is based on concrete facts. The trick lies in presenting selected facts while obscuring the total picture. The western media refrained from any but isolated references, to the US, UK, and Israeli ties with the fascist regime, but concentrated on the Arab and the Palestinian connections.

### The Kenyan connection

A lot has been written in the press on Kenya-Uganda relations during the Amin period. For supporters, as for many opponents, of the fascist regime, local ruling circles in Kenya, along with those in Arab countries, appeared important. The empirical facts on which this analysis is based—the pivotal importance of Kenya-Uganda relations during the Amin period—are correct; the conclusions drawn from them are, however, incorrect. The reason for this is invariably the failure of most writers to appreciate the character of the Kenyan economy: that it is not an independent national economy, but a neo-colonial economy in which Britain was the leading imperialist for the better part of the 1970s. 'Kenyan interests' with a solid Ugandan connection were for the most part Kenya-based British interests.

As the Amin period unfolded, the Kenyan economy played a crucial mediating role between the Ugandan economy and the world capitalist market. Kenya became increasingly significant as a conduit for British interests in Uganda. The real beneficiaries of strong ties between the Kenyan state and the fascist regime in Uganda were Kenyan-based British monopolies, and a tiny clique of British-connected compradors in the ruling circles in Nairobi.

*Kenya's pivotal role as mediator*

Kenya was the centre-piece in the colonial East African economy and, later, in the East African Community. This fact can be discerned from comparing Uganda-Kenya trade relations with Uganda-Tanzania trade relations. In 1971, Uganda imported 160.52 million shillings worth of goods from Kenya but less than a quarter (only 37.95 million shillings worth) from Tanzania. Uganda's direct trade with Britain was, however, much more important than that with Kenya. In the same year, Ugandan imports from Britain were three times as much, totalling 439.41 million shillings. These relations went through a drastic change in the course of the eight years of the Amin regime. The change resulted from two closely-related developments, both leading to the firm establishment of Kenya as the pivotal link between Uganda and the world capitalist economy.

The first development was the Asian expulsion, which led to a break in relations between foreign, mainly British, monopolies, and their on-the-scene agents. British monopolies refused to carry on with normal business practices, to honour letters of credit, or to grant commercial credits, effecting an economic embargo on Uganda. The *mafutamingi*, who replaced the Asian businessmen, were without any experience in export-import trade. Most had been retailers before; others were without any previous business experience of any kind. They could not initiate a shift from suppliers in Britain to those based in other imperialist countries. As the practice of using letters of credit became extinct, prospective importers simply got bank drafts and travellers cheques, or even cash in foreign currency, and went shopping outside the country. The country they went to was, naturally, Kenya. This trend was accelerated by a second development: with the sharp decline of manufacturing in Uganda, the Kenyan trade blossomed further. Smuggling, principally to and from Kenya, mushroomed across the border. Budding entrepreneurs on both sides of the border saw smuggling as the answer to the growing demand for capital to set up businesses.

These developments gave Uganda's foreign trade relations a dual character. Producer goods (industrial machinery, transport and telecommunications equipment) were still bought directly from manufacturers in the USA, Europe and Japan. Purchases were usually financed by tied aid. Consumer goods were mainly purchased, legally or illegally, from Kenya. Legal transactions were financed by foreign exchange issued by the Bank of Uganda; illegal imports were paid for from the proceeds of coffee or cotton smuggling. The Amin regime tried to nip this smuggling in the bud. A decree issued in June 1974 permitted only parastatals to carry out the Uganda-Kenya trade, but it was honoured only on paper.<sup>12</sup>

As the Amin regime survived from one year to the next, the weight of imported producer goods declined steadily. Imports of iron and steel, non-ferrous metals and manufactures, and telecommunications equipment, amounted to shs. 72.85 million, shs. 140.69 million and shs. 29.15

million respectively in 1971; by 1976, these figures were down to shs. 20.43 million, shs. 52.91 million and shs. 15.29 million—a decline of about 70, 60 and 50 per cent respectively. Correspondingly, the weight of consumer goods and therefore imports from Kenya increased. Imports of animal oils and fats, cotton fabrics and sugar imports were worth shs. 24 million, shs. 12.3 million and shs. 11 million in 1971; by 1976, they had jumped to shs. 94.99 million, shs. 41.68 million and shs. 76 million—an increase of nearly 400, 325 and 700 per cent respectively.<sup>13</sup> The Kenyan connection became still more significant.

