

Synopsis for the 60th Independence Day Anniversary Celebrations

“For everything that is really great and inspiring is created by the individual who can labour in freedom.” Albert Einstein

Uganda’s journey to independence

The origin of the struggle for Uganda’s Independence from the British colonial rule began in 1930s but picked momentum in 1940s when Ugandans staged various demonstrations against the colonial rule largely objecting to economic exploitations. The spark was when the agitators objected the manipulative pricings of their cash crops that did not give the deserved benefits. Such bold and courageous face-up against the colonial rule later metamorphosed into political agitation leading to the formation of various political parties all agitating for self-rule.

As a result, Uganda’s first political party the Uganda National Congress (UNC) was founded in 1952. The party that was largely for farmers was founded by Ignatius Kangave Musaaazi, Abubakar Kakyama Mayanja, Stefano Abwangoto (Bugisu), Ben Okwerede (Teso), Yekosofati Engur (Lango), and S.B. Katembo (Tooro). Ignatius Kangave Musaaazi, was the founding president general, and Mayanja was the founding secretary general. The others were chairpersons in their respective regions. The party was first based at the Kabaka’s Lake, Mengo, in the house of a one, Kitimirike. His place was the headquarters of the party for several years before it moved to Katwe and later to Kololo in the late 1950s.

However, among the heroes of our agitation for independence is a one Semakula Mulumba. Mulumba is unfortunately less talked about largely because his fellow tribesmen the Baganda didn’t warm up for him simply because he chose to be a republican and criticized the exploitative Buganda monarchs who he felt were in bed with the exploitative colonialists.

The struggles of Semakula Mulumba

Semakula Mulumba’s struggle for Uganda’s independence dates back in the 1940’s when he repeatedly clashed with the Colonial Protectorate Government officials in Entebbe and British government officials in London.

He did not spare Kabaka Edward Muteesa II, whom he accused of conspiring with the colonial masters to suppress the indigenous communities. His message became very popular with the masses, but became the most unwanted figure both by the colonialists and Kabaka’s government at Mengo.

In a telegram to Muteesa on 21st February, 1949 he wrote: *“The African people of Uganda should know that the powers conferred on either the Kabaka or the governor, have certain limits. Neither the Kabaka nor the governor has any power to enslave any section of the Uganda Community. The people ought to know and safeguard their rights as citizens. They certainly have the right to speak*

their mother tongue just as pleased. Therefore, anyone- Kabaka, governor, Bishop, priest, teacher, chief, peasant, etc who provoke the Africans by interfering in their conversations, or greetings of: Jambo, bu, etc, does so at his own risk. The Africans should take a stick and give him a good beating. That is the only way to put a stop to all that nonsense off harassing people for saying 'BU'."

'BU' was the greeting slogan of Semakula Mulumba's party which was full known as "Bataka BU". Party members would greet each other by simple shouting the last phrase "BU". 'Bu' was the kiganda rallying call for peasant action against oppression. Both the colonial government and the Mengo establishment of Kabaka Muteesa passed legislations outlawing the "BU" greeting.

Semakula Mulumba who at the time was in London moved from office to office and frantically wrote telegrams to whoever mattered, championing the call for Uganda's independence.

As a result of his efforts the United Nations Organization (UNO) discussed Uganda's independence during a session in New York for the first time in 1947.

The struggle for Uganda's independence had begun in 1931 under the Bataka party, a Buganda-based peasant movement. They opposed the 1900 Uganda agreement and subjugation by the British, among others.

Through the years, the movement changed names and approaches and re-emerged in the 1940s with the original name Bataka party, led by James Miti. At the time, the movement lacked a well-educated and charismatic leader to captain the struggle.

In 1947 Semakula Mulumba, a 34-year-old radical and charismatic university student, returned from England after his scholarship was terminated as part of a crackdown on independence freedom fighters.

Two years earlier, there had been a riot during which the colonial government carried out a brutal crackdown on independence crusaders. One Indian was stoned to death, two Europeans were severely injured and eight Ugandans shot dead by the police, when the riots began in the first week of January 1945, according to a 1949 Confidential Inquiry Report.

Back home, members of the Bataka party were impressed by Mulumba's charisma, eloquence and wealth of knowledge. They raised money to send him back to England to complete his education and agitate for freedom. On October 2, 1947, he returned to England.

