



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

MAKERERE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH
INTERNATIONAL ALERT

ETHNIC CONFLICT WITHIN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

by

Dr. IJUKA KABUMBA
Principal Lecturer
Uganda Institute of
Public Administration
P.O. Box 20131
Lugogo, Kampala, Uganda.

Paper presented to the Seminar on "INTERNAL
CONFLICT IN UGANDA", 21st - 26th September,
1987; sponsored by International Alert London;
Makerere Institute of Social Research,
Makerere University; International Peace
Research Institute, Oslo; and the United Nations
University, Tokyo.

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Dr. Ijuka KABUMBA*

INTRODUCTION:

The public service, being a large and complex organization, with multifarious smaller organizations within it, is, like other organizations, characterized by conflict - which takes various forms, with unique or shared sources/causes, indicators and remedies.

In this paper, we concentrate on the ethnic form, and on Uganda.

Basing ourselves on information obtained from a variety of sources - in-depth interviews of, or completed questionnaires by, a number of Ugandan public servants; informal discussions with others; observations; review of some relevant literature; and our own experience - we ask and try to give answers to the following questions:

*Principal Lecturer, Uganda Institute of Public Administration.

We are very grateful to the many officers who granted us interviews or completed our questionnaire AND to the following for reading a draft of the paper and offering us very helpful criticisms: S.L.N. Serwanja and V.P.M. Ngwabe, respectively, Permanent Secretary/Special Duties, and Commissioner for Personnel Development, Ministry of Public Service and Cabinet Affairs; H.S. Opika Opoka, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Energy; and Prof. J. Kwesiga, of the Centre for Continuing Education, Makerere University. We nevertheless accept full responsibility for the views expressed in the paper. These views do not reflect those of Uganda I.P.A.

- (i) Is there ethnic conflict within the Uganda public service?
- (ii) Where in the hierarchy does it occur?
- (iii) What are its manifestations or symptoms?
- (iv) What are its sources/causes?
- (v) What are some of the ways in which it can be brought to an end or reduced?

Throughout the discussion, our major assumption is that total ethnic harmony in the Uganda public service is inconceivable when there is ethnic conflict in the social, economic and, especially, political environments.

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY:

As pointed out in the introduction, we got our information from several sources. We wish to elaborate on two of them - interviews and questionnaires.

We interviewed eleven, mostly very senior, officers for between one and two hours each. These were persons known to us. In addition, we distributed 141 questionnaires to participants on nine different in-service programmes run at the Uganda Institute of Public Administration. Of the 141 questionnaires, 56 or 39.7 percent were returned. All this took place during May-June 1987. This means that in addition to our own experience, observation, etc., our conclusions are based on information supplied by 67 public officers.

The regional distribution was as follows: Eastern (18), Western (17), Northern (10), Southern (13), and no region indicated (9). The types of public service represented were: traditional public service (48), public corporations (7), local authorities (i.e. District Administrations and Urban Authorities) (6), teaching service (3) and others (3). Religious affiliation was: Protestants (Anglican or other) (31), Roman Catholics (28), Moslems (4), Orthodox (2) and others (2).

The ethnic distribution was: Baganda (13), Basoga (8), Bakiga (7), Acholi (7), Banyankore ('cultivators'/'Bairu')(6), Iteso (6), Bahororo (4), Madi (3), Batooro (2), Langi (2), Lugbara (2), Bagisu (2), Samia (2), Jonam (1), Munyole (1) and Mugungu (1).

The officers fell into the following salary scales: U2-1 (11), U3 (8), U5-4 (45) and U8-6 (3). In this connection, it should be noted that in most of the public service, the scales applicable are U1 (highest) - U8 (the lowest) plus the Grouping Scheme.

We placed the officers' experience in years into seven categories or brackets as follows: 0 - 5 (12), 6-10 (36), 11-15 (8), 16-20 (6), 21-25 (zero), 26-30 (4), and over 30 (1).

We would like to end this note by saying how deeply grateful we are to all these officers (here-after referred to as respondents, instead of interviewees and respondents) for their cooperation. We were touched and gratified by their willingness to discuss a fairly sensitive aspect of our country's political sociology in a frank manner. Their

frankness and cooperation augur well for our country, including its public service, and in spite of the many problems it is facing.

DEFINITION OF SOME KEY WORDS

It is important at the very outset to specify what we understand by key words in the title of this paper.

'Ethnic' and associated terms:

According to Webster, ethnic means, "of or relating to races or large groups of people classed according to common traits and customs".¹

There is a close relationship among the terms, 'ethnic', 'ethnic group', 'ethnicity', 'tribe', 'race' and 'culture'. So, it is proper to define them also.

