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# The Political Economy of General Amin

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*E. A. Brett*

By the end of 1974 no section of Ugandan life had been left unaffected by the crisis which had been developing since the end of the 1960s. The military had been continuously purged since the coup of January 1971 and Amin had faced a number of attempts to unseat him. The state apparatus had been seriously undermined by its senior elements being fired or physically eliminated or leaving the country. The shortage of foreign exchange had become so intense that raw materials and spare parts had declined to very low levels, creating inflation of more than 100 per cent per year. Infra-structure services and supplies of implements to the rural sector had broken down, reducing its productivity, and thus the supply of foodstuffs to the towns and of exports to foreign markets. The international confrontation over the Asians had led to the withdrawal of most foreign support for the regime. The British had refused to renew their aid contributions and their personnel had left as their contracts expired. The Scandinavians and the Canadians had withdrawn their personnel more hurriedly while American aid was also reduced to negligible proportions. By the latter part of 1973 it appeared that the only foreign sources of support were the Arab countries and Yugoslavia. In 1974 Amin was apparently losing his links even with the Arab world and had become almost totally isolated.

Explanation for this crisis is often sought in Amin's personality. He is considered insane and Uganda's problems are entirely attributed to this insanity. Although it may be true that a great deal can be put down to particular decisions taken since he came to power, much more can be attributed to the cumulative effects of the problems which Uganda had to confront in the period immediately prior to the coup. It can be argued that most of the problems which Amin has faced and been unable to solve were created for him by the nature of the conflict in Uganda during the previous period. It can even be argued that these conflicts are the direct outcome of the problems of underdevelopment which can be seen at work in most of the less developed countries in tropical Africa, and that Uganda is not so much a special case but an extreme one; a case in which a number of contradictions characteristic of other African situations have come together to produce

a crisis of an extreme type. For this reason it is useful to look more closely at Uganda where these problems manifest themselves so clearly. The Ugandan crisis can be seen as the outcome of a period of intensified internal competition for resources in a situation where the structural changes in the economy were not sufficient to increase productivity to the point where it could meet the demands being made upon it. To understand this process we need to explain both the source of the demands for additional resources and also the factors which have inhibited the growth in productivity.

The continued underdevelopment of Uganda can best be understood in relation to three primary contradictions. These are first the contradiction between the requirements of international capitalism operating inside Uganda and the growth of the national capitalist class; second, the internal conflicts between different sections of the national petit bourgeoisie, in particular the conflicts between different regional groupings of that class; third, the contradictions between the demands and needs of the bourgeoisie and those of the mass of the population, especially the small peasantry. Before looking at each of these contradictions in detail, it is necessary to note the crucial role played by the state in mediating between the different elements involved, and, more particularly, in assisting and encouraging the development of the African petit bourgeoisie itself.

From the beginning of the colonial period the state has performed a crucial extractive role. It has been responsible for appropriating a large percentage of the surplus created by the peasantry and of allocating this to the further development of the bureaucracy and of the private sector. Control over the state has therefore been of critical importance in determining the success or failure of both capitalism as a whole and, more especially, of particular fractions (international and regionally based national) within it. During the early colonial period the state intervened decisively to strengthen the competitive position of the large colonial and (subsequently) Asian companies. It was of great importance in reducing the competitive power of the small Asian company and more especially of the potential African entrepreneur. In the later colonial period African entrepreneurs began to penetrate the market despite

the very intense competition which they faced from the Asian sector. They were also able to acquire positions in the bureaucracy, usually at the lower level. These positions they could then use as a means of capital accumulation which enabled them to establish themselves in independent business.

