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## Makerere's Chancellors and their Times (1970 – 2004)

Under the British system, every public university has a titular head called the Chancellor who is largely a ceremonial official without executive powers. Most university charters prescribe in some detail who can be Chancellor, how one is appointed to the office, as well as the duties and functions of a Chancellor. In principle, any person of good standing in society could be appointed Chancellor. One of the important functions of a Chancellor is to preside over the university's graduation ceremony and confer degrees and other academic awards of the university. The Chancellor may also be called upon to preside over other ceremonial functions of the university. Another role a Chancellor plays is to appoint the Vice Chancellor who is the executive head of the university. In the system commonly used in the North America, Japan and elsewhere, the President of the university is the equivalent of the Vice Chancellor.

The Francophone system uses the title of Rector, meaning ruler in Latin. There are other minor roles a Chancellor carries out. Under the defunct University of East Africa, the late "Mwalimu" Julius Kambarage Nyerere was its first and last Chancellor until the position was dissolved in 1970. Milton Obote, who was then President of Uganda became the "Visitor" to Makerere University College. This position empowered him to direct a visitation to inquire into the affairs of the college. As far as Makerere College was concerned, this was the only role assigned to the Head of State of Uganda by the charter that set up the University of East Africa.

### **Apollo Milton Obote, the First Chancellor of Makerere University – First Term**

When Makerere University College became the national University of Uganda in 1970, a precedence was set. A ruling President of Uganda was its automatic

Chancellor and as we have seen, the practice was enshrined in the Makerere University, Kampala Act of 1970. The strong argument advanced in support of this practice was that with the Head of State, being the Head of Government as well as Chancellor, the university stood to receive sympathetic attention when it came to the allocation of resources. To a certain extent, this argument made sense because at the time, society and government viewed the university as a special institution that required some sort of preferential treatment from the State, which only the Head of State could confer. But many academics were skeptical about that simplistic argument, which they believed was flawed right from the beginning and had serious consequences for the future of Makerere. They were fearful of the excessive control of the university by the state and its functionaries. They saw this as the beginning of direct political interference in the affairs of the university and the erosion of the long cherished academic freedom. Perhaps, the events that followed in the latter years vindicated them.

Milton Obote, the architect of the 1970 Act, was installed as the first Chancellor on October 8, 1970. Had Obote not abrogated the 1962 national Constitution, it is probable that Sir Edward Muteesa who, until the 1966 Buganda crisis was the non-executive President of Uganda, would have been the first Chancellor. Up till then, Milton Obote was Prime Minister and not the Head of State. Obote replaced Muteesa as President with full executive powers in 1966, a status which was later enshrined in the Republican Constitution of 1967. Milton Obote was no stranger to Makerere. He had been, though briefly, a student there in the latter part of the 1940s. In 1949, he left the college, as we shall see later, for unclear personal reasons before completing the two-year diploma. Obote did not continue with his studies, and therefore, never graduated. Instead, he went to Kenya to look for employment. It is believed that his political thoughts were shaped and moulded in Kenya when he joined the Trade Union movement there.

One is tempted to speculate that when Milton Obote became Chancellor of Makerere University, he must have had some lingering resentment of the institution he had unceremoniously left almost 30 years earlier. Indeed, in his inaugural speech as Chancellor, he lamented the cold reception he had received when he visited the college in the 1950s, as one of the activists agitating for Uganda's independence. Apparently, the college's intellectual community had no time for his small talk, moreover as he was a dropout. He also warned in the same speech that although for the time being Makerere was the only university in Uganda, it would not take the Government long to establish other public universities. However, it took almost 20 years for his prediction to be realised, with the opening of Mbarara University of Science and Technology, the second public university in the country, in 1988.

