

APPENDIX I

MINISTRY	MINISTER	TRIBAL OR ETHNIC GROUP
President	D. Moi	Kalenjin
Vice-President and Home Affairs	M. Kibaki	Kikuyu
Agriculture	Dr. M. Waiyaki	Kikuyu
Attorney-General	J. Kamere	Kikuyu
Basic Education	J. arap Ngeno	Kalenjin
Commerce	J. Okwanyo	Luo
Constitution Affairs	C. Njonjo	Kikuyu
Culture and Social Services	M. Mudavadi	Luhya
Co-operative Development	R. Matano	Digo
Econ. Planning and Development	Dr. Z. Onyonk.	Kisii
Energy	K. M'Mbijewe	Kalenjin
Finance	A. Magugu	Kikuyu
Foreign Affairs	Dr. R. Ouko	Luo
Health	M. Mango	Luhya
Higher Education	J. Komotho	Kikuyu
Industry		
Information and Broadcasting	E. Mwamunga	Taita
Labour		
Lands, Settlement and Physical Planning	G.G. Kariuki	Kikuyu
Livestock Development	Paul Ngei	Kamba
Regional Development, Science and Technology	N. Biwott	Kalenjin
Tourism and Wildlife	E. Mwangale	Luhya
Transport and Communications	H. Kosgey	Kalenjin
Water Development	J. Nyangah	Embu
Works and Housing	Mr. C. Rubia	Kikuyu
State	J. Gichuru	Kikuyu
State	J. Gichuru	Kikuyu
Natural Resources and Environment	P. Aloo Aringo	Luo

Source: *The Standard*, February 26, 1982, pp.1—2.

SOVIET PROP TO IDI AMIN'S REGIME: AN ASSESSMENT

James Mulira*

INTRODUCTION

While external factors contributed, to a certain extent, to the coup of 1971, its inherent causes lay in the existing contradictions in the complex Ugandan society, which for generations had been beset by ethnic, religious, and class differences. In an attempt to eliminate such divisive elements, by forming a national egalitarian society in Uganda which had not been achieved during the colonial era, Obote antagonised and alienated several groups that preferred to retain the *status quo*. By 1966, Obote resorted to forceful measures to achieve national unity, but these methods were interpreted by his antagonists as machiavellian, to say the least. Amin, by design and sometimes by chance utilised the anti-Obote groups to oust Obote and to win the political support that was crucial for the consolidation of his power, at least for the first years of his regime.¹

The domestic and foreign policies of Idi Amin cannot be fully understood without a discussion of his background and personality. Much has already been written about his regime from various aspects. This essay intends to focus on his relations with the Soviet bloc which, in the author's opinion, played a major role in sustaining his unpopular regime in power. Soviet economic and, particularly, military aid helped Amin to terrorise and destroy his internal and external "enemies", both real and imaginary. It propped up his confidence so that he dared to antagonise his neighbours, Kenya and Tanzania in particular, and to lash his critics at will. In short, support gave him the confidence that enabled him to ignore the international isolation of his regime, and save it from a much earlier collapse. Other factors which also sustained his regime included religious and ethnic cleavages as well as political ineptitude and class antagonism in the Ugandan society.

AMIN'S EARLY LIFE

Amin's origin is somewhat obscure. While he claimed to be a Kakwa from Northern Uganda born around 1926, other sources reveal that he is a Nubian from southern Sudan born in 1925. The Kakwa, who are found in northern Uganda, West Zaire and southern Sudan are closely related to the Bari of southern Sudan.² He is a descendant of a Nubian community created by the isolation of Equatoria region of the Egyptian Sudan which emanated from the uprising of the followers of Ah Mad al Mahdi (1882—1885) in the Sudan. Emir Pasha's troops, who fought the rebels, included the Nubians who

*Lecturer in Soviet and European History, University of Ife, Nigeria

adopted Islamic faith. Because of their military background, Lugard found them suitable for recruitment in 1892, in order to assist him in subordinating the rebellious regions of Uganda during the colonisation process.³ Most of them stayed on after these rebellious regions had been crushed but they kept their distinct identity, e.g. in language, religion, tribal marks and living areas. Their education was relatively modest and, therefore, the majority became petty traders, butchers and soldiers of lower ranks. The allegation is that Amin claimed to be a Kakwa from Uganda to cover his Nubian identity which might have led to his rejection by many Ugandans.⁴

Such was Amin's background, which greatly influenced his behaviour and policies as a soldier and as the president of Uganda. For example, except for a short period after the takeover, he relied almost entirely on his kinsmen — some moslem groups, the Nubians, the Kakwa and the less educated, who made up the bulk of his top aides in the army, government, police, secret police and in the civil service. His assistants enjoyed various privileges and favours to the detriment of enlightened and qualified Ugandans. His reliance on such groups had an adverse effect on the overall development of the country. He was a typical upstart:

Amin jumped from a peasant background in a sophisticated world of modern politics without any intermediate feudal preparation.⁵ He had, however, a special appeal to his kith and kin: "Amin the Kakwa, the uneducated, has an immediate appeal to his fellow Kakwa who were not as sophisticated as the Bantu of the South".⁶

Amin's marginal education or his reliance on his kinsmen and uneducated were not, however, the major concern of most Ugandans, but rather his use of such groups to liquidate the talented and to retard development of the country. Amin, who had supported the cause of Anyanya during the civil war in Sudan against the Arab North, deployed them in the Ugandan army after the war was over. They sustained his power by any means in return for lucrative rewards, such as businesses formerly owned by the expelled Asians, important posts in the Government and the army, etc. Because of this they enjoyed a standard of living well out of proportion with their ability and skills. Most of the loot they acquired in Uganda they transferred across the border into Sudan where they had a permanent home. It was, therefore, not surprising that, when Amin was toppled, the former Anyanyas and most Ugandans of Sudanese origin fled to Southern Sudan, their original homeland, but only after Amin had fully exploited their support in keeping him in power.⁷