This process was rapidly intensified after independence when large numbers of Africans were recruited into the more highly paid sections of the bureaucracy and the nationalized industries. These positions gave the individuals concerned access to substantial amounts of capital which they could then use to operate in the private sector. Given the commitment of the Obote government to the full development of an African capitalist class it can be seen that access to the state apparatus was an essential prerequisite to success in the private sector. The state and the whole bureaucratic apparatus therefore became the primary agent in the creation of the African petit bourgeoisie. At the same time both the international capitalist sector and the pre-capitalist peasant sector looked to the state to provide them with the services and facilities which they required in order to operate effectively. Politics became a battleground fought over by these different sections, and control of the state apparatus became the most important prize to be won. This fact explains the intensity of the conflict at the central political level, and the instability of the political organizations set up at that level. It also indicates why our analysis must focus very directly upon the relationship between the state and various classes and fractions of classes involved in the competition for control over its power.

### **The international context**

The end of the colonial period left Uganda with an economy the major features of which were very similar to those of much of the rest of Africa at the same stage. The major part of activity in the cash economy was devoted to the production of agricultural exports. The bulk of these were produced by small peasants with plantation production playing a relatively small part. During the 1950s a small manufacturing sector had been built up, based on collaboration between expatriate, Asian and state capital. Commerce and the processing of agricultural commodities was in the hands of an Asian class most of whom did not intend to take out Ugandan citizenship. This group had also been responsible for processing agricultural commodities like cotton and coffee, but during the 1960s the bulk of these activities

were transferred to African co-operatives. These co-operatives were organized on increasingly bureaucratic lines and the conditions of service in them were very similar to those in the state sector itself.

The African bourgeoisie therefore grew up within the context of an essentially externally-oriented economy. The educational system played a major part in this process of recruitment and the bulk of the teaching in the secondary and tertiary sectors was supplied by American or British personnel. During the 1960s Britain's dominance in Uganda was gradually reduced as the influence of the United States and of smaller countries like the Scandinavian countries and Israel grew. During the same period the foreign controlled manufacturing sector of the Kenyan economy expanded very rapidly and captured a large share of the Ugandan market.

No effort was made during the early years after independence to change the basic nature of the relationship which had been set up with overseas capital during the 1950s. Instead the government attempted to increase the inflow of aid in order to improve infra-structure services and thereby further expand agricultural exports, to expand the manufacturing sector on the basis of import substitution, and to Africanize personnel at the higher levels of the state bureaucracy and of the foreign private sector. Substantial inflows of capital did occur. In agriculture the bulk of these went into the creation of large farms and the establishment of a tractor hire service. The new technology proved to be relatively unsuitable in Ugandan conditions and productivity increased very little, if at all. Investment in manufacturing, on the other hand, took the form of capital-intensive technology so that substantial increases in production were secured with relatively small increase in employment. The expansion of production simply replaced existing imports and benefited only a limited section of the population. The Africanization of the larger corporations and the civil service greatly increased the African professional class but it did not go anywhere near meeting the demands for employment at this level, since the output of secondary school graduates had expanded so rapidly by the late 1960s that the competition for jobs was greatly intensified.

The impact of foreign capital upon the society as a whole was therefore very limited, but it was of crucial importance to the further development of the small African elite which had taken over the state at independence. Financing the state

sector depended very heavily upon growing aid subventions—these underwrote a continued growth in the bureaucratic apparatus and the relatively high import-based standards of living of those who controlled it. Access to imported technology provided a basis for the expansion of the para-statal manufacturing sector in which Africans initially established themselves, since they did not have the capital nor the technological skills (given the essentially literary education they had been bequeathed by the British) to move into this sector independently. And especially after the political crisis of 1966, continued access to imported armaments was of crucial importance in enabling the whole state system, and in particular the group which controlled it, to protect itself from competition and to continue to extract tribute from the population as a whole.

