

STATEMENT

BY

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**ON THE MILITARY COUPS THAT HAVE
RECENTLY TAKEN PLACE IN SOME
AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

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The Military Coups that have taken place in Mali and Guinea, must be evaluated by the African freedom fighters so that we correctly take a principled stand. In a recent interview with Radio France, I condemned the Coup in Guinea because that was the latest. The same condemnation extends to the one in Mali and all the others like the one that was in Madagascar, some time ago. Why? It is because the African resistance, right from 1912 when the ANC was founded after the humiliating take over of the whole continent by the imperialists after defeating the incapable traditional chiefs, had 5 aims: to expel the imperialists from Africa (decolonization); in order to do that, the freedom fighters had to unite the African Peoples in each territory (colony) by emphasizing Patriotism (the unity of all the people as opposed to tribalism - the word being used was "African Nationalism); however, patriotism was not enough to defeat the imperialists - we needed Pan-African action to gain more strength (hence, the Manchester conference of

1945, the Accra Conference of 1958, the OAU conference of 1963 etc.); this Pan-Africanism, apart from the coordinated anti-imperialist actions, also anticipated the political and economic integration of either the whole of Africa (Dr. Nkrumah) or in parts (Nyerere Mwalimu); in the anti-imperialist struggles, we were supported by the socialist countries of the Soviet Union (1917), China(1949), Cuba (1959) etc. and the progressive groups in the west such as Dr. Shepherd of the USA, Lord Fenner Brockway of UK, Olof Palme of Sweden etc.; and, finally, the freedom fighters opposed and resisted neo colonialism – freedom in name but bondage in practice - that is why we condemned the killing of Lumumba, the overthrow of Nkrumah, Modibo Keita etc..

In otherwords, starting with 1912, African freedom fighting meant the following:

- i. Decolonization-anti-imperialism.
- ii. Patriotism or Nationalism as opposed to Sectarianism.
- iii. Pan- Africanism in fighting the imperialists but also leading to economic and political integration after liberation (CFTA □ Continental Free Trade Area and, where possible, Political Federations - like

Tanzania- the union of Zanzibar and Tanganyika or the federation of Ghana, Guinea and Mali).

- iv. Internationally, working with those that supported the independence of Africa and opposing those that support the subjugation of Africa.
- v. And, by that very fact, opposing neo-colonialism in Africa, Asia and Latin America (the war in Vietnam, the killing of Lumumba, the actions in Libya, recently, etc.).

Here, in Uganda, this is how we have been assessing actors. Idi Amin announced his coup detat at 1500 hours on the 25th of January, 1971. By 1700hours, on the same day, we met at Yona Kanyomozi's house in Bugolobi and we resolved to fight Idi Amin with arms. Who were we? We were part of the East African Student Movement that included people like Andrew Shija - Tanzania, John Garang- South Sudan, Peter Kinyanjui - Kenya, Mwakasungura - Malawi, Charles Kileo - Tanzania, Eriya Kategaya - Uganda etc. We believed in the five aims outlined above and we assessed all political actors accordingly. We did not fully agree with Mzee Obote. However, we thought that we could work with him on the issue

of integration of Africa and on anti-imperialism. With Idi Amin, however, there was no

hope. It was clear that he was an uninformed tool of some external actors whose interests were inimical to ours. Amin and the soldiers that followed him, had, therefore, no right to interfere with our destiny march. Guns, our guns bought for them from China (AK-47s), Czechoslovakia (BTR-60- armoured personnel carriers) etc., with our own money, could not intimidate us. We could and we did quickly learn the use of these instruments of force and, by 1979, Amin and his misdirected soldiers, were in full-flight, running away from the justice of the Ugandan revolutionaries.

Were we wrong to take up arms against Idi Amin? Not at all. This is because Idi Amin and his fellow golpists in Africa, were almost all of them agents of anti-African interests. We were calling them reactionaries and puppets of foreign interests. Who were they? They were the following: Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga, Eyadema of Togo, Afrifa of Ghana, Bokassa of Central Africa Republic, Habyarimana of Rwanda, etc etc.

What proof do we have that they were agents of foreign interests and against our destiny? When

Afrifa overthrew Mzee Nkrumah, the latter had either proposed to or had actually sent a reconnaissance group to the Zambezi valley

(Zambia side) to participate in the confrontation against Ian Smith in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

I remember, that in one of his speeches, Afrifa actually cited this as one of the reasons of overthrowing Mzee Nkrumah. After that, Ghana withdrew completely from the anti-colonial struggle and yet, thitherto, she had been the pointsman in the anti-colonial struggle.

