CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

REFUGE

Volume 11, Number 3 March 1992

AFRICAN REFUGEES

BY HOWARD ADELMAN

In the past we have published several issues devoted to African refugees. The problem does not seem to go away. Africa has about one third of the world's refugee population. We must once again focus on that strife torn continent.

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What about solving the problem by the traditional method of settling the refugees in adjacent first countries of asylum? A paper by a Visiting Research Fellow from France on rural settlements in first countries of asylum echoes the generally pessimistic outlook on this so-called permanent solution referred to by the Guest Editor in his article.

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AFRICA'S NEW REFUGEES: AN OVERVIEW

BY YOHANNES GEBRESELLASSIE*

INTRODUCTION

By and large, African refugees until recently have been rural to rural migrants covering short distances and settling in the closest neighbouring countries. This phenomenon is now changing, mainly due to better means of transportation and also to the availability of more information about countries of asylum. As a result, African refugees are now covering long distances and settling in places that provide them with better opportunities. Ethiopian, Somalian and Ugandan refugees resettled in Europe and North America are some examples of this phenomenon.

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Another significant factor is that African refugees are not only peasants and uneducated farmers with a rural background. There are also many highly skilled and educated African refugees, whose numbers are increas-

ing. These refugees of urban background do not want to settle in rural areas and be unproductive. They want to move to urban areas where they can look for suitable jobs. Consequently, "countries like Sudan and Somalia have found their cities swollen by in-migrating refugees... many of them are clearly urban to urban migrants, and hence possess much higher levels of education and skills than the 'traditional' African rural to rural refugees" (Clark, 1985, 70).

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WHY DO THEY LEAVE?

There is a variety of socio-economic, environmental and political factors responsible for the departure of Africans from their countries of origin. Some of them leave purely for economic reasons, i.e. in order to look for better paying jobs elsewhere, and thereby improve their economic situation. Some examples of these were the Ghanaians in Nigeria, the Sudanese and Nigerians in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Emirates, etc. The majority of Africans, on the other hand, are forced to leave their countries purely for political reasons.

This can be due to ideological differences and/or ethnic, tribal and religious inequalities that lead to conflicts and civil wars. In such cases, Africans who oppose their governments are considered hostile and in most cases, are persecuted or imprisoned. Thus, to escape, they flee for safety and seek refuge elsewhere. Most African refugees that reside outside their country are in this category.

Generally, within the continent of Africa, there have been successive conflicts, wars, revolutions, coups and counter coups since political independence. These factors have forced millions of Africans to abandon their homes in order either to find security elsewhere until conditions improve for returning home, or to establish military bases from which to conduct an armed struggle against the system they opposed or the governments that forced them out. The following are some of the historical examples of refugee movements in Africa:

1. Ewe refugees from Ghana entered Togo following the defeat of their attempt to re-unite "Eweland" which had been split between the states of Ghana and Togo since the colonial period.

2. The politically dominant Tutsi of Rwanda and a number of their supporters became refugees after armed conflict accompanied the assumption of power by the majority Hutu; with little practical possibility of repatriation, these refugees were settled in Burundi, Uganda, Zaire and Tanzania.

3. Subsequently, inter-tribal strife in the wake of the Hutu attempt to take over the Tutsi-dominated government of Burundi resulted in the massacre of perhaps one hundred thousand Burundians and the flight of tens of thousands of Hutu into Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire.

4. In the years directly following independence, Zaire suffered prolonged civil war, first in one part of the country and then in others, which disrupted civilian life and forced thousands of villagers to flee to safety in all nine neighbouring countries, most notably the Central African Republic (C.A.R.), the Sudan, Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania.

5. The history of the Sudan resulted in a separate economic, cultural and religious heritage from the North and South and the government was unable to integrate both in satisfactory political terms. The ensuing civil war caused successive waves of refugees from the South to stream in large numbers to Uganda, Zaire, C.A.R. and Ethiopia.

6. Armed conflict between Ethiopian forces and separatists in the province of Eritrea resulted in a refugee flow into the Sudan.

7. Members of the Lumpa sect left Zambia to become refugees in Zaire after armed assertion of their religious separation culminated in violent clashes with Zambian authorities.

8. Nigerian nationals living in a number of West African countries, especially Equitorial Guinea, became *réfugiés sur place* when they were unwilling or unable to return to Nigeria after the onset of the civil war. Other Nigerian refugees entered nearby countries, such as the Ivory Coast and Gabon, as a result of the war.

9. A refugee situation of a somewhat different nature occurred when racist policies of the government of Uganda compelled tens of thousands

of Ugandan Asians, many being of undetermined nationality, to migrate (Holborn, 832-3).

TO BE A REFUGEE

The UNHCR's film entitled "Caring for Refugees Since 1951" explains what it means to be a refugee:

> *To be or to become a refugee is an unenviable experience for anyone. To be a refugee means fleeing through hazards into the unknown. To be a refugee is to leave behind all that you hold most dear. To be a refugee means arriving in a country where the language, the custom and the way of life are totally unfamiliar. To be a refugee is to leave in the hope of returning home.*

Voluntary repatriation has taken place more often in Africa than in any part of the world.

To be a refugee in Africa where people of the host countries are as disadvantaged as the refugees themselves can be worse even than the above description. African refugees experience tremendous social, economic, cultural and political pressure in the country of asylum. Their mobility is often restricted and their standard of living is far below that of the local people. When refugees receive some assistance from international agencies, the local people become hostile towards them because they think that refugees are living in "an island of relative privilege in the sea of poverty."

African refugees do not get higher educational opportunities because most African countries cannot afford to run many colleges and universities even for their own people. There is much competition for the limited spaces in the few post-secondary institutions they do have, and refugees are likely to lose out.

African refugees have to adapt to a new culture, language and way of life (and sometimes to a completely different socio-economic and cultural milieu) from their own. These adaptation and assimilation processes can be difficult:

> *Perhaps the most serious consequences of refugee status are constraints of economic productivity. In many cases, refugees' productivity is thwarted by restructured mobility, unavailability of jobs appropriate to their skills and limited access to their means of production and markets. Without an economic base to ensure family livelihood refugees cannot achieve self-sufficiency.* (*Migration News*)

There are certain groups of refugees who are more vulnerable and highly exposed to problems; for example, the African women.

> *The failure to recognize their pivotal position in the household economy, and the special needs and particular vulnerability of women in the refugee situation, has led not just to women being disadvantaged, although this is obviously the case, but to whole programs disappearing. Unfortunately, through ignorance and sometimes through personal prejudices, both policy makers and field workers often unknowingly contribute to the further weakening of women's position.* (Harrell-Bond, 251)

In general, African refugees are perhaps the most disadvantaged people on earth. They are victims of the force that drove them out of their countries, as well as victims of the socio-economic and political upheavals that frequently occur in their countries of asylum. Zambia's former President Dr. Kaunda comments on the situation of African refugees as follows:

> *To be a refugee is terrifying. It means that one is uprooted from one's home by forces which are outside of one's control. Nothing makes a human being more helpless than that. You are thrown out of your home. Your property is destroyed, and you are chased like a wild pig in the bush, sometimes by your own government. Your roots are shaken, and you have no way of telling whether or not you will ever find your home again. You have no way of telling whether you will see your own sister and brother, your mother and father, your uncle or aunt, ever again. It really is a situation which is very worrying.* (UNHCR, 1987, 27)

That truly reflects what it means to become a refugee — particularly an African refugee.

OPTIONS

Many scholars argue that *voluntary repatriation* is the ideal option that can bring a durable solution to the refugee problem of the continent of Africa:

> *For the four million refugees in Africa, voluntary repatriation seems, in the long-term, the only realistic solution to their plight. It is also the solution that the UNHCR promotes when conditions in the country of origin make it possible. In the African context especially, the sense of attachment which refugees have towards the physical and social environment of their homeland is very strong. Recent history has repeatedly demonstrated that when conditions have changed for the better, African refugees wasted no time in setting out on the road back home.* (*Ibid.*)

Voluntary repatriation has taken place more often in Africa than in any other part of the world because African refugees consider their country of asylum as a temporary place, a place to stay until conditions are favourable to return home. "According to one estimate, between 1974 and 1981 alone, more than one million African refugees voluntarily repatriated to countries such as Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Sudan and Zaire" (*Ibid.*, 27). The most significant example of a voluntary repatriation

took place in Zaire in 1979 when the government of Zaire gave a general amnesty to Zairian refugees. As a result "some 120,000 to 150,000 Zairian nationals returned from Angola and other countries under UNHCR auspices, making it one of the largest organized border crossings in recent African history" (*International Migration Policies, 91*). Another example of voluntary repatriation of equal importance and "certainly, the largest repatriation has been that of the Southern Sudanese from Central African Republic, Zaire, Uganda, Ethiopia (and more recently to Namibia). Approximately 170,000 refugees returned to Sudan between 1972 and 1974" (Clarke, 1982, 41).

Voluntary repatriation, although considered to be the ideal solution to the refugee problem in Africa, is not without problems. For instance, factors such as unstable governments, continuous conflicts, lack of reception centres to returnees, lack of funding to re-establish returnees, problems of re-adjustment and re-assimilation of returnees (particularly if they have children who were born and grew up in the country of asylum), lack of security and safety, all slow down implementation.

Article V of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) states that "the essentially voluntary character of repatriation shall be respected in all cases," and calls on countries of origin and asylum to "make adequate arrangements for the safe return of refugees who request repatriation, refugees who chose to return," it says "shall in no way be penalized for having left," they must be granted the "full rights and privileges" enjoyed by other citizens, "people who freely decide to return to their homeland," the article concludes "shall be given every possible assistance by the country of origin, voluntary agencies and international and inter-governmental organizations" (UNHCR, 1987, 27). Such a proclamation by African leaders sounds good and looks good on paper. However, there is no guarantee whatsoever that these African countries, which are members of the OAU, will respect the OAU Charter on refugees. In fact, many African countries have the worst record of violating basic human rights. Therefore, in order to successfully carry out voluntary repatriation, Rick A. Stainsby urges that the following seven principles of voluntary repatriation be respected by all governments.

1. *The first principle is that refugees have a right to return voluntarily to their country of origin. This right, recognized in international law, is normally respected by countries of origin. Refugees wishing to repatriate have, however, been harassed and efforts have been made to prevent them from returning. Such impeding action, from a variety of sources, is often done for political reasons. The UNHCR, in these cases, works closely with all concerned authorities to protect those seeking to return voluntarily.*

2. *It is a fundamental principle of the highest degree that repatriation of refugees must only take place at the freely expressed wish of the refugees themselves...*

3. *Voluntary repatriation must be carried out under conditions of safety and dignity, preferably to the refugees' place of residence in their country of origin... Assurances are sometimes given to refugees by the authorities in the country of origin, to allay their fears of security problems...*

4. *The UNHCR must monitor the fulfillment of these assurances.*

5. *The UNHCR should, whenever appropriate, take initiatives to promote voluntary repatriation... The promotion for voluntary repatriation, however, should only be done when the circumstances which gave rise to refugee movements have changed fundamentally and to an extent to permit return in safety and dignity.*

6. *International action in favour of voluntary repatriation should receive the full support and cooperation of all states involved.*

7. *The UNHCR should establish and implement assistance programs for returnees.* (UNHCR, 1988, 34)

FIRST COUNTRY OF ASYLUM

When conditions become unfavourable for voluntary repatriation, a planned settlement of refugees in first country of asylum becomes an alternative. The objective of such an option must be to make refugees self-sufficient while integrating them within the socio-economic and political structure of the host country. Some African countries have been successful in doing so. For example, in Tanzania:

> *which has provided assistance to a large number of refugees from various countries in Southern Africa, a number of refugee settlements have become self-reliant communities... Many of the refugees have been fully integrated into the United Republic of Tanzania's society, as shown by the fact that some 36,000 Rwandese refugees became citizens of the United Republic in 1980, in one of the largest mass naturalizations in recent history. (International Migration Policies,* 92-3)

Other African nations with similar successes include Uganda and Burundi while other countries such as Zaire, Somalia, Ethiopia and the Sudan have had difficulties in implementing such policies. John Rogge considers the reasons why these countries have problems with settling their refugee populations:

> *... suitable land for such settlement is becoming scarcer, especially in some of the areas most in need of land for refugee settlement. External capital availability is also declining, even though the total budget of aid agencies continues to escalate. More and more of this aid is being diverted to emergency relief projects, leaving a diminishing sum available for long-term development solutions. It is also becoming clear that refugees are*

becoming less willing to be institutionalized on settlement schemes, and instead often prefer to take their chances in the urban areas; indeed while rural refugees currently remain in the majority, over the next decade there is every probability that the problem will increasingly shift away from the country, and will focus upon the cities. The concept of refugee settlement schemes must therefore shift accordingly, perhaps in the direction being proposed for Kenya's Witu (Kapini) settlement, where settlers are being drawn from urban areas, and emphasis is being placed upon training in trades and occupations that will facilitate their eventual integration into an urban economy. (International Migration Review, 212)

EFFECTS ON COUNTRIES OF ASYLUM

African refugees often have social, economic, political and environmental effects upon the countries of asylum. "From the time they arrive, refugees compete with local citizens for scarce resources, land, water, housing, food and medical services. Over time, their pressure leads to more substantial demand on natural resources, education and health facilities, energy, transportation, social services and jobs" (*Migration News*, 45). The customs and traditional values of the indigenous people within host countries can also be affected by refugees, particularly when the language, religion and customs of refugees are different from those of the community within the country of asylum. These differences often create confrontations and conflicts between refugees and indigenous people. This, in turn, creates hostility and discrimination that disturbs the social structure of the community at large. A good example of such a phenomenon is the concentration of Ethiopian refugees in the few big towns and cities of Sudan, such as Khartoum, Port Sudan, etc. The traditional, religious, linguistic and cultural differences between the Ethiopian refugees and the Sudanese people have resulted in discontent amongst the Sudanese. As a result, the Sudanese people have developed hatred and discrimination towards their refugees because they think that these refugees have disturbed their culture and tradition. Also, host governments often take advantage of the differences between refugees and their own citizens in order to minimize internal social upheavals.

Another effect of refugees is on the political and/or administrative structure of host countries. There are two types of refugees in Africa: those who are categorized as "genuine refugees" according to the definitions of the UNHCR, and those freedom fighters, who, as guerilla fighters, have left their countries in order to establish a base for military activity. The refugees categorized as genuine do not put much political pressure on host countries, but freedom fighters, not considered genuine refugees according to the UNHCR definition (but considered as refugees according to the OAU definition), often put increasing pressure upon the political and administrative structures of African host countries. At times, they can cause deterioration in the international relations between refugees' country of asylum and refugees' country of origin. The case of South Sudanese and Somalian refugees in Ethiopia and the Eritrean, Tigrayan and other nationalities in Sudan are examples of this phenomenon.

Refugee movements are generally unpredictable and more so within the African context. Therefore, refugee settlements in Africa are unplanned. This means that refugees use whatever is available for survival. For example, they cut trees for wood, make extensive use of rivers and lakes for drinking, washing, etc. When thousands of refugees do this, they can cause environmental changes within the area where they reside. Environmental changes caused by desertification can affect the agricultural potential of the territory in which they live.

In general, refugees, genuine or not, can bring much pressure to bear upon host governments. These governments are sometimes forced to reduce the services they provide to their own citizens in order to support refugees, particularly in the absence of international aid. When this happens, these governments face many challenges from their own citizens for more and better services. Sometimes these challenges result in more confrontations and opposition to the local or central government. The price of this can be too costly.

REACTIONS OF HOST COUNTRIES

African host nations have generally been kind to refugees even under circumstances where they find themselves surrounded by high unemployment, declining agricultural productivity, and continuous natural disaster. Recently however, the escalating number of refugees has put enormous pressure on their socio-economic structure. Dr. Kaunda expresses his country's experience as host to thousands of refugees, as follows:

Zambia is a country which is trying in a very small way to be helpful to the uprooted, to the homeless, to refugees. But of course, we are going through a very, very difficult economic situation. Although we are happy to give a place to our displaced brothers and sisters, we are helpless in terms of providing for them. (UNHCR, 1987, 21)

His comment shows clearly that there is a willingness to help; in fact, it has been part of African tradition to share what one has with one's neighbour. The problem is simply that these countries are poor. As a result, African host countries are becoming particularly sensitive towards refugees of urban background:

...originaires des grandes villes, employés de bureau, fonctionnaires et d'autres ayant pratiqué des

professions libérales cherchent à trouver du travail en zone urbaine et leur reclassement présente des problemes particuliers. En effet, la plupart des grandes villes africaines connaissent le chomage. (UNHCR, 1971)

Thus, African host countries are putting more and more restrictions upon this type of refugee; the government of the Sudan can be taken as an example of such a policy.