Horris defines 'ethnic group' as "a distinct category of the population in a larger society whose culture is usually different from its own".² The members of such a category are, or feel themselves, or are thought to be, bound together by common ties of race or nationality or culture.

Ethnicity refers generally "to the perception of group difference and so to social boundaries between sections of a population".³ In this sense, adds Wallman, ethnic difference is the recognition of a contrast between 'us' and 'them'.

Writing about tribal society, Lewis gives two definitions of 'tribe'. First, in general use, tribe is taken to denote "a primary aggregate of peoples living in a primitive or barbarous condition under a headman or chief".⁴ Second, a technical term, it denotes "a territorially defined unit", a usage which recalls the original Latin use

word for the political divisions or patrician orders of the Roman State.

Race is defined more unambiguously by Webster than by some of the writers consulted. To him it is "a family, tribe, people, or nation belonging to the same stock".⁵ This definition corresponds to 'social race' - rather than 'biological race' - in which there is stress on descent and descent rule, and the decisive test of group membership involves the calculation of geneological relationships.⁶

We now turn to culture. As far back as 1871, Taylor defined it aptly as

"that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".⁷

For purposes of this paper, tribe will be taken to mean a territorially defined political unit, and be equated with ethnic group. Clan (which we think is too familiar to require definition), tribe or ethnic group and race are directly and vertically linked. The clan is the smallest, while the race is the largest, of them. For instance, in Uganda, the Basakuru, Basigi and Beinika are some of the clans comprising the Bakiga tribe in Kabale district. The Bakiga are part of the Bantu peoples of Uganda and other black African countries like Tanzania and Zambia. In Uganda, the Bantu (such as the Bakiga, Baganda and Bagisu) are culturally very different from the Nilo-Hamites such as the Langi, Acholi and Iteso. The Baganda, being a big tribe, come nearer to a nation or nationality.

Furthermore, except where the context clearly indicates otherwise, 'ethnic' or 'tribal' should be taken to refer also to 'clan' (at a lower level) and 'regional' (at a higher level).

This interpretation is especially true where either there is one commonly used language (e.g. Luganda in the south) or two or more but very similar ones (as in the west) and in view of what we say below under the sub-heading 'summary of the sources' (of ethnic conflict).

Conflict

Conflict can be viewed from different angles including the ethnic one.

Generally defined, conflict can be taken to mean

"a breakdown in the standard mechanisms of decision-making so that an individual or group experiences difficulty in selecting an action alternative".⁸

This definition is particularly helpful when looking at the individual and organizational forms of conflict.

Viewing it from the social angle, Coser defines conflict as a

"struggle in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals".⁹

Building on Coser's definition, Katz and Kahn come to the conclusion that conflict is

"the direct interaction of two or more parties (persons, groups, organizations, nations) such that the actions of one tend to prevent or compel some outcome against the resistance of the other".¹⁰

Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic conflict is conflict involving tribes or ethnic groups.

Nevertheless, this definition might appear deliberately vague. So, we shall try to refine it further, borrowing from the above definitions. Our definition excludes that of March and Simon. It is nearer to those of Coser, on the one hand, and Katz and Kahn, on the other. Consequently, we shall define ethnic conflict as

"the direct or indirect pursuit, by members of different ethnic/tribal groups, of incompatible objectives where the winner takes all that there is, or the bigger share, of what is available, in a situation involving interaction which consciously or unconsciously is characterised by overt or covert acts meant to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rival group(s) before, during or after the said pursuit".

Public service

The term 'public service' is taken to mean, variously "things" like 'civil service', the bureaucracy (as opposed to 'bureaucracy' which, strictly speaking, is true of all large-scale organizations including churches), and the public sector.

In Uganda, the public service comprises the following:

- (i) The Traditional Public Service;
- (ii) The Teaching Service;
- (iii) The Diplomatic Service;
- (iv) Judges of the High Court;
- (v) Members of all other Courts of Law established by Parliament;

- (vi) Uganda Police Force;
- (vii) District Administrations; and
- (viii) Urban Authorities.¹¹

Unless otherwise specified, our discussion should be taken to refer only to the above organizations although, obviously, it will not be irrelevant to other areas of the public sector such as the Armed Forces, Makerere University or public corporations.

WHETHER THERE IS ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE UGANDA PUBLIC SERVICE

Before putting the question, "On the basis of your experience, observations, etc., is there ethnic conflict in the Uganda public service?", we were careful to ascertain whether the respondent understood the term 'conflict'. For this reason, we asked a prior question, "What do you understand by the term 'conflict'?"

We were impressed by the responses.