Obote's chancellorship hardly lasted a year. It abruptly ended with the military coup d'état of January 25, 1971. We can only imagine what Obote had in store for

Makerere, had he lasted longer as Chancellor. For an academic institution used to enjoying freedom of speech and independent thinking, the little some of us saw left much to be desired. The university was flooded with Akena Adoko's General Service operatives, which included both staff and students. Political polarisation was slowly but surely taking root, as those who did not support the Ugandan Peoples' Congress (UPC) were intimidated into silence. The politics of fear had pervaded the university. Organisations like the National Union of the Students of Uganda (NUSU) and the National Union of Youth Organisations (NUYO) had become UPC youth brigades on the campus.

Some students were over-politicised to the extent that they had made it a habit to follow the President wherever he went. In late 1970, seven students were burnt beyond recognition when the small bus they were traveling in overturned and caught fire in the Kyalusowe swamp, some 10 kilometres from Masaka town, on the Kampala–Masaka Highway. They were returning from Kabale after attending Obote's political rally there. Soon after his overthrow in 1971, many students who were his staunch supporters wept openly and bitterly, lamenting that their revolution, which was essentially the move to the left, had been raped. Every evening, some diehards would assemble in front of Northcote Hall and sing UPC praise songs, urging the world to condemn the coup d'état and castigate Idi Amin for overthrowing a legitimate Government.

Perhaps they had conveniently forgotten that Obote was supposed to have called a general election in 1967, but did not, using the state of emergency he had declared in Buganda as an excuse for postponing the election. In fact, his extended stay in power up to 1971 was as illegitimate as Amin's coup. Luckily for them, at the time, their utterances against Amin's popular military regime went unnoticed, perhaps on the account that Idi Amin was still enjoying his political honeymoon and nothing appeared to threaten him then. Some of the final year students who were bitterly opposed to Idi Amin, like Masete Kuya, a student in the Faculty of Social Sciences, went into exile immediately after writing their last examination papers to join their mentor in Tanzania. Many came back as part of the combined Tanzania/Uganda invasion force, which overthrew Idi Amin in 1978.

In spite of his real or perceived political shortcomings, one cannot fail to recognise Obote's contribution to the infrastructural development of the university. Buildings such as the Mathematics block in the Faculty of Science, Africa Hall – the second female hall on the campus, Lumumba Hall, the West Road staff flats, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine complex, and the Faculty of Technology, to mention a few, were all constructed in Obote's time, before and after becoming the university's first Chancellor. Given his apparent lackluster interest in the university affairs, we can sum up Obote's relationship with Makerere as a love-hate one, as he himself used to tell the press.

### **Idi Amin Dada – Makerere’s Second Chancellor**

General Idi Amin, who later promoted himself as Field Marshal, was installed as Makerere’s second Chancellor in March 1971. One thing he seems to have enjoyed as Chancellor was rubbing shoulders with the academic fraternity, and he relished the fact that he could appoint and dismiss a Vice Chancellor at will. But as he enjoyed the trappings of the office, one could detect in him a deep-seated hatred and mistrust for the educated, in particular the highly educated Makerere dons. The murder and disappearance of several prominent academics at the time is linked to this mistrust. As a result, it became too dangerous to be found in possession of a Makerere University identity card. Many members of staff nearly lost their lives at the hands of Amin’s security operatives because of this. As a precaution, Professor Lutwama, the then Vice Chancellor was prompted to issue a quiet warning to staff to be extra careful and not to overstay in their offices and laboratories after office hours.

For Makerere, Amin’s chancellorship was a very disruptive one and this contributed to the erosion of the university’s prestige and reputation as a fine academic institution, not only in Africa but also in the whole world. The mass staff exodus almost paralysed the once vibrant institution. It was also during Amin’s time that salaries of the academic staff at Makerere as well as other categories of salaried staff in Government departments started losing purchasing power. The era of the *mafuta mingi* had arrived. *Mafuta mingi*, a term Idi Amin coined, were the Ugandans who were allocated or took over the businesses of the expelled Asians and other foreigners as part of Amin’s economic war spoils. No doubt, the smart ones with good business acumen made a fortune and became extremely rich almost overnight.