Fortunately, for Africa, we had a few far-sighted and courageous elders of ours that did not desert the frontline of resistance to colonialism and imperialism. These were: Mwalimu Nyerere (Tanzania), Mzee Kaunda (Zambia), Mzee Seretse Khama (Botswana), Abdul Nasser (Egypt), Houari Boumediene (Algeria) and Mzee Sekou Toure (Guinea-Conakry). With material supplies (weapons) and training from the socialist camp (the Soviet Union, China, Cuba etc.), they gave training camps and rear bases to the African freedom fighters from Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and Guinea-Bissau. By 1974, the African Armies had defeated the Portuguese Army in Africa (a total of almost

200,000 soldiers); by 1980, the regime of Ian Smith, that had declared that it would sit on top of the Africans for another 1000 years, was defeated. In 1986, Uganda's leadership came into our hands and we also made our humble contribution. Eversince 1975, the number of the frontline states had grown from the original 3 (Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana) to the then six (adding Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola). Later, Namibia (1990), joined the frontline states. By 1994, South Africa was liberated. All this was the work of the African freedom fighters, supported by other anti-colonial forces in the World.

The question to ask is: "What would have happened if the Afrifa - Amin - Mobutu line of collaboration with imperialism at the expense of African interests, had succeeded?" In the article, I have talked of only the African Countries where there was fighting. There were, however, others that were not independent by the time the Afrifas betrayed us in Ghana. These were Sao-Tome and Principe, Equatoria Guinea, Djibouti, Seychelles. Swaziland, Lesotho, Western Sahara etc. Definitely, in the countries where the fighting took place, the imperialists had no intention of accepting African empowerment, leadership, and democratic participation. Portugal used to say that

their African colonies (Mozambique, Angola etc.) were not colonies. That they were “overseas provinces of Portugal”!! it was a titanic struggle in which our few elders, led as well.

Therefore, “the struggle between the two lines”, as the Chinese used to say, the line of independence and the line of flunkeyism, has been crucial and decisive in Africa. The imperialists wanted to extirpate the independent thinking leaders in Africa, like they did with Lumumba, Nkrumah, Modibo Keita, etc. The Portuguese invaded Conakry on the 22nd of November 1970. Sekou Toure and the Guinean resistance, defeated them. Hence, Guinea of Sekou Toure, remained a reliable rear- base for the PAIGC (Partido Africano Independencia of Guinea and Cape-Verde). That is how Guinea-Bissau, led by the capable Amilcar Cabral, whom the traitors assassinated on the 20th of January 1973, struck one of the biggest blows to Portuguese colonialism, so much that the defeated Portuguese Commander there, General Spinola, when he went back to Portugal, led the “golpe” (coup) against the fascist “Professorio Doctorio” Marcello Caetano.

Another strategic defeat had been inflicted on the Portuguese in Cabo Delgado Province when

comrade Samora Machel defeated General Kaulza D'Arriaga's "Operation Gordion Knot", in 1971, where he had employed 35,000 soldiers in that offensive. The imperialists tried to overthrow Mwalimu Nyerere (the William Chacha Coup, the planting of bombs by South African Commandoes landed by sub-marines at, for instance, Selander bridge- 200meters from where I was staying at Sun and Sand hotel;);etc.

Therefore, when it comes to these new Coup details in West Africa, we must ask three questions. The questions are:

- 1."What is the ideological stand of these Coup makers? Do they understand the 5 aims of the African freedom fighters that caused the formation of the ANC in 1912?
- 2.Whom are they overthrowing in terms of ideology and aims? Who is Alpha Conde, who is Keita, ideologically? Are they in the tradition of the African freedom fighters like Nkrumah, Nyerere, Sekou Toure etc?
- 3.What right do these Coup makers have when it comes to interfering with our destiny?

I certainly do not know the ideological position of the Coup-makers. There are, however, clues that show that they may not be part of the freedom fighters. The African Union has made some positive steps in working for the realization of some of our 5 strategic aims. The OAU supported the decolonization of Africa by creating the committee of 9 that Co-ordinated the anti-colonial armed struggle. This committee was based in Dar-es-Salaam and was headed by George Magombe and, later, by General Hashim Mbiita (both of Tanzania).