It is true that of the 67 respondents, two declined to offer any definition. Also, three gave definitions which showed that they did not quite understand the term. Nevertheless, 62 (92.5 percent) gave extremely helpful definitions, such as the following:

- "A struggle between two or more forces".
- "A struggle between people over something".
- "A state of disagreement, animosity between two or more persons/groups whose interests, desires or aspirations do clash".
- "An unharmonious situation where two persons do not agree on an issue - whether the facts involved are real or not".

- "Misunderstanding - in most cases accompanied by emotions - between individuals or groups of people over a particular issue for a period of time".
- "Differences".
- "Differences in opinions, disagreements between individuals or groups of people".
- "A clash of interests between two or several individuals".

We do not know whether those whom we did not interview consulted dictionaries or textbooks or friends before answering the question. What is clear is that the definitions given are reasonable. The words/ expressions that occur frequently in these definitions are given in table 1 below.

Table 1: Words/expressions used commonly in respondents' definitions.

Word/expression	Number of respondents using it	Percentage
1. Disagreement	20	32.3
2. Differences (or 'different' 'differ', 'divergence')	13	21
3. Misunderstanding	10	16.1
4. Interests	4	6.5
5. Struggle	3	4.8
6. Lack of harmony	3	4.8
7. Other	9	14.5
Total	62	100

Source: Own construction based on respondents' information.

The responses

Of the 67 respondents, only four (6.5 percent) expressly or indirectly denied that there was ethnic conflict in the public service or said, simply, that they did not know. The rest (93.5 percent) agreed that this form of conflict exists in our service.

Own view

We go along with the majority of the respondents.

There might be controversy on the intensity, causes, etc. of ethnic conflict in the Uganda public service. However, we believe that its existence is too self-evident to be disputed.

LEVELS IN THE HIERARCHY WHERE ETHNIC CONFLICT OCCURS

INTRODUCTION:

We were interested to find out where in the hierarchy of the public service ethnic conflict occurs. The responses are summarized in table 2 below.

Table 2: Levels in the Uganda public service
where ethnic conflict occurs

Level (in the hierarchy)	Number of respondents mentioning it	Percentage of total
1. Throughout the hierarchy/service	35	52.2
2. Mostly at the top	26	38.8
3. Top and bottom levels	5	7.5
4. Middle ranks	0	0
5. Junior ranks	1	1.5
6. The very bottom	0	0
Total	67	100

Source: Own construction based on respondents' information.

Elaboration

Top level positions include those of Permanent Secretary (Principal Secretary), Head of Department plus other U1 or equivalent posts. The very bottom level is that of unestablished employees ("Grouping Scheme").

The fact that there are no responses or only one from middle ranks downwards is explained, we believe, by the nature of the answers given in 1 - 2. Thus, 'throughout the service' and 'mostly at the top' clearly cover all levels.

The reader may rightly wonder why many respondents believe that there is ethnic conflict at the top. The following two elaborations by respondents are illustrative. One said, "The top level is where the control of resources is greater". Another put it thus,

"Ethnic conflict is related to political alignment. Now, politics tends to work mostly at the top. So, ethnic conflict also tends to manifest itself at the top".

There are two other statements made in connection with number 3 in the table, which we found very revealing. Both reinforce the possibility of ethnic conflict being sharpest at the top. One respondent said,

Basically, ethnic conflicts are found among the lower groups of employees where technical qualifications are not a pre-requisite and among the occupants of the highly political posts where benefits look lavish".

Another, while maintaining that ethnic conflict takes place at all levels within the public service, added,

"but most directly at the lowest levels, and most indirectly at the highest ones (Permanent Secretary and equivalent levels)".

Own views

People with technical/professional qualifications are sometimes also victims of, and slaves to, ethnic conflict—depending on how they entered their positions, ambitions, etc.

We are inclined to support the view that ethnic conflict takes place throughout the service. We would especially:

- in those cadres (like Foreign Service, Administrative Service, Personnel Management) which are by their

nature very political, or in which professional/technical skills are not directly and obviously a prerequisite for initial entry;

- among all those employees who lack "exportable" skills. Here the export market could be inside the country (private sector or self-employment) or outside;
- in those jobs requiring no or very limited skills (such as those of sweeper, gardener, etc.), especially if incumbents have got them through nepotism or similar non merit channels, and since appointment, disciplining, etc. are delegated to Heads of departments;
- among employees who have political ambitions or are opportunistic; and
- in those posts at the very top where incumbents exercise a lot of political and economic power such as those of Permanent Secretary.

