

Ugandans to the rescue



August 19, 2010

Posted by Musa

Mr.Kipenji,

I had given myself an 'Obote' holiday but I think I must address your message to avoid further confusion. Yes, I read some bits of the Bible and this is what it says: there were four people living on the planet: Adam, Eve, Cane, and Able. Cane killed Able and then wandered off and found a tribe of people and got married.

On the other hand, the snake convinced Eve to eat the apple and she gave some to adam too that pissed off God and everything else is history. So if this story is true then probably Adam and Eve did put us in this mess in the 1st place according to the bible, and it is justifiable to blame them. Nevertheless, it's not too late to correct our own mistakes if we want to.

Similarly, Obote had a chance to set up a good foundation for Uganda as the first post independence Prime minister, but he went on to do things selfishly that have followed us up today. We are yet to get a leader who will say: 'enough of Oboteism, let's think Ugandan way'. Museveni came into leadership with that kind of image (i.e, Uganda way) before he fully unveiled himself in the 1990s and now we all know that he was just a student of Obote, and therefore we are back to square one. It's just that the student has proved to be a wiser and formidable opponent than Obote such that it will take a proper political tactical genius for anybody to win this battle:

ARMY,BUGANDA AND POLITICS

The tactics both the Museveni and late Obote sometimes used differ but the end product is always the same. It's more like selling toothpaste by calling different names when the ingredients are similar. At the moment, Museveni has kept good tabs on the army but nobody should deceive you that the army and other security agents are not directly involved in politics, as was the case during Obote. Actually, Honourable Erias Lukwago constitutional proposal this year to get rid of army MPs was intended to pull a plug on this before it was defeated in parliament.

Similarly, when eventually the Kabaka's Palace, the Lubiri, was attacked at 5.30 am on 24 May 1966, the Obote army had established itself in an indispensable position in the politics of Obote's UPC government in Uganda. Many university students and their families suffered, if not loss of life, certainly extreme humiliation by having their faces trodden on and their wallets stolen by the often-times drunken soldiery. From May 1966 until the end of Obote's Presidential rule on 25 January 1971, Buganda was judged to be in 'a state of emergency' and was held so by none other than the Ugandan army and the police.

MEDIA FREEDOM

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Sedition charges did not start with president Museveni as he learnt that from one of his predecessors, Dr. Milton Obote. Pro-baganda newspapers like the Economy had a breather after the fall of Amin but things started getting tougher afterwards. Obote 2 also got tougher on foreign journalists who had had freedom under Lule and Binaisa. Many newspapers like the weekly topic were closed down by government officials under Obote 2. Anthony Sekweyama, the editor of the main Luganda newspaper then, Munansi, and two other employees of the paper were arrested in March 1980s and held for three weeks on sedition charges. I think the new internet Los Angeles radio, Radio Munansi, has picked this name in remembrance of Sekweyama's Munansi.

Under Museveni, journalists such as Andrew Mwenda, Kalundi Serumaga and currently Timothy Kalyegira and others have got sedition charges still hanging over their heads. We don't know how far the government is willing to extend their arm on sedition since they have even started picking on internet guys.

Museveni's idea of the media centre headed by Robert Kabushenga did not come from the moon. Obote was the man who first introduced Newspaper and Publications Act to lay down conditions for the starting of a newspaper or magazine in Uganda. Museveni's media centre is an equivalent of Obote's Press Accreditation Committee (PAC) which had representatives from the Ministries of Information, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs. Ugandan journalists wishing to send material to foreign sources had to be approved by the same body. Under Museveni, there is already a bill that has been tabled and has raised a lot of eyebrows internationally and nationally because it intends to take away media freedom from Uganda completely. The Swedish were the first to openly oppose it though we don't expect the Americans to oppose it now that Carson has rubberstamped Museveni's leadership. But let's hope that others will follow.

BLACK MAMBAS AND THE JUDICIARY

'Black mambas' were in existence during Obote 2 and now under Museveni's government. Whatever Obote did during his reign, Museveni can do better. An example is when Barak Kirya was acquitted of treason charges in Dec 1984; he was rearrested in the same way FDC's Besigye was rearrested under Museveni and taken back to Luzira Prison. Kirya just like Besigye was co-accused with others on treason charges (who included captain Mark Kodili, major Hussain Ada, Captain Sajjad Soori, Frank Kivumbi and James Balamu), who were also acquitted by the judge but the Obote's 'black mambas' surrounded the court but the Kiryas could not leave the court room. They were eventually forced out and taken back to Luzira using the same tactics, and same force, but with different actors involved, more like watching the same movie with different actors.

RIGGING ELECTIONS

UPC is a party that started rigging elections in Uganda. They rigged the 1980 elections because they wanted Obote to become the president of Uganda by all means. For instance, Museveni who was in Uganda People's Movement (UPM) in 1980, is quoted

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to have said that “*Kategaya was a very bad UPC. He even stole our votes. He stole eight. He told us. He voted eight times*”. Probably Museveni learned all the tactics of rigging elections while still a member of UPC because he has also been taken to court for the same problems after the 2001 and 2006 elections. Like they say: 'an apple does not fall far from the tree'.

Let's also remember that there was a chance to hold General elections in 1967 before Obote introduced mafia legislations that pushed the whole idea of elections aside because he knew he could lose.

RDCs UNDER MUSEVENI

After 1967, Obote increased his power tremendously. The 1967 Constitution was designed to get rid of feudal rule at the sub-national levels of government by increasing the powers of the District Commissioner, who now became the effective instrument of the central government policies in the district, and the removal of outmoded offices at the local level. Chiefs and ministerial figureheads at the district headquarters were removed. Obote also increased his powers so much as a president under the 1967 constitution.