The collapse of local manufacturing was dramatically illustrated by a request from a parastatal, Uganda Merchandise Ltd, for government permission to import 'essential goods' from Kenya during the 1975 OAU conference. The list was made up solely of such items as toilet paper, toilet soap, dental cream, dry-cell batteries, shoe polish and razor blades, but amounted to millions of shillings.<sup>14</sup>

The overall trend can be deduced by comparing Uganda's imports from Kenya with those from Britain for 1971 and 1976, the last year for which comprehensive figures are available.

Table 8 *Uganda's import trade ('000,000 shillings)*<sup>15</sup>

	1971	1976	1977
Total imports (excl. EAC)	1,362.00	654.83	
From UK	439.41	200.35	
From Kenya	160.52	537.42	668.56
From Tanzania	37.95	6.72	

Uganda imports from Kenya were worth a little over a third of those from Britain in 1971. By 1976 imports from Kenya had jumped to nearly three times (275 per cent) British-originated imports. In fact, imports from Kenya nearly equalled imports from all other countries in 1976, even when the smuggling trade, which is difficult to measure statistically, is not taken into account. Figures available on Uganda's import trade in 1977 show that imports from Kenya were actually increasing, amounting to 668.56 million shillings.

*Kenya as a conduit for British monopolies*

In 1979, after the fall of Amin, the Kenyan government submitted a list of debts to be settled immediately by the Uganda government. These totalled 22,409,811 shillings and 86 cents; 28 companies were listed as creditors to Ugandan importers. Of these companies, however, only 10 were demanding over a million shillings. The list below gives their names with their overseas links.<sup>16</sup>

Table 9 10 Kenyan companies to whom Uganda indebted in 1979

Name of Kenyan-based firm	Overseas connection
1. Cooper Motors	agent for British Leyland
2. Kenya Film Corporation	distributors for Anglo-American films (UK-USA)
3. Kenya Creameries Cooperative	a dairy co-operative with a Swiss connection
4. Leyland Paints	a UK subsidiary
5. East African Industries	a Unilever subsidiary
6. Longman (K) Ltd.	a UK subsidiary
7. Pfizer Labs Ltd.	a West German subsidiary (FRG)
8. Robbialac Paints	a UK subsidiary
9. Sadoline Paints	a UK subsidiary
10. Shell Chemical Co.	a British-Dutch subsidiary

Nine of the ten companies listed above are directly connected with an overseas monopoly; seven are either subsidiaries of British monopolies, or distributing agents for British-made commodities; one is a West German subsidiary; and the other a distributor for Anglo-American films. The lion's share of Kenyan consumer exports to Uganda was really bagged by overseas monopolies, mainly British, with subsidiaries or distributing agents in Kenya.

The British government too used Kenya as a jumping-off point in its trade with Uganda. NAAFI, the British government armed forces suppliers, made 'nearly £1 million a year' by supplying tinned food, alcohol, tobacco and clothing to Amin's army from their Kenya depot.<sup>17</sup> Trade between Britain and the Amin regime in sensitive telecommunications and spying and torture equipment was also funnelled through two Kenya-based companies which facilitated transactions, while concealing British suppliers from the public eye.

The first of these was Cooper Motors, which acted as an agent for Contact Radio Telephones of UK. The company's principal Nairobi director was Bruce Mackenzie, while its Kampala contact was a certain Mr Scanlon, one of the four British businessmen who carried Amin shoulder-high in his chair during the 1975 OAU conference, in a supposedly comical illustration of the 'white man's burden'. For his services, Scanlon was awarded Uganda citizenship. He was arrested in June 1977, accused of being a British spy, and killed the following September.<sup>18</sup>

The second Kenya-based company which handled sensitive British trade with Amin's regime was Wilkins Communication. It rerouted

telecommunications equipment from Pye and Dwyer, whose testing equipment was found in SRB head-quarters when the Amin regime was overthrown.<sup>19</sup> The president of Wilkins Communication was another Kenya-based Briton, Keith Savage. The fate of Bruce Mackenzie and Keith Savage was no different from that of their Kampala counterpart, Scanlon. In May 1978, the two agents, accompanied by another British businessman, Peter Gaymer, went to Uganda for business talks with Amin. All three were killed when a bomb exploded aboard their plane on the return flight from Entebbe to Nairobi.