In the latter connection, it is worth recalling that in spite of what some writers say about the need to separate politics and administration or the apparent distinction between the two, the reality is otherwise.¹² As other writers like Long¹³, and Seidman¹⁴, have ably pointed out, politics and administration are very much interlinked especially at the higher levels. Most top public servants are political animals. So, whether they admit or realize it or not; the fact is that they arrive at their top posts, stay in them,

and, finally, lose them, because of politics - and not purely and exclusively on the basis of their technical competence although the latter is usually a requirement. And, to the extent that in Uganda, ethnic conflict is still, alas! part and parcel of politics, we must conclude that top civil servants are not un-affected by that conflict - whether as its initiators or manipulators or victims, etc.

We maintain this position although we are aware that, to some people, it might sound an overstatement, especially if they view it from what the Uganda constitution says.

Such people might argue that it is not generally true that top civil servants are politically appointed, deployed, disciplined or removed from their positions, the exceptions being posts of Permanent Secretary, District Administrator and officers on the personal staff of the President - in the sense that the Head of State does not have to seek anybody's advice, let alone have their appointment, etc. follow the normal Public Service Commission machinery. They might add that even with these positions, appointments are usually, though not necessarily, made from public officers serving already in related fields and in possession of the requisite qualifications, competence and experience.

Maintaining our position need not contradict such people. Nevertheless, space does not permit us to answer them fully - even without going into details such as those relating to the theory and practice of the separation of powers. Suffice to repeat that most top civil servants (almost anywhere in the world) are political animals. Furthermore, in Uganda

politics tends to pervade the entire public service, if with varying degrees of intensity depending on several factors - such as one's level in the hierarchy, educational background, tribe, career ambitions and the period of the country's history.

SYMPTOMS

The list

Different respondents mentioned a number of these from which we have selected the following. The number of respondents mentioning each is indicated in brackets.

- Nepotism/favouritism (47)
- Unfair dismissals or suspensions (16)
- Unfair transfers (11)
- Corruption (6)
- Openly expressed mistrust (5)
- Lack of cooperation (5)
- Violent, physical or verbal, confrontation (5)
- Elimination/murder (3)
- Use of own (vernacular) language in the department/ministry which happens to be dominated by a particular tribe (3)
- Ethnic based informal groups (2)
- Discrimination in the approval of financial requests or claims (2)
- Character assassination (2)
- Openly expressed hatred (2)

We assume that these symptoms do not require elaboration. But let us explain briefly the last one and 'lack of co-operation',

Openly expressed hatred

This is where an officer openly refuses to see or criticizes another or a client/visitor, for no other reason except the latter's tribe.

The officer may refuse to see the client/visitor "now or in the future" by either sending the latter out of his office or just walking out of it, leaving him (visitor/client) stranded.

This type of hatred seems to permeate the entire service. However, while it is more visible at the junior and middle levels, it is somehow suppressed but present, at the top.

We were told that political leaders also indulge in it - in their dealings with senior public servants.

Lack of cooperation

Essentially, this involves withholding (vital) official information from officers of another tribe or other tribes, until it is too late for it to be acted upon; and sabotage by members of one ethnic group of the efforts of the members of other tribes.

Lack of cooperation extends to the uncommitted implementation of instructions and decisions and, according to one interviewee, is mostly responsible for administrative bottlenecks in the public service. It also makes inter-departmental and interministerial coordination and cooperation difficult.

SOURCES/CAUSES

INTRODUCTION:

To understand the sources of ethnic conflict in the public service needs a full appreciation of at least two basic facts: conflict is part and parcel of the human condition; and has multiple causes, some obvious others less so.

The first fact is ably summarized by Katz and Kahn when they note:

"The fact of conflict - of being somehow involved with opposing forces - must surely be among the most common of human experiences. We recognize conflict in the opposition of wishes within ourselves, in the clashes between others whom we observe, and in the full struggles against those we ourselves oppose. And, according to our temperament and experience, we seek it or avoid it, fear it or enjoy it, call it sickness or call it life".¹⁵

The authors are not being original. Much earlier, Shakespeare brought out clearly the poignancy of conflict in the following lines spoken by Hamlet:

"To be, or not to be, that is the question:- /
Whether 't nobler in the mind, to suffer/
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune;/
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? ".¹⁶

Later, in the same speech, Hamlet utters words that most honest adults will readily agree with, namely, "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all".

Nor was Shakespeare being very original in reflecting on conflict. In this connection, theologians and historians will recall St. Augustine's statement that "where one deliberates, one soul fluctuates between contrary wills" - which may involve a choice between two or more good alternatives and/or bad ones.¹⁷ They will also recall the words

of Jesus Christ when, in Gethsemane, before his arrest, trial and subsequent crucifixion, he prayed three times saying,

"My father, if it be possible, take this cup of suffering from me.' Yet not what I want, but what you want".¹⁸

Also conflict has multiple causes.