The Bataka party wanted Buganda to secede and they totally opposed the colonial white paper 210, which pushed for creation of the East African Federation. However, Mulumba lobbied for national independence instead, which annoyed party members.

Mulumba took the British head-on, attacking the British government as well as Kabaka Muteesa. *"They were pro-British and I must excuse them because they were not enlightened. They knew*

nothing about democracy and, in fact, all the people in Uganda at the time knew nothing about democracy. I was the one who introduced the idea the idea which I got from England in 1945 when I took part in the general elections after the war which the Labour party won. I saw the British people having the right to elect their MPS and realized that the people of Uganda should have the same right to elect their mps so that the sons of the Bakopi (commoners) could enter in the Lukiiko which was then the preserve of sons of chiefs,” Mulumba’s said in an interview published in the February 14, 1980 issue of Weekly Topic.

He added: *“they used to say mwana w’ani? (Whose son is that one?). That statement is still being quoted. But when I introduced the idea of democracy, the people fought for it and got it. Then democracy started in this country. Today, the people-do not know who introduced voting in this country”,* said Semakula Mulumba.

The British colonial secretary, Mr. Creech Jones, dismissed Mulumba as a man representing a *“mushroom political party”* that was not recognized by the Protectorate and Mengo governments.

He described Mulumba’s party as being *“unrepresentative of the great mass of the people of Uganda”*. He accused Mulumba of consistently refusing to use constitutional methods to express his views.

However, the Bataka wrote letters to the British prime minister and the UN, saying they supported Mulumba, and the British resented him because he was fighting for the independence of Uganda.

Surprisingly as Uganda approached independence, and political Parties including traditional rulers were being invited at table to discuss the possible independence of Uganda, Semakula Mulumba was never invited to officially participate in the process that laid out the framework for Uganda’s independence.

Finally, when he returned at independence, egoism and politics of intrigue came in. he was arrested in 1969. Upon his release, Mulumba quit politics and nursed his frustration quietly. In 1980, he said: *“you do well to them and they forget you; for they have forgotten me”*.

Our journey as an independent state

Post-Independence Uganda story a is quagmire to the extent that by 1986, the country was experiencing absolute poverty and total regression. Coups after coups defined our political path. The country was mired in endless tribal conflicts largely occasioned by the political leadership of the time.

Fortunately, that period came and passed, leaving the nation with bitter memories which, though, have since served as learnable lessons. The last thirty six years have witnessed a miraculous resurrection of Uganda as an Independent nation, thanks to some patriotic and caring Ugandans

who saw the wisdom in using these learnable lessons. The resurrection began with the restoration of peace and security of both person and property. Upon securing peace internally, the NRM Government, true to its Pan-African outlook, has pursued a deliberate and conscious effort to demonstrate that our Independence means an African inter-dependence and by extension – an African shared destiny in the following selected means:

Energy Infrastructure development:

The NRM Government has taken firm decisions to invest heavily in energy infrastructure – with a regional outlook. For instance, during her two-day State Visit to Kampala in May 2022, Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu and her Ugandan counterpart Yoweri Museveni witnessed the signing of an inter-governmental Memorandum of Understanding for the development of the 400kV transmission line linking the two countries. In the MoU, Uganda and Tanzania committed to build a 400kV Masaka-Mutukula-Kyaka-Nyakanazi-Mwanza transmission line. Uganda will sell surplus power, and Tanzania will meet its demand for electricity.

According to the Global Transmission Report, 2022; Tanzania's power needs are expected to rise from 10,176GWh in 2022 to 28,663GWh in 2030, which requires approximately 9,000MW of new generation added to the grid in the next eight years.

According to UETCL, Uganda exports electricity to Kenya, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan,

According to a Bank of Uganda Report for the period between June 2020 and June 2021, Uganda exported a total of 294.1MW, which earned the country \$26.84 million, up from \$24.5 million earned from 246.3MW exported the previous year.

Launch of the Pearl Africa Satellite:

On the 10th of May 2022, Ugandans witnessed the successful handover of Country's first satellite named Pearl Africa Sat – 1 built by Ugandan students at Kyushu Institute of Technology (Kyutech), to the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). The successful launch of the Pearl Africa Satellite was a result of a deliberate policy initiative started in April 2020. At that time, Uganda began the path to launch its first satellite into space by sending three graduate engineers to design, manufacture, test and launch ParAfricaSat-1, as part of a multinational program known as the BIRDS-5 Project.

