

BOOK REVIEWS – REVUE DES LIVRES

D. Wadada Nabudere, *Imperialism and Revolution in Uganda* (Tanzania Publishing House and Onyx Press) 1981 – London and Dar Es Salaam—376 pages.

Reviewed by Horace CAMPBELL *

In December 1980, Apollo Milton Obote once again assumed the presidency of the turbulent society of Uganda after eight years of the military dictatorship of Field Marshall Idi Amin and after a coup d'état had removed the failed experimentation of a government of National Unity called the Uganda National Liberation Front. Questions of the propriety of the elections which brought the Uganda Peoples Congress back to the seat of power, of the arbitrary arrest of opposition elements of the dispersal of other elements back into exile, persist, as the majority of the people of Uganda are reduced to the limited role of a frightened audience in their own society.

The poor of the society caught at the bottom of a World system where the butter mountains and an armaments culture form one reality and where for another part famine, hunger and the bullets form another, look on quietly as the second Obote administration join the call for more aid as the prerequisite for the planned economic reconstruction. But even the aid donors have become apprehensive about giving assistance when there is clear evidence that part of the aid for the famine victims of Karamoja had been siphoned off by state officials who used the proceeds to intensify the gap between the rulers and the ruled in Uganda. The area of Uganda, one of the most fertile regions of the African continent, strategically located at the source of the Nile, remains economically stagnant as compounded underdevelopment, political instability and armed conflict postpone the era of peace and prosperity. The inability of the administration to effect even a limited trade network makes life a burden for the eleven million citizens of this multinational state. Even the measures aimed at economic rehabilitation announced by the UPC leadership fail to grasp the *cul de sac* of the colonial trade economy which focussed production on a narrow range of export crops. The pretentious «floating» of the Uganda shilling, which was aimed at reducing the illicit currency dealings has intensified the misery of the people for the whole economic package reinforced the spiralling inflation so that commodities such as salt, sugar, hoes and soap are luxury items in Uganda. A price structure which was aimed at stamping out the illegal but formally established trade called *magendo* was not backed up by any attempt to diversify the narrow economic base. Instead the economic measures were accompanied by paltry incentives for the rural poor to return to the planting of cash crops (coffee, tea and tobacco). The rural poor in their own resistance to the economic crisis have resorted to the planting of food crops, demonstrating their understanding that the planting of cotton

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is regressive in the present world of polyester fabrics. Given the fact that the poor peasant depends on the iron age technology of the hoe to produce for the world market, the poor of Uganda have turned their backs on spending 73 days to reap one acre of early cotton when in the end their family cannot afford the textile products made from their own labour. The state revenue in Uganda, or the resources for the unproductive bureaucracy is today inordinately dependent on the export of coffee, for coffee exports account for 98.9 per cent of Uganda's export earnings. Probably the only reason that this cash crop continues is because the coffee tree bears fruit annually after its first three years and does not require the back-breaking care of tobacco, cotton or the picking of tea.

Where the rural family subsist on their own food production, planting the barest minimum of export crops to pay taxes, the growing urban poor face a life of terror, hunger and violence. With the medical infrastructure in shambles the health of the urban population remains permanently threatened because of the lack of clean running water. The main hospital, Mulago, formerly one of the better training hospitals in Africa, has not had running water since 1974. Water and sewerage systems function badly and the signs of deterioration strike those who have to carry out their livelihood in the midst of the armed conflict between the UPC and an opposition which has resorted to guerilla warfare. Transportation is now a luxury, with no spare parts for the publicly owned transportation system, workers have to walk miles to work while those children who still go to school without books have to wake up before daybreak to begin their journey to school. Day to day activities now involve monumental struggles either with one's peers or with those who are enriching themselves out of this chaos.

