

EXCURSUS II

Four Years of Amin

On January 25, 1971, General Idi Amin deposed Dr. Milton Obote, President of Uganda. Many Western embassies greeted the military take-over of the constitutional government of Uganda by the former army sergeant. It was thought he would be "friendlier" to the West than Dr. Obote. The ensuing four years of Amin's rule, however, have turned out to be one of the worst nightmares suffered by any people of the world in this century. Amin will rank near to Hitler in terms of his crimes against humanity. This classification will probably not upset him, since he has publicly stated his fondness for the butcher of Europe.

Almost the size of Oregon, with a population of around eleven million people, Uganda has long been regarded as one of the most attractive countries in the world. By the middle of this century it was one of the most Christian countries in black Africa. When Pope Paul VI, the first reigning pope ever to visit a black African state, visited Uganda in 1968, over 55 per cent of its people were Christian.

Now, in 1975, the "pearl of Africa" has been turned into a horror chamber. Four years after Amin's take-over, tortures and killings are common and well known. Chief Justice Kiwunuku; Father Clement Kiggundu, editor of the only Catholic newspaper, *Munno*; Joseph Mubiru, former governor of the Bank of Uganda; Professor Francis Kalimuzo, Vice Chancellor of Makerere University; Anil Clerk, a humanitarian lawyer and member of Parliament; George Kamba, a former Ugandan ambassador to India and West Germany—these are only a few names on the long roster of prominent Ugandan citizens killed by Amin's henchmen.

Amin gave the world many early warnings of his brutality, but they were ignored. In the first few months of his rule there were numerous reports of his killings. One reliable report places the killings in 1971 at eight to ten thousand. But this first warning about Amin's propensity for brutality was ignored because it was thought that he would at least be a friendly tyrant. The first shock for Americans came in July, 1971, when two Americans, Nicholas Stroh, a journalist, and Robert Siedle, a lecturer, went to investigate reports of bloody fighting at Uganda army barracks on the outskirts of Kampala. They were never again seen alive. Despite Amin's whitewash, it is common knowledge that there was clear complicity on the part of Amin's henchmen in the murder of these two Americans.

In early 1972 Amin turned on Israel and the Jews. He followed up a vicious verbal assault on Jewry in general by expelling almost five hundred Israeli aid technicians and their families in March, 1972. While it was a harrowing experience for all concerned, fortunately no one was killed. Later, in September, 1972, Amin sent a telegram to U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim endorsing Hitler's genocide policy against the Jews. It seems almost incredible that there was no public outrage expressed by the U.N. authorities against this gross public indecency.

When, as U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, I arrived in Kampala in July, 1972, most Western diplomats were still operating under the illusion that Amin would not be as bad as his record of the one and a half years to then indicated he would be. The slaughter of Ugandans was continuing. There seemed to be a desire just not to speak about it—to remain silent. We would only chat quietly in diplomatic circles about the most recent Ugandan who had been taken to the infamous Makindye prison, where Amin's favorite mode of execution was death by the sledgehammer.

Even as these reports continued to come in, there remained a desperate hope that Amin would somehow change. The situation only became worse.



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On August 5, 1972, Amin launched one of the greatest acts of racism of this decade. He began the brutalization of the Asians. By November of that year fifty thousand of them had been expelled in circumstances of mass suffering and cruelty. I was there when he announced what he was going to do. Again, there was hope he would not treat the Asians as badly as he said he would. Again,

the world community refused to recognize the reality of the brutal tyrant. The fall of 1972 was the most repressive period of Amin's four-year nightmare. His anti-Semitism was especially pronounced in these months. In one meeting Amin warned me about having Jews on my staff and said they were all "Israeli agents." I sharply protested this accusation and immediately began the quiet evacuation of the Jewish members of the official American community.

In November, 1972, I was among the diplomats present at a state dinner given by Amin for Saudi Arabian King Faisal. In addition to distributing copies of the Protocols of Zion at the dinner, Faisal launched into an obscene attack on the Jews of the world. Not one diplomat walked out of the dinner. I regret that I was among those who remained seated while Amin smiled with approval. Again, no one wished to recognize the brutal madness that was before our eyes. Yet the record is now very clear. The past four years have been a horrendous experience for the people of Uganda. The death toll is now around eighty thousand, and the genocide by Amin and his henchmen is continuing!

This four-year record of Amin's rule raises a question and forces on all of us a harsh lesson. The question is: Why is the U.N. silent on this horrendous violation of human rights that is still going on? The U.N. has spoken and acted on behalf of people suffering in other parts of the world. Why has it not spoken and acted with equal force on behalf of the people suffering under Amin? In February, 1975, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights censured Israel for desecrating religious shrines and for interfering with the religious liberty of its non-Jewish inhabitants. Without going into the issues concerning the desecration of the shrines, what a cruel irony it is that the U.N. Commission would spend time debating those issues while remaining silent on the selective genocide going on in Uganda. Again I must ask: Why?

There is one single lesson to be learned from the four years of Amin's rule. The record of not dealing firmly with brutal tyrants like Hitler, Duvalier, Stalin, and Amin is a bleak one. Placating these despots never accomplished what we had hoped. Cruel despots seem to remain cruel, and should be treated with firmness. Amin's cruelty was clearly visible in the first few months of his reign. He and his henchmen continue to torture and kill. All appeals to him—including mine—did not alter his tyranny.

We say that governments must refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign countries. But who then can act in these cases? Somehow the U.N. must face up to its responsibilities. It is the one universal organization with a mandate to protect the human rights of all men. The U.N. rec-

ord on human rights in the past year is, however, a disturbing one. The U.N. has been practicing selective outrage, expressing indignation at some alleged violations of human rights but ignoring others. We must influence the U.N. to respect its Charter. As I have written elsewhere on this subject: "Standards for human rights retain their moral force only if they are applied equally and universally. Otherwise, they become the tool of hypocrisy."

I will forever hear the echo of the screams of the thousands tortured by Amin. It will be less sharp only if I can feel that in some way we have learned that we must stand up to and oppose despotic tyrants such as Amin, who has turned the "pearl of Africa" into a huge torture chamber.

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EXCURSUS III

Socialism, Wilson, and British Labor

It is melancholy to record that the British Labor Party has produced only three prime ministers in its seventy-five-year history. Ramsay MacDonald, Clement Attlee, and Harold Wilson have occupied the official residence on Downing Street, but they never exercised real power. A parliamentary majority is indispensable, but the worlds of finance, industry, high society, and civil service must be stormed if a socialist Britain is ever to break through the chains of the decadent property system that continues to limit the great potential of the British people.

Harold Wilson's first tour as Prime Minister was a disaster. It reminded one of the sad truth in the observation of Robert Michels in 1912, that even socialist leadership would become "cautious, conservative, intent above all to preserve its strength undiminished, and, if possible, to increase it....At some future time socialists may possibly be successful, but socialism never." Now there may be a change, however. Wilson's cautious and moderate policies led to his defeat in 1970. His two modest victories in the elections of 1974 may very well drive him decisively to the left. The February election was a vote against Edward Heath and the Conservatives, while the October poll increased Labor's strength. Even though Labor's overall majority is quite small, and despite the fact that some 60 per cent of the voters supported Conservative, Liberal, Scottish Nationalist, Welsh Nationalist, and Ulster Protestant candidates, Harold Wilson