Generally, although the traditional African generosity towards their refugees still exists, African host countries are having difficulty in coping with more and more refugees entering into their countries because they have fewer resources available. One example is that of the:

380,000 Somalis who, by mid October of 1988, had found refuge in the Ethiopian province of Hararghe, a remote rural area lying at an altitude of over 1,000 meters. Water is scarce here, and must be brought in from the town of Jijija, 75 kilometers from the camp. Jijija's 35,000 inhabitants are, for the time being, not too worried by the prospects of the lowering of the water table on which their own well being depends. And, of course, the newcomers have to be fed, for which 10,000 tons of food are needed each month, and camp life has to be organized. In short, a new challenge for UNHCR Ethiopia, and for the international community. (UNHCR, 1988, 34)

INTERNATIONAL REACTION

There are various international governmental and humanitarian institutions that provide material as well as financial assistance to refugees. Some of these institutions include the UNHCR, OXFAM, the International Red Cross, Save the Children UK, CARE, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Mennonite Central Committee and other religious institutions, such as the Catholic Foundation, et al. Among these, the UNHCR is the major international institution which provides relief and aid coordination, contributions to African refugees and also legal protection to refugees.

Although the UNHCR's role in carrying some of the burden of African host countries has been very important, its support has been targeted mainly toward emergency aid. Thus, its efforts in implementing project development aid that helps bring about a durable solution to the refugee problems in Africa, have not been successful. The main problem for the UNHCR in this matter is not the lack of staff but rather the lack of finances. The UNHCR has no regular financial assistance; it depends on the international community for funding:

the voluntary nature of this agency has also meant that financial assistance is not provided by the entire international community. In fact, only eighty governments currently contribute to the UNHCR ... A major problem that remains to be resolved by the international community is that of financing refugee programs. Whereas the concept of financial burden-sharing as put forth in the Declaration of Territorial Asylum, an effective mechanism has not yet been established to ensure that countries with large refugee populations do not bear disproportionate costs ... Thus refugee assistance continues to be provided on an ad hoc basis as demonstrated by the short term mandates and by limited objectives of the major international institutions that deal with refugees. (International Migration Policies, 90)

Although the response of both governmental and non-governmental humanitarian agencies toward African refugees has been encouraging, it should be noted that these institutions have limited resources and in most cases, they depend upon their respective governments for additional assistance. Some governments, such as the government of Canada, have encouraged these institutions and agencies by doubling the amount of money they collected to assist African refugees.

All this international assistance has undoubtedly contributed towards solving the problems of refugees in Africa, at least temporarily. Many lives have been saved as a result.

REACTION OF THE WEST

The Western world has made a significant contribution, particularly financial, towards African refugees. The question remains as to whether or not it has done enough to reduce some of the burdens of African host countries by accepting African refugees through their resettlement programs.

John Rogge argues that:

African refugees, with their predominantly rural, less educated and unskilled character, are not regarded by principal immigrant receiving nations as populations that could readily integrate and become economically self-sufficient. The fact that many of the Southeast Asian refugees come from similar backgrounds and have equally limited skills or educational standings is frequently overlooked. For example, in the period from 1975 to 1979, the USA accepted 595,000 refugees; virtually none were from Africa. In the same period, Canada accepted 74,000 refugees, also with virtually no African representation. Indeed, it was only after the passing of the U.S. Refugee Act in 1980 that Africa first received a quota for refugee resettlement, and Canada followed with similar legislation in the following year. In 1982, the U.S. quota for Africa was 3,000, and the Canadian quota was increased from 500 to 1,000. No other immigrant receiving country in the industrialized world currently has an African refugee resettlement quota, although some European countries accept a few African refu-

gees as immigrants under provisions for family reunion. (Clarke, 1985, 72-3)

In general, even under a situation where war, natural disaster and famine have aggravated the refugee problems in Africa:

— *in the Western world the doors of hope are inexorably closing, especially in Western Europe, where country after country amended legislations to pinch the right of asylum. These countries — West Germany, Switzerland, Britain, Sweden, Denmark, France, Belgium and the Netherlands — also implemented streamlined procedures for the swift deportation of those ruled not to be genuine refugees.*

— *At some entry points, refugee claimants are routinely compelled to return to their previous stopping point. In West Germany, they are sent to special camps and are not permitted to work for at least two years.*

— *Almost 200,000 refugees claimants mostly from the Third World, poured into Western Europe in 1987; 204,000 arrived in 1986. Now a dam of resentment has been erected across the stream; the predominant feeling is that most asylum seekers are really economic migrants using the refugee process as a means of jumping immigration queues. Along with this sour attitude has come the linking, rightly or wrongly, of acts of terrorism, drug trafficking and violent crimes with the presence of refugee claimants...*

— *Like the European countries, Canada is invoking the concept of 'country of first asylum' to justify the implementation of restrictive measures. In other words, a refugee should remain in the first country where he can get protection from whatever he is fleeing or can apply for refugee status.*

— *Critics argue that this concept is forcing the enormous refugee problem on to the Third World countries that usually are the refugees' first stop and which are least able to cope with it.* (*Globe and Mail*, 13 Feb. 1988)

Resettling refugees outside Africa and within the industrialized countries is another alternative in helping to solve Africa's refugee problems. It is true that the vast majority of African refugees have not benefitted from such an option. A few skilled and highly educated African refugees have had an opportunity to reside in a second country of asylum. Scholars of different disciplines argue that lack of knowledge and thus lack of communication with the developed countries, high transportation costs, lack of skill etc. are factors as to why the majority of African refugees remain in first countries of asylum, i.e. within Africa. The truth, however, is that developed countries have such very high standards of refugee selection and refugee processing policies that these can hardly be met by even the skilled and educated African refugees. Some industrialized countries use family reunification, while others use age, sex, language, etc. as a base for selecting their refugees. For example, France has traditionally given preference to French-speakers, and to persons who served during the previous French colonial administration. Although Canada does not give refugees a numerical rating, refugees are selected overseas on the basis of overall eligibility and the amount of assistance to be required. Australia admits refugees who have been determined to have the necessary personal characteristics to settle successfully in that country.

These complexities add up to make resettlement programs rather difficult. This raises the question as to whether such an option can be regarded as one of the solutions to the African refugee problem.

It is important to note that as long as the number of African urban refugees continues to increase and continues to crowd the few cities of the African host countries and as long as these host countries are unable to integrate their refugees with their indigenous communities, the demand of African refugees to resettle in economically better-off countries will also increase. The disregard of such an option as an alternative to the solution of the refugee problem in Africa, therefore, reflects the reluctance or unwillingness of countries concerned to provide asylum to African refugees.

Resettlement programs have three advantages: first and foremost, African refugees can achieve socio-economic and political freedom and become self-reliant in the politically and economically stable countries. Secondly, African refugees can help family members, whom they left behind, to resettle within the same countries through programs such as sponsorship, family unification, etc. Thirdly, African refugees can also provide financial assistance to the people they left behind, thereby improving the economic situation of their relatives who remain in the first country of asylum.

Taking these factors into consideration, resettling African refugees in the developed countries has to be considered as one solution to the African refugee problems. It is also important, therefore, that scholars, international governmental and humanitarian institutions, and most importantly, the developed nations, give equal importance to such an option thereby reducing some of the burdens on the host countries in Africa.

Note

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GHANA 1981-1991: A DECADE OF FORCED REPRESSION AND MIGRATION

BY EDWARD OPOKU-DAPAAH*

INTRODUCTION

On December 31, 1991, Ghana's military government, the Provisional National Defence Committee (PNDC) marked its tenth anniversary of being in power. Within that same period, Ghana, situated on the west coast of Africa with a population of about fourteen million, saw an unprecedented flight abroad of its citizens as refugees. During the 1981-91 decade, Ghana emerged as a source of substantial refugee outflow from Africa, next only to the devastated areas in the Horn of Africa. Whereas in the Horn, the flight of people was precipitated by recurrent ecological disasters and devastating wars (as in Ethiopia) or civil wars (as in Somalia), in Ghana military repression was the predominant factor behind the flow of citizens. Too often the enormous refugee crisis in the Horn and Southern Africa overshadowed and at times even led to a disregard of the realities of Ghana's forced migrations. A closer assessment, however, will portray Ghana as a dark-horse when the two related issues, repression of citizens and forced migrations abroad, are considered.

The flight of Ghanaians abroad is not a new phenomenon. In the 1960s clashes between President Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) and opposition parties caused the flight of some members of the opposition. In that early phase, involuntary migrations of Ghanaians were limited in magnitude; and neighbouring African nations and Britain were the major destinations. The decade 1981-1991, on the other hand, witnessed flights of Ghanaians both unparalleled in volume and strikingly re-oriented from traditional destinations such as Togo, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Britain, to new destinations such as Canada.

THE PNDC

This article outlines the activities of Ghana's military regime, the Provisional National Defence Committee (PNDC) between 1981-1991 and how it caused such a massive flux of Ghanaians abroad. The PNDC (still in power) is chaired by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings. He seized power from the former elected government — People's National Party (PNP) — on December 31, 1981. The essence of the PNDC involves two inextricably combined characteristics: military dictatorial tendencies and revolutionary-socialist ideals.

Soon after it assumed power, the PNDC established a dictatorial grip on Ghana. Under an Establishment Proclamation of January 11, 1982, the PNDC exercised all powers of government. In practice however, Chairman Rawlings developed all government policies, assisted by a number of close advisers. Suspending Ghana's constitution, the PNDC ruled through decrees. No guarantees of freedoms and rights existed. Public tribunals were set up to bypass the regular court system. Criticisms of the revolution, Chairman Rawlings and PNDC members were never tolerated. By severely crushing all coup-makers and conspirators, the PNDC expressed it's antagonism to dissent, opposition and "reactionary" attitudes. Also, the revolutionary vigilance of PNDC organs, such as the Bureau of National Investigations, and the overwhelming presence of armed personnel in public places perpetuated the predominance of the regime.

The PNDC launched policies designed to usher in a new revolutionary-socialist era. These were essentially anti-imperialism, anti-bourgeois and relentless in their denunciation of all capitalistic tendencies. In the early days of the regime the main preoccupation was the nationwide mobilization of citizens into revolutionary organs such as People's Defence Committees (PDC), Workers' Defence Committees (WDC), People's Militia, mobilization squads and Task Forces. Both the People's Defence Committees (PDC) and Workers' Defence Committees (WDC) were quasi-political organs, designed to give hitherto under-represented and underprivileged masses a voice in the government. Drastic changes occurred in the social location of power, in higher political and government offices, in urban and village communities and in work places where PDCs and WDCs were rapidly established by the able, angry and discontent. The PDC's and WDC's were collectively renamed "Committees for the Defence of the Revolution" in December, 1984.

Leftist intellectuals and activists from Ghana's high institutions such as the University of Ghana were recruited as key supporters of the new regime. The latter were organized in networks of influential and vanguardist bodies like the Pan-Africa Youth Movement and June Fourth Movement. It was from within such networks, partly composed of Rawling's confidants and partly those who subscribed to his revolutionary ideals, that the PNDC appointed leaders for para-revolutionary organs and key state institutions such as the media, state boards, energy commission, tribunals and other powerful committees.

Throughout the 1981-91 decade, the socialist leanings of the PNDC regime, its dictatorial nature and the revolutionary vehemence which characterized the implementation of policies, contributed to the flow of Ghanaians abroad.

ECONOMIC POLICIES

The economic policies of the PNDC had by far the greatest impact on the life of Ghanaians and also on their flight abroad. The PNDC assumed power in a Ghana where insufficient foreign assistance, corruption and years of economic mismanagement had created chaotic economic conditions. The regime inherited an incredible budget deficit that could only be financed by printing money, generating still more inflation. Exports were falling, cocoa could not be moved to the ports and Ghana's terms of trade had dropped by thirty-one percent since 1980. Further, Ghana had no external financial reserves. Because of its large debt arrears (about $348 million) it was unable to obtain external credits.

In tackling these dire economic problems, the PNDC pursued an austere economic restructuring program unparalleled in scope and duration elsewhere in Africa. The harshness of the policies and the manner in which they were enforced, compounded by a total clamp-down on all who challenged the viability of the economic policies, had a profound impact on forced migration within the decade. The PNDC launched an Economic Recovery Program in 1982. This contained plans to rehabilitate roads and infrastructure, revive ailing industries, increase agricultural production and to conduct a house-cleaning exercise aimed at profiteers, smugglers and tax evaders. The specificities of the recovery program were often cast in strong revolutionary rhetoric.

To ensure external cash flow, the PNDC entered into an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to institute economic reforms in line with a structural adjustment program (SAP). In eighteen months, Ghana devalued the local currency "cedi" by one thousand eight hundred and eighteen percent, leaving it worth five and a half percent of its prior nominal value. This also raised real costs of imports by more than eighteen times. Government controlled prices were eliminated on necessary imported goods and services like drugs and spare parts, permitting the full impact of the increased costs to be passed on to the consumers, with devastating impact. Price controls involving far lower subsidy levels were retained on only twenty-three widely used essential commodities. The structural adjustment program (SAP) also called for large layoffs or redeployments in order to reduce employment, incomes and effective demand.

Due to harsh economic measures, real wages saw no increases. Real wages in 1982 were only sixteen percent of their 1975 level. Minimum wages rose in successive stages from 12.50 cedis (approximately 6 cents) per day to 70 cedis (approximately 24 cents) per day in December, 1984, leaving wage and salary earners worse off than they were in April, 1983.

The effects of the austere economic policies on Ghanaians were agonizing and engendered a total rejection from organized university students, professional bodies, trades, teachers and other groups who were affected. The government and its organs counter-attacked all such critics and demonstrators by accusing them of being reactionaries. Spokespersons amongst protesting groups became targets of abuse, surveillance and military terrorization. The harsh economic reforms, scarcities, lay-offs and the high inflation caused a lot of Ghanaians to leave for abroad. Also, the clamp-down on protestors forced leading members of organized anti-PNDC groups to seek refuge elsewhere.

The PNDC's anti-bourgeois and revolutionary socialist ideas surfaced in the form of incessant attacks on property owners, merchants, industrialists, expatriate investors, professionals, traditional nobilities and so on. The intimidating bodies, Citizens' Vetting Committees (CVC) were established in January, 1982 to screen assets and economic activities of people suspected of "profiteering, corruption and tax evasion." The ordeal of appearing before such militaristic committees caused a large section of Ghana's business community, their families and close associates to flee abroad.

Self-employed petty traders in central markets in Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi, Takoradi and Koforidua were forcibly impelled to migrate more than any other group. The PNDC persistently denounced traders as profiteers who were responsible for all forms of economic malpractices including hoarding and over-pricing. Stringent import licences regulations and frequent army swoops on traders combined to endanger the life and livelihood of these people. Actions taken against traders included public whipping, subjecting females to gross indecencies, arrests for profiteering, seizures and so on. Their powerlessness in the face of unparalleled revolutionary measures forced countless numbers to flee. Estimates of traders in flight could be as high as twenty thousand.

The exigency of Ghana's economic development and the policies for its eradication were associated with arrests, imprisonments without trial, deportation of expatriates, abductions, executions, ceaseless harassment and terrorization of the business community. The result was a massive exodus of Ghanaians.

MILITARY POLITICS

Throughout the decade of 1981-91 the impact of Rawling's dictatorial grip on power was profound. Government policies stemmed from the PNDC's insistence that covert imperialist agents in league with predominant forces outside Ghana, were working meticulously to topple the regime and derail the ongoing revolu-

tionary socio-economic programs. PNDC Law 4-Preventative Custody Law was established in 1982 for "the arrest and indefinite detention without trial of persons determined to have engaged or engage in activities not in the interest of national security." Other obnoxious laws included: the 1984 PNDC Law 91, which prevented a person detained under the Preventative Custody Law from filing for Habeas Corpus, the Newspaper Licensing Law - PNDC Law 211, which was used to terminate the critical press and the Religious Bodies Registration Law which interfered with freedom of conscience and religion.

