

# Idi amins reign of terror history essay



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Eventually, it came to a point whereby Obote felt threatened by Amin's continuous and increasing support from both the people and the army. The reason for this rift was further fueled by Amin's involvement in supporting the rebellion in southern Sudan and worse, he made an attempt on Obote's life which all happened in 1969! (Michael and Michael, 2003) During the late 1970, realizing the superb danger and ability Amin possessed, Obote quickly seized control of the armed force trying to reduce Amin's military might! According to Republic of Uganda (2003), Obote planned to arrest Amin with reason that he embezzled military funds. Having realized Obote's cunning plan, Amin seized power via military coup while Obote was in Singapore attending a Commonwealth summit meeting. Troops loyal to Amin sealed the international airport of Entebbe and took control of Kampala. These actions successfully impeded Obote from returning to Uganda to his administration. Therefore, Amin became the person with the highest authority in Uganda second to none.

One week into the rebellion, he declared himself as the President of Uganda, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Army Chief of Staff and Chief of Air Staff as cited by Jamal (1988). This was followed by a suspension of the constitution and the Advisory Defense Council. Amin positioned military tribunals above the civil law, appointed military officers to top government posts and agencies, and notified civilian cabinets that they were to follow military discipline. Other than that, the General Service Unit was replaced by the State Research Bureau (SRB) whose function was basically to torture and execute people! Referring to Jamal (1975) in the article, "Asians in Uganda, 1880-1972: Inequality and Expulsion", agencies such as the military police

and Public Safety Units were also used to root out political dissent. These changes were done to suit Amin's one desire, which was to kill off all who oppose him! During his quest for power, Obote took refuge in Tanzania due to an offer by the president of Tanzania and soon allied with 20, 000 Ugandan refugees who fled Amin's reign of terror.

As cited by Michael and Michael (2003), in the article " Idi Amin, Murderous and Erratic Ruler of Uganda in the 70's, Dies in Exile Sometime" suggested that later in 1971 Amin's continuous slaughter and Obote's desire to restore his power led Obote to start guerilla warfare against Amin. Obote and his exiles bade to recapture the country through a mismanaged coup attempt, unfortunately, without success. These failed assassinations caused Amin to become more and more paranoid by the day. As a result, he retaliated by eradicating Obote's army of supporters, especially those from Acholi and Lango ethnic groups. By early 1972, Amin's massacre killed around 5000 soldiers, and at minimum two times the amount of civilians vanished! (Republic of Uganda, 2003) The list of victims included members of other ethnic groups, religious leaders, journalists, senior bureaucrats, etc. At one point, he became so paranoid that he thought that even his ministers were conspiring against him. Among the most conspicuous people killed were Benedicto Kiwanuka, former prime minister and later chief justice, followed by Janani Luwum, the Anglican archbishop, Joseph Mubiru, the former governor of the Central Bank and during the near end of his reign, Amin's own cabinet ministers, Erinayo Wilson Oryema and Charles Oboth Ofumbi.

The elimination of such prominent people in Uganda marked the starting point of a situation whereby no one dared to speak up or do anything to stop

him as cited by Schultheis (1975). Moving on with his campaign, he even ridiculously suggested and later firmly implemented the idea of “ economic war”, a set of policies which includes the expropriation of the assets of Asians and Europeans! The Asians in Uganda, mostly Indians, had come to Uganda when it was still under British rule. They were the essential backbone of Uganda’s economy as they owned many businesses, including large scale firms. When Amin issued the order in August 1972 to expulse the Asians (with British passports) with the exception of professionals, he practically single-handedly brought the already ailing economy crashing down. (Schultheis, 1975) India dissolved all diplomatic relations it previously had with Uganda as a response to Amin expelling the Asians, who were mostly Indians. Furthermore, Amin virtually challenged Britain by severing its diplomatic ties and nationalizing 85 of the British-owned firms in Uganda. The economy further faltered due to mismanagement and industries crumbled when he handed them to his supporters.

The crash of the economy helps to worsen international resentment towards Uganda. As more conflicts between Uganda and other nations including Israel took place, U. S Ambassador Thomas Patrick condemned Amin’s management to be “ racist, erratic and unpredictable, brutal, inept, irrational, ridiculous, and militaristic” and hence, requested the U. S to decrease its presence in Uganda. (Melady, 1977) Consequently, in 1973 U. S decided to cease the operation of its embassy in Uganda followed by British High Commission later during the mid of 1976. Being in a position with lesser allies to trade with and helped by, Amin’s helplessness guided him into his own downfall! The shutdown of the U. S embassy in Uganda set Amin’s thirst

for power and control into a free state. Under his rule, Uganda boarded on a large military build-up surrounding Kenya and anon announced Uganda would investigate the chances that parts of southern Sudan and Kenya were historically under Uganda's colonial rule. Fortunately, a war was prevented when Amin came to his senses and decided to back down when Kenyan military force arrayed troops and armored personnel carriers along its borders. Subsequently after this particular incident together with hijacking of Air France incident in Entebbe, Britain completely pulled out of Uganda by shutting down its High Commission.

Over the years, his closest allies continue to diminish with no signs of recovery as he faced amassed dissent by the people of Uganda. In accordance to Michael and Michael (2003), his aggregate paranoid personality caused him to execute both his cabinet ministers Oryema and Oboth Ofumbi in 1977. Their deaths encouraged several of Amin's ministers to defect and flee the country. Judging the situation, vice president, General Mustafa realized Amin's thirst and hunger for power would sooner or later reach him. The failure of Amin's assassination plan on General Mustafa triggered off a mutiny from troops loyal to General Mustafa. Being in a rather desperate and confused state, Amin triggered another international incident - this time Tanzania. President Nyerere responded by dispatching military forces in defense and later counter-attacked. Finally Amin's army retreated and he was forced to flee on 11th April 1979 from Kampala to Libya and to ultimately remain in exile in Saudi Arabia. Even then he remained strong in his belief that what he did was right and the best for Uganda! Upon his death, his wife's request for him to be buried in Uganda was firmly and justly

rejected! That would be a perfect ending for the self-proclaimed “ President of Life” who did nothing but destroy Uganda.

Concisely, Amin was a cannibal and a man of pure malevolence! When he emerged as the president, he gave high hopes to the citizens of Uganda! Promising peace and justice! Yet it seems, he has done all in his power to bring them despair, sufferings and death. Based on such statements and facts, it is not exaggerating at all to decide that Amin was the cause of the humanitarian crisis during his rule. Death toll is estimated to around 300,000! There were so many bodies floating on the banks of the Nile River adequate to clog the Owen Falls Hydroelectric Dam in Jinja. Not only he took away lives, he too destroyed the meaning of peace and prosperity in Uganda when he destroyed the economy. Amin’s downfall and exile was truly what saved Uganda. It is doubtful that the scars he left will ever disappear!