The BIRD-5 project as implemented by Kyushu Institute of Technology (Kyutech) in Japan, has three key objectives.

- a. Specialized training on satellite development, from mission conception to satellite disposal.
- b. Establish Uganda's first satellite communications network.
- c. Establish a space laboratory in Uganda, to facilitate construction of subsequent satellites to enable space technology industrial value chain.

The main purpose of PearlAfricaSat-1 is earth observation, by using its multispectral camera to provide information on soil, water bodies, land cover, climate and atmospheric early warning

systems which will be shared with our neighbors in the region as a measure to avert environmental and natural catastrophes occasioned by changing weather patterns. This project is another critical element of our Independence which promotes our interdependence and a shared destiny as Africans.

The EACOP and Regional Road networks - as a shaper of Africa's interdependence:

Uganda and Tanzania are undertaking different joint projects, including the oil pipeline. The East African Community Oil Pipeline (EACOP) which runs 1,443km from Kabaale, Hoima district in Uganda to the Chongoleani Peninsula near Tanga Port in Tanzania is in offing having completed all the agreements with the developer – Total Energies. 80% of the pipeline is in Tanzania. It is a buried thermally insulated 24" pipeline along with six pumping stations (two in Uganda and four in Tanzania) ending at Tanga with a Terminal and Jetty. Here crude oil will be loaded onto tankers.

EACOP allows Uganda to unlock value from its own natural resources, and represents a significant inward investment of some \$4 billion across both Uganda and Tanzania, thus value creation is also extended to Tanzania. The new corridor linking the two countries will bring benefits including the development of new infrastructure, logistics, and technology transfer as well as improving the livelihoods of communities along the route.

Equally, Uganda and DR Congo are building infrastructure especially roads to connect the two countries for increased trade and improve security of the two countries. This is about trade, social welfare and security. To guarantee security, you need roads for easy movement of soldiers. But this can also help people to move to hospitals.

Trade between the two countries was \$513 million in 2021, but could increase threefold if the roads construction undertaken by the two countries is completed. Currently, both countries agreed to jointly build 1,200 kilometers of roads from Uganda to the three eastern Congo cities, Goma, Bunia and Beni.

The \$330m “Regional Connectivity Roads Project” will be carried out by a Ugandan construction company called Dott Services. The aim is to build three roads to improve communications between Uganda and the eastern DRC cities of Beni, Goma and Butembo.

Altogether, Uganda and the DRC plan to build or upgrade some 1,182km of road. The priorities will be an 80km highway between Mpondwe in Uganda and Beni, an 89km route between Bunagana and Goma and a 54km road between Beni and Butembo.

Regional trade – as a precursor to our shared destiny and African Inter-dependence:

Turning to the East African Community (EAC); our challenges notwithstanding, a lot has been achieved. There is a harmonized Customs Union whose main objective include furthering the liberalization of intra-regional trade in goods; promoting production efficiency in the Community; enhancing domestic, cross-border and foreign investment; and promoting economic development and industrial diversification. The Partner States have agreed to cooperate in simplifying, standardizing and harmonizing trade information and documentation so as to better facilitate trade.

Uganda is a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) a regional economic integration grouping of African states. The member states are Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

They have agreed to promote integration via trade and to develop human and natural resources for the advantage of their citizens. They are looking at harmonised and more competitive market, Greater industrial productivity and competitiveness, increased agricultural production and food security, a more rational exploitation of natural resources, more harmonised monetary, banking and financial policies.

Finally, we cannot forget peace and security of Uganda and indeed the whole of Africa. Indeed, Uganda has not sat back when some African countries lacked peace and were on the verge of disintegration. We together with other African countries we put our boots on the ground. In South Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, DR Congo, Central Africa Republic etc. As we celebrate our anniversary of independence under the most appropriate theme; **“October 9th: a declaration of African interdependence and our shared destiny”**, let us pause to reflect on what independence means. ***True national independence is not complete without economic independence of us as a country and Africa as a continent.***

...Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1992), pp. 8-9.

....⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 6. See also Samwiri Lwanga-Lunyiigo, "The Colonial Roots of Internal Conflict," in Kumar Rupesinghe (ed..

... *Conflict Resolution in Uganda* (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1989); and Amii Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda* (London: Macmillan, 1987).