OBOTE'S ATTEMPTS TO DEAL WITH EXISTING CONTRADICTIONS IN UGANDA: A PRELUDE TO THE COUP

Several of the problems which Obote's regime attempted to solve could be viewed as the historical causes of the coup. Tribalism, a scourge in most African societies, was especially prominent in Uganda. Some areas, such as the kingdom of Buganda, were guaranteed special privileges such as federal status, under the 1962 Constitution. To the dismay of most non-kingdom areas, the federal status of Buganda made it difficult to achieve a united Uganda. Although Obote formed an alliance with Kabaka Yekka's

monarchist party, for political expediency, he remained deeply committed to achieving a unitary republican state in Uganda. He therefore decided to eliminate the feudalists and the petty bourgeoisie both in and outside Buganda. For example, he arrested five rightist cabinet ministers, who were opposed to his policies, and supported a parliamentary inquiry into the top political and military circles for alleged corruption. He ordered the army, under the command of Idi Amin, to invade the Kabaka's Palace, on the allegation that an armed rebellion, by Buganda against the central government, was being planned. He followed this by deposing the Kabaka as the President of Uganda and took up the post himself; he abolished all monarchs and abrogated the 1962 constitution and replaced it with a republican one in 1967.⁸

These measures were opposed by Obote's opponents and they had a drastic impact on his future political activities. The petty bourgeoisie, the kulaks, and the monarchists interpreted his actions as high-handed and unconstitutional. The Bantu-speaking people of the south, who were most affected by these changes, interpreted Obote's actions in ethnic terms and viewed them as a northern, Nilotic conspiracy to dominate the Bantu of southern Uganda. The irony was, therefore, that this revolutionary constitution of 1967, which was intended to unite the country, created more suspicions and further divided the country between pro- and anti-Obote groups, especially in the southern part of the country. Even though these changes affected Buganda most, they were also directed against monarchists, separatists and minority elitist groups elsewhere throughout the country.⁹

The banning of all opposition parties and the declaration of a one-party state under the aegis of UPC further exacerbated the petty bourgeoisie, the neo-traditionist supporters of the proscribed parties, namely the Democratic and the Kabaka Yekka parties, who interpreted Obote's new moves as further proof of his determination to impose his ruling party on the nation.

The "Move to the Left" and the Common Man's Charter were programmes that were intended to popularise the UPC socialist policies, which, among other things, proposed the nationalisation of the major industries by 60%¹⁰, National Service, etc. The authors of these programmes hoped that these socialist programmes would win them more support, particularly from the workers and peasants, and reduce the power and influence of the petty bourgeoisie and the monarchists who were the main opponents of the UPC.

These new measures, however, gained less support than was expected; for example, the youths resented National Service, which involved posting them to the remote areas at meager salaries; The petty bourgeoisie, particularly the business community and the multinational corporations, viewed with disfavour any attempt by the UPC to "interfere" with a free enterprise economic system under the socialisation policy. In short, the socialist policies of Obote brought him more enemies.

In view of the growing opposition from the various groups in the country, the government became increasingly reliant on the law enforcement agencies, police, army, etc, in order to assert its legitimacy and control; but this was dangerous to the ruling elite because the army became increasingly conscious that it was indispensable for ruling the State.

Amin, then Army Commander, and his supporters within the army, began to take decisions and actions unfavourable to the government; for example: he made unauthorised trips abroad. The attempted assassination of the President, and the murder of Brigadier Okoya, the likely successor to Amin as Army Commander, led the government to purge the army of the anti-government elements. But this move came rather too late because the Amin clique had acquired enough power and influence within the armed forces, and also some support from the petty bourgeoisie and the monarchists, for the army to consider taking power from the embattled civilian regime.

Several theories are advanced for the immediate cause of the 1971 coup. First, it is suggested that Obote's government was toppled because it was at that time very corrupt and mismanaged.¹¹ But the available evidence to date does not show that corruption and mismanagement had become so rampant as to warrant a coup. If anything, by the time of the coup, Obote had done much to arrest corruption, particularly in the civil service and business community.

Second, it is claimed that the alliance between Obote and the military formed in 1966, that enabled him to abrogate the 1962 constitution, had become sour by 1971, when he found a new alliance in the socialist intelligentsia which was to facilitate his socialist policies. The soldiers realised, as mentioned earlier, that they had become indispensable but were likely to lose their privileged position in Uganda. So the logical and practical course of action for them, therefore, was to remove Obote, who had broken the "contract". Mazrui confirms the collapse of the alliance thus:

The old alliance between guns and brain, with the brain in control, had now been shattered....¹²

By 1970, Obote's new allies were the educated political colleagues who propagated a socialist course of development which, in fact, intended to reduce the material privileges of several groups in Uganda, and the army was to be no exception. From then on, the army seemed to be no longer a partner in government but rather a servant of it. When Obote became aware of a split in the army, he made several appointments and promotions without prior consultation with the military commanders. This further confirmed to the army commanders, particularly to Amin's clique, its declining importance to Obote. The Amin group's fears were compounded by the alleged presence of Obote's "private army", charged with the duty of protecting the President. This army, which grew out of the General Service Unit intelligence agency, headed by Obote's cousin, was highly trained by Israel and USSR, and it was alleged that this army was better equipped than the national army.¹³ Some army commanders felt that Obote trusted and favoured the private army more than the national army and it was therefore regarded as a threat to the survival of the regular army.

Third, the immediate cause of the coup lay in Obote's socialist policies which, as mentioned earlier, aroused resentment among the capitalist-oriented group in Uganda which therefore plotted his overthrow.¹⁴ So far, however, there is no hard evidence to prove that this group colluded with the army in the eventual overthrow of Obote.

The coup plotters, however, are likely to have counted on their support. They were certainly jubilant at the final outcome of the coup, and gave it initial support. It is alleged that the bureaucrats, the monarchists, etc, who were to lose personal privileges under a socialist system, lent a hand to Amin's coup.¹⁵ This suggestion also lacks concrete

evidence. The resentment of these groups was evident, but it seems that the execution of the coup was entirely an army affair.

Fourth, although there was no particular political and economic crisis to warrant a coup and, in fact, Obote by 1971 had improved his political position, all the same, the conditions for the coup existed, and once it had started it was difficult to stop.¹⁶ Indeed, by 1971 there was evidence of latent opposition against Obote's policies from the opposition parties, the Baganda and the anti-socialists, to mention a few. The environment seems to have been ripe for the coup. The petty bourgeoisie, the neo-traditionalists who lost special privileges under the new constitution, instilled more confidence in the army to take over power in 1971.

