

Libya to Tanzania, 26-03-1979

The governments of Uganda and Tanzania had been quarreling ever since Amin's successful 1971 coup d'état in Uganda. Throughout the 1970s, both countries engaged in cross border incursions on multiple occasions.¹ Forces of the Uganda National Liberation Front allied to the regime of former Ugandan president Obote had found refuge on Tanzanian territory. In October 1978 Ugandan forces invaded Tanzania. Tanzanian President Nyerere, called Uganda's annexation of Tanzanian territory 'tantamount to a declaration of war'.² Tanzania waged a series of smaller counteroffensives until 20 January 1979, when about 5,000 forces of Tanzania and the Uganda National Liberation Front launched a full scale invasion of Uganda. In late February they neared Kampala at a distance of eighty kilometers. By then their size had quadrupled.³ Uganda's president Amin, who received military assistance from Algeria and Mozambique, then called on the UNSC to intervene. He also requested and received military assistance from Libya, which deployed about 2,700 forces to Uganda in early March. The Soviet Union – whose military advisers had left the previous year – did not offer any support.⁴ In the meantime, in late February, the Organisation of African Unity had set up a conciliation committee which had unsuccessfully sought to bring about a cease fire.⁵ Then on 27 March, according to Tanzania's President Nyerere, he received an ultimatum from Libya's president Muammar Khaddafi. He was warned to 'withdraw within 24 hours or else Libya will join Uganda's side'.⁶ Nyerere refused. Instead he accelerated his offensive which he had reportedly slowed to allow different Ugandan opposition factions to assemble and prepare for a political transition.⁷ Tanzanian and Ugandan opposition forces continued their advance on Kampala where the Libyan forces were stationed. They surrounded Kampala closing off all roads but one, in order to allow Libyan forces an exit. Khaddafi subsequently ordered his forces to be transported back to Libya on 7 April.⁸ Amin fled, first to Libya and then on to his final destination in Saudi Arabia. A new government was installed in Uganda. Approximately 300 Libyan forces lost their lives. The overall conflict claimed the lives of about 3,800 persons, including about 1000 Ugandan forces, 150 Ugandan rebels, 500 Ugandan civilians, 375 Tanzanian forces and 1500 Tanzanian civilians. Tanzanian armed forces remained in Uganda until June 1981.⁹

¹ Brecher and Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis*, 448–50; 453–55.

² Keesing's, *Keesing's Record of World Events, Uganda, June 1979*, vol. Volume XXV (Keesing's publications (Longman Group Ltd), 1979), 29669. See also Steven Carol, *From Jerusalem to the Lion of Judah and Beyond: Israel's Foreign Policy in East Africa* (iUniverse, 2012), 268.

³ U. D. Umozurike and U. O. Umozurike, 'Tanzania's Intervention in Uganda', *Archiv Des Völkerrechts* 20, no. 3 (1 January 1982): 303–4.

⁴ Mahmood Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda*, First edition (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1984), 107.

⁵ Gary Goertz and Paul Hensel, 'Uganda -- Tanzania, RIV 1109, Rivalry', Rivalry Data, accessed 23 March 2015, <http://dingo.sbs.arizona.edu/~ggoertz/rivalry/cm5.10/cm500510v5.10.txt>.

⁶ Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda*, 107.

⁷ John Darnton, 'Amin's Hopes Now Rest on Libyans' Help: News Analysis Qaddafi's Perplexing Message', *New York Times*, 2 April 1979, <http://search.proquest.com.library3.webster.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/120878137/abstract/13AD64C2D026F40A2B4/385?accountid=14944>.

⁸ John Darnton, 'Pull Out of Libyans in Uganda Reported', *New York Times*, 8 April 1979.

⁹ Keesing's, *Keesing's Record of World Events, Uganda, June 1979, Establishment of New Government*, vol. Volume XXV (Keesing's publications (Longman Group Ltd), 1979). See also the description of the rivalry between Uganda and Tanzania, James P. Klein, Gary Goertz, and Paul F. Diehl, 'The New Rivalry Dataset: Procedures and Patterns', *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 3 (5 January 2006): 331–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343306063935>.