These laws were frequently used against critics of the regime. In 1983 up to four hundred and ninety-two former officials of the erstwhile PNP and members of other political parties were detained under PNDC Law 4. In 1988, two organizations, the New Democratic Movement (NDM) and Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards (KNRG) issued a statement in Accra demanding to know why four of their members continued to be detained without charge or trial since their arrest in May and July, 1987. The NDM/KNRG statement called the continued detention of these four, an instance of the wider problem of repression of democratic rights in Ghana.

Amnesty International reported in 1991 that at least forty political detainees — possibly more — were still held in administrative detention at the end of 1990. The report indicated that majority of the detainees had been held since the first half of the 1980s on suspicion of involvement in conspiracies against the government. The conditions which detained people endured were notoriously punitive. Allegations of torture sometimes leading to death were rampant. Released prisoners talked about practices of being brutally whipped while tied down, beaten by rifles, and so on. Other forms of maltreatment included deprivation of food, water and medication.

Throughout the decade personnel from the PNDC's security arm, the Bureau of National Investigation (BNI), frequently took people into custody with or without warrants. The imposition of curfew and its attendant state of emergency at the inception of the revolution facilitated secret abductions of people at the whim of the regime. Tribunals formed to try political prisoners depended on judges with little or no legal experience. They adopted shortcuts to legal safeguards and due process to provide "rough" and "ready" justice. The pro-PNDC stance of the tribunals led to frequent imposition of the death penalty on defendants — who were mostly those convicted of coup attempts.

The PNDC's tight grip on power, merciless treatment of opponents, unfair justice system and political persecutions contributed to the involuntary migration of Ghanaians throughout the decade of 1981-91.

REVOLUTIONARY ORGANS

Relentless harassments, intimidations and terrorization from Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR), Civil Defence Organization (CDO) and People's Militia were also responsible for the exodus of Ghanaians during the decade under consideration. All three groups mentioned above worked as revolutionary organs, charged with mobilization of people for the implementation of government policies. They were also vested with responsibility for tracking and reporting dissident activities, conducting anti-smuggling operations and working with security agencies in their local communities.

The revolutionary organs were a source of unceasing harassment and coercion to Ghanaians. At the workplace the activities of CDRs interfered to the point of fanaticism, causing disruptions and lost production. In state owned enterprises CDR members accused workers and management of being counter-revolutionaries — the consequent friction and clashes caused loss of employment and promotion. Workers and managers were framed on charges of corruption and hoarding in order to settle personal scores. Within the community, CDRs passed on information about people's political affiliations, activities and so on to military officials, which led to their arrests and/or persecution. They also engaged in forced entry into homes and monitored telephones and mail during security investigations. Their presence undoubtedly constituted real terror and discomfort among Ghanaians.

In rural areas revolutionary organs organized their own courts and meted out justice according to no established procedures. Outspoken people at community or town meetings were occasionally accused of inflaming anti-revolutionary sentiments and reported to military authorities.

Military personnel posed a threat to Ghanaians. Operating under emergency regulations soldiers physically assaulted, brutalized, abducted and killed civilians as part of their "house cleaning exercise." Military squads caused a high level of violence against civilians soon after the installation of the PNDC. The most widely reported execution during 1982 occurred on June 30, when three High Court Judges and a retired army major were abducted from their homes during curfew hours and shot. Soldiers went on rampages as a result of their own personal disputes. The victims of such squads originated from all sectors of the society; they included journalists, students, trade union leaders, lawyers and political leaders. News and rumours of disappearances, abductions and killings caused people to doubt their security under the regime and they therefore left for protection elsewhere.

THE PNDC AND STUDENTS

The 1981-91 decade was replete with clashes between students and the military. Ghanaian students, through their mouthpiece, the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), acted as a formidable pressure group capable of criticizing government policies. In a situation of civilian helplessness and powerlessness under a military regime, the concentration of diverse academic minds resulted in the necessary socio-political power and inspiration for the students to act. Between January-March, 1982, students mobilized into a Task Force which engaged in cocoa evacuation, teaching, political education and the formation of CDRs (then PDCs and WDCs). Notwithstanding these signs of cooperation, student-military relations endured awkward moments. Throughout 1982, students recurrently expressed concern about education policy, human rights infractions and the country's political future.

Students' anti-PNDC activities reached a climax in May, 1983 when over two thousand mine workers from Obuasi charged on the campus of UST, provoked by the students' criticism of PNDC's austerity budget and calls for a return to civilian rule. The workers were armed with pickaxes, machetes, clubs and other weapons. On May 6, 1983 students at the University of Ghana also demonstrated through the main streets of Accra. This invited a violent counter-attack by militant workers. The PNDC eventually closed down all three universities in Ghana in May, 1983 until March, 1984. During the closure, security agents sought students accused of "misleading" and "misguiding" students. News of such arrests prompted students who played various roles in the agitations to flee abroad. Student agitations subsided in 1984 only to flare up in 1987/88. During the academic year, students and the government clashed over an education reform program. Students opposed plans to end the government's subsidies on feeding, boarding and rent increases. This led to closure of the universities and arrest and imprisonment of student leaders.

In the midst of such student agitations, the PNDC took swift and punitive measures. Student leaders were denounced as imperialist stooges, paid by outside forces to ferment dissent among students. Undercover agents terrorized students and their families.

THE PNDC AND RELIGIOUS BODIES

Though the PNDC is not necessarily anti-religion, its first decade in power witnessed incessant intimidations and hideous persecution of religious bodies in Ghana. The most heinous attack occurred in February, 1982 when over fifty soldiers from Kumasi's Fourth Battalion Infantry Brigade launched an attack on a religious sect "The Lord is my Shepherd." The Pastor, Odiyiefoo Asare, was killed, his body was dismembered and put on public display. In another incident in 1989 the leader of "The Resurrection Power Ministry," Brother Amoako, died in an accident involving a military vehicle, after preaching against the PNDC.

The PNDC's intimidation of religious bodies crystallized in 1989 when PNDC Law 221 (also called Religious Bodies Registration Law) was introduced on June 14. According to the Ministry of the Interior, PNDC Law 221 was created because certain individuals and groups (were) using or planning to use church premises as meeting grounds in furtherance of their political schemes and also because church premises had already been used for activities calculated to undermine national unity. In practice, however, this law permitted the government to screen existing religious groups in order to weed out those deemed prejudicial to PNDC interests.

In June, 1989, the government banned the activities of Jehovah Witness and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, also known as Mormons. The PNDC's ban stemmed from its concern that these local branches of worldwide religious sects could be used as havens for international spies. In spite of the ban, Jehovah Witness followers worshipped secretly in schools, back rooms and in the bush. Such secret worshippers became prey for CDR and security officials. The ban on the Mormons was lifted in December, 1990, while the prohibition of Jehovah Witness activities persisted until November 1, 1991.

A REIGN OF TERROR

Faced with the massive arrests, curfews, harsh economic policies, persecutions and absolute intolerance of any opposition whatsoever, Ghanaians were forced to live in a reign of terror characterized by perpetual insecurity and discomfort. The persistent violations, aggravated by the punitive economic policies, had a profound effect on flights of Ghanaians abroad.

All too often authorities involved in the refugee determination in both Europe and North America have been quick to reject Ghanaian refugee claims as bogus. Hastily lumping all such applications into a "fraudulent" and "bogus" category makes light of the wanton victimizations, ceaseless terrorizations, abuses and persecutions which occurred under the PNDC reign between 1981-91. People fleeing from the oppression, arrests and other violations are victims of both an unsafe political system and economic disorderliness.

GHANA REFUGEES

It is extremely hard to establish a precise total of Ghanaians in flight, due to their being scattered all over Africa, Europe and North America. Data on Ghanaian refugees in Europe assembled from United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), combined with estimates from community based agencies in

Canada, indicates that approximately fifty thousand Ghanaians sought refuge abroad between 1982-1990.

Three categories of Ghanaian refugees were identifiable. Firstly, there was the "elite group" composed of key members of the civilian administration dethroned by the 1981 coup. Included in this category were parliamentarians, heads of Ghana's diplomatic mission abroad, lawyers, judges, university lecturers, heads of governmental boards and corporations, top political party officials and other administrative officials. The average age of this group was thirty-five. They were highly educated and belonged to Ghana's top income bracket. Their ties to the dethroned administration made them targets for the military regime. They were the most wanted group. Upon their escape their relatives became targets for the revolutionary cadres.

The next category was the semi-elite group. This was composed of university students and journalists who as a result of their outspokenness, anti-military demonstrations, pamphleteering and criticisms of military policies clashed with the military regime. Also included in this group were civilians and army personnel involved in unsuccessful coup attempts. This class was relatively young and educated.

The third and largest group was the "general category" which consisted of those induced to flee as a result of revolutionary measures like raids on traders, control of religious activities, stringent economic measures, clashes with revolutionary organs and those accused of engagement in illegal economic activities. The average age of this group was twenty; their educational background was up to about high school level. Those included in the general group consisted of traders, pedlars, factory workers, drivers, artisans, smugglers, peasants, etc. This last group formed the bulk of Ghanaian refugees abroad since they easily fell prey to military raids and "revolutionary measures." The foregoing categorization may not be exhaustive but it provides a general framework for classifying Ghanaian refugees.

DESTINATION OF GHANA'S REFUGEES

Before the 1980s Ghanaians in flight sought refuge in neighbouring African nations, particularly Togo, Nigeria and Ivory Coast. The choice of these destinations was convenient in terms of proximity, cost and lack of immigration restrictions. Potential refugees gained access to these nations covertly through bush paths, or small communities located on the borders. The fact that Ghanaians could easily fit in and were acquainted with the local cultures made it easier to seek refuge in neighbouring nations. A few Ghanaian refugees also went to Britain. In the past decade however, the final destination of the majority of Ghanaian refugees shifted from the African continent to destinations in Canada, Germany, France, Sweden and Britain. Such a re-orientation is attributable to numerous factors.

The most crucial factor which refugees considered in their choice of destination was their safety. Ghanaian refugees never considered Ghana's neighbouring countries as safe places for refuge due to proximity to their source of danger, the PNDC. These fears were reinforced by the lack of adequate protection in the African nations they fled to.

The absence of any programs or even viable policies to assist them on their arrival in the African countries made it problematic for them to resettle. The majority of Ghanaian refugees who arrived in places like Ivory Coast and Nigeria had to find their own way about in terms of accommodation and means of livelihood. Reluctance of those in flight to declare themselves as refugees to appropriate authorities made them unable to benefit from any refugee assistance, even when it existed, thus making it hard for them to survive in their new locations.

The poor state of the economics of the African nations impeded their ability to provide meaningful support for potential refugees. In Togo, for instance, the extremely poor financial state of the nation, aggravated by the continuous influx of Ghanaians, made it difficult for the country to support refugees. Considerable assistance was needed from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

TABLE 1

Ghanaian Refugee Claimants in Four European Nations

Country	Total	Period
Federal Republic of Germany	7,482	1988-1990
Netherlands	6,032	1983-1990
France	1,240	1988
Belgium	1,198	1988
	15,952	1988

Source: UNCHR, 1990.

Unable to provide adequate protection and resettlement, these neighbouring African nations, Togo, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Burkina Faso, served as temporary stations for many Ghanaian refugees enroute to final destinations in Europe and beyond. UNHCR figures made available to West Africa Magazine indicated that nineteen thousand seven hundred and sixty-three Ghanaians sought political asylum in seventeen European countries between 1988 and October, 1990. The British Refugee Council (BRC) maintained in 1990 that the largest concentration of Ghanaian political exiles was in Britain, which may be partly explained by Ghana's historic ties to Britain. The latest figures from the BRC showed there were three thousand two hundred and twenty-eight Ghanaians with Convention Refugee Status (the UNHCR definition of refugee status) in Britain. The Council cautioned that since the figures excluded families of these refugees, the number could be over six thousand. Available figures of Ghanaian refugee-applicants in other European nations between 1981-91 are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 2

Incoming Claims (Fast Track): Top Ten Source Countries and Totals

May 21/86 – March/87			April/87 – Feb./88			Total Fast Track May 21/86 – Feb./88		
	Claims	%		Claims	%		Claims	%
Ghana	1,072	16.5	Chile	1,695	10.7	Ghana	2,233	10.0
Portugal	1,007	15.5	Ghana	1,161	7.3	Chile	2,067	9.3
Turkey	916	14.1	Iran	1,071	6.8	Turkey	1,922	8.6
Haiti	477	7.3	El Salv.	1,070	6.8	Portugal	1,915	8.5
India	374	5.8	Turkey	1,006	6.4	Iran	1,122	5.0
Chile	372	5.7	Sri Lanka	989	6.3	El Salv.	1,108	5.0
Somalia	315	4.8	Portugal	908	5.7	Sri Lanka	1,017	4.6
Pakistan	194	3.0	Honduras	633	4.0	India	903	4.0
Ethiopia	173	2.7	Lebanon	553	3.5	Haiti	895	4.0
Poland	154	2.4	India	529	3.3	Somalia	843	3.8
Total	5,034	77.8	Total	9,615	60.8	Total	14,023	62.9

The Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands both received a substantial number of Ghanaians within the decade. The totals of one thousand two hundred and forty and one thousand one hundred and ninety-eight for France and Belgium respectively, were considerable for the single year 1988.

The increasing number of asylum-seekers in Europe in the early 1980s attracted restrictive measures. According to UNCHR "some governments introduced measures including prohibitions from working and reduction of social benefits while applications were being considered." Preoccupied with the economic recession and the heavy financial burden constituted by asylum-seekers whose cases often took years to determine in view of the lengthy eligibility procedures, certain governments were no longer in a position to maintain the generous admission criteria of former years. In the Federal Republic of Germany, measures were instituted in 1980 to reduce the duration of asylum procedure and work permits were also prohibited. These measures were reinforced in 1985. Also in Germany neo-Nazi and other anti-immigrant organizations scored propaganda victories, virtually forcing public figures to take a tough stance against immigration in general. In France political parties and groups adopted anti-immigration issues as profitable platforms on which to campaign and this helped to encourage restrictive laws and actions against immigration. Both Belgium and the Netherlands imposed a Refugee Admission Quota in 1984. The flow of asylum-seekers to Britain was checked with the imposition of visa regulations for Ghanaians from their point of departure for Britain.

The stringent measures adopted in Europe had an impact on Ghanaian refugee claimants, causing them to look at North America — particularly Canada. From 1984 onwards when Europe adopted tougher measures against asylum-seekers, the Canadian Refugee Status Advisory Committee (RSAC) began to receive Ghanaian refugee applications in a sizeable number. As shown in Table 2, successive refugee applications from Ghanaians were among the top ten in Canada between May 21, 1986 and February, 1988. Within the period covered by the table, Ghanaian incoming claims surpassed that of major crisis areas like Somalia, Ethiopia and Sri Lanka. The table reveals that in the twenty-two month period May 1986 — February, 1988, two thousand two hundred and thirty three Ghanaians sought refugee status in Canada, the highest among ten countries. The Canadian total of two thousand two hundred and thirty three contrasts sharply with the total of four hundred and two Ghanaian refugee applications Britain received in the same period.

Ghanaian refugees influx to Canada in 1981-91 was influenced by the comparatively flexible refugee policies. Claimants faced no immediate deportation, no refusal of entry, relatively little harsh treatment and so on. The socio-economic opportunities present in Canada also served to boost the choice of Canada as a final destination. Such a preference, however, was not met with a high degree of acceptance. About sixty percent of Ghanaian refugees are still caught in the huge refugee backlog (the acceptance rate was estimated at twenty per one hundred).

Between January 1 and September 20, 1991, eight hundred and eighty-seven Ghanaian refugee claims went through the "Initial Hearing Stage" conducted by the Convention Refugee Determination Division of Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board. Out of these a total of seven hundred and ninety-six were judged to possess credible basis — consequently, they were eligible to proceed to a "Full Hearing Stage." However, out of four hundred and twenty-eight cases which were considered at the final hearing stage, only one hundred and seventy-six cases were given positive recommendations.