On the downside however, several of Idi Amin’s *mafuta mingi* were either semi-illiterate or lowly educated school dropouts. This is not to say there is anything wrong in being an illiterate or a school dropout, after all the world is full of very successful people who never went to school or who dropped out of school early. It was the way they suddenly became businessmen without a clue as to how successful businesses are run. Perhaps Amin’s economic war would not have been so disruptive if the people who took over the businesses of the expelled Asians had made a success of them. Secondly, the fact that most highly educated Ugandans, who had not partaken in Amin’s economic war booty could not make as much money and therefore could hardly afford, not only the basic necessities of life but also simple luxuries such as beer or whisky, made Makerere dons and indeed most professionals a real laughing stock. How could people with mountains of degrees and other academic qualifications, and with the architect of the economic war as their Chancellor, be wallowing in poverty? It was simply incomprehensible as it was paradoxical! And so the slogan *Abasooma batusinza ki?* was coined. The phrase literally meant that those who did not go to school were doing far

better off than those who wasted their time going to school up to university. Makerere professors, who were seen as academically rich but economically poor, provided an excellent illustration of this paradox. While those who had made it in business were enjoying the good things of life amid severe scarcity and economic deprivation, Amin's economic war was also giving rise to another phenomenon: many otherwise bright children started shunning education, preferring to engage in petty trade on the streets of Kampala. Going to school was losing appeal. If anything, it was seen as a sure road to poverty.

Interestingly, Idi Amin enjoyed conferring degrees and addressing the academic fraternity at Makerere. Although, at the beginning of his chancellorship, he struggled a lot with the English language, by the time he was overthrown he had sufficient mastery of the language for him to read the written speeches intelligibly. However, apart from chaos, academic decline decay and unleashing terror, I doubt if Makerere ever benefited from Amin's long-term chancellorship. One is reminded of the horrific incident that saw the brutal suppression of a student rebellion in March 1976 after a Law student, Paul Serwanga, was shot dead by an army captain who had an interest in his girlfriend. Students took to the streets of Kampala demanding, among other things, the resignation of the Chancellor and his government. That was anathema to Amin. By calling for the resignation of the President, the students had overstepped the line. This was treason. The army retaliated with unprecedented brutality. A former graduate student of mine, Dr Yusuf Kizito, who was an undergraduate student at the time and a participant in the protest, narrated the incident to me. Besides other horrific punishments meted out to them in addition to severe beatings, the soldiers forced the students to crawl on their knees for long distances. Many severely beaten students were hospitalised. Caught up in the incident as he approached the Department of Chemistry, my friend and colleague, late Dr Sam Mukasa was arrested and severely tortured by the errant soldiers swarming the campus. In the process he lost an eye. His only crime was that he was going to work. A few days later, a Kenyan female student, Esther Chesire, believed to be a relative of then Vice President and later President of Kenya, Daniel arap Moi, was picked up from Entebbe Airport as she was about to board a Nairobi-bound plane and whisked away to an unknown destination.

She was never seen again despite the pressure the Kenya Government put on Idi Amin to launch a commission of inquiry into her mysterious disappearance.

Another of the terrible episodes of Amin's chancellorship was the heinous murder on June 22, 1976 of Mrs. Theresa Nanziri Bukonya, the first Warden of Africa Hall and a brilliant Mathematician. At the time of her murder, she was eight months pregnant. It is said that as warden of an all-female hall of residence, Theresa Nanziri had tried hard to stop Amin's soldiers from kidnapping and raping the female students in her hall, something that obviously infuriated the men in