On one level, therefore, the new African elite depended on and could operate in alliance with international capital in order to ensure an expanded flow and equitable distribution of the spoils extracted from the rest of society. But on another, the relationship was fraught with contradictions. The newly promoted politicians, soldiers and bureaucrats had to use their share of the spoils to become capitalists in their own right. The underdeveloped state of the rural areas from which they came made it possible for them to move into various forms of enterprise with relatively limited resources. Second and third wives were set to work running small shops in the front rooms of newly built houses, wattle and daub batteries were erected for chicken production, grinding mills were set up to process locally produced millet and maize. Access to various forms of legal, semi-legal, and illegal handouts from the state and associated institutions (banks, insurance companies, state trading organizations) enabled some of the elite to become competitors in the main urban centres. By the end of the 1960s this process had produced, albeit still in a somewhat hidden and limited form, a petit bourgeoisie element in African society whose primary motivation was no longer simply bureaucratic preferment (though this would remain important for as long as the state's role in primitive capital accumulation continued to be significant) but also expansion within and in accordance with the requirements of the capitalistic mode proper.

Now the technological and political backwardness of this class ensured that it would continue to depend upon international capitalism proper. On the other hand, however, the limitations imposed upon its expansion by the slow growth in pro-

ductivity in the country as a whole<sup>1</sup> meant that it would be unable to expand at a speed sufficient to satisfy its requirements. But while this overall failure in expansion (and more especially the form taken by such expansion as was occurring) was the fundamental reason for this, those involved readily attributed their failure to the presence of the Asian commercial class in their midst. The Asian community, dominant in commerce, small manufacturing and a small section of agriculture, were the non-commissioned officers of foreign capital. They were a successful, even brilliant, intermediate stratum. They had, for many generations and with relatively little state support, dominated exactly those areas of the economy which the emergent African bourgeoisie could hope to penetrate. Their failure to establish effective social and political linkage with the African petit bourgeoisie exposed the true nature of their role as foreign intermediaries and did not allow them to cloak these activities under some form of nationalist or popular ideology.

During the early 1960s the community had taken advantage of convertibility to export very large amounts of capital. From 1965, with the introduction of exchange control, they had invested more heavily in property development and in import-substituting industry,<sup>2</sup> They had attempted to buy support from the African political leadership, and there is no doubt that substantial sections of this leadership were closely involved with Asian capital in a wide range of activities.

But the limited resources available for distribution in this way and the growing demands from the African petit bourgeoisie meant that the government had constantly to look for support beyond those groups which had been effectively bought off in this way. This problem was intensified by the necessity to resolve the regional issue (which will be dealt with in the next section), but would have existed even without it. Thus while many members of the Obote Cabinet were themselves extensively involved in collaborative ven-

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1 To substantiate this proposition we can point to the following:

- (a) Growth in formal wage employment from 264,000 in 1962 to only 312,000 in 1970.
- (b) No effective increase in the contribution of manufacturing to GDP 1961-69 (9 per cent to 9.2 per cent).
- (c) Growth rates in 1966 to 1970 manufacturing (in constant prices) of only 3 per cent p.a. in manufacturing, 4.5 per cent in agriculture and 4.4 per cent in GDP, compared with a population growth of 3.8 per cent.

Sources: *Second and Third Five Year Plans; Background to the Budget, 1970-71; 1971 Statistical Abstract.*

2 The Second Five Year Plan shows a substantial increase in Gross Capital formation in 1965 (p. 24) and the expansion in Asian owned property in Kampala was clearly visible between 1965 and 1967.

tures with leading Asian capitalists, it became necessary to attempt to transfer sections of the economy from Asian to African control. In the period up to 1967 the whole of cotton processing and a substantial section of coffee processing were transferred to African co-operatives or private capital. Loan schemes were set up to assist African traders; a state trading corporation was established to give them access to wholesale supplies and in the process distributed large amounts to businessmen with strong political linkages. After 1968 licensing was introduced to reduce the ability of Asian traders to operate, especially in the rural sector, and at the same time pressure on Britain to admit British citizens of Asian descent was intensified.