What gives Uganda special significance is the marked continuity in the violence of politics. More and more it is clear to the people that the problems of the society are more profound than the militarism of the Amin years or the recklessness of the soldiers. The role of force in production (encapsulated by Obote putting a Colonel in charge of production and trade) the continuous use of the gun as the arbiter in political discussions and the absence of democratic processes at all levels of the society demand a level of understanding which could explain to the young people the cheapening of life in Uganda and Africa. Young people who grew up in the society with the experience of commandism, waste and destruction search for explanations which could help them to see beyond the horizons of these political careerists who have dominated the society since 1952. It is in the context of this search that D. Nabudere's book, *Imperialism and Revolution in Uganda*, intervened in the discussion of Uganda's history.

The very title of the book bore promise that the analysis would transcend the scholarship of tribe, religion, regionalism and the personality politics which was asserting itself as part of the anti-democratic and deformed political culture. Dan Nabudere had been a political activist during different regimes and in exile had time to reflect on the destruction of the productive capacity of the society while he taught at the University of Dar-es-Salaam. From the table of contents the book promised to survey the impact of colonialism and resistance, neo-colonialism and revolution, the impact of the colonial economy on the rise of the Working Class, the rise

of the National Democratic Revolution, the politics of dictatorship, and the neo-colonial economy with particular emphasis on agriculture, commerce and finance. An epilogue attempts to bring the analysis up to date covering the period 1977–1980 when the author has been ousted from political leadership by the May 1980 coup d'état. Yet, despite the impressive outline of the study the book suffers from three basic weaknesses:

1. the absence of primary research into the effects of imperialism on the Uganda masses.
2. an inability to root the analysis into the life and struggles of Uganda's history i.e. unnecessary borrowings from other peoples history.
3. a lack of self-critical analysis on the role of the intelligensia in perpetuating the quagmire of violence and corruption in the heart of Africa

The first two weaknesses stem from the absence of a scientific methodology which grasps the particularities of African politics for the borrowings are stamped within the first pages where the author by-passed the rich traditions of oral history to try to force the pre-colonial Ugandan societies into the framework of the Ancient Society of Morgan the anthropologist, simply because this work was approvingly quoted by F. Engels in the *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. From this comparison of the «pre-contract» society with the Iriquois Indian, Nabudere fell into the trap of trying to fit the pre-colonial societies into the geographical boundaries defined by the colonialists. These elementary problems permeated the work and the characterisation of Buganda and Bunyoro as Feudal outlined by the author foundered on the reality of collective ownership of land which continue to exist in the society as the peoples own resistance to the individualisation of land tenure. This contradiction is unwittingly brought out by the author later in the discussion (pp 200–206). The existence of *tributary* relations of the pre-colonial states and the forms of relationships between the central state apparatus and the village communities is still an area which needs to be researched. Primarily because for a long time for the European there was no history before the advent of Europe into Africa, thus the literature on this period remains sparse and intellectually underdeveloped. Nabudere may be excused for the paucity of information on the pre-colonial societies, but for one who has already published a *The Political Economy of Imperialism* it was hoped that the book would depart from the generalities of the previous study to illuminate the particularity of Imperialism in Uganda and Africa. Both Amilcar Cabral and Walter Rodney, in separate studies, outlined the need to specify the concepts of history, class, and state in an effort to be more precise when dealing with colonial peoples. In an attempt to distinguish between the imperialist plunder of Africa and the massive export of capital which had engendered the development of the productive forces in Canada, Australia, South America and Eastern Europe, Cabral termed imperialism «piracy on land, piracy transplanted from the high seas on dry land, piracy reorganised and adapted to the aim of exploiting the natural and human

ressources of our peoples» (Cabral 1969 pp.98). In 1970 Walter Rodney enriched Cabral's formulation by showing that while the export of capital was one of the manifestations of monopoly capital, huge amounts of capital were not initially invested in Africa, hence the need for coercion, commandism and force by the colonial state. The evidence for Uganda shows that the amounts of capital invested in Uganda was minimal and was really confined to the investment in the Uganda railroad, a railway which was more beneficial to the Kenyan settlers than to the Uganda poor, and it was the poor of Uganda who paid for the loan. The history of the implantation of the colonial economic infrastructure required forced labour, portage, and compulsion. Forced labour was used for compulsory crops and unpaid labour was used to build the houses of the colonial officers and to extend the railway.