It seems that the most important immediate cause of the coup lay in the rift between Amin and Obote which had begun in 1970. Obote had ordered a probe into Amin's alleged misuse of army funds, and there was suspicion that he used them to arm his kith and kin — Anyanya in South Sudan and the Nubians and the Kakwa in Uganda. He had also been implicated in the murder of his second-in-command, Brigadier Okoya, and Obote had demanded that Amin answer these charges upon Obote's return from the Commonwealth meeting in Singapore.¹⁷ At this point, Amin's natural course of action was to topple Obote from the government.

But, above all, the most likely cause of the Uganda coup, which scholars have ignored, is the personal political ambition of Amin for the highest office in the land. Amin, after all, was aware of several military officers in Africa who had become head of state through the barrel of the gun. There were also other encouraging factors. He had the support of the lower ranks of the army and was aware of the unpopularity of Obote among some groups in Uganda; and, above all, the absence of Obote from the country in January 1971 made it even more encouraging to take over power.

Amin exploited Obote's political misfortunes to win support from various groups in the country which had been opposed to the former regime; for example, the petty bourgeoisie, the neo-traditionalists; the non-Langi and Acholi in the army, the western powers, etc. Support from such groups enabled him to consolidate his power for the initial period of his regime. The celebrations in the southern part of the country and the general euphoria among the anti-Obote groups went a long way in assisting Amin to take control.

Amin, who had generally been regarded as a purely military man, ill-educated and politically naive, surprised many when he started to use political rhetoric and to apply policies and actions that appeared to be politically astute and popular to Obote's enemies. For example, the declaration by his army spokesman outlined 14 points which motivated the army coup, among which were: arbitrary arrests, continued state of emergency in Buganda, detentions, Obote's socialist policies, Obote's tribal favouritism, etc.¹⁸ The new regime promised to abolish such policies and thus won support from several groups. Furthermore, he promised that the army would soon hand over power to the civilians and the fact that most members of his first cabinet were initially civilians gave more hope for a quick return to the civilian rule. He reconciled the Baganda when he gave a state burial to their late Kabaka; this gave hope to some for the restoration of monarchs. He pacified the west when he visited Israel and a number of

western countries. He denationalised the industries and thus won support of Ugandans who believed in private enterprise and instilled new confidence among external investors. He released all political prisoners and nullified the state of emergency in Buganda. He promised to abolish the detested "Common Man's Charter", and to disband the notorious General Service Unit. He even extended a hand of friendship to Obote's proteges who were in exile and promised that no reprisal would be taken against them if they returned home. All these actions made Amin appear a well-intentioned statesman and thus won him, initially, enormous support from within Uganda and from a few countries abroad. But all these good gestures were, in a few months, to be abrogated one-by-one in favour of others in Amin's personal interests.

Despite Amin's apparent good political policies, as outlined above, all-in-all he lacked an identifiable ideological base to guide him. He was committed neither to the west nor to the Soviet bloc ideologies, and even his non-aligned policy lacked consistency. But after he fell out with the west he became more radical, at least in political rhetoric, and by the time he was overthrown he had become more identified with the Soviet camp and the Arab world. This radicalism won him praise and support from the Arabs, the Soviets and African liberationists, for he was one of the most fiery critics of western imperialism.

RESPONSE TO THE COUP

Internally, as already indicated, the coup was welcome in Uganda, particularly in the south of the country, which was under the impression that there was a northern conspiracy, led by Obote, to dominate the more "developed" south. Some Baganda were particularly jubilant about the coup because they had never forgiven Obote for his 1966 actions against them and their king who was forced into exile where he died. The former members of the banned opposition parties — the Democratic Party (DP) and Kabaka Yakka (KY) were naturally pleased with the turn of event. The anti-socialist groups also had cause to be happy about the overthrow of the socialist architect. The ideological and ethnic enemies of Obote saw his departure as a final demise of socialism and Langi dominance and the restoration of the *status quo*. The most important and steady support to the coup came from the lumpen militariat,¹⁹ who from beginning to end were the faithful supporters of Amin. They provided him with a viable power base and he in turn, generously rewarded them.

Externally, the coup was applauded by the Israelis, who were then training the Uganda army; they are suspected of having helped Amin to obtain power. They were against Obote, because he had begun to identify with the Arab interests to the extent that he supported the UN resolution that Israel evacuate the occupied Arab lands. They also disliked Obote's close association with Moscow, which was then aiding the Arabs and Palestinians against Israel. And they had a common interest with Amin in southern Sudan where both, though for different reasons, supported the Anyanyas against the northern Sudanese. It appears that the Israelis hoped to exploit Amin's limited education, lack of political experience, his differences with Obote and the warm relationship they had with him. They planned to use him to further their interests in Africa

against those of the Arabs and also hoped that if they gained a foothold in Uganda, the source of the river Nile on which several Arabs depended, they could use its strategic importance as a bargaining piece against the Arabs.

The British government particularly, among the western countries, was relieved by the overthrow of Obote, who it had found to be too critical of its policies in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa. Obote had even threatened that continued British arms sales to South Africa would be an open invitation to the USSR and China to replace western interests in Africa. The British resentment of Obote is demonstrated by the allegation that Heath, the then British Premier, deliberately instructed the British intelligence agents not to tell Obote of the impending coup, which he had learnt about in advance.²⁰ Several western countries followed the British lead in recognising Amin's regime.

The Soviet Union naturally reacted negatively to a regime that removed a socialist oriented nationalist and a constant critic of its enemies in the west. Hence, on January 31, Tass quoted Pravda and condemned the coup in a radio commentary, thus:

Few people had any doubts that the coup was directed against the government of Obote which had proclaimed the charter of the common man, had consolidated the country by liquidating the kingdoms, had expanded state control of industries and nationalization of big foreign concerns, and had taken firm anti-imperialist and anti-racist stands. It was no wonder that the British bourgeois press had shouted with joy over the coup - the coup had been carried out to pursue a policy beneficial to the British imperialism and it threatened neighbouring countries such as Zambia and Tanzania which were maintaining independent and progressive policies.²¹

To the Soviets, the coup was purely western-engineered and intended to destroy the anti-imperialist force in east and central Africa, led by Obote, Nyerere and Kaunda who had formed the anti-imperialist front called *Mulungusi Club*. But by March 1971, the Soviet position had softened somewhat after realising that Amin's coup had come to stay²² and fearing that, if it persisted in criticising Amin, it would lose its influence in Uganda.

