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Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies

Title

Front Matter

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Journal

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, 15(3)

ISSN

0041-5715

Author

n/a, n/a

Publication Date

1987

DOI

10.5070/F7153016971

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**UFAHAMU:
JOURNAL OF THE AFRICAN ACTIVIST ASSOCIATION**

**AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024-1310**

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EDITORIAL

MUSEVENI, THE NEW GENERATION OF AFRICAN LEADERS AND THE STATE IN UGANDA

As promised, this edition of *UFAHAMU* is a special issued dedicated to Uganda. Two reasons justify this issue: the tradition of *UFAHAMU* which allows the out-going Editor-in-Chief to publish a special issue that reflects his/her own academic or other special interest which is relevant to the mission of the journal as a farewell, so to speak. In my case, I had to choose between my area of specialization, U.S.-African relations, and my country, Uganda. I chose the latter. The second reason that actually compliments the foregoing, is the significance of the January 1986 "Museveni Revolution" in Uganda.

For the first time since Africa liberated itself from the shackles of colonialism, it has had in Yoweri Museveni's revolutionary vibrancy, a government that has ascended to state power via an outright victory by an indigenous guerilla movement in the name of his National Resistance Movement/Army. It is in this light that *UFAHAMU* regards the NRA victory as offering important lessons to Africa, for it has demonstrated to the African people what they can do to rid themselves of fascist neo-colonial regimes.

The NRA and its leader Museveni have therefore turned a new chapter in the political history not only of Uganda, but the entire continent of Africa. Museveni (forty-one), represents a new generation of African leaders - Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, and of course, Muammar Gadhafi of Libya - leaders who stand for the progress of , and genuine state independence of their countries and Africa as a whole amidst continued imperialist machinations. Before the Musevenis, the generation of African leaders, having emancipated the continent from colonialism, did not seem to

know what to do next. Instead, they started stealing people's wealth, quarreling among themselves as to how to distribute the loot, sowing seeds of nationality division, and stifling debate on how to "modernize" African states, turning to the very same imperialists they had castigated previously. They never took serious note of Kwame Nkrumah's wise counselling when he urged them to "seek yet first the political kingdom and everything else will be added onto ye."

Museveni's generation, the university students or officier cadets of the 1960s, were therefore confronted with two options: either to oppose the then leadership, or to acquire their degrees and simply shut up and quietly feast on the spoils of state or parastatal bureaucracy while the overwhelming majority of their compatriots lived in squalor on the verge of starvation, peril and death.

Museveni and other militants in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa chose the more challenging avenue and opposed the emergence of the so-called "national bourgeoisie" with compradorial links with imperialism. In other words, they opposed neo-colonialism in Uganda and Africa more generally.

The then ruling clique and state functionaries in Uganda regarded militants like Museveni as subversives. Indeed, in 1964, just two years after the country's independence, Museveni was fired from Premier Obote's Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) party, when UPC's youth league (in which Museveni was an active member) was banned for advancing "leftist tendencies".

This anti-people move was not a surprise, for it was in Uganda where the first genuine and coherent critique of neo-colonialism was made. The critique, not by an historian or political-scientist, but by a poet, the late Professor Okot p'Bitek, one of Africa's greatest poets to emerge after World War II, remains a solid 200-page epic poem called *Song of Lawino*.

Around the same time, in 1966, Museveni joined the University of Dar es Salaam where he played a progressive role as Chairman of the University Student African Revolutionary Front (USARF) a forum for the rigorous study of Marxism. In Dar es Salaam, he was greatly influenced by the peoples' historian, revolutionary and scholar, the late Professor Walter Rodney, author of the famous *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. As leader of USARF, Museveni led a group of six revolutionary students on a month-long tour of the liberated areas of Mozambique in September, 1968. It was this tour that left indelible impressions on Museveni of FRELIMO and its leadership, impressions he has recorded in his article, "Fanon's Theory of Violence: Its Verification in Liberated Mozambique", published in 1972, the year

Museveni became a guerilla leader and theorist. What particularly impressed him was the vital role played by the peasantry in the liberation of colonial Mozambique. He was particularly pleased with the warm, vicarious and symbiotic relationship existing between the peasants and FRELIMO guerrillas, what inspired him to sagaciously observe that "[a] revolutionary army never has contradictions with the people-especially the working class. Only bandits and bourgeois armies are ever at loggerheads with the masses".

During the five years, 1981-1986, when he led his own guerrillas, Museveni demonstrated that he had thoroughly mastered the lessons he had learnt from FRELIMO. Indeed, compared with the armies of previous regimes, the NRA was received with open arms by the people, at least in the south and west of the country where it was most active.