Nabudere, in his outline on the rise of the working class, failed to make the theoretical link between the form of imperialism in Uganda and its impact on the truncated working class. In presenting the colonial data on the size and composition of the working people, on the colonial preoccupation with a regular supply of labour, Nabudere did not reveal how the slowness of the process of proletarianisation, the migratory nature of labour and the restricted dimensions of the labour force were due to the limited amounts of capital expended in the society by the British imperial overloads. The characteristics of the Uganda working class along with the incomplete crystallisation of the class showed that capitalism *could not* develop a modern proletariat in its colonial sector and that it required special forms of labour exploitation in the colonies. Fortunately, Nabudere did not fall into the dualism of the articulation of modes of production theory, but he did not bring to light how the absence of legal protection for the workforce placed civil disputes between «Masters» and «servants» under the sanction of criminal law so that workers were imprisoned for such «crimes» as «desertion» – long after such practices had disappeared from European capitalist countries. No colonial report can bring to light the negation of basic human rights and the continued use of obsolete equipment which rendered safety standards at the place of work inadequate. Occupational asthma, throat irritating gases and skin diseases such as tea planters dermatitis increased the immiseration of the Uganda toilers. Contrary to the evidence presented of the role of finance capital in the colonial economy the principal instrument of social control in Africa during the early period of colonialism was naked force. Not only did imperialism use force to capture, pacify and ructalise Africa, but in addition, force brought to bear against Africans served a direct economic function by incorporating into the capitalist system values which initially lay outside the said capitalist system. Subsequent exploitation had to take form of intensifying the exploitation of labour and here in lay the crux of the process of commandism and militarism in Uganda. Contrary to the exposition on the foundations of the dictatorship (174–176) the political crisis of Uganda needs to be addressed in the manner in which imperialism stunted the growth of the most important of the productive forces – namely the working class itself.

That the colonial and neo-colonial economy remain uniquely lopsided is clear from the evidence presented by Nabudere. The data on Uganda indicated that each international economic crisis led to a transfer of a significant portion of the social burden on to the shoulders of the colonial working class and peasantry. However the material is presented in a manner which is very economic. Nabudere does not show how the non-economic dimensions of expansion were just as important as the economic dimensions. Walter Rodney in his essay on «Lenin and the Imperialist participation of Africa» drew attention to the references made by Lenin on to the military and ideological dimension of imperialism, especially where Lenin asserted that : «the non-economic superstructure which grows upon the basis of finance capital, its politics, its ideology, stimulates the striving for colonial request». For the Uganda people the deformed ideas of religious intolerance bequeathed by the civilizing missionaries remain a factor of Uganda politics, and the incessant references to finance capital does not incorporate properly the role of ideology in the cultural arsenal of imperial rule. And for African peoples the most important aspect of the superstructure of ideas was the rise of racism as a central component of capitalist ideology. Once colonialism was justified on the basis of the inferiority of Africans, an ideology manifest on the continent today in the practice of apartheid, it was inevitable that racial consciousness would be part of the consciousness of the African poor. By borrowing ideas on the rise of the «National Democratic Revolution» the author does not elaborate how the racial hierarchy of the colonial order generated the «nationalist» all class response of the 1949 revolt and acted as the smoke-screen for the expulsion of the Asians in 1972. The conflicts generated by the position of European and Asian in the society obfuscated incipient class differences among Africans, hence the popularity of the commandist and underdemocratic expulsion of the Asians. The oppression of Africans on purely racial grounds meant that Idi Amin, with all the brutal macabre history on his regime, can still enjoy support in other parts of Africa. It is for this reason that the theorists of imperialism must address the issue of the cultural manifestation of racism so that in other part of Africa one can penetrate the class content of the formulations of racial consciousness.

