

Some of these orphans found refuge in Museveni's NRA as juvenile soldiers – *kadogos* – instead of roaming the countryside aimlessly.¹⁸ While the number of adults who were physically disabled in the conflict was large, the figures for children were also appalling. It is estimated that about 17,000 children aged four and under in Luwero and Kabale districts alone were disabled and became permanently handicapped. If these figures are typical of Uganda's thirty-four districts, then the number may be as high as a quarter of a million.

The transformation of the family weakened traditions that formerly applied to this important social unit, including control of sexual relations. Before and during the earlier days of colonialism, people did not engage in sexual intercourse before marriage. Girls were expected to be virgins or face rejection. A change in attitudes towards sex began in the colonial period. By the beginning of the 1960s, female virginity was no longer prized as a symbol of virtue. The eruption of violence in Ugandan society further undermined the only institution that kept a lid on sexual laxity, and many children were born out of wedlock. Although further study is needed to link the increase of sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, to the undermining of the Ugandan family structure, the few that have been done suggest that such a relationship exists.¹⁹

Undermining of Social Discipline

Social discipline deteriorated in the face of such difficult living conditions. To survive, people disregarded rules, procedures, and morals. Civil servants took advantage of their positions to rob the state. People in powerful positions broke the laws they were supposed to keep. Tax evasion, smuggling, misappropriation of funds, misuse of foreign exchange, and general dishonesty were practised by the very people who were supposed to enforce the law. Ordinary people were also affected by this moral degeneration. Lying, cheating, forging, looting, and stealing soon became increasingly normal and acceptable in social relations. Children would not consider it immoral to lie to their parents for material benefit. Immorality became institutionalized in social relations. Naive moralists have spoken out against corruption and preached the need for "moral rehabilitation." Religious fundamentalist organizations sprang up like mushrooms, all preaching a return to God as the only way to save society. Little did they realize that corruption in individuals was but a symptom of a complex phenomenon originating in the general sickness of the Ugandan state.

Unless the state was rebuilt in all its completeness, a means to resolve conflicts peacefully devised, and the economy reactivated, treating a single symptom like corruption would not cure the sick state. The key to rehabilitating the Ugandan Mind is rebuilding the country's political and economic institutions.

Wildlife, the Environment, and Violence

So far this discussion has concentrated on the effect of violence on human beings and social institutions, but mankind can survive on this planet only by living in harmony with nature, with the earth, plants, and animals. In Uganda, social conflict has had a devastating impact on wildlife and on the environment in general. Mired in turmoil, Ugandan politicians have failed to safeguard the natural world; the breakdown of law was a disaster for animals, plants, rivers, and lakes. Uganda was once known for its variety of animals, birds, and fish and took steps to protect them. The Queen Elizabeth National Park, which covers 1,978 square kilometres, was "a biosphere reserve" where in the past people had existed in a symbiotic relationship with nature and wild beasts.²⁰ Kabarega National Park was as large as the Queen Elizabeth and contained hundreds of species of animals and birds. Kidepo National Park was home to very rare animal species. But violence took its toll on the parks. Between 1970 and 1985 Uganda lost over seventy-five percent of its elephants, about ninety-eight percent of its rhinos, ninety percent of its crocodiles, eighty percent of its lions and leopards, and many bird species. Dr E. Edroma, head of the Institute of Ecology at Makerere University, has documented the threat to wildlife in Uganda: in 1970 Queen Elizabeth National Park had thirty thousand elephants, but by 1985 only three hundred remained; hippos were reduced from three thousand to five thousand and buffalo from eighty thousand to a mere ten thousand; the white rhino, a rare species that used to roam Kabarega National Park, is now thought to be extinct, as is its cousin, the black rhino. While there has been no thorough survey of the crocodile population, it is believed that they are also on the way to extinction in the area. The once-rich bird life of Uganda has been reduced. In 1987 more than twelve hundred birds were illegally exported.