As for the African socialists, the overthrow of Obote was nothing less than a plot by the imperialists and their agents to frustrate the forces of progress and they therefore strongly condemned the coup. For example the vice-Secretary General of the Zambian students' union called it "the work of the west and petit bourgeoisie Africans in Uganda"²³ The Nationalist, the mouth piece of TANU, called it "treacherous and the work of soldiers under instructions from their imperial masters"; it went on to say that those who betray Africa should realise that millions of workers and peasants would not suffer for long from a neo-colonialist regime and the progressive African countries not far away from Uganda would be able to mount a force to quell this shameful rebellion.²⁴ (Note that this prediction was fulfilled by Tanzania in April, 1979). Sekou Toure called it "an action by elements in the service of imperialists"²⁵ and Siad Barre said that it was not in the interests of the Ugandan people. He, however, soon changed his position and became one of the staunchest supporters of Amin, more so when the latter identified with the cause of the Palestinians against the Israelis.

General Idi Amin who overthrew Milton Obote in 1971 started off his rule in opposition to the Soviet Union and to socialism in general. He denounced Obote's socialist programme and accused him of alienating the west in favour of the communists.²⁶ He also accused the Soviet Union of supplying arms to the deposed ruler and alleged that the Chinese, in collusion with Tanzania, were intent on deposing him.²⁷ He showed great interest in Israel and the western countries. And, in the first few months of his regime, he visited Israel, Britain and West Germany with a view to strengthening Uganda's friendship with these countries.

When he did not receive what he expected from the west and Israel - essentially: sophisticated arms - he turned first to the Arab world, and later to the communist bloc, for such assistance. Why did Soviet leaders give Amin assistance when they knew that he was neither a socialist nor a progressive bourgeois? And why did they continue to aid him and his regime when almost all the international community had denounced his policies in Uganda? The answers are found in three factors. First, the Soviet bloc had been committed under Obote's regime to strengthening its position in Uganda, in order to challenge western and Chinese interests and influence in East Africa and so the change of personalities in Uganda leadership did not necessitate a shift in Soviet policy towards the country. Secondly, Amin's break with Israel and his continued criticism of the western countries, despite his erratic policies, led the Kremlin to believe that Amin was their friend because he was the enemy of their enemies. Finally, the Soviets perceived the economic, political and strategic vacuum that was being created by the withdrawal of western interests in Uganda and seized the opportunity to fill it. It is not surprising, therefore, that relations between Uganda and the Kremlin became warmer as Uganda became more and more isolated by the West. Hence, in the last years of Amin's regime, the Soviet bloc became one of the major trading partners with Uganda and certainly its leading arms supplier. The co-operation between the two which began in April 1971 was warm and strong except for a temporary break over the Angolan issue in 1975²⁸ But even this was soon amended.

It should be noted that, even under Amin's regime except in the last four years, Uganda's major trading partners were the western countries: the US, the UK and the EEC countries, in particular West Germany.²⁹ This trend was changed in favour of Arab countries, the Soviet bloc and China, when the western countries put a trade embargo on Uganda, in protest against Amin's policies and his failure to compensate the Asians and other foreign nationals for the businesses the confiscated from them. This coincided with the deterioration of the economy when, for example, by 1975 the cost of living in the capital, Kampala, rose by 67.2% from the pre-Amin period, and when agricultural production fell by 50% as in the case of cotton. These problems were attributed to low morale among the producing forces in the country and failure of the government to provide agricultural implements and seeds.³⁰ Much of the country's resources were utilised to buy Soviet-made arms.

Amin blamed the economic difficulties of Uganda on western sabotage and from then on intensified Ugandan economic ties with the Arabs and the socialist world which

he used as an alternative to the western markets.³¹ The figures for trade between Uganda and the Soviet bloc for the years under study have been difficult to obtain, but, by 1976, the Soviet Union was buying Ugandan coffee to the tune of \$ 6.2 million a year. Copper, tea and many other commodities were also purchased by the Kremlin. Uganda imported from the Soviet bloc many and medicine, among many other consumer goods. Even in the absence of figures, it is fair to assume that the Soviet bloc, from 1971 played an increasing role in Ugandan foreign trade, particularly after the western countries put a trade embargo on Uganda, 1977/78. The Kremlin, however, retracted its support to Amin after his overthrow in April 1979 and its press accused him, among other things, of draining both human and material resources in Uganda.³² It ought to have been obvious to Soviet donors that Uganda's economy was greatly hampered through continued purchase by the Uganda government of expensive soviet weapons which were of no apparent economic advantage to the country.

The Soviet assistance programme to Uganda was highly appreciated by Amin's government, more so after the western countries cut off similar aid to his regime. But this same aid had an adverse negative effect on the development of Uganda, as the study will show.

Soviet financial credits to Uganda between 1971 and 1979 was modest, probably due to the fact that several dollars worth of Soviet credits were still available for Uganda's use, under the 1965 agreements.³⁴

It is understood that the credits had not been fully disbursed due to the difficult terms of repayments attached to them.³⁵ Between 1971-75, an additional financial credit of \$ 12 million was made available to Uganda under Amin's regime.³⁶ The conditions of repayment are not known, but it is presumed that they were the same as those attached to the previous Soviet credits to Uganda. Uganda received one of the largest credits in states for the period 1971-75. It was larger than what was offered to Mozambique, Angola, Nigeria, Mali and Sudan, and only less than those received by Somalia, Algeria and Egypt.³⁷ It is not clear, however, how this credit was utilised, but there has been a large number of Soviet experts and maintenance technicians there is no evidence of Soviet-financed projects in Uganda apart from those which were started under Obote's regime.

