

## ● UGANDA'S TORMENT

The palace coup which removed Milton Obote from power in Uganda last month has cracked the bankrupt pattern of post-independence neo-colonial Ugandan politics. The implications of the power struggle now underway between the two military groups are continent-wide.

The two Obote regimes, like Amin's, were characterised by deep dependence on the support of Britain and other western powers for murderous military repression and flagrant economic exploitation of Uganda's people. The details of horrific torture and degradation practised under Obote and Amin are comparable with the practices of Nazi war criminals and have been documented many times.

The military junta which seized power at the end of July is not a new regime. Its Prime Minister Paulo Muwanga is the most skillful, ruthless and determined politician in Uganda. He was the power of the last Obote regime. The military leaders General Tito Okello and Lt General Bazilio Okello were responsible for the military who carried out the appalling actions against children, women and men which terrorised the country for the last four years under Obote.

Predictably this group has easily coopted all the weaker opponents of the Obote regime – the sizeable Democratic Party leaders, armed bandit groups nominally loyal to such notorious figures from the Amin period as Brigadier Moses Ali, and a host of well-known opportunist politicians happy to slot into ministerial appointments in Kampala on the basis of personal links any time there is a shift in the personalities at the top. In the same strategy of consolidating the power in Kampala the junta has tried to persuade individual leaders of the National Resistance Army guerrillas to join the scramble for office.

But the NRA has become a formidable force for a new era of politics in Uganda, not for 'turmoil without change' as its leader Yoweri Museveni recently put it.

The July coup by Okello's soldiers took place against the background of the increasingly successful guerrilla war by the NRA. The guerrillas held the Luwero triangle north of Kampala and a significant area in the west of the country throughout 1984/5. The government army (UNLA) was increasingly reluctant to engage them. The NRA took the western town of Fort Portal with no resistance in the last week of July. For the UNLA commanders it was the signal to

## UGANDA

### TORTURE AND "DISAPPEARANCES"

Amnesty International is concerned by the widespread and systematic torture of civilians in Uganda. Large numbers are unlawfully arrested and detained by the army and the National Security Agency in barracks and detention centres where torture is routine. Many have "disappeared" while unlawfully detained and are believed to have died as a result of torture or been deliberately killed in detention.

**Evidence of torture:** The report includes the findings of two British doctors who examined former prisoners and found signs and symptoms consistent with the tortures described by 15 Ugandans who had fled the country.

### DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL

Hundreds more are detained without charge or trial in civil custody under the Public Order and Security Act. They include a number adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

### POLITICAL KILLINGS

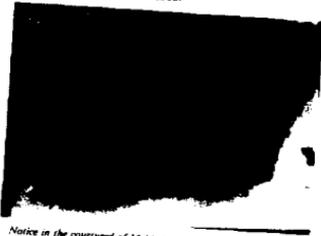
Amnesty International has received many reports of political killings of unarmed civilians by the army since 1981.

# UGANDA



*Six years after Amin ...*

- ... TORTURE
- ... KILLINGS
- ... DISAPPEARANCES



*Notice in the courtyard of Makindye military barracks - All but a few of those detained in Makindye and other military barracks are tortured.*

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JUNE 1985

... tch Obote in the hope of pre-empting an RA march on Kampala which could have triggered the humiliating collapse of the NLA and a repeat of 1979 when Amin's government army simply ran away or joined the tail of the incoming army from Tanzania.

Yoweri Museveni, defence minister in the short-lived democratic Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) government of 1979/80, started the war on February 6 1981 after a rigged election scrupulously organised by Paulo Muwanga returned Obote to power. Museveni, largely because of intra-left rivalry within the UNLF leadership, had made the mistake of joining the Military Commission led by Muwanga which overthrew the UNLF and paved the way for the election.

But he was out-manoeuvred by Muwanga and humiliated at the polls. Museveni went into the bush with 27 rifles and a handful of angry young men saying they were going to fight for democracy. Very little material or diplomatic support came from outside. The West was backing Obote and most African leaders were sympathetic to his brave return from exile and content to believe that 'Amin's legacy' or 'tribal problems' made some repression an ugly necessity.

The myth that tribal rivalries lay behind Obote's failure to reconcile the country after the overthrow of Amin is convenient for those who want business as usual restored in this rich and strategically placed country. A better explanation was recently advanced by Museveni: 'The single biggest factor (of the civil war) is the under-development of our productive forces... this has mainly come about as a result of the unequal and parasitic relationship that has existed between Africa

and foreign interests from the fifteenth century. While other people are exploring space the majority of the African people are going with bare feet, are under-fed, malnourished, victims of easily curable diseases, live in poor housing, have no clean water, have got the highest infant mortality rate etc... These are man-made problems which could be rectified if there was a competent authority to instigate the corrective process. The democratic revolution must tackle the problem of under-development if it is to have any meaning. To end under-development we must first and foremost end dependence in politics and the economy.'

Great pressures have been brought on Museveni by neighbouring countries to join the Muwanga/Okello government in the hope of a swift end to the civil war and to regional instability. The NRA made a big concession to this pressure by agreeing to meet UNLA leader Lt-General Bazilio Okello ahead of the junta appointing a cabinet. But the public record of the junta's lack of good faith during these early contacts has swung some African leaders' sympathy for NRA's principled populist stand. Whatever the immediate outcome of the NRA/UNLA contacts, the nationalist politics of the NRA is back on the Uganda agenda. And, as in neighbouring Sudan where a similar pre-emptive palace coup took place against Nimeiry in April under the pressure of Colonel John Garang's southern guerrilla army, it is only possible for the West to stem the rise of African nationalism against neo-colonialism for a limited period.

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