The destruction of Uganda's wildlife escalated at the same rate as civil conflict in the country. While in the past poachers had used traditional weapons, after Amin's rise to power, they were equipped with firearms. In Edroma's words, "People from the neighbourhood of the park [Queen Elizabeth National Park] no longer

poach with spears and arrows for mere meat for family as the traditional poaching is known."¹¹ Instead, they do so for commercial purposes with sophisticated and powerful arms. But it was not only ordinary civilians who destroyed Uganda's wildlife. Beginning in 1971 government leaders and soldiers openly killed animals in the parks. Edroma points out that "Amin personally participated in the depleting of wild game. Consequently, cronies, mainly army officers, followed suit and indiscriminately shot down prized animals for trophies. The Tanzania forces which fought Amin in 1978/79 reduced Queen Elizabeth National Park almost to an empty bush land. Soldiers randomly gunned down the game in their sight."¹²

Foreign traders bought Uganda's animal products. Between 1980 and 1986, 222 elephant feet, 29 bellies, 631 ears, and 76 trunks were illegally exported; in 1987 more than 280 tonnes of ivory left the country and 550 crocodile skins were sent overseas, mainly to Italy and France. The removal of rare birds has also helped deprive Uganda of its wildlife. Uganda's animals, in addition to being slaughtered, were also victims of bad human policies. Involved in the struggle to control the state, political officials did not scrutinize the "development plans" brought to them by "experts," usually foreigners, but merely signed whatever blueprint was put before them. If governments had spent more time thinking about the impact these projects would have on the environment, Uganda might not have been damaged to the extent that it was.

Two examples will suffice. The first is the destruction of hundreds of varieties of fish – reportedly over three hundred – in Lake Victoria by the introduction of the Nile perch, a fish normally found downstream below Owen Falls in the Nile. In the 1960s foreign "experts" advised its introduction into Lake Victoria to increase the amount of protein available to Ugandans. The government listened and, without thinking of the consequences, agreed to a plan that unleashed a host of problems. To begin with, the Nile perch is a predator – it feeds on other fish. The predictions are that after eating up all the fish native in the lake it will turn on its own kind, ultimately leaving the lake with no fish. Secondly, the fish is so big (its average weight is one to two hundred pounds) that local fishermen cannot catch it. They do not have the nets, boats, or facilities to bring them ashore and store them. Only rich fishermen, and that often means foreign fishermen, can benefit from the disastrous experiment. That the "experts" might have planned this outcome is a possibility that cannot be ruled out. The introduction of

the Nile perch into Lake Victoria was both an ecological disaster and a human tragedy.

The second human error was the decision to dump toxic wastes – cobalt, sulphur, and copper – from Kilembe Mines into streams that feed Uganda's richest fish reserves: Lake George, Lake Edward, and, of course, the Kazinga Channel. Lake George is believed to have had more fish per cubic yard than any other lake in Africa, but all this is threatened by the mines. Waste from Kilembe has also burnt vegetation between Kasese and Muhokya and threatened human and animal life in the area. The weak governments of Uganda failed to realize that temporary sums of hard currency dished out by foreign mining companies cannot replace a food source that millions of Ugandans relied on. Lastly, government preoccupation with political survival robbed Uganda of its forest reserves, hundreds of square miles of which have been illegally cleared by lumbermen, traders, and squatters.¹³ The deforestation of Uganda is certainly linked to social conflict; its impact on the environment has not yet been assessed. Future governments must pay special attention to these issues.

Thus, violence has had repercussions not only on human beings but on animals, fish, and nature. Man cannot exist without nature. If the destruction of the environment is not halted, our children will have nowhere to call their own. Uganda might become part of the great desert, the Sahara, which was itself once habitable.

MUST THE PAST BE REPEATED?

A people who do not learn from their past mistakes are condemned to repeat them. Yet history does not have to repeat itself, as some people think. It repeats itself only when we are prepared to be the servants rather than the masters of events. Rulers who are responsive to the mistakes of the past can prevent their recurrence. In Uganda, several mistakes in particular must be heeded.

Mechanisms of conflict resolution. One of the first lessons Ugandans can learn from their history is the need to establish social institutions that can address political, social, and economic disputes. It is imperative that the country build democratic social institutions acceptable to the majority of its citizens. One step in the right direction would be to replace the dictatorial constitution of 1967 with a new one whose ideas and terms truly represent the "general will" of society. It must be respected by the rulers as the primary