The 1976/77 Uganda-Soviet technical and cultural co-operation agreement involved sending several hundred students to the USSR institutions of higher learning to specialise in various technical and academic subjects. There was also to be co-operation between the two in sports, education, professions, in teaching and in mass media communication. Both Uganda and the USSR noted with satisfaction the good and friendly relations that existed between the two countries.³⁸ Under a similar agreement, several Russian experts - engineers, doctors and engineers, to mention a few - were attached to various ministries in Uganda as special advisors between 1971 and 1979. Amin expressed deep satisfaction with the assistance the Soviet experts were rendering in Uganda.³⁹ It was understood that for Amin to be grateful to the Soviets, because not many countries in the world were willing to offer assistance because of the then-prevailing insecurity situation in the country and the anti-western position Amin's regime had adopted.

SOVIET MILITARY "AID" TO AMIN'S REGIME

The most important Soviet role in Uganda under Amin's regime was in the military field. Because of Amin's fear of a possible coup against him from within and a possibility of Obote's return to power through external assistance, he spent much of Uganda's foreign exchange on sophisticated arms from the Soviet Union, and, to a limited extent, from Czechoslovakia. He found the Soviet Union more than willing to increase its military presence in Uganda for the purpose of enhancing its influence in East Africa. Its presence in Uganda was intended to counteract Chinese influence in Tanzania, western influence in Kenya and Ethiopia, and also to make up for its lost influence since 1971 in the Sudan. Finally, increased supply of Soviet military hardware in Uganda came about as a result of the break in relations between Amin's regime and the western arms suppliers, particularly Britain. The Soviet Union thus became the chief arms supplier to Uganda under Amin's regime, and these arms more than anything else became the most important asset in sustaining Amin's regime.

Amin put in his first request for Soviet arms in 1972, after the abortive invasion of Uganda by Ugandan exiles from Tanzania. In July that year, a high-powered Ugandan military delegation left for Moscow for negotiations with the Soviet Defence ministry. The importance of the mission was demonstrated by the fact that it was led by the commander of the Ugandan army. The achievements of this mission were to be manifested in the enormous amount of Soviet arms which Uganda received between 1973 and 1979. This delegation requested, and was granted by the Kremlin: tanks, armoured personnel carriers, missiles, transport planes, helicopters, marine patrol boats, field engineering equipment, MIG 21 aircraft, radar, and the Kremlin offered to train Uganda's soldiers.⁴⁰

A leading Soviet general, Major General Rossikin, visited Uganda in 1973 to finalise arrangements for the Soviet arms supply. This was followed in November of the same year by the first Soviet consignment of arms to Uganda under the above agreement. Amin demonstrated his enthusiasm, by inspecting the arms personally at Mombasa port before they were delivered by road to Kampala. They included 50 light tanks, 62 armoured personnel carriers, bombs, rockets, seven helicopters and 750 cases of small arms. Under the same agreement, more than 500 Ugandan military personnel went to the USSR in 1973 for military training. The equipment was accompanied by Soviet military experts, who then numbered about 100.⁴¹

This military hardware indeed boosted considerably the firepower of the Ugandan army, which prior to that consignment was known to have only four Sherman second world war tanks, 14 armoured personnel carriers and a limited number of small arms.⁴² Thus, the new arms consignment is generally believed to have made Uganda militarily the strongest in the whole of former British East Africa. It is no wonder, therefore, that Kenya and Tanzania became uneasy about this trend.

Amin naturally expressed his unreserved gratitude to the Soviets for that military assistance as well as for other forms of aid including the training of several Ugandans in military and other fields.⁴³ Who paid for such arms? Were they gifts, as the Soviets and Amin labelled them? Despite Amin's denials, it is generally believed that the Soviet

arms and services were paid for by Ugandan raw materials such as coffee, cotton and copper which the Kref was in need of. In fact, by 1975 Uganda had received Soviet military equipment valued at more than \$ 500 million⁴⁴. They included 12 MIG 21 NF, 8 MIG 17, 634/T54 tanks, 100 armoured personnel carriers (APCs), 50 anti-aircraft guns, 2000 tank wire guided missiles, 850 bombs and rockets, 9 radar units, two MI-8 heli-coj, 250 man-portable SAMs, military trucks and jeeps, six patrol boats, six mobile brid, several crates of ammunitions and spare parts, and furthermore over 700 Ugandan military personnel had been trained by the Soviets in 1975, and, between 1973 and 1975, several hundred Soviet military experts were stationed in the country⁴⁵. It is unlikely that the Kremlin would offer to Uganda, as gifts, all the above-mentioned arms, which were worth millions of dollars.

On July 4, 1976 Israeli commandos destroyed 6—10 Soviet MIG fighters during the raid on Entebbe Airport while rescuing hostages. The Kremlin replaced all the losses. In fact, by 1976 it had increased the supply to Uganda to two squadrons of MIG 17 and MIG 21 fighters which by this time were manned by Ugandan pilots. Amin was deeply appreciative of the Soviet help at this time, which he described as most timely and effective⁴⁶. This new offer added to an already swollen number of Soviet military equipment to Uganda which started in 1973.⁴⁷ This was complemented by an increasing number of Soviet military advisors who by 1976 numbered 300.⁴⁸

The increase in Soviet military role in Uganda was understandable in view of the fact that, by 1976 the western countries, particularly Britain which used to be Uganda's major military suppliers and trainer, had withdrawn such facilities, due to opposition to Amin's regime. So the Soviets filled in this vacuum with increased military equipment, of higher sophistication, which Uganda did not appear to need for its defensive purposes. Amin welcomed Soviet military assistance which he strongly believed would fortify him against his enemies, both internal and external. On the other hand, the Soviets were enthusiastic about their new role in Uganda, because this could be used as one of the ways to serve their economic, strategic and ideological interests against the West.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF SOVIET SUPPLIED ARMS ON UGANDAN DEVELOPMENT

By the time Amin was overthrown in April 1979, the Ugandan army was heavily armed, almost exclusively by Soviet-bloc countries.⁴⁹ Such arms were notoriously used against innocent civilians. The Ugandan economy, which had been one of the most viable in East Africa, was essentially destroyed through excessive spending on the purchase of expensive weapons to the detriment of critical development sectors of the economy. The real percentage of the country's revenue spent on the army was never revealed, but it was rumoured at well over 75%. The army became an endemic parasite on the society. Coffee, cotton and copper, the major foreign exchange earners, were bartered for Soviet MIGs and other military hardware. Yet many MIGs which cost millions of dollars were crashed by poorly-trained and inefficient pilots. All this added to the economic burden of the country.