The policies were administered with an extraordinary lack of skill, while the ineffectiveness of the aspirant African petit bourgeoisie combined with the immense efficiency of the Asian group to ensure that very small benefits accrued to the regime from the largess which it was still able to distribute. Further, the intensification of the attack upon the Asian community increased the outflow of capital and thus aggravated the problem. By the end of the 1960s the willingness of the Asians to reinvest locally had again declined very sharply and in 1970 the outflow of gross private capital increased by more than 60 per cent (Third Five Year Plan, p. 35). Obote, becoming increasingly isolated by 1967 and constantly confronted by a threat to his position from the army, attempted to increase support by a 'move to the left' which involved a great deal of meaningless popular rhetoric, but also a decision to take a controlling interest in the main foreign businesses and more especially the banks and insurance companies. This can be seen as an attempt to obtain more direct control over the credit facilities required to continue the expansion of the African petit bourgeoisie, but those elements of that class which had already built up a successful relationship with the foreign sector (and there were many of these, especially in the south) probably saw this move as a potential threat to their own position. Whatever the effect upon the African petit bourgeoisie, however, there is no doubt that the move alienated foreign support and further increased the capital outflow.

By 1971, therefore, the regime had alienated foreign capital, the Asian intermediaries, and a substantial section of the African petit bourgeoisie itself. These developments were reflected in a growing shortage of foreign exchange which, given the society's technological dependence, at once meant yet further declines in the ability to

expand productivity and support. The coup, and especially Obote's inability to mobilise any form of opposition thereafter, was simply the result of this underlying situation. What was not so clearly recognised by the interests which greeted Amin with such uncritical enthusiasm was that he would be presented with precisely the same set of contradictions and that the resources available to his predecessor to deal with them had now been reduced to almost nothing. Had Obote won, he too would have confronted a major crisis and would have had to take drastic action to deal with it, although he would probably not have had the audacity to undertake the wholesale elimination of the Asian community.

### **The regional issue**

The Ugandan economy developed very unequally during the colonial period. Growth was concentrated in the south east where cotton was succeeded by coffee after the Second World War. This development was associated with an equivalent expansion of the educational system and the early emergence of African commercial and political activities. The development of the north and west, on the other hand, mostly took place after the Second World War. It was only during this period that the transport network was effectively extended to those areas and that it became possible for them to enter the cash economy in an effective way. The major urban centres were also concentrated in the south-east and it was to these centres that manufacturing industry was attracted in the period after 1952.

Regionalism manifested itself in the period up to 1961 through the development of strong institutions of local government. The most important of these were those associated with the extension of Buganda neo-traditionalism into the modern period. At independence the constitution provided various districts with a high degree of autonomy and in particular gave the Baganda a special federal status within the constitution as a whole. There is little doubt that the political leadership in the south saw the maintenance of strong local government institutions as the best means of defending their interests against potential encroachments from the north and west. They recognized, however, the need to participate in central government institutions in order to expand their share of national resources.

By the late 1950s the development of education in the north was sufficient to allow a small group to come forward capable of forming political organizations and of competing for power at the national level. This group recognized that they

had to obtain control over the national government in order to rectify the imbalance of economic growth which had taken place up to that point, and created in the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) a political organization capable of operating effectively at the centre. During the first half of the 1960s, the UPC leadership was able to form sufficient alliances with other groups in the society to capture a majority in parliament and to get control over the state apparatus. More important, from the long term point of view, was the fact that the army had been traditionally recruited from the north of the country. The Africanization of the officer corps took place very rapidly in the last years of the 1950s and the first years of the 1960s. This initially involved the upgrading of non-commissioned officers with relatively low levels of education and exclusively recruited from northern tribes, of whom Amin is the most notable example. Subsequently an attempt was made to recruit better educated people into the officer corps, and southerners were drawn into its junior ranks. But in 1966 still both senior and lower levels of the army were occupied virtually exclusively by northerners. There is also little doubt that Obote took great care to see that the old patterns of recruitment would not be significantly interfered with.