Now that the NRM Government has controlled state power for over a year, how can Museveni be judged? During the war, in the liberated zones of southern Uganda, Museveni was quick to discover that the people of Uganda were not yet ready for socialism, not even by slogans. He has therefore so far down-played socialism, again perhaps recalling Obote's failure to "move" Uganda "to the left" during the 1960s, and Obote's own disillusionment with socialism during his second rule in the first half of the 1980s. Indeed, Museveni has so far succeeded in avoiding experiments to move Uganda's economy toward a Marxist-Leninist direction. He has, instead, repeatedly stated that he is a revolutionary nationalist, and not a Marxist. However, even if he were to be a communist, Uganda is a land-locked, small and weak state surrounded especially in the east and west, by pro-imperialist regimes. These neighbors partially hold the key to Uganda's economic stability, for they could easily impose an economic blockade on Uganda and bring it to its knees, without them feeling the pinch, as their own economies remain under the control not to mention subsidization by their imperialist masters. Thus, until these reactionary neighboring regimes are liquidated via a popular revolution of the masses of those countries, and until the internal contradictions in Uganda are themselves eliminated, socialism in that country will remain a quagmire of elusion.

The Museveni Government seems to have a vital asset in that so far, it seems to continue enjoying the popular support of the majority of the people in the south of the country where most of the country's economic activity occurs. This would seem to suggest that even if the north continues to be plagued by military operations and anti-NRM guerrilla activities, economic recovery may not be adversely affected. However, this observation can be misleading, for no genuine economic

recovery can take place as long as any part of the country remains unstable. Indeed, no single inch of the country is less important, whatever problem that exists in one part of the country affects the entire Uganda directly or indirectly. The current state of affairs in the north may serve as a premonition, as was the situation in the south during Obote II. Indeed, the biggest test to President Museveni's statesmanship remains whether he will overcome the deep national suspicions and their attendant political divisions that were carefully nurtured for almost a century, first by British colonialism, and thereafter by the post-colonial regimes. In other words, can President Museveni make a positive difference especially where his predecessors failed? This critical question forms the central theme of the contributions in this edition of *UFAHAMU*. Most of the contributors are Ugandan scholars themselves, some of them with long experience both in government and academia, a rare combination of qualities that makes this special issue of *UFAHAMU* an authoritative source on contemporary Uganda. Among the Ugandan scholars is a leading Kenyan Ugandanist with a long history of connections with Makerere University and the various governments of Uganda. The other contributors are students from Uganda.

In the first article, Historian Nyeko provides a solid historical background to the political instability in post-Amin Uganda. He interpretes the events of the past seven years since Amin's exit in the light of Uganda's recent colonial history. Nyeko concludes that the issue of a national consensus on unity born of the colonial era is still very much alive in Uganda.

The contribution by Mamdani was originally presented as a public lecture at UCLA. Its title was for the convenience of the organizers of the lecture, the out-going Editor-in-Chief of *UFAHAMU* and the authorities of the UCLA African Studies Center. This title and the original text of the lecture have not been altered. In essence Mamdani covered the period from Amin's demise to the assumption of state power by the NRA in January 1986. Although Mamdani states that some of the ideas in his lecture were still rather "tentative", the lecture generated a lively participation by the audience which comprised the UCLA Africanist Faculty and Graduate Students. For this reason, we have decided to include the questions asked and Mamdani's replies.

Nabudere's observation is that Uganda has been in a continuous state of crisis for the last twenty years; that unlike most African states where the political environment settled down to a greater or less degree after independence, Uganda has experienced extended periods of violent internal strife. He argues that despite the widespread use

political repression, both Obote and Amin failed to bring Uganda long-term stability. For Museveni and his NRM Government to succeed, Nabudere recommends "*an open, principled and democratic dialogue*, preferably in the form of a Round Table Conference where...major issues can be discussed instead of letting the situation drift towards a new wave of instability and possibly another civil war".

Tandon contends that both Obote and Museveni are the most important characters of contemporary Uganda. He discusses elements of continuity and change between the two Heads of State and recommends that there are some lessons Museveni's NRM Government could learn from Obote's past mistakes. Despite this recommendation, Tandon concludes that "[w]hat Museveni seems to be doing is...to liquidate all opposition...to assure imperialism that he can guarantee security in the country...In that sense, Museveni is not doing anything different from Obote."

In his article *The Rise and Fall of the Philosopher King in East Africa...*, Mazrui observes that no country in Africa has had a wider range of leaders than Uganda. Mazrui focuses his article particularly on the intellectual theme in East Africa's history, emphasizing the rise and fall of *documentary radicalism* in that history. He correctly concludes that, of all the three East African Heads of State currently wielding state power, Museveni is the most intellectual, and is therefore perhaps the hope for a Philosopher-King in East Africa.