Secondly, recently, they accepted and launched the CFTA (the Continental Free Trade Area)- one of the strategic aims of the African freedom fighters, to ensure our prosperity. It is this African Union that has outlawed Coups. Who, then, are you to make a Coup against the decision of the AU? Whose interest are you serving? Besides, I was amazed and amused by the arrogance of these people.

When summoning former Government Ministers etc, one of them said that if anybody summoned does not come, he/she will be regarded as having declared rebellion!! Really!!

Especially for the politicians, they have a right and even an obligation to say: “No”, to whatever they don’t agree with. Saying “No”, includes not attending meetings called. It is a peaceful way of showing one’s unhappiness.

It is up to the organizer to come and see why I did not come to the called meeting so that, if he can, he addresses and cures the grievance.

To declare that peaceful abstaining from a meeting is rebellion, shows that you may be a fascist.

4. Who is Alpha Conde, Who is Keita of Mali, ideologically? Certainly, the few times I interacted with Professor Conde, he belongs to the tradition of African freedom fighters; he told me that he supported the federation of West Africa that would utilize the Mandingo, Fulani and other cross-border communities, to build such a political union, in addition to economic integration (ECOWAS, CFTA, COMESA etc.). Of course, we do not know much about the internal politics of Guinea.

Nevertheless, even when you have other differences, it should not eclipse the big aims you share. This is what we always believe and do. Examples of this are plenty.

5.Finally: “Do the coup-makers have a right to interfere with our destiny?”

The answer is a categorical “no”; it is good that the African Union accepted the minimum position of outlawing these coups. The freedom fighters, who themselves have not harmonized well among themselves, but must reject flunkeyism, should have no problem with leaders that do not share their views provided they are elected. Elections means one person, one vote, by secret ballot, at regular intervals. This is the minimum they all have set and it is a good one. If people who do not share our views win the elections, provided they do not engage in extra-judicial killings, we should accept their leadership and struggle against their wrong positions peacefully. The position of one person, one vote, by secret ballot, at regular intervals, is a good minimum position because it addresses the substance of democracy, which means the continuous and perpetual supremacy of the sovereignty of the people.

Nobody has a right to interfere with this.

Some of us, in the foot-steps of the freedom fighter elders, cannot contentedly accept that Africa becomes a Latin America in Africa. The struggle

led by the elders was: “for a free and United Africa”; not for “an unfree (neo-colonialism) and dispersed Africa.”

The 5 strategic goals, had, each, a reason:

Decolonization ☐ to regain the freedom to decide for ourselves;

Patriotism ☐ to create strength in each country by uniting the people and opposing sectarianism (Umoja ni nguvu, Agali awamu g'galuma enyama);

Pan-Africanism ☐ to create more strength, cater for our prosperity through uniting the African markets for our producers of goods and services through economic integration and create strategic security through political integration;

Utilizing the support of the Socialist Countries as well as the anti-colonial forces in the West to strengthen ourselves ☐ after Independence even some of the right-wing actors in the West, started working with the freedom fighters, although quite often they relapse into their wrong attitudes of arrogance;

And rejecting all attitudes of neo-colonialism; Uganda is strong today and on the verge of becoming a middle income Country, because we rejected flunkeyism-we resisted Idi Amin when he was being dined and wined in some capitals. The present chaos in many parts of Africa is on account of not fully implementing the goals of the elder-freedom fighters. That is why some of us cannot give up the struggle for these strategic goals.

In the last 60years, the only actors on the African scene that came through military Coups that stood with the freedom fighters at some point were: Marian Ngouabi in Congo-Brazzaville; General Obasanjo on the matter of Angola; Col. Mengistu on the issue of Zimbabwe (I think he trained some freedom fighters from there); and Col. Houari Boummedione of Algeria who trained freedom fighters from Mozambique and other countries that were still occupied.

Sometimes, in a number of cases, some Western leaders take the side of the African freedom fighters in some controversial arguments. I can remember of 1976 when H.E Jimmy Carter took our side in the matter of Angola when the South African Whites (the Boers) had invaded Angola to

put their puppets in power; 1980 when Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher brokered the settlement on Zimbabwe; and 1990-1994 when H.E De Kirk, reached a peaceful settlement on South Africa. All these were, however, preceded by the correct and determined actions of the African freedom fighters.

Long live the Sovereignty of the African people through regular free elections of one person one vote, by secret ballot.

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P R E S I D E N T