Kenya was also the base for a third type of Western imperialist operation in East Africa. The key figure was once again Bruce Mackenzie, an ex-RAF pilot, long-serving advisor to President Kenyatta, and a former Minister of Agriculture in independent Kenya. According to some western newspaper reports, Bruce Mackenzie was 'the main contact in Africa for all Western intelligence agencies'. The *Daily Express*' writer on intelligence affairs, Chapman Pincher, said that he had met senior officials in the British MI6, the Israeli MOSSAD, the American CIA, and the Shah of Iran's SAVAK in Mackenzie's home. He added that Mackenzie had 'built up a joint intelligence network with Israel which had sensational consequences'.<sup>20</sup> Could one of these have been the Entebbe Raid?

#### *Political relations between Kenya and Uganda*

British pressure on Amin was most effectively applied through Kenya. When Amin threatened to expel all Britons from Uganda in June 1974, a single telephone call from President Kenyatta was enough to call off the threat. Any deterioration in relations between UK and Uganda. The best example is the sharp decline in Kenya-Uganda relations before the Entebbe Raid of July 1976. There were two reasons for this chill. One was the Amin regime's failure to pay up debts, amounting to 400 million shillings, owed to Kenya-based British interests.<sup>21</sup> The second was Britain's failure to exact compensation from the Amin regime for those investments expropriated in 1972 and 1973.

Kenya retaliated by taking advantage of Uganda's landlocked position, and the break-up of the East African Community. Prior to the break-up of the community in 1976, there were three daily freight, and one passenger, train services between Kampala and Mombasa. These services were reduced so sharply in 1976 that only 16 trains came to Kampala in a month. The result was that 26.8 per cent of Uganda's coffee had to be transported to Mombasa by road, primarily on trailers belonging to the Kenya-based Kenatco company. In subsequent years, the share of coffee transported by road increased even further, to 35.5 per cent in 1977-78, 46.23 per cent in 1978-79, and 70.12 per cent in 1979-80.<sup>21</sup>

This development led to higher transportation costs for Uganda's exports and imports. The cost of rail transport was about 400 shillings a tonne, while road transport cost 650 shillings a tonne. As the transport problems increased, the Amin regime was even compelled to use air freight, costing 4,000 shillings a tonne, to ferry its cargo. It was within this context that Amin gave his famous geography lesson, claiming a part of Kenya on historical grounds. The *Voice of Uganda* ominously reported 'military incidents' on the Kenya-Uganda border.<sup>23</sup> Kenya replied with an oil squeeze: instead of the 80 oil tankers which reached Kampala from the country daily, only one was allowed to pass.<sup>24</sup>

The oil blockade, begun on 4 July 1976, coincided with the Entebbe Raid. Ironically, relations between the two countries stabilized a little, following Kenya's diplomatic isolation in the aftermath of the Entebbe Raid. The oil blockade was lifted, but the coffee squeeze continued.

The coffee squeeze mainly reflected the interests of British monopolies and the British state; it also served certain minority interests in Kenya. For the Kenyan state, in particular, the squeeze became a lucrative source of revenue: rail charges had to be pre-paid at Malaba, and a security bond was required for coffee in transit, resulting in a guaranteed payment of millions of shillings to the Kenya Reinsurance Corporation.<sup>25</sup> Coffee transporters were also required to hire escorts from the Kenya authorities for the Malaba-Mombasa route. These agents were sometimes paid as much as 100,000 shillings a journey.<sup>26</sup> Those individuals with foreign monopoly and state connections in Nairobi also made great gains. These gains were either legal from servicing foreign monopolies, for example, or accrued from the illegal use of the state machinery. The Commonwealth Report on Uganda estimates that Uganda coffee worth about \$94 million was stolen in Kenya in 1976-77. The amount involved in 1977-78, when prices were lower, is estimated at \$18m! The report observes that 'high level officials' in Kenya were involved in both the smuggling and theft of Uganda coffee.<sup>27</sup> Two *Daily Nation* journalists, Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, have also noted the involvement of 'police chiefs... as partners of well known politicians'<sup>27</sup> in coffee thefts.