uniform. Moreover, on the day she disappeared, she was due to testify before the Committee which was investigating the disappearance of a Kenyan female student who was also a resident of Africa Hall. That was never to be. She was picked from her residence by Amin's State Research Bureau operatives and quietly driven away without arousing any suspicion. Two days later, her bullet-riddled body was found dumped along the banks of River Sezibwa, on Kampala-Kayunga highway. Kayunga town is about fifty kilometres north-east of Kampala. For her students and the Makerere community, it was a grisly discovery. She was 37, just married to Achilles Bukenya and expecting their first child. No doubt, 1976 will go down in history as one of Makerere's worst years. The State Research Bureau agents were behaving like the legendary man-eating lions of Voi in Kenya, which feasted on so many helpless workers during the construction of the Kenya-Ugandan Railway at the turn of the twentieth century. Amin's chancellorship came to an abrupt end in 1978, when the Tanzania-led forces dislodged him from power, forcing him to flee to Saudi Arabia where he died some two decades later.

### **Yusuf Kironde Lule – The Uninaugurated Chancellor**

The final overthrow of Amin in 1979 was greeted with a lot of jubilation and euphoria. After almost eight years of Amin's misrule, Ugandans were looking forward to a better future. Sadly, the euphoria was short-lived. Optimism and the great expectations soon turned into disappointment, as the various factions that made up the ruling Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) engaged in a power struggle. The UNLF was an amalgamation of various political groupings and individuals, who met in the northern Tanzanian town of Moshi and cobbled together a political coalition that would take over the reign of power after the overthrow of Idi Amin. Former Ugandan President, Apollo Milton Obote did not attend the Moshi meeting but several of his prominent party members were in attendance. As the fall of Idi Amin became imminent, the Moshi meeting elected Professor Yusuf Kironde Lule, a former Principal of Makerere University College and former Assistant Secretary General of the Commonwealth and first Secretary General of the Accra-based Association of African Universities, as the new President of Uganda.

Towards the end of the liberation war in May 1979, Professor Lule returned to Uganda to take up his new job as the fourth president of Uganda and third Chancellor of Makerere University, one of the many roles of a Ugandan president. However, the political intrigues, and in particular the forces that wanted Milton Obote back as president, made it impossible for Lule to govern the country. The National Consultative Council (NCC), which was acting as the Parliament of Uganda, apparently with the full knowledge of President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania who, at the time was wielding a lot political and military power in Uganda, orchestrated his overthrow. After only 67 days in office and

before he was inaugurated as Chancellor of Makerere University, Yusuf Lule was unceremoniously removed from power and sent to Dar es Salaam, where he remained for some time before Nyerere freed him. Thus, Makerere was deprived of an opportunity to have its first African and Ugandan principal as its Chancellor. So, late Professor Yusuf Lule was “a Chancellor who never adorned the Chancellor’s gown”.

### **Godfery Lukongwa Binaisa**

Godfrey Lukongwa Binaisa (QC), succeeded Lule as the fifth president of Uganda in July 1979 and by the provisions of the Makerere University Act of 1970, amended by the Decree of 1975, he automatically became Makerere’s fourth Chancellor. Binaisa was more fortunate than Lule. He was actually inaugurated as Chancellor in October 1979, presided over a graduation congregation and conferred degrees and other awards before he was overthrown in the same year. Like Milton Obote and Yusuf Lule, Binaisa was a Makererean who had left for Britain to study Law. Although some Ugandans were apprehensive about the way he came to power, for Makerere University, Godfrey Lukongwa Binaisa, (the Queen’s Counsel (QC) as he was popularly addressed), was much preferred to Idi Amin. However, Binaisa’s presidency lasted just about three months, after which Paulo Muwanga of the Ugandan People’s Congress (UPC) wing of the NLF forcefully removed him from office on the instigation of Lt. Colonel David Oyite Ojok.