The problem of class and state also remains in the work of Nabudere. The most interesting section of the reading is where the author's own experience as a political activist (pp. 255–258) provided interesting insight into the intra class struggles of the political careerists. However, the information is presented in simplistic terms of the right and left of the Uganda People Congress. It is not clear what is the popular or material base of this right and left. One fact which is clear was that all factions perceived their interest as being able to hold on to state power. This is where Nabudere again founders for he does not properly analyse the relationship between the state and the gestation of the African petty bourgeoisie. The analysis of the petty bourgeoisie is formal and functional, separating the state initiations of ranches, dairy farms, cooperative loans, and maize mills from the attempt by the African petty bourgeoisie to increase their level of consumption. It is not clear why the class delienation of the Uganda Society is tacked on at the end of the book pp. 320–328.

One cannot separate the problem of state from the question of class and Nabudere's concrete treatment of the state turns out to be an exposition of the legal foundation of Uganda's independence constitution pp. 176–179. As one who served in the supra-territorial state institution as Chairperson of the East African Railways Corporation 1971–73, Nabudere should have been aware of the fact that the Ugandan state or the set of institutions which comprised the state extended from the supra-territorial organs of the East African Community to the coercive apparatus of the Uganda police, military, labour department and tsetse officers. An analysis of imperialism could have shed more light on the relationship between multilateral imperialism', the local African ruling class and the dehumanised proletarianised masses. The effects of the petty bourgeoisie to strengthen the state, to build up its numbers and at the same time to increase its accumulation was bound to founder on the untransformed hoe technology of the society.

The essential militarisation of the state, which is documented and periodised from 1966, minimises the role of the African intermediate classes in the process of retrogression and corruption. However true was the fact that the granting of political independence was compatible with the continued influence of the «financial oligarchy». The African politicians were not helpless victims who had no scope for developing popular institutions. It is now clear that imperialism implanted Idi AMIN on Africa but the evidence of Israel's and Britain's machination does not account for the hundreds of bureaucrats, civil servants and intellectuals who willingly served AMIN and at times ingratiated themselves to the military at the cost of other peoples lives.

MILITARISM AND SCHOLARSHIP

The fundamental weakness of the book is that there is an absence of empirical work by the author for an analysis which stridently seeks to assert itself as a Marxist study, the author was inordinately dependent on the published material of the modernising theorists who had flocked to the Makerere Institute of Social Research. In his attempt to reinterpret the structural functional analysis of those who studied 'agricultural credit' 'progressive farmers scheme' the 'marketing of cash crops' 'industrialisation and mining' the book makes for tedious reading with its structural information encrusted within incessant quotations from marx, Engels and Lenin. This weakness is even more startling in the second section of the book where the analysis is an exposition of three published documents of the AMIN regime, the *Third Five Year Development Plan* the *Action Programme* and the *Uganda – Five Years under Military Government*. Nabudere's quotation from these three documents forms the basis of chapter 15, but those familiar with the literature of the Civil Servants under AMIN knew that the information in say the *Action Programme* bore little relevance to

the material reality of the destruction of the productive capacity by the military. These documents could not bring to life the militarisation of the countryside where military governors commanded the double production campaigns and the soldier chiefs who told workers that they would be shot if they carried out industrial action. Ultimately the lack of empirical work led to imprecise documentation as in the case of the figures relating to the redistribution of Asian business during the economic war.

THE EPILOGUE

The third major weakness of the book comes out clearly in the epilogue for throughout the reader had been exposed to the personal nuances of AMIN, OBOTE, IBINGIRA, and the brain of Mahmood MAMDANI. A partisan and stridently sectarian narrative took the place of scientific analysis. In the narrative of the epilogue the author sheds light on the kind of intrigue, deals, compromise and pettiness which resulted in the formation of the Uganda National Liberation Front to replace AMIN. Instead of documenting the ideological and material weaknesses of those who aspired towards replacing AMIN the book concentrates on the routed petty bourgeoisie which had simmered in London, Lusaka, New York, Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, perpetuating the politicisation of ethnicity and regionalism in exile only to descend on Mashi, Tanzania in March 1979 to form a government of national unity. What the book does not reveal was how the writer could have been part of such a clique which earlier in the book he had lambasted as monarchists and agents of dollar imperialism. In this epilogue there is a clear absence of the kind of honesty and humility which one should expect from reflecting on the unholy alliance which foundered in the militarism which resulted in the May 1980 – Coup d'état. Many questions remain unanswered from this addendum, by what criteria were the representatives chosen for the front? Why were there no representatives of the working people in the front? What efforts were made by the UNLF to unleash popular expression and participation? What were the features of commandism which infected the Tanzanian officer corps with the quest towards accumulation?