CONCLUSION

Repressions and persecution continue to characterize Ghana's PNDC regime. The helplessness of Ghanaians in the face of such inhumane treatment means that the flight abroad will persist. This calls for a coordinated external effort to bring pressure to bear on the military regime to amend its ways. There is the need to open the dialogue on linking economic assistance to poor nations with a decent human rights record.

Notes, Table 2:
a) The Fast Track process was implemented on May 21, 1986.
b) The data are divided into 11 month periods for purposes of this table.
Source: Refugee Status Advisory Committee, unpublished data.

Note

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THE LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR: THE FUTURE OF LIBERIAN REFUGEES

BY MOSES GEEPU-NAH TIEPOH*

INTRODUCTION

On December 24, 1989, a rebellion was launched against the Liberian government of the late Samuel Doe by forces of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor. This insurrection soon ignited into one of "Africa's most brutal fratricidal wars" in which thirteen thousand to fifty thousand people have been estimated killed and over 1.1 million persons (out of an estimated national population of 2.4 million people) were displaced from their homes; as many as seven hundred and fifty thousand people fled to neighbouring West African countries for refuge (Ruiz, 49, 52). Although there has not been an official estimate of the total economic and social costs of the war, many expect such an estimate to be gigantic in light of the massive destruction of economic and social infrastructures caused by the war. For instance, the hydropower station responsible for Monrovia's water supply was entirely destroyed and its rebuilding could take about five years and cost over $550 million (*Ibid.*, 58).

The Doe government was overthrown in the war and with the imposition of a cease-fire by members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) near the end of 1990, fighting among the various warring factions has ceased. Consequently, national, regional and other international efforts are in the process of enabling hundreds of thousands of Liberian refugees to be repatriated to their native land. Internationally supervised elections in Liberia are being conducted.

This paper presents a review of the war; the ECOWAS peace initiative in Liberia; relief efforts and conditions of Liberian refugees; and the current status of the Liberian conflict. We begin with a brief historical background to the war.

BACKGROUND

The seeds of what has become present-day Liberia were planted in the early 1820s with the repatriation of freed black Americans to the west coast of Africa by the American Colonization Society (ACS). Before the arrival of the black Americans, the Grain Coast, now called Liberia, was inhabited by indigenous African people who made their living mostly from horticulture, weaving, spinning, working metal and advanced agricultural techniques, such as "shifting system of rice cultivation" (Dunn, 10). With the advent of the black American settlers, a new economic and political order emerged, in which the returnees eventually assumed control of the established Liberian state and the indigenous majority experienced political, economic and social deprivations for a very long time.

Between 1847 and 1980, the governance of the Republic of Liberia was strictly monopolized by the descendants of the returned black Americans or 'Americo-Liberians,' as they became known. Only close to the end of this period were selected members of the indigenous population brought to the periphery of government. In the process of consolidating their rule over the *indigènes*, the Americo-Liberians had to fight not less than twenty wars against the different ethnic groups of Liberia, who were quite determined to defend their lands and cultures from settler occupation. However, in the end, the returnees succeeded in imposing the so-called 'republic' on the indigenous majority.

Until about 1930, there wasn't any substantial capital investment in Liberia. The economy was dominated by a subsistence agricultural sector in which the ruling elites lived on the exploitation of indigenous labour.

After a brief period of internal political rivalry among the various sectors of settlers, the True Whig Party (TWP) ultimately emerged as the dominant political power-bearer of the Americo-Liberians. Through the exercise of 'caste power,' the TWP managed successfully to subdue all opposition and rule Liberia uninterruptedly under a very tight one-party system of government for over a century (1878-1980).

However, the emergence of resolute political activism in the 1970s, coupled with deteriorated economic conditions, sharply undermined the social base of Americo-Liberian rule, so that by the end of the decade, the True Whig Party had become enormously unpopular among Liberians who viewed the Americo-Liberians as the architects of their economic and political problems.

Consequently, on April 12, 1980, a group of seventeen non-commissioned men of the Liberian Armed Forces, led by master sergeant Samuel Doe, overthrew the TWP government of William Tolbert in a bloody coup, thereby ending one hundred and thirty three years of Americo-Liberian hegemony in Liberia. A People's Redemption Council (PRC), comprising the seventeen coup makers, was quickly instituted to serve as the ruling council of the "Revolution." The new leader promised popular participation and economic development.

However, in just under three years, about half of his original councilmen

had been executed and some of his civilian cabinet ministers had fled into exile for their lives. By 1988, every social institution in Liberia had become repressed by the military government. Violations of human rights had become a trade mark of the regime. All of Liberia's social and economic indicators had abysmally degenerated. By 1989, ethnic tensions between the Krahns (Doe's tribespeople) and the Gios, had developed into a full-blown disease threatening Liberia's national stability. Thousands of Liberians were now refugees in foreign lands.

As soon as it was discovered that the military could not provide the appropriate national leadership, Liberians began expressing their discontent and opposition to the regime. But all peaceful efforts to remove the military regime from power failed, as the Doe government believed in fire power and not dialogue.

The Civil War

The Liberian conflict began when, on December 24, 1989, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor, entered Nimba county, one of Liberia's northeastern regions and declared its intention to overthrow the government of Samuel Doe and restore constitutional democracy, economic development and national unity (*West Africa*, 7-13 June, 91, 3149). The Doe regime reacted swiftly by starting a brutal counter-insurgency operation in Nimba, "destroying villages and exterminating members of rival ethnic groups" (*Liberia*, 2). These brutalities led many villagers to align themselves with the NPFL. After several months of fighting, the NPFL forces gained control over many parts of Liberia. As they gained greater control, the rebel forces resorted to acts of bloody retaliation against members of sergeant Doe's Krahn tribe for the atrocities they too had committed in Nimba. The conflict gradually degenerated into a tribalized civil war.

As the NPFL advanced into Monrovia, Liberia's Capital, government troops intensified their counter-attacks and thousands of Liberian people were massacred in the process. It has been estimated that between thirteen thousand and fifty thousand people were killed and 1.1 million people (out of an estimated national population of 2.4 million) were displaced. About seven hundred and fifty thousand people fled to neighboring countries for refuge. Of this number, three hundred and eleven thousand people went to Guinea; two hundred and seventeen thousand to the Ivory Coast; one hundred and twenty-six thousand to Sierra Leone; six thousand to Ghana; and one thousand to Nigeria (Ruiz, 54). One of the most violent acts in the war was the mass murder, on July 30, 1990, of six hundred civilian women, men and children in the St. Peter's Lutheran Church, a designated Red Cross shelter. The people had been in this Church for refuge and a group of government soldiers rushed into it and began a shooting spree.

As the war reached its height in August, 1990, conditions in Liberia, particularly Monrovia, became deplorable. People lived without food, water and light. Starvation and malnutrition were rampant, because international relief assistance was not initially forthcoming and the delivery of what was available was made difficult by the war.

As the size of the NPFL forces increased, it split into two rival factions: the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) headed by Charles Taylor and the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) headed by Prince Johnson. Although the two forces were independently fighting against the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) commanded by Samuel Doe, tensions between them deepened rapidly. On September 10, 1990, Doe was captured by the forces of Prince Johnson and later killed. This did not stop the war. The remnants of the AFL fought desperately in the streets of Monrovia in an attempt to retain power. Meanwhile, the two NPFL factions were engaged in rival fighting, as each tried to assume final control of Liberia. The country became a killing field.

Peace Efforts

The peace process in the Liberian conflict may be divided into two phases: the pre-ECOWAS phase and the ECOWAS phase. In the first phase, the Doe government initiated moves to resolve the conflict, with the hope that the government would remain in power. Within five months of the war, the government requested the intervention of the United States, the Liberian Council of Churches and the Association for Constitutional Democracy in Liberia (ACDL) based in the United States. The government's request failed to achieve any positive result, because Doe refused to accept ACDL's demand that he should resign and the U.S. request that he go into exile. On the other hand, he pledged his government's resolve to "fight to the last person" (Shettima, 7). In June, 1990, the Liberian Council of Churches convened a peace talk between Doe and the NPFL in Freetown, Sierra Leone. This meeting also collapsed, because Doe refused the demand that he resign.

Following the failure of the Freetown talks, it seemed that the Doe government was really in disarray. Ministers and other high officials of the government were abandoning their posts and secretly escaping from Liberia. Apparently in distress, Doe wrote a letter to the U.S. government, in which he stated:

> *Our capital is named after your president Monroe. Our flag is a replica of yours. Our laws were patterned after your laws. We in Liberia have always considered ourselves "step children" of the U.S. We implore you to come and help your step children who are in danger of loosing their lives and children.* (*Ibid.*, 9)

Although in the early stage of the war, the U.S. Rangers were reported

to have been seen escorting Doe's forces in Nimba, the United States later refused to fully intervene in the war because of Liberia's increasing irrelevance to U.S. strategic interest, in light of the new changes taking place in global relations and also because of domestic public opinion against Doe.

In the second phase of the peace process, members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decided to sponsor a cease-fire in Liberia. In May, 1990 at its 13th regular meeting in Banjul, the capital of Gambia, the ECOWAS set up a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) to deal with some of the political problems confronting the West African region. The Liberian problem occupied a forefront on the SMC agenda in view of its urgency and increasing regional implications. At a subsequent meeting in Banjul on July 5th, members of the SMC, including Gambia, Ghana, Togo, Mali and Nigeria, decided to send a 2,500-member peace-keeping force to Liberia. In August, the Community invited all the political parties, warring factions and interest groups in Liberia to an All-Liberian Conference in Banjul to form an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) to be headed by a non-partisan to the conflict. The mandate of IGNU was to provide the climate for national unity; facilitate International relief efforts; repatriate Liberian refugees; and conduct an internationally supervised election, in six months. All the parties invited, except Taylor's NPFL, attended the conference. Dr. Amos Sawyer was elected president of the Interim Government. And, although the NPFL was absent, it was offered six positions on the Interim Government, including the position of Speaker of the Interim National Assembly, which was reserved for Taylor. The United States and other countries declared their support for the ECOWAS initiative and pledged to work within its framework, even though the United States has not officially recognized the Interim Government in Liberia.

However, when the ECOWAS forces, known as the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) arrived in Monrovia in August, 1990 they were fiercely resisted by the NPFL of Taylor. The INPFL of Johnson declared its support for the ECOWAS peace plan, although it later decided to withdraw its support from the Interim Government. The bombardment of ECOMOG's positions by Taylor's forces prompted the former to change its terms of reference from that of peace keeping to peace enforcement. The ECOMOG forces finally succeeded in creating a buffer zone among the three warring factions (NPFL, INPFL and the remnants of AFL).

Meanwhile, another dimension emerged in the conflict, when the Sierra Leone government complained that NPFL forces had crossed into Sierra Leone and started a war. Burkina Faso was also accused by the government of aiding the incursion. But the rebels quickly responded that they were members of Sierra Leone's own Revolutionary United Front. It was through the intervention of Guinea and Nigeria that the rebel forces were defeated.

On July 29-30, 1991 another ECOWAS-sponsored peace meeting was held in Abidjan, the Ivory Coast. At the end of the meeting, both interim President Sawyer and Charles Taylor declared that their differences had been overcome (*Ibid.*, 16). A 5-member sub-committee of the SMC was commissioned to work out modalities for the proposed national elections in Liberia. The subcommittee included Liberia, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia and the Ivory Coast. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's International Negotiation Network (INN) was contacted to serve as part of the Liberian election process.

Relief Efforts and Refugees

There were about seven hundred and fifty thousand Liberians who fled the war and over seventy-seven thousand were displaced. According to some international relief workers, international response to the Liberian plight was "too little, too late" (*Liberia*, 15). Emergency food supplies did not arrive in Liberia until September, 1990, nine months after the eruption of the war. The U.N. failed to designate a special representative to Liberia to facilitate relief efforts (*Ibid.*, 18).

Although the U.S. government led the relief efforts in Liberia, it has been criticized for not having done enough, given the long standing historical relationship between Liberia and the United States. Also, many countries consider Liberia as a U.S. problem, referring to the huge amount of military and economic aid donated to the Doe dictatorship. By mid-December, 1990, total U.S. relief assistance stood at $72.6 million, including in-kind assistance and embassy contributions (*Ibid.*, 21). It now stands at $140 million (*West Africa*, 11-17 Nov. 1991, 1887). In addition to the United States, several international relief agencies and voluntary relief groups were working in Liberia. These included the UNDP, UNICEF, the World Food Program (WFP), United Nations Development Relief Organization (UNDRO), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and others (*Ibid.*, 21-22). There were also a number of Liberian voluntary organizations, including the Special Emergency Life Food (SELF); the Liberian Committee for Relief, Resettlement and Reconstruction (LICORE); the Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL) and others.

In the neighboring countries, where Liberian refugees fled, a number of problems, such as bad roads and lack of trucks, made relief efforts difficult. One unique feature of the Liberian situation was the

non-existence of refugee camps in the host countries. Before international relief assistance arrived, almost all of the refugees were accepted into the private homes of the host nationals. This eventually caused a strain on the resources of the local populations. However, when relief assistance later arrived, it was intended only for the refugees. The situation caused some resentment among many villagers who now needed assistance, too. A special appeal to the international community by UNDRO's officials for assistance to compensate the affected populations in Guinea met with a "very disappointing" response (*Ibid.*, 23).

The Current Status of the Conflict

Although there are good reasons for optimism, there are also grounds for caution towards the current peace process and the future of Liberia and its citizens. The optimism stems from the result of the latest round of peace talks held in Yamoussoukro, the Ivory Coast, at the end of October, 1991. According to the final communiqué released on October 30th, Charles Taylor has agreed to disarm his forces under the supervision of ECOMOG within 60 days. Following the process of disarmament by all parties, repatriation and rehabilitation of Liberian refugees will proceed. This will then provide the groundwork for elections to be conducted in April 1992 (*West Africa*, 11-17 Nov. 1991, 1886). Before the election, ECOMOG is expected to occupy all of Liberia's air and sea ports and create buffer zones to separate the warring factions. This would allow Liberians to return home and safely participate in the election. For such a task, ECOMOG is planning to augment its forces to ten thousand with the addition of troops from Senegal. It should be noted, however, that up to publication time, Taylor has not yet complied with the terms of Yamoussoukro IV; he has not disarmed his forces and there are fears that this may jeopardize the election plan.

All those who attended the talks, including former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, expressed their satisfaction with the results. However, there are reports about possible "obstacles" to the plan from the Yamoussoukro talks (*Ibid.*). The United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), comprising remnants of Doe's forces and supported by the Movement for the Redemption of Liberian Moslems (MRM), is said to be displeased with ECOWAS' concessions to Taylor and insists that the NPFL should disarm unconditionally. ULIMO's forces claimed to be 60 miles inside Liberia and vow to continue their "strictly military" campaign against Taylor's forces (*Ibid.*).

Meanwhile, efforts are being taken on the ground to actualize the Yamoussoukro plan. Prince Johnson, who had withdrawn his support for the Interim government, is now said to be coming back to ECOWAS. The ad hoc Supreme Court, established to moderate the election, is now getting funding from U.S.-based organizations such as the National Democratic and National Republic Institutes (*Ibid.*, 1887).

While the current state of affairs in the Liberian conflict deserves both optimism and caution, there are reasons for more optimism. Firstly, the presence of Doe's supporters in the ULIMO has rendered that movement virtually without a base, in terms of both national and international support. Secondly, the ECOWAS peace process has strong domestic and international legitimacy and it will be difficult for a discredited force such as ULIMO to destroy it. I think the ball is in ECOWAS' court and also Taylor's. If Taylor truly cooperates with ECOWAS, I believe that the long-sought objective of peace in Liberia finally will be achieved in the foreseeable future. And Liberian refugees will then be safe and happy to return to their Liberian villages.

Note

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RURAL SETTLEMENTS FOR AFRICAN REFUGEES IN FIRST COUNTRIES OF ASYLUM: PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATION AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

BY VÉRONIQUE LASSAILLY-JACOB

INTRODUCTION

Over the past fifteen years, more than seventeen million people world wide have been forced out of their homelands. A significant number of these refugees originate in Africa. In spite of the uncertainty and the unreliability of African refugee statistics, in 1991 Africa was estimated to have approximately five million refugees[1]. Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Malawi today support the largest concentration of the refugee population.

