

# Uganda Looks Towards National Unity

[AN] Three years after dictator Idi Amin was driven from office, Uganda is still locked in a three-pronged war of survival. And the east African nation must win this war in order to rekindle the hopes that accompanied independence 20 years ago this week.

First, there is the war against anti-government guerrillas whom authorities in the capital of Kampala dismiss simply as "bandits", then there is the new "economic war", through which Obote is seeking to rehabilitate an economy shattered by Amin's eight years in power and now left at the mercy of world markets and overseas donors. And, finally, there is an urgent need to improve the government's image, following claims by Amnesty International that Uganda has evidenced a "pattern of severe violations of basic human rights."

The current crisis in largely the legacy of Amin's reign, which seriously eroded Uganda's economic base. The country lost most of its professional and skilled manpower. The balance of payments deteriorated as Amin increased imports of military equipment at the expense of the rest of the economy. And government revenues took a nosedive while expenditure skyrocketed.

Finally, in 1979, exiled groups formed the Uganda National Liberation Front, with the single objective of overthrowing Amin. With the help of Tanzania, whom Amin had provoked by an invasion, the UNLF forces ousted the hated "Field Marshal". But as soon as Amin was out, the differences among the various groups surfaced. Amid rising tensions, Yusufu Lule lost the presidency to Godfrey Binaisa, who later lost the leadership to Paulo Muwanga. In 1980,

internationally-supervised elections returned Obote to power.

Economic recovery was on the top of the new administration's agenda. One far-reaching economic program was outlined by President Obote to the National Assembly some three months ago. It includes measures to increase farm production, reduce smuggling and speculation, remove price controls, and reduce inflation by stimulating investment and industrial production.

Through discussions with overseas donors, the government has secured nearly half of the financing required for 140 projects. This financing is a shot in the arm for many of the industries which were operating in 1970 before Amin took power and which either closed down or had to reduce operations to as little as 20% of their capacity.

Special efforts will be made to revive coffee production, which in less-troubled times accounted for 97% of Uganda's total foreign exchange earnings.

One major economic move has been to invite the former Asian industrialists and managers back. These Asian would be among the 80,000 whom Amin expelled in 1972 after expropriating their property in his own "economic war".

Earlier this month, the Ugandan parliament passed a new law to return this property to its former owners. The law, however, poses the condition that the Asians remain in Uganda and run the businesses for at least five years, having won them back.

President Obote says he expects Ugandans now running the businesses to file rival claims for ownership. Obote told a press conference that present occupants may claim

ownership "on the simple basis that the particular building is not empty and that the premises are being utilized productively."

The Ministry of Finance will process all claims taking into account the interests of the present occupants, he said.

The law has been strongly criticized by the opposition Democratic Party and by some members of the business community who saw it as a move to de-Africanize the economy. Some observers in Kampala expect stiff competition for the affected businesses, while others say that few Asians will return to claim their property. A number of the businessmen who were expelled in 1972 are now too old to want to start afresh, they say, and most of the younger Asians have found employment in their new homelands.

**Security Problems**  
The effort to rehabilitate the economy has been greatly hampered by the activities of dissident guerrillas who have been operating in and around Kampala. In one well-publicized incident in February of this year, insurgents attacked a military barracks in the capital. The two organizations that claimed responsibility have as their declared goal the ouster of Obote.

There were reports that the guerrillas were armed by Libya through neighboring Rwanda, or through Kenya, via the Libyan embassy in Nairobi. Both the Rwanda government and the guerrillas have denied the claim.

Kenya, which has given refuge to many Ugandan exiles, has warned that it will not allow its land to be used by them to attack a neighboring country.

Following a government offensive recently, more than 100 guerrillas operating around Kampala surrendered to government forces. Most of the guerrillas claimed they were members of the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) under former interior minister Andrew Kyere.

Beside these "hit-and-run" guerrillas, there is a threat of invasion from neighboring Sudan or Zaire where some troops loyal to Amin still hide.

During the first four months of this year, the Ugandan army battled against a 10,000-strong force of Amin soldiers who controlled Koboko, the home town of the former dictator in the West Nile area. This district was the last stronghold of Amin's forces in the 1979 liberation war, but it was taken without a fight by Tanzanian-led forces in

June 1979 as Amin's soldiers fled to Sudan and Zaire.

When the Tanzanian troops left Uganda in 1981, Amin's soldiers invaded the area. Ugandan soldiers, bolstered by Tanzanian officers, retook the district later. When the Ugandan forces went on strike in June last year, Amin's forces returned to the area, only to be defeated again in May.

Obote's enemies have also been active abroad. Early this year former presidents Lule and Binaisa met with guerrilla leaders of the UFM in Europe to plan strategy for a comeback. And last month Binaisa revealed that he had plotted with a leading British mercenary recruiter, Raymond Ingram, to topple the Obote government.

Binaisa was to have paid \$4 million for the alleged invasion, which would have taken place earlier this month. The Ugandan failed to raise the money, however, and the plot fizzled.

Obote has not taken these threats lightly. Government forces have been let loose to rid Kampala of guerrillas, and the operation has spilled over to nearby areas, especially the Buganda district. In many cases, civilians have fled their homes rather than face the government forces, as soldiers have been accused of looting, raping and killing innocent people.

**Human Rights Record Questioned**

Obote's administration has dismissed soldiers for indiscipline on a number of occasions, but the measures taken so far have not placated those critics who charge the government with human rights violations. Amnesty International, for example, last month released a report alleging abuses including "extensive illegal and arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial executions of civilians, disappearances and deaths in detention, and harsh conditions of imprisonment."

Many civilians killed were suspected of being anti-government guerrillas or guerrilla supporters, Amnesty International said, but "unarmed men, women, and children living in areas of armed conflict have also died."

Responding to the charges, the government has published a list of 237 people being held without trial under a law authorizing indefinite detention for security reasons. More than 2,000 prisoners, mostly Amin's soldiers, have been freed during the past month. Another batch of 1,000 may be freed during Uganda's independence anniversary on October 9.

Despite the conces-

sions, however, the volatile security situation has taken its toll on conventional politics in Uganda, whose two-party parliamentary system is unique in east Africa.

**Opposition**  
Democratic Party leader Paul Ssemogerere recently claimed that more Ugandans were killed during the past year than during any single year of the Amin regime. He also accused Obote's Uganda People's Party (UPC) of provoking violence through the activities of the security

forces. Obote has responded by saying that anyone who thought Uganda was more lawless today than it was under Amin should see a psychiatrist. But the president agreed that the nation needed more effective training for the army.

Internal Affairs Minister John Luwuliza-Kirunda later accused the opposition party of "fomenting instability". He charged that the DP leadership supported acts of banditry.

According to Kampala radio, Ssemogerere has

since disavowed any connection between his party and the guerrillas. He also disowned a former personal assistant who was recently arrested on charges of banditry.

Any party member who joined a terrorist band, Ssemogerere warned, automatically lost his DP membership.

Obote supporters are heartened by the recent defection to the ruling party of six DP legislators, a development that boosts the president's majority in the National Assembly to a margin of 81 to 45.

But the government's campaign against guerrilla insurgents is far from over, and officials feel there can be little economic headway until the armed opposition has been quashed.

Meanwhile, both the threat from dissident groups and the indiscipline of the army complicate the government's efforts to attract the foreign capital that they believe Uganda needs so badly.

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WILKES-BARRE, PA.—George Banks the suspect in an early morning shooting spree, thirteen persons including seven children died in the spree. Banks is surrendering to police after barricading himself in a house near the shooting scene. UPI photo.



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