Under Museveni, we have got people like RDCs who yield more power than even the elected officials at the districts. They always interfere with the work of district officials in the name of protecting presidential interests. For instance, a RDC can stop a radio station from hosting a president of the national party like FDC or UPC just to please the president. A RDC can fire a LCV chairman as was temporarily the case in Kayunga with Mr. Besweli Mulondo. The powers of the Buganda sub chiefs are almost nil.

ARMY APPOINTMENTS, SECTARIANISM AND TRIBALISM

In his book *African Upheavals since Independence* (Westview, 1980), Grace Ibingira, ex-Minister of Justice, recalls a conversation he had with Obote at the Governor General's Garden Party on the 12th of October: 'as I accompanied Obote through state guests', he writes, 'he pointed out Karugaba to me at a distance and inquired whether I knew him. I replied I did not. He then confided that the senior British Officers were recommending him to command the Army and to retire Opolot and Amin, who had reached the highest ranks they could reasonably attain. Obote then told me Karugaba was a Roman Catholic and as such could not be trusted and he would not accept him to head the Army' (p. 92).

Ibingira goes on to claim that the chief reason for Obote's dismissal of Major Karugaba, which he proceeded to have carried out, was not primarily one of religion but of ethnicity, since he was a southerner and stood in the way of Amin whom Obote had chosen in his mind to be his hatchet man. This was in the face of strong advice to the contrary from the Governor General, Sir Walter Coutts, and the British Officers, Colonels Cheyne and Tillett, following charges brought against Amin of using great brutality against the Turkana tribe in the Kenya border area late in 1961.

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At Independence the Uganda Rifles consisted of one battalion and though it was very largely composed of northerners from the Acholi, Iteso, Lugbara, Kakwa tribes and other West Nile groups, it did not have within it many men from Lango in the north, Obote's home area. However, Obote portrayed tribalism of the highest degree with the introduction of the para-military wing of the General Service Unit, almost wholly recruited from Lango.

Similarly, Under Museveni, a man can shoot you in broad day light just because you have refused to give way for the president who wants to pay his respects at Kasubi tombs. Under Museveni, you demonstrate or stage a riot at your own peril because a soldier can easily shoot you between the eyes and go away with it, as was the case with the Buganda riots last year. Under Museveni, majority of the Generals come from western Ugandan, the president place of birth, as pointed out by the Observer's Ibrahim Ssemujju Nganda(now the IPC spokesperson).

BANNING PARTIES

UPC was the first party to ban political parties in Uganda under Obote 1 in 1968 under the famous Lugogo ceremony. Similarly when YKM came to power in 1986, he did the same thing as a way of weakening the notorious UPC.

INTERFERING IN MUK POLITICS

Makerere students and most Ugandans generally hated Obote because he used the campus to spy on students, intimidate and kill students. The Obote army intimidated and killed a lot of students at Makerere university in the 1980s purely because they wanted to devise ways of either UPC dominating the Guild or closing it altogether if UPC couldn't have it. At one time, one George Bwanika was shot and damped in Namanve forests. UPC used the offices of the then Dean of students, George Kihuguru and the Deputy Vice chancellor, Gingera-Pinyywa, to plunge the whole university into chaos with the help of obviously the army.

Trust me when I say that NRM is also investing a lot of time in MUK politics. They want their own people to run things there other than anybody else.

COUPS

Obote was the man who started coups in Uganda by illegally ousting President Sir Edward Mutesa in 1966. This same year he illegally abolished kingdoms and is partly responsible for the death of Ugandans in the Lubili attack of 1966.

There are several aspects where these two guys are similar but I just thought I could point out a few of them. Yes, the Luwero war was justified without any doubt in my mind. If all the above is just 'anterograde amnesia' to you then I have got nothing else to

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say. Obote needed to go by all means. If Museveni had not spearheaded the Luwero Bush war, somebody else would have done so. I have no doubt about that.

As for people calling for Museveni to go now, I think this is also now justified, and he will go some day as people say: 'every dog has got its own day'. The moment president Museveni changed the 1995 constitution to remove term limits, he blocked his own peaceful exit, and that hurt a lot of people who once believed in him.

Byebye ebyange

Abbey.K.S

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Mr Semuwemba:

Adam and Eve are basically responsible for all the problems human beings have in the world today.

Do you agree with that statement?

If you do not, what have you as a human being done to mitigate this?

The reason for asking this is because, you appear to be suffering from anterograde amnesia i.e. inability to learn anything new since you were told Obote was the cause of Uganda's problems.

I am seeing this tendency in most Ugandans especially those who aver that the Luwero genocide was justified and yet at the same time, they are now turning around to claim Museveni must go and everybody must join them in sending Museveni off.

We can not unfortunately eat our cake and have it at the same time. So till we learn to accept that there are no open ended mistakes that absolves us from responsibility for the mess we ourselves create,

we are going to continue in this circus of the ostrich approach to solving problems.

The present problems that Ugandans have are not the creation of Obote because the Germans could also say that the problems Germany has are due to Hitler.

Lastly sometime last week I forwarded to this forum an article about the aborted Kenyan coup of 1982. Central to the counter coup was a one General Mohammed. If you read his story, Idi Amin was much better schooled than him. Yet the British promoted him to a rank above that of Idi Amin at the time.

So how does Amin become Obote's creation?

Have you acquainted yourself with those behind the 1971 coup and that Amin was just a scapegoat/ pawn they were using in the hope of getting rid of him in a short time?

So in a nutshell, there is no knowledge your statements add to the history of Uganda if all you state

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is to continue recycling anecdotes from players who do not want to take responsibilities for their failures.

At this rate, Ugandans really need re colonization.

Kipenji