

KAMPALA DIARY

M. M. CARLIN

Lecturer in English, University College of East Africa

WALKING in the centre of Kampala you are beset by all the contrast, the bustle and collision that mark the growing new towns of Africa. Glass and concrete alternate with corrugated iron. The *basuti*, the sashed voluminous gown of the Baganda women, appears quite Victorian besides the sateen, bangles and wedge-heels you find at the ready on street-corners. Luganda, Gujerati and kitchen Swahili can all be heard in the space of five yards. You will see the features and bearing of every tribe in Uganda and a good many from beyond; Hindus, Moslems, Goans, English; an American tourist or two; some Italians, some Swiss; you may even see Ernest Hemingway by the Imperial Hotel, treading man's road between tusk and martini. The day is bright, the heat not overpowering, the streets thronged, hooting and vivid. In the shade of a barber-shop three buckled placards stare—the Queen, the Aga Khan, and the Kabaka.

Kampala is built, they tell you, on seven hills. I always count nine or ten, but certain and salient are those bearing the Roman Catholic and Anglican cathedrals—fittingly dominant in a town where the early wars between Catholics and Protestants still reverberate in politics. Kabuli, the hill of the mosque, faces them across the valley, and when the three buildings are floodlit on great occasions, the white minarets of the mosque float like the Heavenly City, while the red-brick cathedrals take on the tinge of Sodom and Gomorrah. Between are two lower hills. On one, surrounded by a high, elaborately woven grass fence, stands the Kabaka's palace; on the other, a fort. The site was chosen by Lugard.

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Imperium in imperio signifies the status of the four kingdoms of Uganda, of which Buganda is the richest and the weightiest politically. That there should be four, together with numerous other groupings—peoples, tribes, language stocks—is the factor working most against the growth of a united African political movement in Uganda. The Uganda National Congress, powerful as it is, is concentrated in Buganda and cannot approach the

position of dominance enjoyed, for example, by the C.P.P. in Ghana. Smaller parties such as Mulira's Progressive Party have a good many ideas (the policy of the U.N.C. is rudimentary) but little strength; and neither Musazi nor Kiwanuka, the dominant figures in the U.N.C., has anything like the overriding *charisma* of a man like Nkrumah.

Uganda unity requires one of two things, if not both—an Nkrumah as leader or a Strijdom as Governor. Lacking the former, the U.N.C. seems of late to have pinned its hopes on the latter; and the new Governor, Sir Frederick Crawford, is watched, and his record picked clean, for any evidence of settlerism, of favour for East African Federation, of *putting on the brakes*. His South African wife, his career in Kenya, his public demeanour, anything that may afford hope of a tyrant, is earnestly attended upon. That there isn't likely to be a great deal to seize hold of is a tribute to British intentions here, and the search itself is a comment of some irony upon history and politics in Africa. The Security Branch, it is true, continues to be alarmed by vigorous advocacy of self-government, but this is really a matter of finding an agreed language—a problem that has occupied governors and editors in other countries and for longer periods. The latest news, moreover, is of concession, not rigidity: direct elections are now to be extended throughout Uganda three years earlier than was formerly planned, bringing the rest of the country into line with Buganda at the centre.

Sir Frederick does seem prepared to put at least the minute hand of the clock back in one way. He and Lady Crawford began appearing early on at segregated functions and patronizing segregated institutions—a golf club, a swimming-bath, a banquet. One does not feel that the new Governor accedes to this kind of demand out of any deliberate intention to slight or in order to uphold a principle. As an old colonial hand he simply knows of no other way to behave. But at such functions in Sir Andrew Cohen's time, the large amount of space unoccupied by the Governor was a rather conspicuous part of the proceedings. Cohen was a man whose absence could be felt; and though by sticking to his principles he lost the support of the stiffer-backed Europeans in his own administration, without gaining much favour with the mass of the people, he nevertheless won as a man the respect and liking of a large number of individuals, including, very unofficially, many of the more extreme nationalists. And this regard survived even the Kabaka's

deposition and the stoning of the Governor's car.

Perhaps a word is necessary here on the colour bar. There is legally none at all, as there has not been since 1922. In hotels, restaurants, bars and cinemas, one may see all three races mingling, though there isn't as yet very much companionship. In Kampala there are one or two all-white places of entertainment. There is a hotel with a swimming-bath which poses as a club (you can get in for sixpence if your skin is the right shade). There is a night-club whose one claim to glory is that Prince Aly Khan was refused admission there (he had to fly on to London and console himself at the Savoy). And there is, crowning what is undoubtedly one of the seven hills, the same crumbling bastion that you find from Lagos to Zanzibar—the European Club. Here it is called the Top Club, to distinguish it from its multi-racial rival down the hill. There is a not easily definable air about such places; some are shabby, some are still plush, but all are unmistakably on the skid, and even the crispest table-cloth seems conscious of it. Though the strong shift in social emphasis initiated by the Cohens seems due to suffer a slackening or even a check now, it is a matter of small conjecture how much longer the Top Club will justify its title or even continue, in its present form, to exist.