Corruption in Uganda is the title of Nsibambi's article. Nsibambi discusses the relativity of the concept of corruption, forms of corruption, causes of corruption and possible solutions to it in Uganda. He concludes that "[p]rivatization of the state, local governments and parastatal bodies has been the chief form of corruption through which public funds have either been wasted or looted." Nsibambi therefore calls for the creation of nationalists who will jealously guard Uganda's wealth against what he calls "domestic and international vultures".

Kannyo's article highlights the significance of violence as a reflection of cleavages and conflict in any society. In Uganda's case, he argues that heightened violence has been a key aspect of that country's politics since 1971. Kannyo recommends that one way to approach the study of violence in Uganda should be through a comparative analysis, employing methodological and empirical evidence. In this regard, Kannyo contends that the understanding of other sources of violence-economic, social, historical, cultural, etc., - is paramount.

Oloka-Onyango's paper examines the critical role and performance of the Uganda Development Bank. Although Joe's paper is rooted in the law, it is simulataneously grounded in the concrete

socio-economic and political conditions of Uganda. He contends that the UDB has aided and abetted the further penetration of international capital into Uganda; that the bank has therefore operated in the interests of imperialism. To alleviate this problem, Joe recommends a necessarily revolutionary break with the forces of neo-colonialism which the bank and the entire country are entrenched.

Greg's, Ssali's and Chacha's contributions are more theoretical, opinion essays than in-depth research papers. Nevertheless they reinforce the lead articles.

The rest of the contributions are a review article, book review, a poem, an analysis of E. N. Zirimu's plays and a tribute to the late President Samora Machel of Mozambique. The reviews and the poem supplement the articles and commentaries.

Given the connection of the present Ugandan leadership with FRELIMO as described above, it is a bitter but sweet sorrow that a tribute to comrade Machel is being carried in this special issue of UFAHAMU dedicated to Uganda. President Machel died in a plane crash on his way back to Mozambique after attending a meeting of the Front Line Heads of State in Lusaka, Zambia, in the wake of heightened South African aggression in southern Africa. Machel's contribution to the "Ugandan revolution" and to the African revolution in general, will always be remembered and honored by all those concerned with socialist transformation in Africa.

In reference to the state crisis in Uganda, bourgeois scholars have erroneously asserted that it is due to "ethnic conflict" in the country. However, contrary to this reactionary view, there remain two broad sources of state crisis in Uganda: external (imperialism) and internal (intense class struggles) but more so, an intertwining of the two. It is these two forces of negation that use the concept of ethnicity for their own selfish interests. Imperialism and its resident allies, the ruling classes in Uganda, have historically orchestrated nationality cleavages as part of their *divide et impera* policies in which they, rather than the masses, have been the beneficiaries. Because of these anti-people policies, for the last twenty-five years there has been an institutional malaise in Uganda. The shortcomings in economic and social performance during the last two and a half decades are symptomatic of an institutional crisis facing not only Uganda, but the entire continent of Africa. This problem has been compounded by the dominant role played by the state in "development", the weakness of other institutions and the stratification of the Ugandan society.

This state-centered approach in Uganda as in other African countries, is clearly a colonial legacy. Created arbitrarily by the British

colonial regime to cater for its own interests, the so-called modern state in Uganda was established with virtually no regard for the nationality, linguistic, economic, or geographic features of the peoples deemed by colonial providence to become nationals of the new country as perceived and created through the lenses of colonial geo-political *force majeure*. Nor was it created with a view of encouraging political participation and accountability. Similarly, "development" during the colonial era was predominantly controlled by a class of colonial civil servants. For reasons of political control, the colonial regime was reluctant to foster the creation of associations beyond the immediate tutelage of the state.

It is in the foregoing regard that the NRM, like its predecessors, inherited what essentially remains a neo-colonial state. Unless this state is structurally transformed to reflect the dominant political-economy bottle-necks in Uganda, revolutionary democracy, genuine stability and economic development will not be possible. At any rate, what is development; who sets the agenda? The crisis of the state in Uganda dictates that a transformation of both the objective and subjective historical conditions prevalent in the neo-colonial state become more imperative. This is for the important reason that these conditions remain the dominant agencies that allow individuals and/or groups to monopolize Uganda's resources under the patronage of the gun. In such a situation, control of the state by one major group of armed politicians and/or soldiers can only remain temporary. As long as this equation is not politically resolved through a round-table conference of all contending parties to the state crisis, the scenario confronting the NRM Government will remain highly volatile.