Seemingly weary and suspicious of the increasingly powerful Sandhurst-trained soldier – Oyite Ojok – with strong ties to ex-President Milton Obote who at the time was still in Tanzania, a man who had made himself chairman of the Coffee Marketing Board and a member of the powerful Foreign Exchange Allocation Committee of the Bank of Uganda, Binaisa believed that as president, he had the powers and perhaps the clout to keep him far from the centre of power. In a bold but highly risky move, Binaisa appointed Oyite Ojok Uganda’s Ambassador to France. Unfortunately for President Binaisa, it was a blunder and a bitter lesson he learned the hard way. By omission or commission, Binaisa must have been oblivious of the fact that Oyite Ojok was the real power behind the throne. In his hasty decision to redeploy him as a diplomat, Binaisa had unknowingly touched Oyite’s raw nerve. Oyite Ojok perceived Binaisa’s move as an attempt to sweep him aside and also a sign of ingratitude to those who put him in power. However, in all probability, Oyite Ojok was just playing a waiting game. His real mission was to facilitate the return of his former Commander-in-Chief, Apollo Milton Obote. In Paulo Muwanga, Oyite Ojok found a powerful and close ally. It was actually Muwanga who announced to the nation and the world that Binaisa was no longer president of Uganda. A three-man military commission had taken over the power with Paulo Muwanga as Chairman, the other two being Yoweri Museveni, then Minister for Regional Cooperation and Colonel Marulu. The position of

the president was to be overseen by a Presidential Commission comprising three Judges of the High Court of Uganda. That was the end of Binaisa's short-lived Makerere chancellorship.

### **Paulo Muwanga and the Military Commission**

The Military Commission presented a serious dilemma to the university as the Chairman of the Military Commission, Paulo Muwanga, was not the president of Uganda and therefore according to the 1970 Makerere University Act, he did not qualify for the position of Chancellor, neither was the Presidential Commission provided for in the Act. Who then should be Chancellor? While the university was embroiled in this legal fix, the general election of December 1980 provided the unexpected solution. After the election, Uganda People's Congress, the Party of Paulo Muwanga and Milton Obote, was declared winner, thus paving the way for Milton Obote as its leader to become the president of Uganda for the second time and Makerere's next Chancellor. Paulo Muwanga showed no serious interest in Makerere's affairs or being made its chancellor. Perhaps he had too much on his mind to worry about Makerere, an institution he never attended.

Before Dr Milton Obote was re-installed as Chancellor, the university was due to hold a graduation ceremony but it would this time take place in the absence of a Chancellor, something that had never happened before. Although considered precedence at the time, it was provided for in the Act. According to the 1970 Makerere University Act, in the absence of a Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor was empowered to perform all the functions, which would ordinarily be performed by the chancellor. Professor Asavia Wandira who was the Vice Chancellor at the time presided over the ceremony, thereby becoming the first Vice Chancellor at Makerere to perform the functions of a Chancellor.

### **Apollo Milton Obote – Second Term**

Obote's second term as president of Uganda was one of the most difficult episodes in the recent history of Uganda and the university. As soon as he came to power, he had to contend with a guerrilla warfare, which started in December 1980 and lasted until the army, under the command of General Tito Okello and his cousin Basilio Okello, ousted him again in July 1985. The military offensive against the insurgency put a lot of pressure on the country's meagre financial resources, a country that was just emerging from the worst dictatorship and a war that ousted Idi Amin from power. Government made serious attempts to revive the economy through what Obote termed the Recovery Programme that included, among other measures, the floating of the Uganda shilling, the introduction of Window I and Window II at the Bank of Uganda for the purposes of controlling and allocating the meagre foreign exchange. In spite of these well-meaning measures, the economic hardship persisted.

Shortages of most essential commodities such as drugs, sugar, salt and soap continued to dog the country. Industrial production was at a trickle. Like in Amin's time, the practice of rationing the allocation of essential commodities continued. People had to stand in endless and humiliating queues for endless hours in order to get something for their families. However, this time there was a difference; political patronage dominated the process, as it was being used as a way of rewarding the ruling party supporters. I vividly recall seeing some senior professors and Heads of Departments who were supporters of the ruling party, shamelessly engaging in the allocation of sugar and other essential items to their fellow party supporters. When a commodity was in acute shortage, unknown party members used to walk away empty-handed. One prominent professor in the Faculty of Science and a prominent member of the party had actually turned his small office into some sort of a warehouse.