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Entebbe, the centre of government—a quiet place by the enormous lake—and Kampala, the centre of commerce, are twenty miles apart, a humming half-hour on an excellent road. You have an imposing view of Kampala as you come over the final hill from the south, but the approach is mutilated for the sensitive colonial servant by a social, political and architectural excrescence known as Katwe. Katwe ruins that excellent road. It is a shabby, straggling, iron village-become-suburb which seems to express its personality in two things: bananas and printing-presses. Since *matoke*, a preparation from green bananas that tastes like yam gone slightly sour, is the staple diet of the Baganda, the banana-market in Katwe has a certain symbolic significance. The printing-presses have a significance a great deal more practical. They look as if they were designed by Benjamin Franklin, but they are the voice of African nationalism. Here smudged vernacular sheets with names like "Flash of Dawn" appear, are suppressed, and phoenix into being again under a different name. The headquarters (one above the

other) of the Progressive Party and the Uganda National Congress are to be found in Katwe. Meeting, discussion, intrigue, manoeuvre, argument, all the energy and activity of rising political consciousness, are concentrated in Katwe. The Security Branch distrusts the place, and the authorities neglect it. Its one street has been given a coat of tar recently; what it needs more is a public library and a debating-hall. The world gives this village little attention, but Katwe may yet command it.

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Katwe is not placed on one of the seven hills—or on any hill. Makerere, the University College of East Africa, very decidedly is. Makerere Hill is on the other side of town, but you may find your way to Katwe from there if you try. Katwe has already found its own way to Makerere—under college auspices last year an extra-mural course for party-political organizers took place, with field-work that involved the holding of street-corner meetings on actual political issues. There was a rather stiff fluttering of quills in the security offices, but the course took place, and some of the lecturers were Government servants. To a South African this kind of thing is beyond comprehension, but it happens in Uganda. Makerere, though it is distrusted already by Whites, especially in Kenya, would do well to make more contact with its surroundings in such ways as this.

Life in the college is organized along the lines of an English residential university, but since Makerere hasn't nearly the resources of, say, Achimota, progress is slower and amenities less. The strong leavening and sophisticating effect that a large body of non-African students would have, is lacking. But the college is expanding rapidly, the few Europeans, Asians, Goans, and Africans from Zanzibar and Nyasaland as well as from Kenya and Tanganyika, give it an "open" and unisular character, and a very large and very necessary programme goes forward. Makerere's principal function is to turn out an administrative and technological élite ready to provide the structure of government and commerce in East Africa in the future. As far as Uganda is concerned, self-government is impossible without such a corps; yet self-government is the expressed intention of all parties to the debate. It seems a pity that Katwe and Makerere do not come more often together. The college has much to offer, not least an assemblage of experts whose advice would greatly benefit any party policy committee.

A nationalist movement with little policy or patience, a government with rather ponderously enough of both—this is the classic British colonial situation to-day. But in Uganda there is a third force—it is the force of the Buganda Establishment—the force of the King, his Court, and his (for it is still his) *Lukiko*. The Kabaka is a force himself—a small but very erect figure with a cane, a Saville Row suit, an English voice astonishingly English, and the demeanour, quite unaffectedly, of a King. To see a group of Baganda fall to their knees as he passes arouses no democratic protest, in me at any rate. They smile and chat to him, kneeling, with the respectful ease of men who are assured of things, as in the days when kingdoms were. One can imagine the Kabaka in war—“a little touch of Harry” at the garden-party, if not in the night, is very much the kind of effect his passage exerts on his subjects, even on those who are prominent in Congress. But sooner or later Congress and Kabaka will be at odds. The policy of the Establishment is simple—kingship. The Kabaka is a King, and a King is unshackled, whether it be by the British while they are here, or by the legacy of “constitutional monarchy” when they are gone. To a statesman of the Buganda court indeed, “constitutional monarchy” is a phrase about as comprehensible as it would have been to any of his counterparts in the Middle Ages.

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Kampala is well served by the international airport of Entebbe close by. Thus you may listen to Julius Katchen, trapped on his way to Johannesburg, performing on the grand piano purchased, imported and maintained by the Uganda Musical Association for such high purposes. Outside of music, however, life is a little narrow for Europeans. Only by breaking the caste habit can you discover Kampala in all its singularity—and beauty. You can go to naked concrete dance-halls where the regular followers of the art carry hip-flasks of gin to lace their beer. You can visit quiet shaded bars where the Goan mechanics will attempt to engage your scorn against “these bloody Indians.” You can go to a Baganda wrestling contest—Cumberland style—with plenty to drink and drummers to encourage the contestants. You can attend a musicale at an Indian home; a fine, easy, personal, old-world affair, where any of the ladies may slip off her sandals to join the musicians on the floor and sing; where the children sit heavy-eyed—unless they are given the chance

to play the drums—until the last guest has departed; where the drone of the *tamboura* and the whining of the *sitar* are pointed by the lugubrious little drums called *tabla*; where girls dance with ochred palms and the petulant spot between the eyes, majestically to the ancient rhythms. But this, too, will go, as the West rolls over Africa—bringing marketing-boards, parliaments, and ultimately, one supposes, television. Kampala is still a town of three peoples, but the ways of the smallest group—the Europeans—seem destined to shape the future. How much will be gained, and how much lost, will only be fully measured afterwards.