During the first half of the 1960s most of Obote's efforts were devoted to breaking down the independent power of the district elites. At the same time the southern leadership was organizing itself in an attempt to eliminate northern control and take over the central government. These conflicts culminated in the 1966 confrontation when Obote arrested five of his senior Ministers, in order to forestall a takeover, and subsequently used the power of the army to break the political influence of the Kabaka in Buganda and of other district leaders throughout the country. His dependence upon the army and in particular upon the political support of Amin during this process was very clear. He was unable to hold the elections due in 1966, and initially at least had very little support outside the main areas in the north from which he and his close colleagues had been recruited. The move to the left, the attack upon the Asian commercial class and the commitment to holding new elections in 1971 can be seen as an attempt on Obote's part to recapture the political support which he had had at the beginning of the 1960s, but his ability to do this was, as ever, constrained by his limited resources. The attack upon the foreign sector alienated as many groups as it attracted and his traditional enemies in Buganda and other parts of the south could not forget, or forgive him for, 1966. In particular, he found

himself increasingly threatened by the strength of Amin's position within the army and by its potential internal conflicts. In 1971 he appears to have planned to eliminate Amin from the army. This was to have been carried out during a trip to the Commonwealth Conference. Amin, however, proved to be a more astute tactician than Obote had anticipated and was able to mobilize sections of the army drawn from his own area of West Nile and to eliminate the Obote groups. After a short battle, the Obote faction was defeated and Amin took power.

Amin appeared initially to have the support of the leading elements from the south, despite the fact that he had commanded the attack upon the Kabaka's palace in Buganda in 1966. For a brief period it seemed that he might be able to overcome the regional problem, but this was not to be. He, like his predecessor, had very few resources left to distribute. The weakness of his position in the army meant that he had necessarily to make considerable concessions to the areas of West Nile from which he drew most of his support. Unless he could find new resources to distribute he too would be able to remain in power only by the exercise of naked physical force. Given the stagnation in the economy and the continued leakage of foreign exchange, the only resource available to him was the Asian commercial and manufacturing sector. It was therefore no accident nor an act of lunacy which led him to turn in this direction when he found himself running short of political credit in the latter part of 1972.

### **Problem of mass mobilization**

The further development of both the foreign and the national capitalist sectors was dependent upon the ability to appropriate a growing surplus from the mass of the population which at the end of the colonial period was still very largely rural. This in turn required on the one hand the ability to attract rural labour into a more productive manufacturing sector and secondly to expand the productivity of agricultural production. In fact during the 1960s the growth of the employed labour force was relatively small, although its income tended to rise as the capital intensity of industry increased. From a political point of view the fact that incomes were increasing in this sector meant that the government was confronted with very little overt opposition from the urban proletariat. The trade union movement could be penetrated and its political influence emasculated. Minimum wage legislation could be effectively enforced because of the big profits being made in the manufacturing sector.

On the other hand, the smallness of this sector and its high degree of concentration in the southern part of the country meant there was little generalization of its benefits. Those outside it were greatly attracted by the high level of rewards which it offered, but were very quickly made aware of the fact that the number of jobs available was to be very small. This in turn meant that the importance of expanding rural productivity was of even greater importance than it would have been had the industrial sector been growing more rapidly. But, as we have seen, the main investment on the rural sector took the form of imported capital-intensive technology, which was available only to a tiny percentage of the rural population. A large percentage of these resources were also monopolized by those who established themselves in the urban sector and used their influence there to obtain preferential access. This urban based class also used their influence to appropriate large amounts of land and thus increasingly came to play the part of a new class of settlers. The political discontent generated in the poor peasantry by this process could not make itself felt in political organization because of this low level of organization and their inability to make any alliance with the petit bourgeoisie. It was reflected in their failure to produce more resources for the monetary economy and this in turn made it impossible for the government to obtain the additional surplus which it required to build its support in the community as a whole.