These questions which continue to be pertinent for the ongoing struggles in Uganda demonstrate that the Uganda crisis transcends the personalities of AMIN, LULE or OBOTE. The discussion of the 'New Democratic Revolution' reads as a hollow borrowing from Chinese history for the political activists of Uganda have shown that they were neither democratic nor revolutionary.

D. Wadada NABUDERE nowhere explained in this epilogue how the UNLF intensified the inflationary pressures on the poor by printing billions of shillings of unbacked notes, which made the monthly earnings of the poor worthless. More significantly it was a strange twist to see the author as one of the defenders of the Commonwealth report on the *Rehabilitation of the Economy of Uganda*. While thoughtful Ugandans inside and outside the territory were critical of the proposed sell out of the national assets to former imperialist operators, the author defended the report

before a gathering of Ugandan students in the United Kingdom in 1980, while he was still Minister of Culture and Chairperson of the powerful Political and Diplomatic Commission of the National Executive Committee.

The threatened disintegration of Uganda centralised by the regional warfare and the clear dead end of neo-colonialism shows clearly that the crisis is not simply one of declining food production or political violence and magendoism. The book *Imperialism and Revolution in Uganda* shows that the crisis of imperialism is at the same time a profound ideological crisis.

Economie et Sociologie du Tiers-Monde, un guide bibliographique et documentaire. Ouvrage collectif sous la direction de P. Jacquemot, Paris, Harmattan, 1981, 383 p.

Revue par : ASSIDON (Elsa), DEKHLI (Karina), JACQUEMOT (Pierre), RAFFINOT (Marc Michel)

C'est le premier recueil bibliographique de synthèse sur l'économie et la sociologie du Tiers-Monde, publié en langue française. Il intéresse aussi bien l'étudiant, le chercheur et l'enseignant que le documentaliste.

C'est d'abord un bon document d'initiation et d'orientation pour les étudiants travaillant sur l'économie du Tiers-Monde pour lesquels les auteurs (1) l'ont réalisé. L'ouvrage présente en effet en une introduction générale, un large panorama critique de la théorie du développement des années 1950 à 1980 qui mène naturellement l'étudiant à la liste des principaux manuels et à la bibliographie analytique et critique de 32 ouvrages fondamentaux. Il s'agit de livres écrits ou traduits en français.

Plus de 1100 fiches signalétiques d'ouvrages spécialisés sont ensuite répartis dans 29 rubriques thématiques articulés en quatre grandes unités :

- l'impérialisme et le sous développement
- le Tiers-Monde et l'économie mondiale
- les modèles, les stratégies et les politiques de développement
- la dimension sociale et politique du développement

Les livres faisant explicitement référence à un pays ou à une région sont classés par continent mais un index matière permet de les replacer aisément dans l'ensemble. 900 titres ont été ici retenus pour la période 1970-1980. Cette bibliographie regroupe ainsi 2000 fiches sur une production d'ouvrages évaluée à 15000 pour les trente dernières années. Elle présente une majorité de titres en français mais aussi de nombreux ouvrages en langues anglaise, espagnole, et dans une moindre mesure portugaise et allemande. Cette partie est donc aussi pour le chercheur et l'enseignant un bon point de départ bibliographique.

(1) *Ces quatre enseignants chercheurs animent le collectif d'économie du développement, recherche et éducation (CEDRE) à l'Université de Paris Dauphine.*