Ugandan government authorities were convinced that the country's problems were essentially political, and that the long hand of Britain was behind most Kenyan measures. This is clear, for example, from official discussions on civil aviation problems.<sup>29</sup> The committee on bilateral relations with Kenya noted that these problems began when British engineers based in Nairobi, who used to carry out service checks on East African Airways planes, refused to provide a similar service to Uganda Airlines when the Community broke up. The committee resolved that 'in view of the fact that Britain and Kenya usually had a common stand against Uganda', there was no point in putting a formal request for assistance to the Kenya government.

Such are the facts on the Amin regime's relations with neo-colonial countries. They point to two conclusions. First, support from neo-colonies was secondary: it was not the main external element behind the regime's survival. This support was important at certain isolated moments in the life of the regime, but it was never continuous. As the above analysis of the Amin regime's relations with Arab states shows, the significance of the neo-colonial connection was tactical, not strategic. When the regime was finally forced to rely heavily on friendly neo-colonies it collapsed. Secondly, what appeared to be a close relationship between the Amin regime and a neighbouring neo-colony was mainly a link with imperialist monopolies based in that country.

#### Notes

1. *The Times*, London, 4 January 1973; *Financial Times*, 2 April 1973; *Voice*, 4 January 1973, 7 March 1973.
2. *Voice*, 9 February 1974, 20 May 1974.
3. *Financial Times*, 21 November 1972; *Egyptian Gazette*, 7 August 1972; *East African Standard*, 1 November 1972; *Voice*, 20 April 1972, 31 July 1972, 11 February 1977, 20 August 1976, 13 December 1977.
4. The following transactions could be gleaned through the press: 1.7.72: 500 tons of tea and 35 tons of coffee. 20.8.76: cotton yarn worth 23.8 million shillings. 13.12.77: 2,000 tons of coffee and 920 tons of cotton yarn. In return, Uganda bought textiles, dyed wool yarn and crushed, fine ground gypsum.
5. *Voice*, 28 July 1975, 28 March 1975, 3 July 1975, 3 April 1975.
6. *Voice*, 30 January 1976, 10 January 1976, 9 March 1978, 15 January 1977, 6 August 1977.
7. *Financial Times*, 4 September 1972; *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 January 1973; *Egyptian Gazette*, 25 December 1972, 24 December 1972.
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12. Ministry of Commerce files S.INT/6: Trade with Kenya.
13. All figures supplied by officials at the Ministry of Commerce, Kampala.
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15. All figures supplied by officials at the Ministry of Commerce, Kampala.
16. Lists abstracted from Ministry of Commerce files S.INT/6.
17. *The Times*, London, 10 September 1977.
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21. *Voice*, 2 August 1976.
22. 'Problems of coffee for export', Ministry of Commerce files S.INT/6.
23. *Voice*, 30 June 1976.

24. Amin's telegram to UN Secretary-General, *Voice*, 26 July 1976.
25. Minutes of Meeting between representatives of Coffee Marketing Board, Uganda Railways Corporation, Customs and Excise held in CMB Board Room on 21 August 1978, in Ministry of Commerce files S.INT/6, vol. 1.
26. Joseph Karimi and Philip Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*. Transafrica, Nairobi, 1980, p. 115.
27. *The Rehabilitation of the Economy of Uganda*, a report by a Commonwealth team of experts, vol. 2, p. 63.
28. Karimi and Ochieng, *The Kenyatta Succession*, p. 155.
29. 3rd Meeting of Committee on Bilateral Relations with Kenya held on 1 February 1978, *Minutes*, Ministry of Commerce files S.INT/6, vol. 1.