It was also clear that Amin's overriding interests in arming his army were egocentric; to sustain himself in power and to fulfil his cherished dreams of expanding Uganda's borders at the expense of its neighbour. He was always obsessed with the idea of invading Tanzania to punish it for harbouring his arch-enemy, the former President, Milton Obote.

He also had designs for annexing the western region of Iya to Uganda. He made this intention clear to Kenya in 1976. He also aimed at securing one of the Tanzanian ports to enable land-locked Uganda to have access to a port on the Indian Ocean. All these plans were sustained by a confidence in himself, which had been boosted by the enormous availability of Soviet arms and advisers, on which he strongly relied.

But the worst effect of Soviet arms on Uganda can be measured at the level of their destruction of Ugandans, a phenomenon which is unprecedented in modern history. This is demonstrated by a colossal number of victims, estimated, conservatively, at 500,000, out of a mere total population of 13 million people. All perished in a period of just eight years and in a state of non-war. The Soviet-supplied arms were always used in these massacres.

Amin fanatically believed that his well-equipped army would lead the other African armies against racist South Africa and liberate the oppressed Africa there. He once requested the Soviet Union to assist his country in building a nuclear reactor for that purpose, a request which was never honoured. But it appears that this anti-Africanist intention was being used as a cover to enable him to acquire more arms for the purpose of terrorising his opponents and his neighbours to ensure his personal security.

The Ugandans' protest against Soviet military support to Amin proved ineffective; so did the international human rights group's efforts. As for Uganda's neighbours, the protest was loud, though ineffective, too. Kenyan authorities protested to the Soviet representative in Nairobi against the dangers of heavily arming Uganda. The Soviet reply was rather inept, because it argued that Uganda would have acquired the arms elsewhere if the Soviets had not supplied them.⁵⁰ Such an answer could not have been further from the truth, because at that point in time the western superpowers, principally Britain and the USA, had banned any arms sales to Uganda. China, which was on good terms with Tanzania, could hardly be persuaded to sell arms to Uganda, which would be used against Tanzania. The only avenue probably would have been through a third party, most likely Libya, but this would have been rather an indirect, cumbersome and irregular source.

The Ugandan army used Soviet purchased arms to intimidate its neighbours and to invade Tanzania which resulted in the killing of several Tanzanians in Kagera area and in the subsequent annexation to Uganda of 710 square miles of Tanzanian territory in 1978. This served as a warning to Uganda's neighbour that Amin was not involved in mere rhetorics when he talked of expanding Uganda's borders. The Ugandan action also ran contrary to the OAU charter, which condemns annexation of territories by force. Even up to the present, the Kremlin has remained quiet about the misuse to which its arms supplied to Uganda were being put. One would have expected the Soviets at this point to restrain Amin from using such arms to weaken and demoralise Tanzania, the very citadel of the African liberation movements, which the Kremlin

professed to be supporting. Several world leaders condemned Amin's invasion of Tanzania, which violated the principles of national sovereignty. Attempts made to reconcile the two countries proved futile, because Tanzania decided to avenge the death of its citizens, at all costs; this objective was successfully carried out when Tanzanians and Ugandan exiles toppled Amin in 1979. After his overthrow, Moscow, to the surprise of many, turned about, produced a new policy on Uganda and condemned Amin's regime. But, this about-face was flayed by some of the African press. For example, in a *Daily Nation* article entitled "Let us learn from Uganda" the editor castigated Soviet policy in Africa in general, and Uganda in particular, thus:

Had it not been the Soviet Union and its inconsistent policy towards the third world nations, much of the blood that has been shed unnecessarily in the country (Uganda) would have been avoided. Who does not know the revisionists in Kremlin maintaining an unchecked flow of sophisticated military hardware to the despotic regime of ousted dictator — Amin, even when all peace-loving nations had categorically disassociated from excesses of the brutal murdered — Soviet Union had to wait sheepishly. Until Amin's deadly arsenals were full to the brim before they were booted out. While waiting for their undignified departure they had the privilege of witnessing the effectiveness of their military equipments being experimented on poor Ugandans. Uganda as a developing country was much more in need of schools, hospitals, roads and sound economic base. Yet what did the Soviets give them? They furnished Amin with TU 54 tanks, MIG jets, Kalashnikov automatic rifles etc. This goes to reinforce the fact that the Soviets have been accomplices in the bloodiest massacre this side of Africa.⁵¹

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Soviet Union's assistance programme to Uganda under Amin's rule was devastating, both in terms of human and material resources. Most African countries, like Uganda, possess weak economics and are not in great need of sophisticated arms, except for those such as Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, etc. which needed military assistance to overthrow the yoke of imperialism and neo-colonialism.

Soviet emphasis on military rather than economic aid to African states is well demonstrated by the fact that the 11 African countries which received both Soviet military and economic aid (1971—1976) received far more military than economic aid.

Yet a close analysis of their needs show that they urgently needed the latter in order to boost the standard of living of their people. The emphasis on military aid is well illustrated by the fact that for the period 1971—1976, Soviet military aid to Africa was \$ 2000 million, while economic aid amounted to a mere \$ 600 million. The figure for military assistance is even higher since the Ugandan war and the Angolan crisis started. The *Daily Nation* of Nairobi once commented on this phenomenon thus:

Somalia, virtually a desert, has received \$ 32m. in economic aid and \$ 132m. in military aid and an estimated 1,000 Russian and 50 Cuban advisers.... Mali, another desert, has received \$ 12m. in military and \$10m. in economic aid.... Guinea \$39m. in economic aid and \$ 94m. in military aid. Uganda whose economy is known for being robust, \$48m. in military aid and \$12m. in economic aid, Egypt \$ 1,300m. in military aid, \$ 355m. in economic aid - Nigeria \$ 39m. in military aid and \$ 6m. in economic aid.... Except for Mozambique and.... Angola none of these countries

tries were in dire need of military aid. They had no one to fight; the question arises: Why does the Kremlin want to arm so many people whose welfare otherwise is just about zero or nearly so?....⁵²

Most recipients of such large Soviet military aid are military regimes, the popularity of whose leadership among the people is always in doubt.