Take, for instance, Iago's action in tricking Othello, the Moor, into killing the beloved and supposedly unfaithful, yet, in reality, faithful Desdemona. In a soliloquy following his conversation with Roderigo, he says with a cruel frankness:

"..... I hate the Moor; And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets/He has done my office: I know not if 't be true; / Yet I, for mere suspicion in that kind, / Will do as if for surety"¹⁹

It is clear from what we are told earlier on that one of the main reasons for Iago's hatred of Othello is failure to get promoted to the position of second in command to the Moor - which position was given to Michael Cassio, a Florentine, to whom Iago contemptuously refers as 'a great arithmetician' and a theoretician with no practical experience of warfare.

At any rate, without presenting further evidence as to the source of conflict - such as that provided by Meerlo who argues that

"Every war is a dramatization of man's inner war, the externalization of his inner conflict"²⁰

it is helpful to remember Iago's behaviour, circumstances and actions and their consequences as we try to understand the sources in as far as the Uganda public service is concerned.

For, sometimes, what appears as conflict over one factor, such as a desire to promote the interests of an officer's tribe, might be no more than an effort on that Officer's part to punish another one who has won in a contest to secure a prize from within or outside the service. Or, it might be a case of an employee who is dismissed purely on grounds of inefficiency, wishing to hide the fact by claiming to have been so treated because of his tribe, region, etc.

Summary of the sources

As with symptoms, different sources were listed by different respondents. We grouped a number of these sources into six major ones as indicated below- with the number who mentioned them being indicated in brackets.

- (i) Nepotism/favouritism (47)
- (ii) Political factors.(19) These include thirst or greed for power; the fanning by politicians of ethnic differences; and conflict over goals between bureaucrats themselves or bureaucrats and politicians, usually concerning the siting of national assets.
- (iii) Historical circumstances (including colonial legacies) (14)
- (iv) Cultural differences (11)
- (v) Prejudice (6)
- (vi) Economic inequalities (5)

Nepotism was seen as both a symptom and a source. That is why it appears under both headings.

Regarded by most respondents as synonymous with favouritism, nepotism is defined in Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary as "favouritism shown to a relative (as by giving an appointive job) on a basis of relationship".

In the Ugandan/African context, the term "relative" should be interpreted liberally to mean/include a member of one's clan or tribe or region or even religion or political party, but especially, the first three. For, while one's relatives might be few, members of one's clan or tribe or region will be many. They will, just like relatives, tend to be beneficiaries of an officer's acts of nepotism.

In Uganda, as in virtually all parts of the world, nepotism is also reinforced by other factors or considerations like old boy/girl and professional ties and associations.

It is not possible to explain here all the sources listed above. We will only elaborate on two - prejudice and cultural differences - since they are immediately relevant to ethnicity and because they tend to be pervasive in their influence, if in an indirect manner.

Prejudice

According to Klineberg, prejudice may be defined from a general/popular view or a social science one. From the former view point, it means

"a prejudgement or preconcept reached before the relevant information has been collected or examined and therefore based on inadequate or even imaginary evidence".

From the social science viewpoint, it is

"an unsubstantiated prejudgement of an individual or group, favourable or unfavourable".

able in character, tending to action in consonant direction".²¹

Below we give selected examples of some prejudice - oriented statements by some public officers about certain tribes within the public service.

Tribe A

- "Very hypocritical. Very proud. Very submissive".
- "Give As money and they will be okay".
- "Very elusive. Very nice on the surface but inwardly very malicious. Very good diplomats because diplomats are liars. Will stay with you and then stab you in the back".

Tribe B

- "Arrogant as (As). They look at others as inferior creatures".
- "Very arrogant. They don't believe that other ethnic groups are also people".

Tribe C

- "Outright rude and violent".
- "Rude; violent; have little respect for law, order and discipline".
- "Very aggressive, uncultured, undisciplined, ambitious".

Tribe D

- "Conmen and gamblers".
- "More opportunistic than arrogant".
- "Very opportunistic. Like camcleous; they will take on the colour of the political party in power at the time; will sing to the tune of any ruler, however cacophonous".

Tribe E

- "What the master says - so do I say".
- "Submissive. Always following the existing (political) order as though blown by the wind".
- "Non-aligned in political matters".

Tribe F

- "Crude, rough, highly united, industrious, no nonsense".
- "Generally hot-tempered, aggressive but at the same time very good people to associate with due to their open-mindedness".
- "Open-minded, strong, hardworking but like fighting and drinking".