The growth of large-scale farming in the rural sector paralleled the development of African entrepreneurship in the urban sector. Most of the leading individuals involved in control over the state, and in urban and rural capitalism, were the same. But this emerging class, dependent as it was upon imported technology and upon the state, necessarily stood in a contradictory relationship to the mass of the population concentrated on the land. It could not exploit them effectively, either directly or indirectly. It was unable to create the capital resources required either to draw the poor peasantry into paid employment, or to enable them to develop their own production on an individualistic basis. It could not, in other words, create an effective capitalist revolution. Yet at the same time its essentially capitalistic aspirations meant it could not attempt any other kind of revolution either. The socialist rhetoric of the late 1960s in no way limited the process of personal accumulation on the part of the African petit bourgeoisie, both those inside and outside the ruling party. But the nature of their process of accumulation impoverished the country instead of expanding productive capacity. The result of this

basic contradiction was the coup of January 1971, the Asian exodus of 1972 and the continuing crisis which can no longer be concealed or overcome.

### **Conclusions**

The problems and constraints which the new regime had to confront in 1971 can now be more clearly identified. The disunity in the army was ended by the purge of many thousands of Achole and Langi soldiers (the assumed supporters of the Obote faction) after the coup, followed by an extensive purge of the leading political elements in those two districts. Although this movement took on large and violent proportions, it can be argued that the fact that Obote was working in Dar-es-Salaam to engineer a counter-coup made something of this sort inevitable. This step, of course, necessarily alienated many others who had been associated with the group closest to Obote. This in turn led to further purges which necessarily alienated even more people. New factions developed within the army itself which was divided on both religious and regional lines. Those who had initially brought Amin to power themselves became suspect as it appeared that they might conspire to eliminate him and establish some new system of control. The only way in which they could be stopped was either by their physical elimination or by moving them out of the army into senior positions in the bureaucracy or into private business, where they would pose a less direct threat to the regime.

By the early part of 1972 the organized African traders were directly and continuously petitioning the government for more effective action to eliminate the Asians from the trading sector. By this time many army officers, like other bureaucrats and the leading politicians, were extensively involved in capitalistic agriculture, commerce and the processing of agricultural commodities, as described above. They too were being squeezed by the economic slump and confronted entrenched Asian competition.

The exodus of 1972 gave the regime a breathing space. Almost five thousand businesses had to be allocated and this represented a very substantial resource. The unpopularity of the Asian trader, who was widely regarded as a profiteer, meant that the resulting support was not confined to the petit bourgeoisie, but extended both to the urban working class and the peasantry. These businesses were allocated during the first part of 1973. Most of the largest factories, shops and hotels were allocated to army officers close to the regime, and many to Muslims from West Nile who were them-

selves close to the army. The rest were apparently allocated to bureaucrats and politicians who had been prominent during the Obote period and had avoided the purge. Suddenly a new class had moved into prominence. Before 1972, the African trader and manufacturer had been relatively invisible. Although many bureaucrats and politicians were building up their own businesses, they were still primarily regarded as state functionaries. Now, however, it was the African as trader who came to play the leading part in society.

But while the expulsion and transfer of Asian assets created short term popularity for the regime, it merely intensified the long-term problem. In the first place the way it was carried out, involving virtual expropriation of a large number of foreign owned assets, meant a clear break with the dominant imperial powers. Most of the Asian traders were in debt to the British banks, and the expulsion meant that these debts were virtually cancelled. The manner in which the British government was forced to admit a large number of Asian immigrants led to considerable hostility from the Heath Administration. The cancellation of existing contracts with foreign suppliers and the imposition of a new class of businessmen meant that all of the credit which the Asian business community had built up over the years was lost. Foreign suppliers required cash with orders and this in turn made it more difficult for the government to control the outflow of foreign exchange.

The African traders themselves felt very insecure in their new situation. They recognized that they owed their business to political intervention and it could be lost, should there be any change at the centre. During 1972 and 1973 many businesses were purged by what were believed to be agents of the government. All these factors tended to reduce the willingness of the new commercial class to import goods and to retain the foreign exchange which they made on the export trade. Shortages led to a rapid growth in black markets and in smuggling of essential commodities out of Uganda into neighbouring territories with harder currencies. It was widely believed that senior individuals in the government were heavily involved in all these activities.