## 10 Conclusion: An Imperialist Solution to the Problem of Fascism

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For the Amin regime, 1977 and 1978 were years of crisis. The regime's internal base was rapidly narrowing, and with the murder of Archbishop Luwum, its external isolation became almost complete. The people of Uganda were beginning to stir. Before its internal crisis could intensify, the regime initiated a series of reforms to try and solve its problems. The external forces which had backed Amin since the coup of 1971 also began looking for an alternative regime, one that would serve their interests more effectively. This last initiative lay with the US-led camp which, unlike the Soviet bloc, was untainted in the public eye, since its dealings with the Amin regime had been conducted under the counter.

### The regime tries to solve its own crisis

Capitalism in a neo-colony has a dual character. It has a comprador aspect; local capitalists function as agents for foreign monopolies. Comprador capitalism is essentially agent capitalism. Its second aspect is bureaucratic. The state plays a major role in the accumulation process because of the weakness of individual capitalists. The fortunes of an individual capitalist also depend on the effectiveness of his state connections. A capitalist in a neo-colony thrives on a double connection, his ties with foreign monopolies and with the local state machinery.

The comprador aspect of capitalism in Uganda was weakened by the 'economic war'. International economic relations with foreign monopolies became rare, and were, for the most part, mediated through the Kenyan connection, which was unstable and irregular. The bureaucratic aspect became very strong at the same time, and the state's participation in the economy expanded drastically. The number of parastatals and state enterprises proliferated, and the fruits of the 'economic war' were distributed to individuals with political connections. There were at least three 'allocations', as these distributions were called, during the life of the regime. This meant that a pauper with good state links would simply become a millionaire through a few business allocations and contracts, while a millionaire without solid state connections could be starved of contracts and allocations and, as a result, opportunities to expand.

This economic and political situation was, from the imperialists' point of view, characterized by great uncertainty, bureaucratic corruption, and the absence of a well-oiled machinery to facilitate and oversee foreign exploitation in a regular way. Direct foreign investments shrank to an all-time low as a result. Opportunities for profitable investments were confined to trade relations, while the size of the export-import trade continued to diminish. The reforms of 1977-78 were intended to reverse this trend: to strengthen the comprador aspect of the economy, and to prune the bureaucratic aspect of capitalism in Uganda. The reform package was summarized in the Action Programme for Rehabilitation (1977/78-1979/80) and the Foreign Investments Decree, 1977.

The Action Programme was addressed to both Ugandan businessmen and foreign monopolies. Three carrots were offered to the business community. The government promised to 'encourage the performance of private Ugandan businessmen by restraining administrative intervention in the economic activities of the private sector'.<sup>1</sup> This pledge was coupled with a commitment to lift all price controls. Finally, the government promised to relinquish its monopoly on the purchase of agricultural export crops, agreeing to 'license private buyers to buy produce directly from farmers'.<sup>2</sup> All these measures amounted to a promise to remove state controls from private enterprise.

The Action Programme was intended to attract foreign monopolies to invest in Uganda, with a view to increasing the level of production, especially in industry. To achieve 'at least the output level prevailing in 1972', the government concentrated on 50 key industries. The Ministry of Industries was asked to estimate the cost of rehabilitating each industry, and to identify a foreign monopoly which could be asked to undertake rehabilitation. In the list prepared by the Ministry, which this author has had access to, foreign contacts for only 12 industries had been identified by the time the regime fell. The foreign monopolies cited were mainly from Western Europe (for sugar, beer, salt, cement, fertilizers, ceramics), and only a few from Britain (iron ore) and Canada (cobalt).

To 'foster the confidence and trust of foreigners in Uganda', the Action Programme promised 'full consultation and liaison' with 'all relevant authorities' to try and solve the thorny problem of 'foreign assets'. This was in effect a pledge to compensate those foreign investors whose property had been confiscated in 1972 and 1973 on mutually acceptable terms. Combined with this pledge was the promise of an abundant harvest for those wishing to invest in future. This was written into law as the Foreign Investments Decree of 1977.<sup>3</sup>

Broadly speaking, the Decree spelt out two important provisions designed to transform Uganda into a haven for foreign investments. The first was, in Amin's own words, the guarantee of 'tax holidays of a

far-reaching character', given in Section 1 of the Decree. Sub-section 1 exempted foreign investors from the payment of either import duties or sales tax on 'any plant, machinery or any construction material imported into the country'. Sub-section 2 exempted foreign investors from all taxes, including corporation tax, selective income levy, and withholding tax, 'until a company has realized 50 per cent of capital brought into the country by way of profits'. The second key measure incorporated into the Decree was an amendment of the 1964 law on foreign investments. This amendment gave foreign enterprises the right to repatriate all profits after tax, taxes from which they had just been exempted, 'within 12 months after the accounting year'.