Cultural differences

Three specific examples were given of cultural differences as a source of ethnic conflict:

- The tendency to use rude or arrogant language when addressing officers or people from other tribes;
- Poor communication/breakdown in communication; and
- Differences in values and attitudes such as those relating to defeat and victory.

The first two are related. Elaboration on the one should shed light on the other. Consequently, we will elaborate on only the last two.

Poor communication or breakdown in communication was associated with the manner in which some tribes speak or make approaches. Thus, some tribes are said to speak 'giving orders' or 'quarrelling' even when making request. Others do so in a 'soft' or 'diplomatic' manner.

But here, as in beauty, the softness or harshness of the language depends on one's tribe.

With the first category of tribes, soft, diplomatic language is not appreciated. It is associated with weakness - both physical/literal and psychological/figurative. What is appreciated is forceful language.

With the second of tribes, there is distinct preference for soft, diplomatic language. There is likely to be a negative response if a request or even command is made in a commanding tone.

The factor 'differences in values and attitudes' covers many aspects including food and sex; and also goes very deep. As an example, we were told of a case where two Ugandan university professors (call them X and Y) played a game inside Uganda - we will not mention the name of the game in order to hide the identity of the professors but the time was in the early 1980s. X won. Because of that, Y boxed him. Onlookers were greatly shocked that Y could not accept defeat even after a fair, friendly contest. The interpretation, based on the fact that X and Y were from distinctly different tribes, was that sadly, sometimes, even very high education does not help remove the more negative of ethnic/cultural differences. For surely, in most contests, there are losers and winners, and it is very important in life to learn to accept and bear defeat, however painful it may be.

Nevertheless, but on the basis of limited research, we are inclined to believe that the issue of people accepting or refusing to accept defeat is profoundly human and personal,

not tribal - although it might be higher in some tribes than in others.

Uganda's tribes are different. Consequently, the ways in which they react to defeat are likely to differ. However, we do not know of any tribe that tolerates defeat so much so that none of its members will ever attempt to reverse it - whether immediately and openly (with some tribes) or much later and secretively or indirectly (with other tribes).

Lastly, let us emphasize the fact that there can be two types of refusal to accept defeat. The first type is the one we have just described. However human, it is negative and dangerous. The second type is associated with determination in the pursuit of, hopefully, a worthy objective, and not being easily discouraged. It is positive. But, like the first, it is not a monopoly of one tribe.

SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH ETHNIC CONFLICT
CAN BE BROUGHT TO AN END OR REDUCED

INTRODUCTION:

Well over fifty five suggestions were made as to how ethnic conflict in the Uganda public service could be brought to an end or reduced. We have grouped the different suggestions into fourteen as follows, with the number who mentioned each being indicated in brackets.

- (i) Educational reforms and efforts (16).
- (ii) Reduction of (political) conflict outside the public service (10).
- (iii) Clarification of the role of party politics in the public service (6).

- (iv) Equitable distribution of national resources/sharing of the national cake (5)
- (v) Streamlining of, and adherence to, procedures in the public service (5).
- (vi) Good, honest, sensible and selfless political leadership (4).
- (vii) Increased use of, and reliance on, committees rather than individuals in decision-making (3).
- (viii) Introduction of a national language (Swahili or Luganda) (3).
- (ix) Improvement of the terms and conditions of service of public servants (2).
- (x) Increased use of the Inspector General of Government (2).
- (xi) Inter-marriage (2).
- (xii) Strengthening of Statutory Appointing Bodies like the Public Service Commission (2).
- (xiii) Increasing of the national cake so there is more to share (2).
- (xiv) Clearer definition of the objectives, role and functions of departments/organizations, including systematic job evaluation, job descriptions and job specifications (2).

The fourteen suggestions can be sub-grouped further into four broad categories - organizational, social, economic and political.

Measures of an organizational nature

These relate to those concerning points (v), (vii) and (xiv) namely: strengthening of, and adherence to, procedures in the public service; increased use of, and reliance on, committees rather than individuals in decision-making; and a clearer definition of the objectives, role and functions of

departments/organizations and their sub-units. Let us elaborate on the second point.

The use of committees (with their usual advantage and disadvantages) was interpreted by one interviewee to include, broadly, consultations within the service including the "absolute" need for politicians to consult technical personnel on all decisions on which they intend to make pronouncements.

This should be so even if, eventually, the politicians may take a stand which runs counter to the professional advice given. But, it was argued, the consultation must take place and before rather than after the politician has taken a final decision. The tendency for politicians to make statements about which public servants learn from the radio - just like other members of the public - was considered not only unfair but also likely to lead to non-implementation, or the deliberately slow implementation, of policy pronouncements and decisions.