Most refugees flee across the nearest border and settle spontaneously among the local population, particularly when there is close cultural affinity. When war broke out in Eritrea, the Beni Amer refugees were welcomed by their brothers living on the Sudanese side. In this case, refugees self-settle in the border area with help from the local population. They are unregistered and unassisted by both host governments and the international community.

However, host governments worry about national security and depletion of their resources when the influx increases. They also worry about the enormous economic and social burden imposed by an uncontrollable mass influx of foreigners. They do not want to become hosts to self-settled refugees and prefer to directly control and supervise refugee flows into their territory and to channel them towards assigned areas. Most host countries have precarious national economies and limited resources to share with the newcomers. Host populations are often as poor or even poorer than the refugees themselves[2].

In many cases, "reception" camps or "transit" camps are established near the border where the refugees are provided with emergency aid such as food, water, shelter, clothing, blankets and medical help. Camps are supposed to be temporary, otherwise the population develops a dependency syndrome on outside aid. However, in some cases, camps have tended to become permanent solutions i.e. the Sahrawi refugees have settled in camps in Algeria since 1975 and the Ogaden Somali and Galla have been accomodated in camps in Somalia since 1978.

Since the early 1960s, Africa has pioneered organized rural settlements as a "durable" solution to the problem of accomodating long-term refugees[3]. Refugees who are regrouped in camps located near the border, are moved to land settlement schemes inside the host countries. They are supposed to integrate locally and become self-sufficient through agriculture as soon as possible. This way of rehabilitating refugees was first started in the early 1960s by the UNHCR[4] (United Nations High Commission for Refugees). The first rural settlement was Bibwe in the Kivu province of Zaïre, which opened in October 1961 for the tens of thousands of Rwandese Tutsi fleeing their country (Stein and Clark,59).

This paper will first describe these organized settlements and their purpose. Their current situation will then be analysed and discussed by examining the obstacles which have prevented them from becoming self-sufficient and locally integrated.

REFUGEE RURAL SETTLEMENTS' MAJOR OBJECTIVES

There are many reasons for implementing rural settlements for refugees in countries of first asylum. Firstly, until now most African refugees have been rural refugees who have settled in the country of first asylum[5]. Secondly, the host populations have had to share their scarce resources with a growing number of newcomers and cannot support any more long-term, unproductive people. Most Eritrean refugees have been living in Sudan for more than 20 years.

This means that the host countries have had to find long-term development-oriented strategies to support large, long-term refugee communities. But the burden of granting asylum is often too heavy for a single country which has to ask for international assistance. Land settlement schemes for refugees[6] are implemented with the help of international aid. Almost all costs of rural settlements are met by the United Nations organizations, mainly the UNHCR and the World Food Program (WFP) in collaboration with international organizations such as Care International or the Red Cross or local non-governmental organizations (NGO). Host countries provide the agricultural land and the administrative services to run the settlements. During the last three decades, organized rural settlements have received considerable attention and funding because integrating refugees in host countries through agricultural self-sufficiency has been considered the best solution.

These schemes belong to the group of land settlement schemes conceived by governments in order to develop pioneer lands. Implementing an organized rural settlement involves several factors: identifying a suitable area according to soil and water supplies (drinking water, rainfall or irri-

gation water), investing in basic infrastructures such as access roads, site clearing and construction of buildings (including schools, dispensaries, community buildings and medical facilities). These development programs are supposed to benefit not only the refugees but, as much as possible, the local population too.

An organized rural settlement is either a small town or a number of "villages" surrounded by agricultural land. The Mozambiquan refugee settlement of Ukwimi in Zambia is made up of 64 villages. Upon arrival, each family head receives materials to build his or her house on an assigned plot. He or she also receives tools and seeds and a farmplot which has to be cleared. In Eastern Sudan, each refugee household is given a 5 to 10 "feddan" plot of rain-fed land (one feddan equals 0.4 ha). Food rations are supplied by the WFP for two years. Families are supposed to become self-sufficient through agriculture as soon as possible.

The UNHCR establishes three prerequisites for a settlement to be considered viable i.e. the necessary basic facilities must be operational, the new settlers must be able to feed themselves and the new community should be locally integrated. A rural settlement is deemed to be viable within four years. Then, the settlement is handed over to the host government which has to integrate it into the local administrative structure. The international donor community is then relieved of its financial and managerial burden. However, the reality of self-sufficiency and local integration does not always live up to the expectations established by the UNHCR.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND LOCAL INTEGRATION

At issue is how to define self-sufficiency and local integration. At what level of subsistence do we speak of self-sufficiency? What are the criteria that indicate a settlement is locally integrated? According to the UNHCR local integration is "The process by which the refugee is assimilated into the social and economic life of a new national community." T. Kuhlman argues that the concepts of integration and assimilation are different and finds this definition unsatisfactory (Kuhlman, 1-20). G. Kibreab has a more realistic view of local integration and sees it as "an economic, social and cultural process by which refugees become members of the host society on a permanent basis" (Kibreab, 1989, 469).

Self-sufficiency is a concept which is very difficult to measure or evaluate. For most aid agencies, refugees' self-sufficiency means achieving at least the same standard of living as that of the local residents. But can we speak of self-sufficiency when the standard of living is *below* subsistence level, as is often the case? "Throughout Africa, the dilemma exists of establishing acceptable and sustainable living standards for refugees settled where the living standards of the resident rural population are themselves often unacceptably low" (Armstrong, 1988, 70).

ORGANIZED RURAL SETTLEMENTS

It is worth noting that only a minority of refugees are actually living in organized rural settlements. All refugees could not possibly be accommodated in organized settlements because of insufficient funds and staff. Indeed most refugees are reluctant to be settled within these schemes and prefer to remain self-settled. Angolan refugees in Zambia resisted attempts made by the government to place them in organized settlements despite the economic hardships faced in spontaneous resettling and despite the high levels of welfare given to refugees in settlements (Hansen, 375-80).

Two main factors explain why refugees are reluctant to move into organized settlements. They do not want to be controlled and they perceive these to be permanent settlements. Most refugees feel they live in temporary exile. They fully intend to repatriate as soon as possible. Therefore, they do not want to put down roots in the host country. The other factor is the way of life imposed on them. A. Hansen who conducted interviews among self-settled Angolan refugees in Zambia, found that "their long-term goal was to re-establish their normal existence. Normal existence meant living in a village or town, not in a camp under government supervision." (Hansen, 378).

From 1961 to 1987, one hundred and thirty-two refugee settlements have been set up in Africa. They have assisted some one million refugees. This figure is about one fifth of the total refugee population and does not include internally displaced persons. Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaïre, Botswana, Burundi and Mozambique are the main countries of asylum where these settlements have been established.

Out of the one hundred and six refugee settlements set up between 1962 and 1982, only eighty-four are operating. Eleven were abandoned and twenty-one were closed due to voluntary repatriation. Of these eighty-four settlements, thirty were declared self-sufficient by the UNHCR between 1966 and 1982. It should be mentioned that fifty-four settlements had not attained self-reliance by 1982. Furthermore, most of the thirty settlements took longer than four years to attain self-sufficiency and twenty-one of them have needed substantial post hand-over aid in order to re-attain economic viability (Stein and Clark, 59).

Why do the majority of refugee rural settlements present such disappointing results despite the huge amount of money spent to make them viable?

OBSTACLES TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY?

Unsuitable Locations

The first and main obstacle is an unsuitable location; frequently inadequate in terms of geographical situation, soil, water supply and natural resources available to the number of settlers.

Many settlements are located in marginal and isolated areas where

accessibility is a major problem. Some twenty thousand Rwandese refugees have been settled in an underpopulated and underdeveloped area of northeastern Burundi. Most refugee settlements in Eastern Sudan are located in remote areas. Geographic isolation from main urban centres and transportation networks hinders marketing and trade.

Refugee sites are often unsuitable in terms of soil, rainfall and water resources. In Eastern Sudan, several settlement sites were chosen by the government in spite of warnings made by international survey missions (Stein and Clark, 59). As a result, the Quala En Nahal refugee settlement, which regroups farmers dependent on rain-fed agriculture, is located in an area where rainfall is erratic and crop failure is high.

Some settlements were closed due to viability or security problems. Koboko, set up in 1962 for twelve thousand Sudanese in Uganda, was abandoned in 1966-67 because it was too close to the border and too much involved in violence (Stein and Clark, 59).

Inadequate farm sizes are another obstacle in achieving self-reliance for these agricultural settlements. Allocated plots are often too small to allow food self-sufficiency. Hence yields decline and erosion spreads because of continuous cultivation without fallowing. "The land resource in the old settlement of Qala en Nahal, when looked at in the light of the present population needs, is inadequate to enable all the families to receive the ten feddans of cultivable land which were considered as sufficient to enable a family of average size to become self-reliant" (Kibreab, 1987b, 65). Furthermore, no allowance is usually made for future land demands which will arise from the natural population growth. "In the old local settlements in Eastern Sudan, land fragmentation is one of the problems facing the old settlers. Parents are now sharing their holdings with their married male children because their future need was not taken into account when the settlements were planned" (Kibreab, 1989, 486).

An even more serious problem is lack of adequate water supplies. In the refugee settlement of Mishamo in Tanzania, A. Armstrong reports that in southern villages women have to walk distances of three to five kilometers to fetch water which was intended to be available within five hundred meters (Armstrong, 1986, 30-52). The inadequate water supply threatened the viability of Ulyankulu in Tanzania and required that more than half of its fifty thousand population be relocated (Armstrong, 1988, 57-73). In Somalia, four of the five areas which contain thirty-one refugee camps have critical water shortages (Rogge, 1981, 195-212).

Another obstacle to achieving self-sufficiency is linked to overpopulation. Large numbers of refugees contribute to the deforestation of wide areas surrounding the sites in their search for firewood and building materials. The refugee settlement of Katumba in Tanzania, which has now grown to over one hundred thousand inhabitants, faces major environmental problems (Armstrong, 1988, 57-73). H. Christensen mentions camp areas in Somalia which are slowly being transformed into stony, arid desert (Christensen, 48).

According to G. Kibreab, the main reason why these unsuitable sites are chosen for refugee settlements is linked to host government policies (Kilbreab, 1989, 468-490). Firstly, governments tend to use refugee settlements as a means of colonizing and developing the country's underdeveloped and marginal areas. Implementing refugee settlements in remote areas is an opportunity to create an infrastructure with the help of international assistance which otherwise would have been unavailable without the refugees. This has been especially true for the settlements of Meheba in Zambia and of Ulyankulu, Katumba, Mishamo and Mwezi in Tanzania. Secondly, by putting refugees in isolated and thinly populated areas, host governments try to avoid problems of land disputes and local hostility which frequently arise when new schemes are set up in occupied areas. Thirdly, refugees settled in remote areas cannot compete with nationals for scarce resources and employment opportunities.

Governments do not pay much attention to the environment and potential resources of the sites because they perceive these sites to be temporary solutions for temporary settlers who are expected to repatriate as soon as possible. Even when there is no emergency situation involved in the planning, there are few (if any) feasibility studies and base-line surveys conducted to determine the suitability of the sites.

Some settlements such as Mishamo in Tanzania, Ukwimi in Zambia or Etsha in Botswana have been successful because advance planning and site preparation were undertaken before settlers arrived. Ukwimi was located in a reserve.

Inadequate Assistance Programs

Another major obstacle to achieving self-sufficiency is related to inadequate assistance programs, mainly agricultural programs.

As is often the case, refugees are not allowed to use their traditional farming methods to farm their allocated plot. Refugee settlements are seen by planners as an opportunity to introduce modern farming techniques such as tractors, fertilizers, insecticides, etc. Mechanization and block farming are frequently used. Refugees are considered risk-taking settlers who are ready to abandon their traditional farming practices, the way voluntary, highly motivated settlers do. Planners do not take into consideration the fact that they deal with uprooted and traumatized people who are distraught at having left their homeland and who attempt to cling to their traditional way of life as a way of coping. Even in Etsha, Botswana, which is considered a successful refugee settlement, the agricultural program was a failure as noted by D. Potten:

> *Destumping was emphasized, although it led to wind erosion and was unnecessary as the Hambukushu cultivated mainly with the hoe. The kinds of seeds purchased for the farmers were not geared to*

their preferences. More than 600 donkeys were brought to the settlers, although they were not accustomed to ploughing with donkeys...Several hundred ploughs were purchased but not more than 30% were ever used. (Potten, 116)

This is an example of wasteful assistance. There should be a distinction between development approaches needed under "normal circumstances" for voluntary settlers and those needed in a crisis situation as is the case for refugee settlers.

In these organized settlements, farmland is considered the main source of income and employment and planners focus on farm activities. However, rain-fed agriculture is seasonal and refugees are under-employed. In addition, the settlements often regroup a heterogeneous community consisting of people from both rural and urban backgrounds. Refugee settlers may be educated, as is the case of some Ugandans settled at Kigwa. Others may be pastoralists, as were the Rwandese refugees at Mwesi in Tanzania and many Eritrean refugees in rural settlements in Sudan. Urban, educated refugees are expected to support themselves as settled farmers with all the new skills and mental attitudes that this entails. Speaking of the settlement of Dukwe in Botswana, J. Zetterqvist mentions that the traditional Botswana communities base their economy on cattle with crops as a complement (Zetterqvist, 1990). As refugees are not allowed to own cattle their economy is heavily dependent on the production of crops.

Furthermore, refugees are not involved enough in the setting up of the settlements. Settlement commandants who handle settlement affairs have often left little room for refugee participation and have developed antagonistic relations with the refugees. For example, A. Armstrong points out the very limited representation of Burundis in the Mishamo settlement's secretariat which is dominated by Tanzanian staff (Armstrong, 1986, 30-52).

Aid agencies mostly address the men as far as development assistance is concerned. However, female-headed households are numerous in refugee settlements and most of the assistance provided for them is relief assistance. As a result, refugee women, who constitute sometimes the majority of the refugee population, are often marginalized.

Finally, the high level of infrastructure and services provided in organized settlements suffer from problems of maintenance and long-term upkeep costs. Many programs built in too much external dependence, such as regular importation of fuel and spare parts. These advantages are often short-lived. After being handed over, many (if not most) of the settlements experienced difficulties maintaining their infrastructure and services because local funding was inadequate or non-existent. It involved major adjustment problems.

The Qala en Nahal scheme in Eastern Sudan was totally dependent upon the construction of an elaborate pump and storage system which absorbed the greater part of the scheme's funding. Moreover, when poor maintenance caused pumps to break down, the scheme was threatened with abandonment (Rogge, 1981, 203).

OBSTACLES TO LOCAL INTEGRATION?

Of the twenty-one organized settlements that were closed due to repatriation between 1962 and 1982, seven were already considered self-sufficient (Kibreab, 1989, 468-490). This suggests that achieving self-sufficiency is not enough to retain refugees in a host country. Economic integration should be accompanied by social, cultural and legal integration. But several obstacles make the achievement of local integration an impossible target under the present system.

Social and Cultural Integration

The location of refugee settlements in the host country can be seen as an obstacle to social and cultural integration. When refugees are kept in isolated or thinly populated areas, they are prevented from establishing relations with their hosts and becoming members of the host society.

The settlement patterns themselves can be perceived as an obstacle to local integration. According to G. Kibreab, by keeping refugees together in spatially segregated sites, host governments want them to maintain their cultural identity in order to facilitate their repatriation (Kilbreab, 1989, 468-490). For example, in the refugee situation in Eastern Sudan, "Organized settlements are relatively isolated pockets of refugee communities, with very limited social contacts with the hosts" (Bulcha, 84).

Refugees accomodated in organized settlements are often reluctant to become integrated — they express great nostalgia for their homeland and previous way of life. They suffer from a breakdown of the family structure and dislocation of the traditional community based on kinship. In addition they suffer a loss of cultural identity and from not belonging to a form of social organization any more. Refugee rural settlements often regroup nuclear families or isolated individuals from different villages or even ethnic groups. In many cases, local integration seems to be better achieved among spontaneously settled refugees. During his interviews with refugees in Eastern Sudan, M. Bulcha found that eighty-two percent of self-settling refugees spoke Arabic as compared with forty-eight percent among those in the organized settlements (Bulcha, 73-90).

Another obstacle preventing local integration is linked to the status of the refugees in the settlement areas. They are by law prohibited to leave the settlements without authorization and work outside the settlement. Their movements require official permits. In other words, they are expected to behave like settlers without the rights of citizens.