To show that it really meant business this time, the regime invited two economic missions to visit Uganda. The first was a UNIDO mission which was 'to define a large-scale assistance project' for industries, including repair, maintenance and break-down services. The second mission came from the IMF in August 1977. The UN agencies responded to the reform package affirmatively, giving their seal of approval to the proposed measures. Whereas from 1972 to 1976 the agencies had granted 120 million shillings in aid to Uganda, for the period 1977-81 they now pledged a whopping sum of 320 million shillings, an increase of over 166 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

The Action Programme and the Foreign Investments Decree were fine as neo-colonial economic blueprints. Imperialism had no cause for complaint—at least on paper. The problem was, however, not simply economic; it was not merely a question of re-establishing Uganda's relations with foreign monopolies on a more regular and expanded basis. Far more basic was the political problem of restoring stability to the neo-colony, of mobilizing the people behind the regime while there was still time.

### The crisis intensifies

Popular resistance to the fascist regime often took the form of silent sabotage. Each class used the weapons at its disposal to express its own discontent with the current state of affairs: peasants uprooted cotton and coffee trees; workers absented themselves from factories; civil servants deliberately misinterpreted whatever instructions they were given. As oppression intensified, resistance became more articulate and open. In Lugazi and Kakira rural workers set plantations on fire. Industrial workers braved bullets at Kilembe and U.T.C. to go on strike. At Makerere, students demonstrated in opposition to the regime, and were joined by many people in Kampala, ranging from workers to small proprietors.



A detailed analysis of the nature of popular resistance to fascist rule is beyond the scope of this study. It is sufficient to note that popular resistance, whether silent or vocal, remained unorganized. Organized opposition was limited and had three shortcomings. Most resistance groups were based in exile, with little or no organized following in the country. Secondly, their membership was by and large made up of the middle-class intelligentsia. Finally, the organized opposition was split into a myriad of groups, at least a dozen of which mushroomed between 1976 and 1978.

As resistance against the regime became visible, Amin replied with the proverbial carrot-and-stick approach. The carrot, in the form of economic reforms directed at foreign monopolies and local entrepreneurs, was designed to arrest the disintegration of the regime's social base, even to expand it. The stick was aimed at the people. Neither carrot nor stick proved effective. The regime's erstwhile sponsors were beginning to lose confidence in its ability to stabilize their hold on this neo-colony. They watched with trepidation as the regime continued to repress the people, forcing more and more into opposition. The regime's sponsors looked actively for alternatives to Amin before it was too late. Even the regime's own ranks were disintegrating. There was a growing number of coup attempts, with each attempt coming from a rank higher than the previous one.

The US was the first country to distance itself from the regime publicly, giving a nod of approval to pro-imperialist opposition forces. The Americans wanted to cut the life of the regime short, before an organized popular, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist movement took shape. In mid-1978, the US congress debated a bill to halt all trade, except that in food, with Uganda, amid great propaganda fanfare. In July 1978 the US senate voted to end all trade with Uganda. On 10 October the embargo became law. The US trade embargo presented Amin with a far more serious situation than that in 1972 when Britain had tried to orchestrate his overthrow. A super-power had signalled to its allies that it was ready to sponsor a suitable replacement to Amin's regime, while, internally, the unity of the regime was crumbling fast; coup attempts were now combined with open, large-scale mutinies in the ranks like the one at the Mbarara barracks.

It was in this situation that Amin made a gamble—the Kagera invasion. The invasion of the Kagera salient was designed to kill two birds with one stone. First, Amin hoped to solve his immediate internal problems by using the mutinous troops to mount the invasion. Secondly, he hoped to woo the United States by performing a gratuitous service—bringing a government he considered hostile to the Americans to its knees. On 12 October, only two days after the US embargo became law, Amin raised the alarm about an alleged Tanzanian invasion of Uganda.

