

Can Obote Handle The Ugandan Mess?

By Lawrence Muhammad

Ugandan President Milton Obote, who returned to the country after nearly ten years of exile to win an easy election victory December 10, 1980, still goes by the euphemism "strongman". But the country is in a mess, steeped in debt, corruption and violence, and the big question remains is Obote "strong" enough to handle it.

Field Marshall Idi Amin, who was chased out of Uganda in April of 1979 by Tanzanian troops and Obote loyalists, left the country in a shambles, and Obote returned to win the election handily.

He was supported by Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere and 10,000 of his soldiers, and Obote's Ugandan Peoples Congress had the backing of the ruling military council as well as the government daily, the *Uganda Times*. At least seventeen opposition candidates were disqualified before balloting through Obote-inspired finagling, and when his principal opponent, the Ugandan Democratic Party, claimed an early lead, announcement of election results was outlawed for the duration of the contest, subject to a \$7,000 fine.

But it will not be so easy to bring the troubled Ugandan infrastructure around. Amin, who now lives in Saudi Arabia, reportedly left only \$200,000 in foreign exchange in the country's central bank, and had generated some \$250 million in foreign debt. Violence is rampant, and both Tanzanian occupation forces and the small Ugandan army rob civilians for food and other items. The death rate from military clashes and random violence is about fifty per day in a country of thirteen million people. Red Cross trucks, which try to deliver aid items to impoverished areas, are attacked and hijacked, and many products including medical supplies are sold to the black market. Consequently the country's best medical institution, Mulango Hospital, now has some 2,000 patients sharing about 1500 beds. And there are rats and roaches, fleas, bedbugs and lice in the wards, which have not anesthetics, gowns, syringes, sterilizers, blood, or much of anything, and the doctors have mostly given up in desperation and left.

All this, of course, cannot be blamed on Amin. When he pulled his coup in January, 1971 while Obote was traveling in Singapore, the country was just beginning to feel the pinch because it existed heavily on the largess of former colonialists. Obote himself had estranged much of the population with this bulldozing administrative method of government.

In the 1950's, Obote's name was synonymous with the fervor of a continent rising to freedom after centuries of colonial slumber. Obote was a name spoken in the same breath with Kenyatta and Nkrumah, and he became prime minister in 1962 when Uganda gained independence from Britain. But he was heavy-handed, and during an internal power struggle in 1966, he stripped cabinet members of power, jailed them and assumed full executive authority. He tried to dismantle four of the country's twelve major tribes and exiled Baganda tribal king Edward Mutesa II, which estranged much of the population. Thus he primed the country for acceptance of Amin's rule, who was formerly the chief of the armed forces.

But Amin quickened the country's economic slide and virtually ran it into the ground. In 1971, for example, Uganda was the fifth largest exporter of coffee, but by 1980, the product was being smuggled out of the country at such a rate that foreign exchange on this commodity had dropped to about \$10 million a month. Amin seemed to be a maniac. He abruptly deported Jews, Asians and British subjects, who manned the commercial structure. And he jostled with the best of world leaders. He caused an international controversy, and got an appeal from the Pope when he threatened to boil an obscure British subject in oil. Amin would have whites bear him aloof, in the fashion of kings, and sent President Richard Nixon a bicentennial message wishing him a "speedy recovery from Watergate." And they say Amin left mass graves in Uganda with almost a million dead.

But Amin apparently knew of plans in Obote's exile home of Tanzania to mount a counter-coup or military offensive, and he kept a running verbal conflict with Nyerere. There were minor clashes through the years and finally in 1979, Tanzanian troops took over, chasing Amin out of Kampala, the Ugandan capitol.

The Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF), Obote soldiers who helped Tanzanians, took control and decided that rather than immediately enthrone Obote, there should be interim leadership. But the ruling coalition, made up of some 26 organizations, suffered deep ideological divisions, and eventually the country was run by a six-man junta.

But they were unable to get the nation under civilized control, which has dampened prospects for much international aid. About \$100 million has been promised, and the reason the figure is so miserly is that due to violence and corruption, much of it does not get to those most needy. There is no trust, and international aid groups feel that money will simply be sucked into the whirling hole of black market. In fact, fraud is so rampant in Uganda that a British bank examiner speculated that every European bank in the country had lost about \$2 million to fraud.

Maybe Obote can establish some order, and live up to his reputation for strong leadership. He said the country will remain nonaligned, and that he was not impressed enough with Tanzanian socialism to import it back to Uganda.

Happiness Through Health

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healthy people," he says. "Ten times the RDA is too high a dose."