Legal Integration

Local integration is impossible without legal integration. If long-term refugees cannot acquire the citizenship of a host country, they will never

become members of the country. Some governments such as Tanzania, Botswana and Burundi decided to grant citizenship to refugees settled in the oldest settlements. As noted by J. Rogge:

> *Botswana was the first to recognize that full self-sufficiency also implies the creation among refugees of a feeling of national responsibilities and that this was best achieved by giving refugees the option of becoming citizens of their adopted state.* (Rogge, 1985, 73)

Tanzania granted naturalization to thirty-six thousand of the Rwandese refugees in 1980. Two thousand five hundred Angolan refugees in Botswana and a limited number of Tutsi refugees in Burundi were granted citizenship. However, we notice considerable unwillingness on the part of refugees to become naturalized citizens of the host states. For example, in the former Mozambiquan settlement of Mputa, which was handed over to local administration over ten years ago, only ten families out of an approximate one thousand one hundred have chosen to acquire citizenship. Mishamo's refugees were found to be the least integrated with eighty-nine percent unwilling to be naturalized.

CONCLUSION

There is a contradictory perception held about these local settlements which threatens their viability. Refugee land settlements in Africa are perceived by international donors to be a durable solution, a means to enable refugees to attain self-reliance and to integrate locally. For this reason, they build costly infrastructures and services and carry out costly development programs. But most host governments perceive these settlements to be a means of colonizing and developing new lands. They do not pay much attention to these settlements because they consider refugees as temporary settlers in their country. And refugees see themselves as temporary settlers unless citizenship of the host country is granted. Unwillingness on the part of hosts is probably the major obstacle facing integration of these settlements.

What about the future? The obstacles preventing refugee settlements from achieving integration and self-sufficiency are likely to increase, not diminish, because of the continuing decline of host country economies and lower funding from the international community. In spite of all these obstacles, organized rural settlements will still provide one solution to the problem of accomodating long-term rural refugees who have constituted the largest group of refugees so far, though as J. Rogge noted:

> *no similar set of solutions has yet been evolved to enable host countries to deal with the ever rising tide of urban refugees. This issue is now one of the major challenges confronting the continent's asylum states, as well as the international community in general. (Ibid.,* 82)

Notes

[1] The actual number of African refugees is far greater. Part of them have found refuge in their own country and are considered internally displaced people. By late 1990, there were a minimum of four hundred thousand internally displaced Somalis. They live in refugee-like conditions but are not considered refugees according to the criteria established by the Organization of African Unity Convention of 1969 and therefore don't receive any assistance. Some of them spontaneously resettle in urban or rural areas and are not registered. "It is part of the tragedy of being a refugee that he or she can't be helped as a refugee unless he or she is included in a statistic" (Neldner, 395)

[2] Despite precarious national economies the Eastern, Central and Southern African nations, for whom the refugee burden is most heavy, have never closed their borders to potential refugees nor have the so-called refugees ever been forcibly turned back.

[3] While in the past, political conflicts were resolved within years, nowadays turmoils face a much longer time to be settled. Most refugees fleeing anti-colonial wars were repatriated once guerrilla warfare ended. Nowadays many refugees remain long-term refugees.

[4] The first UNHCR involvement in Africa occurred in 1957 when about two million refugees from Algeria fled to Tunisia and Morocco. Camps were established for these refugees who received emergency assistance under UNHCR supervision.

[5] Today, a growing number of refugees come from an urban background. Only the few who are better educated find permanent asylum in a second country of asylum. On the one hand, most African refugees, particularly those from rural areas, are unwilling to move far from their homeland, expecting to repatriate as soon as possible. On the other hand, the industrialized countries are unwilling to receive these people with a rural background.

[6] One country, Sudan, created two other forms of refugee settlements — the wage-earning settlements where the refugees are supposed to become self-supporting through wages earned in the agricultural irrigated schemes and the semi-urban settlements which aimed at relocating spontaneously settled urban refugees to specific settlements located peripherally to cities.

Note

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISES IN UGANDA: REASONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND REFUGEES

BY OGENGA OTUNNU *

In the past three decades since Uganda gained independence from Britain, the country has experienced some of the worst human catastrophes in modern times — gross violations of human rights, amounting to genocide and generating millions of refugees and internally displaced persons; state sponsored terrorism, dictatorship, nepotism, corruption, ethnicity, civil wars, famine; total collapse of the economy; the disintegration and demise of the state. The magnitude and severity of the crises are comparable to those experienced by Afghanistan, Cambodia, Ethiopia and the Sudan. While both the short and long-term costs of the problems are devastating to the nation as a whole, the weight of the burden differs depending on gender, class, region, age group and the particular period. A number of important questions warrant investigation here: what are the origins of the crises? Why do they persist? What can be done to avert them?

There are many possible origins of violations. Given the current state of research on human rights in the country and the partial nature of literature, it is difficult to isolate any single factor from a series of other factors that seem to be equally important in addressing the issue. Again, causes and results of violations are not easy to empirically isolate. That is, whatever starts the sequence off tends to change other qualities of life so that from a number of different starting points, following different trajectories of change, comparable results may ensue. This view seems to hold true for all the questions posited. Nonetheless, on the balance of the evidence, this paper contends that while the origins of violations of rights in Uganda lie in a blend of factors, colonialism and its lopsided socio-economic and political structures are central to addressing the question. This is not to suggest that origins of violations may not be located in pre-colonial African societies, but rather, as a territorial unit, Uganda did not exist before European partition of Africa.

These oppressive, exploitative and tension laden socio-economic and political structures, preserved in the main since the colonial era, go a long way in explaining the persistence of the crises. What this means is that the conventional overwhelming emphasis on the roles of rulers (Milton Obote, Idi Amin, Yusuf Lule, Godfrey Binaisa, Paulo Muwanga, Tito Okello and Yoweri Museveni) and their armies in those violations, often obscures rather than clarifies their functions in the broader structures.

This, however, does not mean that these rulers are mere victims who are helplessly constrained by the dysfunctional nature of the system they inherited and maintained. Admittedly, theirs is a peculiar "autonomous" behaviour which contributes to gross violations of rights and the socio-economic and political decay of the state. Another factor that sustains the culture of crises is external to the country. Firstly, a number of governments, democratic and authoritarian, in the South and North, have directly and indirectly supported dictatorial regimes in the country. Through economic, diplomatic and military assistance the wheel of violence and dictatorship is serviced. Secondly, by treating the crises as essentially internal affairs of the sovereign state, the international community has done little to avert violations of rights. Finally, by maintaining the unjust and exploitative international economic system which violates the right to development, the international community directly violates the rights of Ugandans.

The point is, the economic underdevelopment of the country, which is a result of both internal and external contradictions (past and present) further reduces the capability of the marginal state in promoting and protecting universal human rights. That is, a close link exists between economic development and advancement of human rights. It is on this issue of development as a significant contributor to human rights that the commitment of Western democracies to human rights in Uganda and other underdeveloped countries, is quite suspect.

There are no simple solutions to the crises. Nonetheless, by way of suggestion, this paper maintains that it is vital to cast the problem of violations of rights in the context of the historical development of the country — because it is within such a perspective that the current issue of human rights and refugees may best be understood and tackled.

The international community — democratic governments, regional

and international inter-governmental organizations, NGOs, academic institutions and religious communities — should play an important role in bringing to an end the human tragedy in the country. This means that the international community should play a fundamentally new role — come to grips with human rights abuses in the country and stop treating violations of rights as internal affairs of the sovereign state. It also means that the rhetoric about the "new era" of human rights and democracy should be tested against actual policies and practice. Constant pressure should be exerted on any regime in the country to practice democratic pluralism and protect human rights. Also, it should be remembered that promoting and protecting human rights will require initiating self-sustaining and equitable economic development; a responsibility which the international community should not shy away from. It is on this issue that the question of debt crises and the policies of the World Bank and IMF and their implications for human rights should also be evaluated and tackled. Certainly, it is inappropriate and misleading to create a false and rigid dichotomy between internal and external initiatives, economic and political. Actions on all fronts should take place simultaneously. Unless this role is taken seriously, the international community will continue to address the symptoms rather than the root causes of gross human rights abuses and refugee flights from the country. Therefore it must be emphasized that only when human rights conditions in Uganda improve substantially, will current and future human rights abuses and refugee flows be averted.

This study will briefly cover the period immediately before the era of formal European colonialism up to the present day. In particular it will examine colonial strategies and tactics of socio-economic and political integration of various countries which today constitute Uganda, the politico-religious wars, discriminatory missionary education, the formation of political parties, religious and ethnic discriminations and the problem of political legitimacy and the role of the military in violations of rights. It is hoped that this approach, though limited in scope, will help explore the questions.

The Colonial Background to Human Rights Violations

An analysis of the history of human rights violations in Uganda must begin with an examination of the conflict-laden, oppressive and exploitative socio-economic and political structures fashioned and left behind by the colonial regime — because this is where the immediate root causes of contemporary crises may be located. Colonialism by its very nature is inherently authoritarian and exploitative — a flagrant negation of the fundamental rights of the colonized. To begin with, the arbitrary and artificial creation of colonial borders divided families, as well as ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups into different nation states. More specifically in the case of Uganda, this colonial design lumped together into a single administrative unit over forty ethnic groups which formerly had not developed much in common (Karugire, 3; Minority Rights Group, July 1989; Sathyamurthy, 1). Also, the colonial political strategy by which the various political units were integrated, rested on violence and political manipulation.

Four important points are worth noting: firstly, the creation of straitjacket colonial boundaries separated peoples of the same linguistic and cultural groups. The Banyaruanda question, for example, has its genesis in the European partition (Clay, 1984; Catherine Watson, 1991). Secondly, colonialism was essentially imposed by military violence and/or through other forms of manipulation and coercion. This marks the beginning of the contemporary history of violence and abuse of military might in "overcoming" the problem of political legitimacy in Uganda. Thirdly, by using Semei Kakungulu and his Ganda troops and administrators to spread colonial rule in other parts of the country, a new dimension was added to pre-colonial intergroup tensions and ethnic conflicts. The majority of the conquered subjects in other parts of the country saw the expansion of colonial rule as a vital part of Buganda sub-imperialism. It was therefore not surprising that Buganda rather than colonialism was perceived as the the immediate enemy of the people (A.D. Roberts, 1962, 435-50; M.S.M. Kiwanuka, 1968, 603-19; I.R. Hanocock, 1971, 305-23; Karugire, 1980); and finally, it was also at this point in history that a new class of political rulers and administrators emerged, whose power emanated almost exclusively from the illegitimate colonial state. Naturally, this ruling class was accountable to the regime, not the colonized masses (Mamdani, 1976).

The colonial policies of divide and rule and "indirect rule" further marginalized prospects for national identity and unity. By granting different parts of the country different political and economic status, the country shared only one thing in common, colonialism. It was also through this type of political arrangement that the Buganda or Uganda Agreement of 1900 became a source of new tensions within Buganda and between Buganda and the rest of the country (Sathyamurthy, 139; Mamdani, 1976, 120-88). This Agreement invariably forced other kingdoms and districts to "gang up" against Buganda during the move towards a federal union. Similarly, the transition from quasi-federalism to a unitary state led to increased tensions and political conflicts (G.S.K. Ibingira, 1973).

In order to understand the structural socio-economic inequalities created by the colonial regime, it is

imperative to highlight the basis of colonial economic policy, as summarized by Captain F.D. Lugard (Vol. I, 1893, 381; cf. Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, 1963) the first accredited representative of the Imperial British East Africa Company:

> *The 'scramble for Africa' by nations of Europe—an incident without parallel in the history of the world — was due to the growing commercial rivalry, which brought home to the civilized nations the vital necessity of securing the only remaining fields for industrial enterprise and expansion. It is well, then, to realize that it is for our* advantage *[emphasis in original] — and not alone at the dictates of duty — that we have undertaken responsibilities in East Africa. It is in order to foster the growth of the trade of this country and to find an outlet for our manufactures and surplus energy, that our farseeing statesmen and our commercial men advocate colonial expansion.*

Mamdani has this to say about some of impacts of the colonial economic policy:

> *An analysis of how this country was integrated into the colonial imperialist economy would show that there were two forms of integration, depending on the region we may consider. The first was whereby an area was turned into a cheap labour reserve. This was the migrant labour system whereby the wife remained a peasant producing food in the village, but the husband migrated as a worker to a plantation. He was employed only part-time, the rest of the year, he returned to the village and lived off the food cultivated by his wife. The second term of integration was whereby an area was turned into a reserve of cheap raw materials. You take the above system, with wife producing food and the husband cheap labour, collapse the distance between husband and the wife... Now, in Uganda, there were quite a few cheap labour reserves at the outset of colonial rule: Lango, Acholi, West Nile, Kigezi. But in the 1920s, as the Belgians increased exploitation in Rwanda, the Banyarwanda peasants began to emigrate to Uganda. In the late '50s once again there was out-migration from Rwanda due to a political crisis. As a result, the British introduced cash crop production in Lango and Acholi in the 1920s and then in West Nile in the 1950s. Today, the only remaining cheap labour reserve is Kigezi. The rest of the country continues to be a cheap raw material reserve.* (Mamdani, 1985, 92-6)

A number of points emerge. Firstly, one of the central motives for the colonization of the country was economic. This led to the exploitation and oppression of the people and the creation of at least two economic regions under a single political administration. It is at this point that the north-south divide emerges more clearly as both political and economic. National unity or integration, it should be noted, is both political and socio-economic; neither has been achieved under this structural imbalance. This point is stressed only because non-statement of the obvious has tended in the past to derail debates on unity. Secondly, the colonial labour, land and taxation policies increased the oppression and exploitation of women in particular and the whole society in general; and finally, this lop-sided economic and political policies go a long way to explaining the persistence of famine in Karamoja and other parts of the country and the vicious struggle for political power (Mamdani, 1985, 92-6).

Religion, Colonialism and Human Rights Violations

Historically, it is not paradoxical to argue that religion can be and at times has been a cause of human rights abuse. This is not to suggest that religion is not or has not been a strong moral force for the promotion and protection of universal human rights. In the context of Uganda, religion has played both roles. This section, however, deals only with violations. The first major foreign religion introduced into Uganda was Islam. In Buganda, Arab traders who came from the East African Coast took slaves and ivory in exchange for guns, clothes and ornaments. Soon this religion became closely associated with trade and political power. The relationship between the new converts and the kabaka's palace (king's), however, were not always harmonious. For instance, in a concerted attempt to curb the growing influence of the converts and Islam from undermining his power base in Buganda, in 1875 Kabaka Mutesa I ordered the execution of about seventy converts. It is important to bear in mind that Islam (like Christianity later) spread in Buganda starting from the top, among the central administrative cadres (F.B. Welbourn, 1965, 5).

On the other side of the Nile, in northern Uganda, Arab slave and ivory dealers, who were based at Gondokoro and Khartoum, in southern Sudan, did not attempt to "rigorously" introduce Islam. The failure of Islam to spread in this region, it has been argued, was partly due to the segmentary nature of the societies and the adventurous behaviour of the fortune seekers (Karugire, 56). By way of relevant digression, it is to be borne in mind that this part of the country suffered most from the slave trade (Karugire; John Beattie, 1971, 67). Surely, it was not because of Islam that the propagators of the religion became engaged in violations of human rights. The fact remains however, that among other things, Islam became closely linked to absolute political power, slavery and slave trade.

At the "request" of Kabaka Mutesa I in 1875, the explorer Henry Stanley asked missionaries to come to the kingdom. It is conceivable that Mutesa equated the whiteman with the power of the gun and it is therefore likely that his prime motive was to check Egyptian expansion-

ism from the north by enlisting the support of the Europeans (J. Taylor, 1958; C.C. Wrigley, 1959; D.A. Low and Pratt, 1960; Low, 1971). As a result of the "request", in June 1877, the Church Missionary Society from Britain ("Bangereza") reached the Kingdom. Less than two years later, in February 1879, the White Fathers, who were Roman Catholics, arrived from France ("Bafalansa").