State-owned factories were turned into party branches, as each factory was required to have a UPC Workers' Council. In such a situation, it was almost impossible for a person who did not belong to the party to find employment in the factories controlled by the UPC Workers Councils. In some instances, the UPC branch chairmen were more powerful than the factory managers. Makerere too had its fair share of UPC branches. Despite the fact that Uganda was once again a multi-party state, no other political party could dare open a branch in a factory, at Makerere or anywhere in the country. This was also the era of the yellow maize flour in Uganda, imported from the USA. For the first time, Ugandans were forced to eat this strange maize flour, which in the USA is essentially animal feed. Since there was nothing else available, the only alternative was to go hungry.

When UPC ascended to power again, many Ugandans expected a different approach to the nation's affairs. For example, they expected the UPC leadership to engage the guerrillas in some form of dialogue as an attempt at reconciliation and the healing of the nation. After Idi Amin, Uganda was not prepared for more bloodletting. Unfortunately, and to the dismay of many Ugandans, the Government behaved as if nothing had happened between 1971 and 1980; instead it became more repressive. The National Security Agency (NASA) agents routinely picked up people they suspected to be sympathisers of the guerrillas and took them to Nile Mansions, now Serena Hotel, many never to be seen again. The lucky ones like Matayo Kyaligonza made spectacular escape. It became extremely dangerous to discuss politics in the open, especially if it involved criticising the Government. The infamous Operation *Panda Gali* was one of the anti-insurgency campaigns Ugandans dreaded most. In what appeared to be a desperate attempt to rout out the insurgency at all cost, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) hatched the idea of rounding up unsuspecting members of the public at dawn, loading them on trucks and taking them away for mass-screening.

Residents of Kampala city centre as well as the suburbs of Kampala and Makerere, like Wandegeya, used to be rudely woken up at dawn while sleeping or

picked up on their way to work and herded like cattle to a designated collecting point. There, they were forcefully loaded on the trucks, which were often commandeered from the Uganda Transport Union (UCTU) at Kawempe – a suburb about ten kilometres north of downtown Kampala. The command to board the truck was *panda gali*, which in Kiswahili means board the vehicle; hence the operation was nicknamed *Panda Gali*. In the majority of cases, the trucks and their cargo ended up at Kibuli Police Training School sports grounds, another suburb a few kilometres south of Kampala. There, everyone would be ordered to file past supposedly “captured rebels”. The rebels’ task was to identify their collaborators from amongst those filing past. If you happened to be unlucky that day and the so-called “rebel” pointed a finger at you, that was it. Your fate was sealed there and then. You were picked from the queue and whisked away, most often to the dreaded Nile Mansions. Many who were picked were never seen again.

Although Makerere University was spared this indignity for reasons best known to those who were responsible for the *panda gali* operation, it was still risky for students, members of staff and their families to go outside the campus in the early hours of the morning. You could be caught up in such an operation as it almost happened to me once in 1984. I was on my way to Kampala High School where I used to “moonlight” as a Chemistry teacher. It was national examination time and I was on my way to the school to administer a Practical Chemistry examination. As usual, I chose to use the small university west gate. Unknown to me, that morning the Army had mounted a *panda gali* operation in Makerere Kivulu and the areas surrounding the Full Gospel Church on Sir Apollo Kagwa Road. As I approached the Nakulabye-Bwayise junction opposite the Full Gospel Church, I could see from a distance a brown Leyland truck with the all too familiar UCTU markings parked right in the middle of the Makerere-Nakulabye road.