In this connection, it was stressed that what politicians call sabotage is not sabotage as such. It is merely refusal to implement what public servants consider bad policies. We were reminded that there is a tendency for Ugandan politicians to dictate or direct - with little or no prior consultations with the public servants. Yet, some of what they say is wrong. In such a situation, the public servant many times finds himself having to choose between implementing bad policies and ignoring them. If he does the latter. And, depending on his tribe and

his political master, conflict might not only arise but also take on ethnic colours.

Needless to say, in a multi-ethnic service like Uganda's and where political leaders have no clear and definite mandate from the people, confusion does arise. For anybody - politicians, public servants, the military, etc - can claim to represent the "people's" interests, although these might be no more than one's own or those of one's tribe. Sometimes the confusion becomes real conflict and of the ethnic type.

Social measures.

Purely social measures are mainly two-educational reforms and efforts; and intermarriage.

Educational reforms and efforts are meant to encompass many aspects such as:

- (i) Actual reforms of the school education system.
- (ii) Introduction of universal, free and compulsory primary education.
- (iii) Politicization - in schools like Kyankwanzi; in places like the Uganda Institute of Public Administration; and at mass rallies.
- (iv) Literacy campaigns to help the mass of illiterates in the rural areas and, a few, urban ones, to learn how to read and write about the cultures of other tribes.
- (v) Self and other-people initiated education about the cultures of other tribes.
- (vi) Posting of, especially, the more senior officers to places other than their own or away from the capital so they can learn how other people live.

- (vii) The usual seminars and other training programmes with an emphasis on human relations and team work in multi-ethnic organizations
- (viii) Counselling by supervisors at all levels in the hierarchy.
- (ix) "Positive" reliance on religious organizations especially churches and mosques to preach unity - just as was done by the Uganda Ministry of Health during 1986 - 1987 when it successfully solicited their assistance in the child immunization programme.
- (x) A systematic, properly executed national policy on adult education that goes beyond literacy campaigns.

The actual reform of the education system should concentrate on the young, who are more amenable to change in attitudes, without forgetting that adults can and should be assisted to become fully conscious of the social, economic and political realities of Uganda.

It was felt that the present system emphasizes differences rather than shared values among Ugandans. Children are not consciously and deliberately encouraged to grow up as Ugandans.

The reforms should include making and assisting the young to study in different parts of the country - which is likely to help cement friendships so valuable for national unity - AND also to pursue practical, rather than purely theoretical subjects so that they can become job creators rather than job seekers.

Such reforms are likely to be more effective if Uganda chooses and pursues a definite political ideology as Tanzania has done.

Measures of an economic nature are the equitable distribution of natural resources/sharing of the national cake on the basis of well worked out and generally accepted criteria; improvement of the terms and conditions of service of public servants; and increasing the national cake so that there is more to share.

According to one interviewee, "most of the problems associated with ethnic conflict within the public service and, indeed, in the entire country, are but symptoms of poverty". While, on the basis of the evidence gathered, this is an exaggeration, there is no doubt that in a situation of persistent and prolonged scarcity of goods and services to share, what is good behaviour becomes difficult to define. For, otherwise very decent people, including public servants, can be easily reduced to a state of lower animals scrambling for mere bones. In such a state of utter human degradation, the flimsiest excuse, including ethnic differences, will be seized upon to kill, rape, defraud and engage in other barbaric and primitive acts.

Nevertheless, in a situation of relative plenty, including reserves and an assurance of future supplies and a well-worked out and generally accepted system of sharing the bounty, it is likely to be easier to reduce greed and the many evils it gives rise to. Those who are born, or have become incurable, thieves (and who are likely to be a minority, found in all tribes) will be more easily

separated from the vast majority (again to be found in all tribes) who would have become thieves due to environmental circumstances, to which they would have succumbed and out of which they are capable of being liberated.

Political measures

These constitute the largest number. This is perhaps logical since most sources are also political in nature, even without considering the cancerous phenomenon of nepotism. We shall say a word on three of these - strengthening appointing bodies, provision or existence of good political leadership and the reduction of political conflict outside the public service.

The suggestion of strengthening the statutory appointing bodies must not be considered superficially. In this connection, it is worth recalling that it is usually forgotten that these bodies, especially the Commissions, such as the Public Service Commission (PSC), have two distinct but closely related parts - the Commissioners and the Secretariat.

Now, while the Commissioners tend to be men and women of great integrity, expertise and experience - witness, for instance, the calibre of those appointed in June 1987 under John Bikangaga - the officers comprising the secretariat tend to be less qualified and experienced. This is most unfortunate. The two parts of the Commission need to be roughly equally experienced and, at any rate, equally competent. The criticisms sometimes levelled at the PSC, in our view, refer, even if unknowingly (beco

the tendency to confuse the Secretariat staff with the Commissioners), more to the Secretariat than to the Commissioners. Our view is that for as long as the Secretariats of the Commissions remain weak, the work of the latter and hence, the entire public service, will continue to suffer.