The arrival of Christianity soon gave unprecedented prominence to religion as a factor in political rivalry and domination in the country. Military battles for political and religious supremacy were fought in Buganda by the three foreign religious groups with their own armies of local and foreign-backed converts. The politico-religious wars came to an end when Captain Lugard naturally threw his military might behind the numerically fewer Protestants (Karugire, 75; R. Oliver, 1956, 56). As a result of the Protestant victory, in Buganda the society became classified in descending order of importance, "Protestant, Catholic and Muslim" (Mamdani, 1976, 216). From 1893 to 1971, throughout the country both the "traditional" and the "new" leadership became firmly allied to the Protestant camp.

Missionary Education

Education is a fundamental right, not a privilege. However, in all parts of the world, accessibility to and affordability of formal education remains more a privilege than a fundamental human right. To begin with, in the context of Uganda, "from the earliest years of the British Protectorate until 1925...formal education was entirely in the hands of voluntary agencies, mainly Christian missionaries who founded primary and secondary schools and teacher training colleges in many parts of the country" (*Education Policy Review Commission Report*, Kampala, 1989, 1). One of the primary objectives of missionary education, it is argued, was to train a collaborating or accommodating class to serve the interests of the colonial regime (*Education Policy*). As cited in Low and Pratt the dual political usefulness of this form of education — technical training and ideological indoctrination, is summed up by Lord Lugard in a discussion of a similar form of education of sons of Fulani chiefs in Nigeria:

> *I hope that they would thus be taught not merely to read and write but to acquire an English Public Schoolboy's ideas of honour, loyalty and above all responsibility. It is by such means that I hope the next generation of Fulani rulers may become really efficient, reliable and honest co-operators with the British in the administration of the Protectorate.* (Low and Pratt, 171)

In retrospect, Mamdani concludes that:

> *This was not education, but training; not liberation, but enslavement. Its purpose was not to educate a person to understand the objective limits to the advancement of individual and collective welfare, but to train a person to accept and even administer the limits in an 'efficient, reliable and honest' way. Such training could most effectively be imparted in a controlled environment.* (Mamdani, 1976, 162)

Also, different missionary denominations established schools strictly for members of their religious sects. For example, King's College Budo and Gayaza were for Protestant boys and girls respectively, particularly those of the "royal blood". St. Mary's Kisubi, on the other hand was for Catholic boys — also predominantly from families of the chiefs (Welbourn, 8). As for the Muslims, since they had no missionaries who could provide them with schools, their position became even more precarious. This institutionalized discrimination and inequality was more complex and devastating in the north and east where provisions of education were poorer than in the south; thus further dividing the country and heightening intergroup conflicts and breeding future uneven competition for scarce resources. It is imperative to indicate that educational discrimination was even more severe for women, whose position in patriarchal societies was already quite oppressive and marginal.

In the 1920s when the Government assumed more direct responsibility for education by providing financial help to missions and establishing its own schools, the situation seemed to improve a bit. However, religious, regional and gender discriminations remained essentially unchanged; government assistance towards education during this period reflects these contradictions (cited in Mamdani, 1976, 16). Since the *Binns Commission* (1951) and the *Report on African Education in Uganda*, drawn up by a committee under Bernard de Bunsen published in 1953, a series of commissions have been set up by various regimes to address the problem of equitable and relevant education (*Education Report*, 2). The situation today, however, indicates that the problem has been further complicated by decades of socio-economic and political anarchy. To make matters worse, the present IMF Structural Adjustment Programme in the country has made accessibility to and affordability of education a far-fetched dream for the majority of Ugandans. Also, in a situation of chronic anarchy, education seems to have lost its value.

Independence and Retreat to Dictatorship: 1962–71

At this juncture, it is imperative to remind ourselves of the close link between religion and politics in the country; this allows for a better understanding of the negative and parochial motivations for the formation of political parties on the "eve" of independence. As M.S.M. Ki-

wanuka (cited in Karugire, 161) correctly points out: "For a period of over seventy years, religion became the springboard to power, privilege and influence in Uganda. All hereditary rulers, all Secretaries-General, all District Heads, all District Chief Ministers were Protestant".

Uganda moved to independence without a political party that was national both in its composition and behaviour — "political parties and their leaders aimed at striking down some section of the country or uplifting some other section at the expense of someone else" (Karugire, 168). For instance, the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) was essentially anti-Buganda and predominantly Protestant (A.B. Mujaju, cited in Karugire). As for the Democratic Party (DP), it was predominantly Catholic and was formed to redress the power balance in their favour. As Karugire puts it, the party was formed "not as a step towards uniting the country under the umbrella of a single national, less still nationalist, party; it was a step towards conforming to the religious polarities that had existed in Uganda's public life since the turn of the 19th century" (Karugire, 162). The Kabaka Yekka (KY) the "King Alone") was formed by monarchists in Buganda who thought that by using the name that had great emotional and cultural appeal in the area, the movement would gain enormous support. The primary objective of the movement, however, was to ensure the removal of the DP from office before independence. Another objective was to carve some political space for the monarchy in an independent unitary state; this was a direct response to Buganda's failed attempts to secede from the country.

Through the *marriage de convenance* between UPC and KY, the DP was blocked from gaining political power. With the victory of the UPC and KY, Dr. A. Obote formed the first independent government in 1962. It is important to indicate that the UPC/KY was an alliance of individual elites from the two political camps, not an alliance of the regions where supposedly the parties were strong. Furthermore, both parties had divergent views on almost every conceivable subject (Karugire, 182; Ibingira). As part of the bargain, Kabaka Mutesa II became the president of the country; thus combining his hereditary and monarchical position in Buganda with the functions of a constitutional head of state in the country. This conflict-laden arrangement soon produced enormous tensions and conflicts between the Prime Minister and the President. Three important points should be highlighted. First, right from the time of their inception, political parties in the country remained based on sectarianism. Second, the UPC/KY alliance maintained the Protestant hegemony and allowed for the continuation of discrimination against the Catholics and Moslems in the country; and finally, the manipulation of ethnicity and religious allegiance by the ruling elites and those vying for political power became a prominent factor in post-independence Ugandan politics.

Obote's position from the very beginning was extremely complicated; his shaky regime was constantly haunted and entangled by divisive and complex colonial legacies. One such seething and divisive problem was related to the status of the "lost counties", which the colonial regime had seized from Bunyoro and transferred to Buganda (Sathyamurthy, 106; F.D. Lugard, Vol. 2, 1902, 235; J.R. Postcethwaite, 1947). Among other things, it was the referendum on the lost counties that dealt a fatal blow to the UPC/KY honeymoon. Without examining the details of subsequent developments, a number of significant events which occurred included: the dissolution of the UPC/KY alliance in 1964; power struggle between Buganda and the Central Government; the split within UPC; the split within the army between pro-Obote and anti-Obote forces; the arrest and detention of five cabinet ministers in 1966; Obote's unilateral suspension of the 1962 constitution and dismissal of Mutesa as President in February 1966; the ultimatum by Buganda Parliament ordering the Central government to remove itself from the soil of Buganda before May 30, 1966; the attack on the Kabaka's palace by northern dominated troops led by Idi Amin; the murder and torture of thousands of Baganda by the troops; the flight of the Kabaka Mutesa into exile; the abolition of kingdoms with their special constitutional provisions in September 1967; the "anti-imperialist" move to the left by Obote. From this time on, the regime was surviving on borrowed time. The country had become a police state with Buganda suffering more pronounced violations of rights than any other part of the country (A.M. Obote, 1968; Nelson Kasfir, 1967, 52-6; Picho Ali, 1967/68, 11-3; Akena Adoko, 1967, 10-2; Abu Mayanza, 1967, 20-5; *Uganda Parliamentary Debates*, 1965-66; A.G.G. Ginyera-Pinyewa, 1974, 32-44).

A number of important points should be noted: firstly, the infant democratic institutions which emerged were immediately suffocated by the legacies of colonialism and the uncompromising quest for "absolute" political and economic power. Secondly, the use or misuse of the military to "resolve" internal political conflict continued as it had during colonialism. From then on, the survival of post-colonial regimes would be essentially determined by the army, not the masses of the Ugandan society. Thirdly, the various interest groups which had become disillusioned or disappointed by Obote soon allied themselves with some factions of the army. This alliance of domestic classes was strengthened by the support from some prominent western countries and Israel. The latter group in the coalition "feared" that Uganda was drifting to socialism or communism during the era of intense Cold War

rivalry. Obote's own stand against 'imperialist' penetration of neo-colonial Africa and western support to the apartheid state of South Africa forced the external interests to look for a friendly leadership in the country (Mamdani, 1983). Thus external forces exploited internal contradictions to remove Obote from power in 1971.

As the Obote regime became more dictatorial and repressive, abuse of human rights drastically increased. By using a predominantly Acholi-Langi based military (Amii Omara-Otunnu, 1987) against Buganda, the North-South divide widened. Drafting illegitimate constitutions which protect the interests of illegitimate regimes would now become a prominent factor in the Uganda political and constitutional history. In other words, constitutions, whether suspended or redrafted would have no meaning to regimes which do not adhere to a democratically instituted constitution. Ethnic tensions surfaced within the ethnic-based army, especially after the murder of prominent Acholi army officers — Brigadier Okoya and and Col. Omoya. The Acholi-Langi military alliance became a distant and elusive myth.

General Idi Amin: 1971-1979

Most accounts of the 25 January 1971 coup agree on one basic point; General Amin, who had been placed under house arrest, upstaged Obote, while the latter was away attending the Commonwealth Conference in Singapore (Ali A. Mazuri, 1975, 110-1). In keeping with the image military coup leaders in Africa present immediately after coups, Amin started off by sounding conciliatory and offered eighteen popular points for overthrowing the Obote regime. These points included: Obote's rule by emergency, detention of innocent people, restriction of various freedoms, corruption in high places, inability to curb *kondoism*, failure to organize popular elections, economic impolicy, burdensome taxation, the plight of cultivators of cash crops, Uganda's failure under him to cooperate with sister countries of the East African community, concentration of power in the hands of a tiny class of wealthy individuals, domination of all key offices in 'Uganda's political, commercial, army and industrial life' by Langi elements, the existence of a private army under the control of the Cabinet and dominated by the Langi and maladministration of the Armed Forces (*The Birth of the Second Republic*, Entebbe).

Understandably, aggrieved parties — national and international, were jubilant at the overthrow of the Obote regime. In the streets of Kampala, for example, thousands of people celebrated what they thought was the passing of the era of dictatorship and anarchy. At the international level, Britain and Israel rushed to recognize and promote the regime, which was partly their own child. The position of the British government was echoed by the British press. Consider, for example, a position advanced by *The Daily Telegraph* on 12 July 1971, that Amin:

> *provides a welcome contrast to those African leaders ... who bring African rule into discredit in their own countries ... Dr. Obote who violated Uganda's Independence Constitution and was justifiably ousted by Gen. Amin, was in that category ... Gen. Amin, always a staunch friend of Britain, has been quick to express this in his country's policy. His request now for the purchase of equipment for re-building of Uganda's defences deserves the most sympathetic consideration from every point of view.* (Cited in Omara-Otunnu, 109)

Immediately after his major public campaigns, aimed at creating some breathing space for his regime, Amin embarked on restructuring the military for the sole purpose of political survival.

Having temporarily resolved the perceived threat from within his military, Amin moved swiftly to impose his machinery of repression and coercion on the civil society. As in the military, his first targets were the Acholi and Langi — to the rest of the country and the international community, by and large, business continued as usual. However, in 1972 when Amin ordered forty thousand Ugandan-Asians, holding British passports, to leave the country in ninety days, the international community "discovered" that the regime was violating human rights and formally protested against the decision (cf. Twaddle, 1975). This seemingly contradictory response was essentially due to the fact that the resettlement of the expelled Asians became the responsibility of Britain and the international community. Ironically, at a time of increased state terrorism, overt repression and anarchy, Amin became the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity. A report by the U.S. Committee For Refugees makes a similar observation:

> *In February 1977, Amnesty International estimated that killings under Amin's regime numbered 40,000 to 30,000 but the UN Commission on Human Rights shelved a British attempt to have the atrocities investigated. In May, Uganda itself was actually voted a member of the commission. It is an irony of this period that, while the international human rights community condemned Amin's massacres and governments deplored his belligerent statements, life under Amin continued normally for many who were in regions not touched by the violence.* (1985, 7)

The only factual error in this statement is, by 1977, every region in the country had been visited by Amin's violence. What differed was the degree of violence and those affected by it. It was in this same year that the murder of Archbishop Janani Luwum and two cabinet ministers turned the international community increasingly against the regime. With increased dissention in the military, Amin's attempted "annexa-

tion" of Tanzania's Kagera in October 1978 and Tanzania and the exiles' counter-attack in January 1979, the stage was set for the overthrow of the regime; this was completed in May after the capture of the West Nile province.

Although the "numbers game" in human rights is complex and controversial (cf. Michael Stohl, David Carleton, George Lopez and Stephen Samuels, 1986, 592-606; Robert J. Golstein, 1986, 607-27), the report by The Minority Rights Group (1989, 7) estimates that between one hundred thousand and five hundred thousand people were massacred during Amin's rule. Hundreds of thousands fled the country and thousands were internally displaced. There was also a total breakdown of the economy and social services — including health care and education.

Class, Ideological and Ethnic Confrontations: Continuity of Anarchy and Repression Under the Uganda National Liberation Front

After a decade of military despotism under which the mass of the people had to bear the brunt of fascist oppression and continued imperialist penetration, the promise of a return to democracy once again gave rise to popular enthusiasm, even as Amin's false promises to liberate the Ugandan people from the yoke of tyranny that they had endured under Obote drew enormous crowds of jubilant people to the streets over eight years before. But the sufferings of the mass of the people have continued unabated ... (Sathmurthy, 658)

In order to understand why the hopes and aspirations of Ugandans were again betrayed by the ruling elites who filled the power vacuum created by the overthrow of Amin, the formation of the new regime, its ethnic, class and ideological base and political agenda should be understood. The Uganda National Liberation Front which was formed on 26 March, 1979 to "replace" the Amin regime, brought together at least twenty-two diverse ideological, religious and ethnic exile groups (G. Kanyeihamba, 1989). The only two things the group agreed upon were: first, that Amin must be overthrown. In order to do that, there was a need for a loose coalition which would coordinate opposition to the regime. This was also a pre-condition for Tanzania's support which would finally lead to the overthrow of the Amin regime; and secondly, that the power vacuum must be filled by them.

Like its political wing, the UNLF, which consisted of rival clusters of influence, the fighting force, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) was essentially a military umbrella of personal armies without any commitment or loyalty to the nation. The military coalition comprised the personal armies of: Obote and David Oyite-Ojok, Tito Okello, Yoweri Museveni, Akena P'Ojok and Col. Omaria. Since the majority of exiles who fought were from the North, the UNLA was dominated by people from that region. In other words, the military was once more dominated by the North. It must, however, be indicated that people from West Nile, who are traditionally considered part of the North, were not in this northern-dominated army.

With Amin the "common enemy", ousted, an intense and vicious power struggle rocked the UNLF and the National Consultative Council (NCC). As for President Lule, a Muganda, he continued to broaden his power base by strengthening the Baganda clique in the new government at the expense of equally power angry cliques. What Lule forgot was that he lacked the military backing of the UNLA or the Tanzanian Peoples' Defence Forces (TPDF). Moreover, he was just a "consensus" nominee to a provisional presidency. Less than two months into his presidency, President Lule was voted out of office by powerful factions within the quasi-parliament, NCC (*New African*, September 1979, 12-3; *Africa*, July 1979, 22-3).

Any credible attempt to grapple with the questions of democracy, human rights, refugees, national unity, stability and development, must be informed by the historical development of the country.

Although it was the leftist elements, led by Professor Wadada Nabudere, which were largely instrumental in instigating the removal of Lule, it was "the clout of segments of the Front representing the interests of UPC and FRONASA (led, respectively, by Paulo Muwanga, a Muganda and Yoweri Museveni, the Defence Minister) that really prevailed in the decision to remove Lule from power" (Sathyamurthy, 662). Sectarian politics had once more re-emerged. The governing body continued to use the old repressive state apparatus which it inherited without altering it in any substantial way. As a matter of fact, repressive laws were used whenever they suited the convenience of the ruling elites.