Attempts have since been made to reorganize the control over foreign exchange and improve the method of obtaining essential commodities from the outside. But these measures are undermined by the prevailing sense of insecurity and a tendency for those within the bureaucratic and political structures to use their official positions

to accumulate foreign and internal resources on their own behalf. The termination of foreign aid has also greatly reduced the availability of spare parts for the machinery required to keep the economy going. The result of all this is a rapid run down in the ability of the society to provide for itself. Many of the new bourgeoisie have made paper fortunes, a small number of them have made fortunes which they have been able to transform into foreign assets. But that inflation is rapid and the supply of essential commodities has now become so limited the rest of the community is suffering a massive reduction in their standards of life.

To end this decline without a fundamental reconstruction of society three things would be necessary. The supply of imported technology (and especially in the short run the spare parts for existing plants) has to be resumed, the new national petit bourgeoisie has to be forced to put its resources into internal development rather than into external accumulation, and some means has to be found to expand the productivity of the poor peasantry as a whole. In the long term the emergence of a national petit bourgeoisie which has had to confront a social crisis of this magnitude could have positive effects. Uganda, unlike Kenya and many other African countries, is no longer managed from the outside and as a result many have acquired the ability to solve problems which they would never have acquired under the tutelage of foreign interests whose primary interest was surplus extraction. On the other hand growth can only be resumed where new foreign resources can be acquired and devoted to production rather than destruction.

And here the essential contradictions of client capitalism stand in the way of any effective national solution. Foreign resources depend upon the ability to expand peasant production and this in turn involves the ability to provide the small peasant with the technology and the rewards which will make increased production possible and worthwhile. But the costs of maintaining the new petit bourgeoisie and its accompanying state apparatus are now so large as to make a significant diversion of resources to peasants virtually impossible. This problem is intensified by the speed at which land is being appropriated by a new urban class which does not have the technological or organizational capacity to exploit it effectively. Until new exports are created it will be of little importance to international capitalism. Uganda does not have the mineral or petrochemical resources which are currently in great demand; and the national bourgeoisie will be left to fight

among itself for the ever diminishing resources which can be extracted from an increasingly oppressed peasantry and increasingly marginalized manufacturing sector. This, in turn, will require increasingly intense acts of repression to keep the peasantry in order and increasingly Machiavellian political manipulation to contain the conflicts generated within the different fractions of the petit bourgeoisie itself.

The combination of these mutually reinforcing vicious circles suggests that dependent capitalist development has reached its logical dead end more rapidly in Uganda than in many other African countries where the conjunction of forces has been different. It is clear that some form of collective organization of development has become a necessity and that the present national petit bourgeoisie shows virtually no ability to achieve this. On the other hand the colonial and post-colonial experience has produced no other classes obviously able to play that role or even to organize effective resistance to the system of exploitation. The weakness of the centre is paralleled by an even greater weakness of the periphery. The conscious realization of exploitation has increased very sharply over the past two years, and the ever-present threats of sudden death (or more gradual but no less inexorable immiserisation) have begun to overcome the common tendency to give at least passive support to the existing state structure and to accept the inevita-

bility of the existing order of economic, social and political life. But the vacuum at the level of political organization is almost total as is the absence of experience of the politics of resistance. The regime attempts with total ruthlessness to crush every attempt in this direction and will no doubt be able to continue to do so for some time to come.

But in some ways the society in Uganda is too developed for this to succeed indefinitely. Education is probably more widely spread than in any other country in the region; the peasantry has never been reduced to servility but has always been given some degree of autonomy; strong co-operative structures have been built up for marketing and other purposes across the rural areas; memories still remain of the more active and effective resistance to the colonial authorities of the 1940s. Neither the Portuguese nor the French have been able to stem the tide of African resistance, despite the introduction of repressive apparatus on a scale which the present Ugandan regime would be quite unable to afford unless it suddenly assumed a much greater degree of significance to some foreign power than it now has. Whether resistance movements can be developed against an internal rather than a foreign ruling class is the question which has now moved to the top of the agenda. The answer to this question in Uganda will be of much more than local significance for Africans.