So what are the specific hazards from vitamins? This is what the medical establishment thinks:

VITAMINS A and D. These are particularly dangerous because they build up in the body rather than washing out every day. Extremely large amounts may cause headaches, blurred vision, and damage to the nervous system. Amounts too small to cause noticeable harm, but still well in excess of the RDA, may interfere with such normal body processes as nerve transmission, body protein formation, hormone action, or blood circulation.

VITAMIN C. Also a water-soluble vitamin, the arguments that started over C (as a cure for colds) are still raging all over the world. The focus of the most research, vitamin C provokes the most controversy. Scientists even disagree over such basic facts as how much the body can use. Large doses of C may cause kidney stone formation, destruction of an essential B vitamin, hemorrhaging of ulcers, severe diarrhea, and gout. Yet the medical establishment now seems to think that C can ease the severity of a cold's symptoms, though not cure or prevent one.



NCCU Receives
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Robert S. Poole, III, right, North Carolina Central University's new Director of Development, smiled as he participated in his first "check passing" photograph in his new post. The new NCCU fund-raiser received the gift of

\$1,000 from Mechanic's and Farmers Bank, whose president, J. J. Sansom, center, made the presentation. Chancellor Albert N. Whiting looks on.

Rebuilding The Democratic Party

By Bayard Rustin

A. Philip Randolph Institute

The aftermath of the Presidential Inauguration, with its overt demonstration of upper class grandeur and hollow pageantry, suggests that the Reagan Administration will be one which places much emphasis on style at the expense of substance. And although the specifics of the Reagan program have not yet been spelled out, even the most casual observer is capable of sensing the orientation of Reagan's economic program. Moreover, the new administration's cabinet appointees on the domestic front are clearly uninspiring. They range from rabid conservative ideologues of the David Stockman stripe (with their preachments of economic disaster) to untested corporate figures such as Ray Donovan, who has been designated by Reagan to serve as Secretary of Labor.

In the face of a gloomy assortment of symbols, programs, and personalities, it seems entirely appropriate for those who are committed to the principles of social and economic justice to begin thinking about constructing a viable alternative to the conservatism of the Republican Party.

Perhaps more than anything else, the 1980 election

revealed that the Democratic Party lost a large portion of its traditional constituency largely because it failed to articulate a cohesive and inspiring vision of American Society. This lack of vision led to the inevitable factionalism which typified the Democratic Convention. The party's lack of vision was in large measure a consequence of President Carter's piecemeal approach to economic matters and to some extent it was also a product of his insistence that the country's problems were too substantial to be solved by the office of the Presidency. A lack of vision was implicit in Carter's assumption that there were great limitations on what government could do.

By contrast, the Republicans succeeded in conveying to the electorate that theirs was the "party of ideas," albeit wrong ones. The Republicans were also successful because they capitalized on serious Democratic blunders in foreign affairs and because they exploited widespread discontent with the state of the economy.

How then is the Democratic Party to rebuild? How is it to regain the initiative once again? Although many party activists are convinced that the answer rests in

revising party rules to encourage greater participation by professional politicians, I believe that such a necessary revision is far from the real answer. What is even more necessary is the party's careful reassessment of its principles, direction, and goals. Liberal Democrats, in particular, must demonstrate that they have a vision larger than one which merely seeks to preserve the status quo. With the Executive branch and the Senate in the hands of the Republicans, and with an effective conservative majority ascendant in the House of Representatives, the Democrats have the luxury of reassessing programs and approaches.

Vital issues remain on the agenda. A full employment program is without question both needed and potentially popular with the electorate, as is support for prudent increases in health and education expenditures. Democrats also need to develop an effective program to deal with inflation and at the very least should begin a discussion of the advisability of wage, price, and profit controls. Moreover, the party needs to shed its lackluster image in the area of social programs. The Democrats have been portrayed by their opponents as the party of government handouts. This perception, not only is unpopular and harmful to the electoral chances of the party, but it must be replaced with a strategy of combating poverty through jobs creation in the private sector and through a wide-ranging jobs-training and education package which would reach to all poor people, whether they are black, Hispanic or white.

In the area of foreign affairs, the Democratic Party must continually stress its commitment to the cause of freedom worldwide and to a strong American defense. But Democrats must also stress their differences with Reagan's foreign policy, particularly in their approach to the third world and in their consistent support for democracy and human rights.

All these issues must be placed on the agenda if the Democratic Party is to succeed in rebuilding. Of equal importance is that the development of a new program must be undertaken in concert with the traditional constituencies of the Democratic Party: with representatives of organized labor, the black community, Jews, and other ethnic groups. The foregoing of a consensus must occur with broad-based input. But the interests of each group must eventually be creatively molded into a cohesive vision of a more just America. The Republicans can only become the party of the majority, but only if the Democrats are not up to their task.

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