The power struggle between the left and the right within the UNLF led to the election of a compromise candidate, Godfrey Binaisa, to replace Lule. The elevation of Binaisa to power was greeted by demonstrations in Buganda. The point is, with the removal of Lule, the Baganda lost faith in the new administration. More important, Binaisa who had been Obote's first Attoney General, was seen as one whose central job was to pave the way for the return of

Obote. During this initial but major period of political crises, the majority of the twenty thousand Tanzanian troops and the vastly expanded UNLA engaged in gross violations of human rights. Hundreds of thousands of Ugandan women were raped, thousands of people were murdered in cold blood, civilians lost their property and political opponents were either murdered, detained without trial, or forced to flee the country. The situation was particularly bad in two parts of the country, Buganda and West Nile.

In Buganda, the protest against the removal of Lule brought massive military repression on the people. Also in Bombo area, where the majority of Moslems from West Nile had settled, women, children and the elders were murdered, moveable property seized, houses, hospitals and schools blown up by TPDF and the UNLA. In West Nile, those who had not fled into Southern Sudan or Eastern Zaire were massacred by the combined troops. As in Bombo, houses, hospitals, mosques and schools were destroyed in West Nile by the soldiers (*Minority Report*, 9-11).

In a desperate attempt to stop potential candidates from campaigning on party platforms in the elections scheduled for 1980, Binaisa insisted that elections would be organized under the umbrella of the UNLF. This move was vehemently rejected by the UPC, DP and Museveni's FRONASA. As if that was not enough warning of impending danger his divided government faced, Binaisa went ahead and:

> *committed the fatal mistake of dismissing the army chief (whom he offered the Ambassadorship to Algeria) after making a vain and secret appeal for Kenyan military help in order to ensure Uganda's security. Nabudere and his political followers in NCC, well realising that the end was drawing nigh, simply fled the country ... Binaisa was swiftly out-manoeuvred by the armed forces and placed under house arrest for several months in the President's House in Entebbe, while the Military Commission replaced UNLF as the interim government pending national elections in December 1980.* (Sathyamurthy, 668)

Binaisa was removed from office and the Military Commission led by Paulo Muwanga and his Vice Chairman, Yoweri Museveni, assumed power.

Foggy Road to Democracy: the 1980 Elections

Under such tense socio-economic, political and military conditions, the 1980 general elections were held. Four political parties participated in the campaigns. Tthe UPC led by Obote continued to receive its major support from the Protestant communities in Acholi, Lango, Teso and Bugishu. It also obtained some support from Bushenyi in Western Uganda. The DP, led by Dr. Paul Kawanga Semogere, maintained its support in Buganda, Western Uganda and among Catholics in other parts of the country. The Conservative Party (CP), led by Joshua Mayanja-Nkangi, an up-dated version of the KY, acquired its tiny support from the monarchists in Buganda. The Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM), led by Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, a small breakaway UPC faction, attracted very limited support from young people in Buganda and Western Uganda (Sathyamurthy, 699).

The elections were characterized by intimidation and violence meted out by the UPC against its opponents. As a matter of fact, on many occasions during the campaigns Obote challenged the leadership of the DP to parade its army, if it had one. Clearly, Obote sent two important messages to the nation. First, that UNLA was a UPC army, not a national army; secondly, that the support of the army would be the critical deciding factor in the contest for leadership in the country. It was therefore not surprising that the UPC-dominated UNLA blocked some DP candidates from being nominated for the elections. In the North, for example, supporters of DP were either harassed or lost their property. The utterances and actions of the leadership of UPC made it apparent that the party was determined to "win" at all costs.

Despite the dubious move by the Chairman of the Military Commission, Paulo Mwanga, to personally announce the results of the elections, the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) Report described the elections as generally free and fair and the results in which the UPC was declared victorious, valid. It was declared that the UPC won seventy-two seats, DP, fifty-one and UPM, one. Existing evidence indicates that either the DP would have won the elections or the UPC lead should have been by a much smaller margin. The point is, the COG Report gave international legitimacy to the regime, not internal legitimacy.

Instead of going directly to the "bush", the DP gave military and logistical support to groups engaged in a war against the UPC government. It was a faction of the UPM, led by Yoweri Museveni that was the first to declare war against the regime. A number of possible explanations may be advanced to suggest why Museveni, whose infant political party lacked support in the country, went to the "bush". Firstly, since he was among the few with personal armies opposed to Obote, he chose to lead a military opposition to a regime that had rigged the elections. Secondly, having tested political power right from the overthrow of Amin until his defeat at the hand of a very popular DP candidate during the elections, Museveni saw only one avenue left for "recapturing" political power: the military overthrow of Obote.

Obote II: Further Breakdown of Law and Order

Faced with the intractable problem of internal political legitimacy, Obote had to rely substantially on the insti-

tutions of coercion. Obote's self-inflicted dilemma was further complicated by guerilla wars, especially in Buganda and West Nile. The war in West Nile which followed the overthrow of Amin was devastating to the area. By 1983, it was estimated that there were sixty thousand refugees from West Nile in Eastern Zaire and three hundred and fifty thousand in Southern Sudan. Furthermore, there were over three hundred thousand displaced persons, most of whom had settled areas near the borders controlled by the UNRF. It is also estimated that tens of thousands of civilians were murdered in Koboko, Aringa, Arua and Moyo. The majority of these people, it is believed, were murdered in the war of revenge by the UNLA and government militias from Acholi, Lango and Teso. Reports indicate that the guerillas in this region were also involved in committing atrocities against the civilian population, especially people who did not support the insurgents (*The Minority Group*, 9-11).

In Buganda, three main guerilla movements engaged the UNLA in bitter military battles, especially in the Luwero Triangle. The best organized and most effective of these was the National Resistance Army (NRA) led by Yoweri Museveni. This group comprised the Baganda, Banyankole, Banyarwanda, Bakiga and Rwandese refugees (cf. Watson; Edward Khiddu-Makubuya, 1991). The NRA attempted to close the Kampala-Gulu Road (Bombo Road) by destroying military and civilian vehicles. The result of this military strategy led to the murder of hundreds of innocent civilians travelling between the North and Buganda (Lance-Sera Muwanga and Andrew Gombya, 1991). Supporters of the UPC and able-bodied persons who did not join the NRA in Luwero were also reported killed, abducted or torture (A.M. Obote, 1990). According to various NRA reports, most major campaigns by the UNLA were repelled with heavy losses of lives and military equipment on the government side.

Since it could not achieve any decisive military victory against the NRA, the UNLA adopted a counter-insurgency strategy of cutting off human and material support for the insurgents in the Triangle. It destroyed granaries, drove people away from Bombo, rounded up civilians (those who survived were put in UNLA and Special Force "protection" camps). At the height of the crisis, in 1983, thirty-six overcrowded "resettlement" camps were identified in the Triangle by aid workers, with a total population of between one hundred thousand and one hundred and forty thousand. After unsuccessfully denying that gross violations of human rights existed in the Luwero Triangle, the government finally indicated in its appeal for international emergency aid that there were seven hundred and fifty thousand internally displaced persons in the Luwero area resettled in one hundred and twenty five thousand nearby camps. Reports of atrocities committed by the UNLA indicate that hundreds of thousands of people were massacred, including those who were in the UNLA "protected" Kikyusa camp. Tens of thousands were reported detained in various military camps, prisons and police cells. Hospitals, schools, churches, mosques and houses were reduced to rubble. Moveable property was appropriated, children and elderly men tortured and women raped (various Amnesty International Reports, 1980-85).

Another group that faced persecution under Obote's regime was the Banyarwanda. In September 1982, the UPC establishment in Western Uganda, under the leadership of the Minister of State in the Office of the President, Chris Rwakasisi, evicted and tortured an estimated seventy-five thousand Banyarwandas from their homes. Some forty thousand fled to Rwanda and thirty five thousand took refuge in UNHCR refugee camps. A number of possible explanations may be advanced for the persecution of this group. Firstly, in the 1960s, the majority of the Banyarwanda (who were Catholics) and Bahima allied themselves with the DP. Following the overthrow of Obote I, some of them left refugee camps and settled on land in Ankole. A large number of Banyarwanda also joined Amin's security service. However, after the overthrow of Amin's regime, some of the refugees returned to refugee camps because they feared a backlash from the UPC Bairu and people whose land they had earlier occupied.

As a result of their association with the Amin regime, the Banyarwanda were accused of having contributed to the survival of the brutal military regime. Ironically, many "Ugandans" who worked for Amin were freely roaming the streets of Kampala and other cities. As a matter of fact, some of these "Ugandans" had declared their "allegiance" to the UPC and even occupied powerful positions in the country. The point is, in a situation of internal crisis, it is very easy to use refugees as scapegoats. Perhaps a more convincing charge labelled against the refugees was that they were supporting Museveni's NRA. What this charge, however, fails to point out is that most of the refugees joined Museveni's group when the persecution became unbearable (Clay,17).

As at the end his first administration, Obote's regime would be overthrown by the military. During the war in the Luwero Triangle and following the death of Army Chief of Staff, Brigadier Oyite-Ojok, a big rift developed within the Acholi-Langi military hegemony. Obote's attempts to create a new military alliance between the Langi and Itesot heightened military confrontations within the UNLA and finally led to the overthrow of his government in July 1985.

The Regime of General Titi Okello

The Okello regime moved swiftly and granted general amnesty to all political prisoners. By striking a military alliance with factions of Amin's former army to overthrow Obote, the war in West Nile ended and thousands of refugees returned to

their war ravaged region. The regime also reached a temporary peace with every fighting and political group, except the NRA. From early September to December 17, 1985, the Nairobi Peace Talks, which aimed at bringing the NRA into an interim government with other groups, took place. Although the Peace Agreement was signed under the chairmanship of President Daniel Arap Moi, the cease-fire soon collapsed and war continued between the UNLA and the NRA. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that neither side was really committed to peaceful resolution of the Ugandan conflict.

During this period, violations of human rights continued in areas controlled by the two major protagonists. In south-western Uganda, where the NRA/NRM had established its military and civil administration, those who did not readily lend support to the movement were either murdered or tortured. The NRA/NRM, however, attempted to improve its relations with civilians by meting out summary "justice" to some of its soldiers who did not obey the central command. The UNLA on the other hand, continued with its acts of atrocities; indiscriminate rape, looting and murder. As a matter of fact, the Okello regime had no control over the various factions of the fighting groups it had reached an accord with. During this short period, as Mamdani puts it, Kampala resembled Beirut, a capital city under siege and controlled by different military factions.

The Regime of Lt.-General Museveni

Immediately the NRA successfully fought its way to power, on 25 January, 1986, the massacre in Southern Uganda came to an end. It is important to note that as the UNLA was fleeing the city, hundreds of Acholi — children, women and old people were killed by the NRA and its supporters using "Kandooya" or "three-piece tying" in which a person's arms were forced behind him or her and tied so tightly at the elbows and wrists that the chest walls were strained and breathing interfered with to a point of fatal death. However, by and large, the NRA remained disciplined throughout the country. As a result of this relative discipline, the NRA gained support in otherwise hostile terrain, the East and North.

This period of discipline, however, soon came to an end as the NRA started raping women, looting, torturing and indiscriminately murdering innocent people in the North and the East. Two points should be established at this juncture. First, after its military victory in the North and the East, factions within the NRA embarked on revenge against people from Acholi, Lango and Teso; and second, the collapse of discipline within the NRA coincided with insurgencies in the North and East. Both the NRA and the various armed groups in the areas continued to attack and kill civilians. As a matter of fact, the same strategies of gross violations of human rights the UNLA had used in the Luwero Triangle and West Nile are being used by the NRA in these areas. Hospitals, schools, churches, granaries and houses have been destroyed by the the NRA. The insurgents have likewise looted, raped and murdered people from their own home areas. *Amnesty International Report* succinctly summarizes this point:

> *Major human rights violations have occurred in Uganda since 1986 and have continued to be frequent in 1991. They have been particularly acute in areas where the NRA is fighting armed insurgents — and in 1991 there have been especially serious problems in the north — but are not restricted to those areas. When the current government took over in January 1986 it inherited a legacy of gross human rights violations from previous governments. There was immediate improvement in human rights situation in many parts of the country. Six years further on it seems that the authorities have grown to tolerate a persistent and serious level of human rights violations by the NRA. The continuing abuse of the rule of law suggests that the government no longer regards strengthening respect of human rights as a priority. The government is failing to take decisive steps to prevent NRA human rights violations. The repeated failure to take prompt action to investigate reports of NRA human rights violations effectively means that despite a public commitment to respecting human rights, the authorities in fact condone human rights violations ... Furthermore, it has been government policy to entrust the NRA with a major law-enforcement role throughout the country, at the expense of the ordinary police or others ... The continuing violation of human rights by soldiers suggest that there are significant weaknesses in operational procedures within the NRA and that the army does not regard itself as accountable to the civil society.* (*Amnesty International Report*, 4 December, 1991, 21-2)

The only problem with the report is that it tries to create a false and rigid dichotomy between the NRA and the NRM.

It is important to briefly examine the circumstances under which large waves of "voluntary repatriation" took place during 1987-88 (The Minority Rights Group, 22). As soon as the Museveni regime came to power, over three hundred thousand from Gulu and Kitgum fled to Southern Sudan. Inadequate living conditions in refugee camps and continued military attacks on those camps, forced over two hundred and fifty thousand people to return to the war zones in the North. The notable point is that the repatriation was not based on a perception of improved situation in the areas where refugees had originated, rather it was due to an equally terrible war situation in the Southern Sudan. In other words,

most of these people preferred to die in their home country than in Southern Sudan where many had been killed the Sudanese People's Liberation Army and epidemics.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show that there is a continuity of violations of human rights in Uganda. The root causes of violations, it has been pointed out, may be found in the oppressive and exploitative socio-economic, cultural and political structures. These structures were put in place by the colonial regime and "developed" by neo-colonial administrations. In a world of increasing inter-dependence, external factors have continued to significantly contribute to the crisis. Therefore, any credible attempt to grapple with the questions of democracy, human rights, refugees, national unity, stability and development, must be informed by the historical development of the country. There is an imperative need to build viable civil institutions; allow for the emergence of democratic institutions and rule; create a truly national, disciplined and productive army; promote and protect universal human rights; and initiate self-sustaining and democratic economic development. While the bulk of these initiatives lie in the hands of the chained and voiceless Ugandans, promotion and protection of universal human rights is the responsibility of the international community.

The United Nations, the Commonwealth Organization, the Organization of African Unity, European Economic Community and other regional and international inter-governmental organizations should stop treating human rights violations in Uganda and anywhere else as an internal affair of a sovereign state. The point is, the practice of "non-interference" in the "internal affairs" of a sovereign state, undermines the authority, effectiveness and credibility of such organizations from addressing gross violations of human rights. Yet, refugees who flee such repressive regimes become the subject of international concern.

The strong statements made by the Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney, tying development aid to human rights at the Commonwealth and Francophone summits, for example, deserve some credit. However, official declarations of intent will not do the trick. Policies and practice must be consistent with stated position. It is, however, imperative to indicate that Canada, like many Western democracies, has been conspicuously silent about continuing gross violations of human rights in Uganda. On this note, a more coherent and consistent policy than the one applied to Kenya, may help exert pressure on the Museveni regime to open up the political process and hold free and fair elections to be contested by all political parties. The question of acceptable human rights practices must be central in dealing with the regime. In other words, the Western nations should support democratic rule and respect for human rights, not dictatorship and gross human rights violations.

The international human rights groups, and academic and religious communities should pay increasing attention to conditions of violations of rights in the country. Historically, most of these organizations or institutions wake up too late to effectively influence positive change in the country. Also, some journalists and scholars who should expose violations of human rights, have consistently refused or failed to do so because of ideological and/or personal reasons. Surely, without information, the role of the international community in promoting and protecting human rights becomes diminished.

It is common knowledge that there is a close link between human rights and economic development. In that respect, the economic underdevelopment of Uganda imposes further constraint on the capability of the state to perform its role in the area of human rights. Surely violence, corruption and militarism affect the development of the economy. At the same time, the unjust international economic system violates the rights of the people's development. Therefore, it is imperative that the international community should critically examine and change the exploitative international economic system.

Also, in this light, the roles of the World Bank and the IMF should be re-evaluated in terms of development and human rights. In other words, we should avoid a major flaw in human rights debates which assumes that there are two separate or semi-autonomous stages in the struggle for human rights, political and then economic, internal and then external. Effective and genuine action now will assure a positive move towards democracy, improvement of human rights practices and economic development. This will help to avert the creation of future refugees.

Note

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