### An imperialist solution

The Kagera invasion began as a strictly localized conflict between two East African states, but it did not end as such. US-led imperialism was able to take advantage of the conflict and bend the outcome to suit its own interests.

Three factors favoured the Western camp. First, the Ugandan people were by and large disorganized. They could not give more than spontaneous, individual assistance to anti-Amin forces. The exile groups, for the most part, lacked armed strength. Even the combined strength of the few groups with armed detachments was no more than a few thousand. The Amin regime could only be overthrown in the aftermath, or as a result of, an inter-state war. Secondly, Tanzania was an economically weak country that could not possibly execute a major conventional war on its own; it would require external assistance from one super-power camp or other to be successful. Thirdly, the Soviet Union was tarnished by its public association with, and support of, the Amin regime, and was not in a position to lend much support either to the anti-Amin forces, or to the fascist regime. Soviet personnel flying MiGs in Amin's air force in fact left for home on 1 November 1978.<sup>5</sup> As the war with Tanzania intensified, the Soviet Union even permitted Uganda students in Moscow to demonstrate for an hour in front of the Libyan embassy, protesting Gaddafi's military support for Amin.<sup>6</sup>

The Amin regime was now forced to fall back on its second line of support, consisting mainly of Libya. Libya lifted a whole mechanized battalion, 1500 troops and armoured vehicles, to aid Amin in battle.<sup>7</sup> When the war took a turn for the worse, Libya issued an ultimatum to the Tanzanian government: 'Withdraw within 24 hours or else Libya will join the Ugandan side.'<sup>8</sup> The ploy did not work. The effective backers of the regime, the super-powers, had deserted their former client, and the regime's days were numbered.

Imperialist attempts to replace an exposed, tottering dictatorship by a more reliable client regime was not confined to Uganda. Africa saw the fall of three dictators in 1979: Bokassa, Nguema and Amin. In the Central African Empire, the French role in orchestrating a change of regime was visibly clear. French troops had installed Bokassa; French troops removed him. French influence in their ex-colony remained, with or without Bokassa. In Equatorial Guinea, the departure of Nguema made no difference to the presence and influence of the Soviet Union. But in Uganda, the imperialist initiative was not as evident, partly because the war that ousted Amin began as a local conflict which US-led imperialism turned to its own advantage; and partly because this imperialism was able to camouflage its role behind the international prestige of Tanzania. In all three countries, however, imperialism was able to seize the initiative because the people were defiant, but

disorganized. Which also explains the single most important motive behind that imperialist intervention, that the people should remain disorganized. Western propaganda has conveniently overlooked this fact, just as it had conveniently dwelt on the sensational side of the Amin regime while highlighting its public disengagement from the regime.

It should be clear from this study that this disengagement was a mere facade. In private, relations between Uganda and this camp blossomed, but were usually hidden from the public eye by the use of third, or even fourth, parties to carry out business transactions. When news of the western connection leaked out, as with the air shuttles to Stanstead and Florida, a massive propaganda campaign was mounted to present these as innocuous, harmless and amusing 'Whisky shuttles'. The Soviet press, on the other hand, seldom bothered to hide the USSR's close links with Amin: the Russians were presented as the champions of a supposedly pro-people regime. The Soviet propaganda machinery actively supported Amin's presentation of his regime as 'anti-imperialist and anti-zionist'. When the bubble broke, however, there was only embarrassed silence from this quarter.

It was, of course, the demagoguery of the Kibedi clique that disarmed the people of Uganda initially, and gave the Amin regime a critical breathing space between 1971 and 1973, the period during which the military regime consolidated itself into a fascist dictatorship. No popular struggle is possible without drawing a sharp distinction between opportunists and the real friends of the people at every stage. In today's conditions, this requires breaking through the demagogic talk of 'liberation'. There is no such thing as liberation by proxy. To be free, a people must rely on the strength of their own organization. Freedom is won and defended through organized struggle.

#### Notes

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3. The Law Reform Commission, Ministry of Justice. *Foreign Investment in Uganda: The Policy and the Law*, Kampala, 1977.
4. *Voice*, 23 October 1976.
5. *Voice*, 1 November 1978.
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8. *International Herald Tribune*, 27 March 1979.

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