

To all Africans of good will: Let us form an African Civil Rights Movement

by Godfrey L. Binaisa

This statement was issued by Mr. Binaisa, the former President of Uganda, in April 1995:

Thirty years after most of the former colonies in Africa gained their formal independence, the visions and dreams of those days for a better future for Africa's people are still far from being realized. Especially during the last 15 years of the International Monetary Fund's Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), many of the countries in Africa have experienced intolerable economic hardship and social dislocation. Such economic breakdown laid the basis for numerous military conflicts, which by now have destroyed Somalia, Liberia, Angola, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, and threaten to destroy Burundi next. Other countries like Mozambique or Ethiopia have barely survived military fighting.

We, as leaders of the African fight for independence, must realize that, when the flags of our former colonial masters were taken down, the policy of colonial exploitation did not end, but continued unabated under the injustices of the international monetary and economic arrangements made at Bretton Woods in 1944, which never left us in Africa the chance for real development and peace. Except for a brief period at the beginning of the 1960s, the promises we understood to have been made in the Atlantic Charter in 1941, for the time after the war, "that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want," were never kept. Instead the African continent continued to be robbed of its natural and human resources, just as in colonial times. And looking back, we see with great sorrow, that too many of our own elites have helped this process of looting and subjugating the majority of our African people. Starting with events in today's Zaire and the first military coup in Nigeria in 1966, we became victims of flagrant interventions of the colonial powers into our sovereignty. They killed or otherwise removed from power those leaders who dared to challenge the new colonial arrangements, just as they killed John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King in America.

Now, this attack on Africa has reached a new dimension. After the public in Western Europe and North America has been inundated with the racist propaganda of the putative need for population control, the colonial powers have moved to actively promote inner-African wars, that will kill millions

of our people. First, IMF policies destroy the social fabric of a country, and second, so-called rebel groups are encouraged and supplied with weapons to ignite ethnic or clan warfare. Meanwhile, to cover up for the real culprits, the public in the West is induced to cynically believe that it is the backward Africans again who never will be able to manage their own affairs, and of whom there are too many anyway. The two most gruesome examples of this are Somalia and Rwanda, with Angola not far behind.

In 1992, the United Nations watched more than half a million people starve to death after the secretary general had ordered all U.N. relief operations out of Somalia. In 1990, the Ugandan Army launched the invasion of neighboring Rwanda and created the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). In this invasion, Uganda's government was supported by its former colonial master, the British government, and its dupes in American government circles, who knew full well, that this conflict would eventually turn into a spiral of unchecked violence between rival groups. While one side killed a democratically elected President and committed countless massacres, fanatics on the other side prepared for systematic killings, which exploded into genocide after two more Presidents were killed in a plane crash in April 1994. The conflict in Angola has also taken the lives of hundreds of thousands, while an international mafia of weapons traders is supplying both sides to keep the war going and make billions of dollars.

We deeply deplore that black Africans are practicing apartheid against their African brothers and sisters. This is as much a crime against humanity as the apartheid which was until recently practiced against blacks by whites in South Africa. We are horrified by the scenes of Africans torturing and killing fellow Africans.

But we are not so naive as to overlook the fact that those who are aiding and abetting these crimes in Africa are to be found outside the continent. We have no illusions, that family traditions which are firmly rooted in the early days of European colonialism and the slave trade are very much alive among the oligarchical elites of the West today. "Eighteenth-century methods" have guided, in particular, London's strategic approach toward Africa throughout the last 35 years. Now it should be obvious to anyone that it was a complete illusion to think a British prime minister [Harold Macmillan] was serious about decolonization, when he gave his "winds of



Former President of Uganda Godfrey L. Binaisa (right), in Germany in March 1995. With him is Uwe Friesecke, a leader of the Schiller Institute in Germany.

change” speech, while the looting went on, only under a new disguise. Today, we have no illusions about Her Majesty praising the ideals of democracy and freedom, while her secret services and her government are practicing the imperial divide and rule, to accomplish brutal geopolitical aims.

Those aims have not changed much since the times of Cecil Rhodes, Lord Kitchener, or Gordon Pasha. They are to relegate Africa to forever be a source of raw materials, and keep only a few Africans alive to shine the shoes of western tourists and drive their jeeps through game parks, which are under the control of Her Majesty’s World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Africa should not be allowed development for her own people, and any political constellation that would strive for that, must be destroyed.

Therefore, Nigeria, a potential economic giant, is a target and slated to be destroyed in civil war. Sudan, the richest agricultural country, is supposed to be broken up. All of East Africa and the Great Lakes region are to be further depopulated through more ethnic wars, as in Burundi, and brought into the British sphere of influence. Finally, the new South Africa could be thrown into chaos any time.

The policy of small-scale and local improvements, which some promoted, has failed. Humanitarian relief is increasingly overwhelmed by the scale and number of disasters. We therefore call for a fundamental reorientation of Africa policy.

Recognizing the right for development as the inalienable right of man, we call for a policy of rapid development of the physical economy of our continent. This means the large-scale development of continent-wide infrastructure (railways, roads, waterways, energy, education, and health), it means a perspective of rapid buildup of modern agriculture and industry, so that we will feed ourselves and manufacture

from our raw materials. We demand that the existing foreign debt structure be frozen and any payments postponed until such a time as we have economically recovered and have separated out the legitimate from the illegitimate debt. We reject any of the IMF’s SAPs and privatization policies, and instead join forces with those in Ibero-America, in Russia and Ukraine, who demand a general bankruptcy reorganization of the collapsing world economy, and a “New, Just World Economic Order.”

We, the people of Africa, must finally throw off the yoke of the new colonialism and exercise our sovereignty by choosing “twentieth-century methods” for the most rapid economic development, which will enable “all the men in all the lands of Africa to live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.” Thus, we lay the basis for lasting peace on our continent. Because, as Pope Paul VI said, “Development is the new name for peace.”

We reject the United Nations-imposed tailored justice, which is only creating new injustices, as is right now the case in Rwanda, which in turn will lead to revenge, new violence, and new wars. If justice is to be spoken, then all sides, and also those who aided and abetted the crimes from the outside, must be called in front of the court. We call for the return to Africa’s tradition of arbitration, mediation, and reconciliation. But this will only work, if there is a realistic perspective of regional and continent-wide economic development.

The African Civil Rights Movement calls on all Africans of good will, regardless of color or creed, to join hands in building those political alliances across the continent which can forestall the further destruction of our nations and people. In what we do for Africa, we must regain the moral high ground of the Pan-African ideal, and give back to the people and nations of Africa self-respect and dignity.