Lastly, let us consider briefly the provision of honest, etc. political leadership and the reduction of political conflict OUTSIDE the public service.

There was a wide - spread feeling, which we share, that when there is tension or conflict, ethnic or other, within the political atmosphere - and we would add, the social and economic atmospheres or environments - it is bound to spill over into the public service, sooner rather than later. In this connection, we find hard to believe the assertion - though an interesting one - by an interviewee, that whereas, in the political atmosphere, such tension/conflict tends to be "hostile" or "antipathetic", in the public service, it is "sympathetic".

Ethnic conflict outside the public service has a bearing on ethnic relations within the latter. But it can and does originate also from within the public service. The conflict is also seen to be fanned by political leaders and top bureaucrats. So if these 'honourables, ladies and gentlemen' deliberately, openly and, in actions, discourage it, most public servants are likely to follow suit very easily and willingly.

Since late 1965, Uganda's political leadership has lacked genuine, fundamental legitimacy. The national question - who should rule Uganda, for how long, under what system of government, etc. - whose answer directly affects the public service, remains unanswered. Once it is satisfactorily answered - through free and fair elections, with leaders being accountable to the people - then ethnic conflict in the country, including the public service, is likely to be much less than it is now (1987).

CONCLUSION

In the preceding discussion, we have tried to provide answers to the questions posed at the beginning of the essay.

Yes: there is ethnic conflict in the Uganda public service. It exists throughout the hierarchy but mostly at the top. It has several symptoms - the three leading ones being nepotism, unfair dismissals or suspensions, and unfair transfers. Sources are multifarious but the leading categories are those of nepotism (which is both a symptom and a source) and political factors.

There are several ways in which ethnic conflict can be brought to an end or reduced - through a variety of organizational, social, economic and political means. Essentially and ultimately, however, total ethnic harmony in the public service is impossible when such harmony is non-existent in the social, economic and political environment.

In the past, these environments have been polluted squabbles and physical fighting among politicians - and it is true, directly or indirectly, by some public servants.

particularly those at the top. The squabbling and fighting are continuing, if with much reduced intensity. Once the combatants and the squabblers reach peace and conflict among them ceases, the ethnic conflict in the public service will cease totally or remain in a negligible, non-dangerous quantity. We shall then be left with individual and organizational forms of conflict, which are universal and can never be really completely got rid of.

Clearly, therefore, the onus of ending ethnic conflict in Uganda, including the public service, is on politicians, top public servants plus, to some extent, all educated (secondary school and above) citizens.

Meantime, all those politicians, bureaucrats or any other person interested in ending conflict based on ethnicity may wish to reflect on what Mazrui said one day in his Reith Lecture.

"In the future people will quarrel over incomes, jobs and commodities. They will quarrel less over race and tribe".²²

We believe otherwise.

Ethnic, etc ties and consciousness have been in the past, are today, and will in future continue to be, very strong - throughout the world. What has changed and will continue changing is the manner of expressing the consciousness or loyalty to the ties. In general, but not always and necessarily, the more "modern" or "civilized" a society is, the more subtle/hidden will be that manner, and vice-versa. In organizations, junior employees are likely to be open in their expressions while the top people

will hide their feelings in demagogic or diplomatic acts only to let them loose when in private, sometimes with a ferocity and a viciousness that defies both genuine civilization and humanity.

We are not disputing the importance of class or class consciousness. Nevertheless, we believe that these two have never, and will never, really and fundamentally replace ethnic/tribal/racial ties and consciousness except at the levels of rhetoric and sentiment.

Indeed, there is nothing inherently wrong with attachment to one's tribe. What is wrong, and should therefore be resisted, is an attempt by one tribe or group of tribes to "swallow" or subjugate or undemocratically dominate another or others; OR to deny other tribes their due share of the common cake OR to deprive them of that cake which, through their own sweat and without harming others, they have baked for their own enjoyment.

Tribes have aspects and practices that are or can be injurious to others. These negative aspects and practices must be fought and or discouraged. But tribes also have aspects and practices which are innocent or harmless or, indeed, which if copied/learned by others, can be beneficial to them. Such positive aspects and practices should be encouraged and permitted to flourish.

Our hope and prayer are that, in future, and thanks to total African unity and increased individual and collective prosperity, the more negative aspects of tribes including those that are a breeding ground for conflict, will be a thing of the past.

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Such officers had to resign their posts
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