Soviet military aid can be appreciated by most African countries, if it is used for defensive purposes against colonialism, neo-colonialism and external aggression. It was particularly useful, as already indicated, in such cases as Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, during the decolonisation process. But, as noted earlier, most military leaders of independent African countries have tended to over-emphasise the need for military assistance to the detriment of economic aid, which is very urgently needed to boost the standard of living of their people. To date, it seems that very few recipients of Soviet military aid seem to be externally threatened to warrant amassing such huge arsenals. The experience so far has shown that some of these leaders, and mostly the soldier leaders who have acquired power through the barrel of the gun, attempt to sustain their unpopular, undemocratic and ruthless regimes by the same means. They use such arms to ensure their personal security and as a deterrent to their would-be political opponents. It is not surprising that most of these weapons have been used on internal, rather than external "enemies" Uganda under Amin is a case in point.

The Kremlin is well aware of the needs and priorities of these military leaders and therefore delivers the goods that they ask for - the arms rather than the economic aid. The Kremlin's interests are also served better if its military hardware and military advisers are well established on the recipient's territory, because this would allow the Soviets direct access to leaders in the recipient countries and increase their influence over them. It is also likely that military assistance by the Soviet donors is less of a liability economically than financial credits, because sometimes the arms the Soviets sell to the Third World countries are largely obsolete and for which they have no more use, while financial credits are likely to commit resources needed by the donor, such as foreign exchange, to the recipient who may not utilize them efficiently. Some countries have, however, rejected Soviet military aid after realising that it would not serve the best interests of their country; Kenya's rejection of Soviet arms in 1965, on the basis that they were old, is a case in point.⁵³

CONCLUSION

The Soviet bloc assistance programme to Uganda under Amin's regime, 1971-79, was more military than economically oriented. During this period, Uganda became one of the ten major recipients, in Africa, of Soviet military "aid" and had one of the largest corps of Soviet military advisers on the continent. This made it the leading recipient of Soviet military aid in former British East Africa and the best equipped in independent East and Central Africa. Given the population and the resources of the country, those arms made Uganda, per capita, one of the best armed countries in Africa.

Amin requested Soviet arms after the same request had been turned down by the western countries, saying it was for Uganda's defence needs. The Soviets increased their arms supply to Uganda when the western countries imposed an economic and military embargo on Amin's regime on the ground that its policies at home were in violation of human rights. The Soviets, for their economic, ideological and strategic interests, moved in to fill the political, economic and military "vacuum" created by the departure of the western countries from Uganda.

Although Amin publicly announced that the Soviet arms were to be used for defensive purposes against external enemies of Uganda, he, in fact, also planned to use them against his neighbours, Kenya and Tanzania, in his ambition for territorial aggrandisement. He also, fanatically, hoped to use these arms against White South Africa for propaganda purposes. But, above all, he believed that his possession of such a large arsenal would scare off his enemies, both real and imaginary, external and internal.

It should be noted that the Soviet bloc, particularly the USSR, continued to supply deadly arms to Amin's regime, even when it became aware of the misuse to which they were being put. It seems the Kremlin's overriding objective in assisting Amin was to satisfy its ideological, economic and strategic interests in Africa. Soviet strategists realised the importance of military aid to Uganda under Idi Amin. They postulated that it would win them favour from him, which they needed to reduce the Chinese and the western influence in East Africa, and possibly in Africa as a whole. The Kremlin hoped that Uganda's proximity to the Indian Ocean would be an advantage in their surveillance over the western bases on the coast of East Africa. Uganda was also viewed as an important base for the Kremlin in its efforts to minimise Chinese influence in Tanzania and in East Africa as a whole. Finally, Uganda being the source of the River Nile on which the Sudan and Egypt depended, was, in the Soviet estimation, important to win over so as to be used as a bargaining piece for winning new influence in the Sudan and Egypt and the Middle East after Soviet setbacks in these places in 1971 and 1972, respectively.

It should be emphasised, however, that Soviet-Ugandan relations under Amin's regime only served Soviet interests and those of Amin personally, to the detriment of the majority of Ugandans. Uganda at its low level of overall development needed Soviet assistance in building hospitals, schools and good roads rather than Soviet offers of MIG jets, tanks and other sophisticated arms. These weapons were not used to fight against the so-called enemies of Uganda abroad but, rather, were used against Ugandans at home. It is important to note that the same arms increased Amin's confidence and security to the extent that he was able to rule ruthlessly for nine years almost unrestrained. But, ironically, the same arms were partly responsible for Amin's overthrow. First, they made him so overconfident that he antagonised his neighbour, Tanzania who, in collusion with Ugandan exiles, finally toppled him in April, 1979. The second irony was that several Soviet-supplied Ugandan arms which were captured by the Ugandan-Tanzanian Liberation forces during the invasion, played a major role in the final destruction of Amin's troops.

The Soviet officials have always defended their actions in Uganda on the grounds of security against imperialist aggressions against that country. But such arguments do

nothing to lessen the Kremlin's share of responsibility for the economic and human tragedy in Uganda, which was caused by its arms. It is likely that Amin would have found it difficult, if not impossible, to do what he did in eight years without a viable direct and easy source of arms supply. The western powers, apart from any other ulterior motives they might have had, took a credible course of action, which was to deprive Amin access to deadly weapons. The Kremlin, as a self-professed champion of the oppressed and supporter of African Unity, erred grossly in arming without restraint a regime that was not among the progressives. Moscow cannot claim to have been ignorant of the gross violation of human rights, the economic decay and the sense of insecurity that prevailed in Uganda during this period, and all of which could hardly have come about to that level without easy access to arms by Amin and his henchmen.

The Soviety "aid" programme under Amin's regime served no useful purpose for development of the country. If anything, it had a negative effect. It only succeeded in sustaining and prolonging an unpopular regime to the detriment of the Ugandans and all peace-loving people. It is interesting to note that the Kremlin welcomed Amin's overthrow in April, 1979, and called his regime "fascistic". It took the Soviets eight good years to make that obvious indictment.

Let the consequences of Amin-Kremlin collaboration under the popular term "aid" serve as a lesson to African leaders and nationals of the extent to which the so-called foreign "aid", whose objectives are not critically assessed, can destroy their hopes, aspirations and, more importantly, bring about a near annihilation of the recipients.