With this issue, I end my service to *UFAHAMU*, service I commenced in Fall 1983 when I joined its editorial board as a member. This issue also ends my service as Editor-in-Chief of the journal, as I return to Makerere University to resume my teaching duties. While the task of editing a radical journal like *UFAHAMU* is always trying and at times combative, I have learnt a shoalful of skills. These skills have in turn helped me in completing my doctoral program well within the time limit, and will no doubt enable me to edit other journals in future, in Uganda and elsewhere in the world.

Our dear readers and supporters will realize that with effect from this issue we have transformed the format of *UFAHAMU* from its previous appearance (typed, photo-offset) to typeset publication. I am delighted to report that the current editors feel honored to be the brains behind and pioneers of this professional transformation of the journal. Because this process has just begun, I wish the next Editor-in-Chief and editorial board great success, so that they can fly beyond the present

heights that we have achieved. For humanly achievement, the sky is the limit. My charge to you is that *UFAHAMU* must continue to grow like the old sage.

A unique and progressive journal like *UFAHAMU* cannot fail to acknowledge the assistance rendered to it while we were in office. For the financial, moral and material assistance I wish to, on behalf of the editorial board, thank the UCLA African Studies Center, the GSA and our dear subscribers and supporters throughout the world. Special thanks again to the Center for acquiring the Apple Macintosh Plus computer that has enabled us to partly accomplish the task of professionalizing *UFAHAMU*. Bye now. Stay strong in the struggle.

P. Godfrey Okoth
Editor-in-Chief.

A TRIBUTE TO PRESIDENT SAMORA MACHEL

*Today
Our Revolution
Is a great flower
To which each day
New Petals are added*

*--Mozambique
Revolution*

And Machel is dead! The butchers have done it again, only this time it is harder than ever. Instead of hitting at the body, it is the head that sustains the blow. As usual, head injuries are hard to measure, but let us remember this has been the case for many years. Lest we forget history, we must remind ourselves of what became of Machel's predecessor, the late Dr. Eduardo Mondlane assassinated in cold blood in Dar es Salaam. The Portugese colonialists thought they had diffused a time bomb, but what did they get instead? A Machel!! A guerrilla song by Sergio Vierira clearly states:

*We were born in the blood of those who died
because the blood
is earth where freedom grows.*

The colonialists, without knowing it, helped FRELIMO sloughen to a new form: the struggle not only continued, but actually intensified. The death of Mondlane was only a catalyst to an already simmering struggle. And this was when Zimbabwe was not independent and Mozambique was flanked by hostile regimes. Yet the struggle did not get attenuated as a result of Mondlane's death.

Time has changed since then. Mozambique is now a free country. Cecil Rhode's "colony" is now called Zimbabwe. One can bet

that Machel's death will add greater momentum to the struggle. His martyrdom will be fitting if it does help his people to unite more in the struggle to liquidate RENAMO bandits. His death will be glorious if Africa comes to grips with reality that unity is badly needed at this juncture of the Continent's history. Machel's death will then teach imperialism that it is futile to try to stifle peoples' legitimate aspirations and yearnings. You can't cover the sun with your palm, however big it is. A milipede does not die at the plucking of one of its legs. In short, the struggle does not stop as a result of Machel's death. Yes, he was father-figure to the Mozambican revolution and struggle, but he was one among many who took up arms to liberate their country.

And this is where African sense of heroism differs from European concept of a hero. A hero does not spring from nowhere, his roots have to be with the people. He is formed, nourished and molded by ideals, beliefs which are common to all his comrades in the struggle. With his death, all those shared ideals are not thrown overboard. The ideals have existed long before any hero and are sure to continue. And if they helped mold a Machel, there is no reason for us to believe that another hero is not about to assume responsibility.

Surely, the candle lit by FRELIMO and Machel is not going to be snuffed out -- the revolutionary masses of Mozambique will not allow that to happen. And we at *UFAHAMU*, the literary organ of the African Activist Association, are confident that, whatever happens in the interim, victory is certain for the toiling masses of Mozambique. We have identified ourselves with the bold strides of comrade Machel and the struggle for a better life in Mozambique. We promise to continue support, however limited, for the revolutionary struggle in Mozambique. He who has contributed to the improvement of the lives of his fellow countrymen has not died in vain. Our memories of Machel will never be obliterated from our minds, for now that he's gone in body, his spirit is not. That spirit is what will rekindle the yearnings of the Mozambique people to establish the basis for a free and just society. As Soren Kierkegaard said before "The tyrant dies and his rule ends; the martyr dies and his rule begins". Machel's apparition will no doubt continue to haunt imperialism.

ALUTA CONTINUA!

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