FOOTNOTES

1. For a comprehensive discussion of the existing contradictions in Ugandan society, the nature of Obote's regime and how he attempted to solve these problems and how Amin turned Obote's opponents to his advantage see: M. Mamdani, *Politics and Class formation in Uganda* (Heinemann, Nairobi, 1983) and W.D. Nabudere, *Imperialism and Revolution in Uganda* (Tanzania Publishing House 1981).
2. Peter Ward, "Ambiguous Amin", *Africa Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 30, (April 1978).
3. Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire* (Edinburgh, 1893, London Case 1968), Vol. II, pp. 216—219.
4. South Hall: "General Amin and the Coup: Great man or Historical Inevitability?" *Journal of Modern Africa Studies* (1975), pp. 85—105.
5. Judith Listowel, *Amin* (London IUP, 1973), p. 13.
6. A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of Military Ethnocracy* (London, Sage, 1975) p. 313.
7. South Hall, *op. cit.*, pp. 85—105.
8. Mamdani, *op. cit.*, p. 246.
9. David Martin, *General Idi Amin* (Faber and Faber, 1974).
10. Mamdani, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
11. Peter Ward, *op. cit.* p. 156.
12. Mazrui, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
14. E.A. Brett, "The Political Economy of General Idi Amin", *ID's Bulletin* (1975), pp. 15—22.
13. Col. Sad. W. Toko, 'Intervention in Uganda Power Struggle and Soviet Involvement' (Occasional working paper series no. 1: University centre for international studies, University of Pittsburgh, 1972), p. 46.
15. M.F. Lofchies, "The Uganda Coup-Class action by Military", in: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, (1972) p. 1935.
16. M. Twaddle, "The Amin's coup", *The Journal of Commonwealth Studies* (1972), pp. 99—122.
17. Martin *op. cit.*
18. Martin Wambete, "Why Amin's Coup Succeeded", in: *Amin, The full Brutal Story* (U.K. Publishers distributors Walton Press) p. 16. (Magazine) Special issue on the fall of Amin.
19. "Lumpen Militariat is a class of semi-organized rugged and semiliterate soldiery, which has begun to claim a share of power and influence in what would otherwise have become a heavily privileged meritocracy of the educated". See Mazrui, *op. cit.*
20. This was claimed in London in a serialised extract from the Diaries of Cecil King newspaper proprietor. Source: *African Diary*, Jan. 1, 1976, No. 1, Vol. XVI, pp. 7747 — 8.
21. *Soviet Radio for Foreign Programmes Radio Peace and Progress* (Feb, 1971), cited by Col. Toko, *op. cit.* p. 48.
22. Radio Moscow, commentator: Andrey Dolgoy, March, 1971.
23. *Radio Lusaka*, Home Service Broadcast (Jan. 26, 1971, BBC ME/3594/B/10 of Jan. 27, 1971) cited by Col. Toko, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
24. Nationalist editorial quoted by *Radio Tanzania*, Jan. 26, 1971. See also BBC ME/3594/B/10 of Jan. 27, 1971, cited by Toko, *ibid.*
25. Sekou Toure's *Cable to Obote*, quoted in *BBC Summary of World Broadcast ME/3596/B/2*; also *Radio Conakry* of Jan. 26, 1971 and Jan. 1971, cited by Toko, *ibid.*
26. *London Times*, Jan. 28, 1971 and *East African Standard*, May 24, 1971, p. 1.
27. *East African Standard*, *ibid.* and *New York Times*, May 2, 1971. See also Grace S. Ibingira: *The Forging of an African Nation: The Political and Constitutional Evolution of Uganda from Colonial Rule to Independence 1894—1962* (Viking Press, New York, 1973), p. 290.
28. Susan Aurelia Gitelson, "Major Shifts in Recent Uganda Foreign Policy", in: *African Affairs*, Vol. 76, July 1977, p. 365.

29. *Africa Diary*, July 23 — 29, 1977, No. 30, Vol. XXIII, pp. 8587—8.
30. *African Research Bulletin*, Jan. 15— Feb. 14, Vol. 13, 1976, p. 3777.
31. *Africa Diary*, Oct. 1 — 7, 1978, No. 40, Vol. XVIII, p. 9201.
32. *African Research Bulletin*, April 1 — 30 1977, p.4410.
33. *Pravda*. Quoted *VOA* 30/4/79.
34. *African Research Bulletin* April 1 — 30. 1977, p. 4410.
35. Refer to: *Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Uganda, 1970*.
36. Refer to: American Intelligence estimates of Soviet and Cuban military Advisers and assistance (Q Tul 301), quoted in *African Research Bulletin* Feb. 1—29, 1976, p. 3945. See the attached map. Figures based on 1971 — 1975 period, quoted by *Daily Nation*, Kenya.
37. *Ibid*.
38. *Africa Diary*, Sept. 30—Oct. 6, No. 40, Vol. XVI, p. 8154.
39. *Africa Diary*, Nov. 11—17, 1976, No. 46, Vol. XVI, p. 8515.
40. *Africa Diary*, Nov. 26—Dec. 2, 1973, No. 48, Vol. XIII, p. 67337; *Uganda Argue*, 1971: Col. Toko, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
41. Col. Toko, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
42. *Times of London*, quoted by *Africa Diary*, Nov. 26—Dec. 2, 1973, No. 48, Vol. XIII, p. 673.
43. Susan A. Gitelson, *op. cit.*, p. 373.
44. Col. Toko, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
45. *Ibid*.
46. *African Research Bulletin*, Jan. 1 — 31, 1977, p. 4294; *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* (1978), p. 28928.
47. *New York Times*, quoted by *Africa Diary*, April 2 — 8, 1975.
48. *African Research Bulletin*, p. 3945. See the attached map.
49. See Table 6.
50. Uganda Radio, quoted by *Africa Diary*, June 25 — July 1 No. 26, Vol. XVII, p. 8649.
51. "Let us learn from Uganda", editorial, *Daily Nation* (Kenya, April, 1979).
52. *Daily Nation*, Kenya, quoted by *African Research Bulletin* (Feb. 1—29, 1979), *op. cit.*, p. 3945; see the map.
53. *Daily Nation* (Kenya, 30 April, 1965), p.1.