My initial reaction was to assume the truck had broken down but the absence of commuters on the road scared me. In those days, Kampala had very few public transport vehicles and privately owned cars, so most commuters walked to work on foot. Those living near the Kasese-Tororo railway line which runs from the east to the west of the country were using the commuter train, nicknamed *Kayoola* because, no matter how many passengers he was carrying, it still always had room for more. An elderly man who had spotted the parked truck earlier saved me from the danger ahead. The stationary truck was waiting to load and carry the captives away. I heeded the old man’s advice and quickly returned to the safety of the campus. My colleague, Dr Yusuf Kizito, who had used the south Makerere College gate, had a narrow escape too. Some of our students who were caught up in the same operation but managed to escape, missed the morning examination session. They had to wait for the afternoon group. We were lucky to have escaped, but it was a very narrow escape!

Unfortunately for the Government, all these measures did not yield the desired results. The insurgency did not end as the Government had assumed it would. If anything, the desperate counter-insurgency measures just inflamed anger and made Obote's Government more unpopular. If anything, the *panda gali* operations just helped beef up the ranks of the various rebel groups that were fighting the Government. Some of the people who joined the rebel groups said they did so out of anger. They wanted to rid the country of the unending state-sponsored terror. After Idi Amin, many Ugandans did not expect to go through another traumatic experience. The arrogant attitude of some of Obote's ministers and party officials did not help matters either. Whoever advised President Obote to resort to such desperate measures did him a big disservice. Obviously, there were other and better ways of ending the rebellion, which were never explored. For instance, one would have expected to see gestures towards some form of a negotiated settlement, perhaps through mediation. This did not happen. To most people, Obote's return to power after eight years in exile was a disappointment and too much of a reminder of Idi Amin's tyrannical rule, which was still fresh in their minds. After getting rid of the tyrant, people were yearning for healing. In the end, the inevitable happened. Obote was once again overthrown in a military coup in 1985.

Obote's second tenure as Makerere's Chancellor lasted almost five years. However, this time around, the Chancellor had become more security conscious than ever before, which almost bordered on paranoia. Every time there was a graduation ceremony, those of us who were in the Faculty of Science had to put up with a lot of inconveniences. Due to its location, the university had decided that the graduation ceremony had to be held in the Science Quadrangle, which offered better security than the more open Freedom Square. A week before the ceremony, the Faculty of Science would be subjected to a thorough security check and, two days to the ceremony, the place would be cordoned off. If you had experiments running, which required constant monitoring; you were advised to switch them off as the security personnel would not allow anybody to enter any building within the faculty premises. Lectures had to be cancelled too.

The Chancellor has an official room next to the Vice Chancellor's office in the university's main building. The Chancellor's robes, chair and ceremonial regalia were kept there. On occasions like the graduation ceremony, the Chancellor is dressed in his room and joins the academic procession from there. For all I know and remember, Milton Obote hardly ever used this room. His academic gown used to be carried up to the entrance of the Science Quadrangle where he would be robed and where he joined the procession for a short walk to the podium. At the end of the ceremony, he would again walk for a short distance and quickly board his car without waiting for the usual hand shaking with university officials, parents or graduates. Security was always tight and nothing was left to chance. I recall an incident when late Professor Gabriel Kiwuwa of the Faculty of Agriculture, who

had a metal implant in his hip joint, was made to walk through the metal detector several times. Each time he walked through, the detector beeped, confusing the security personnel the more. In fact, the detector was sensing the metallic implant embedded in his body. Eventually he was allowed to proceed.

Obote was known for making long speeches. No matter the occasion, his speeches always took on a political overtone and could be outrightly boring. His verbal artillery was targeted at his political opponents who had no way of hitting back. Besides the scathing attacks on his opponents and the opposition, he also used the occasion to exalt his leadership, his economic policies and the success of his economic recovery programme. But once in a while, he would crack a nice joke or say something exciting. One of such exciting anecdotes was a salary increase for Makerere staff and public employees. He called the pay rise *kakobogo*, a Luganda word meaning “something hefty”. That was the first time I heard him use vernacular in his speech. Although I was not able to find out how much the rise, it was a substantial pay rise. However, like all pay rises, the hyperinflation raging at the time quickly eroded it.

The nastiest comment I recall from one of his graduation speeches was a comparison he made between the *matooke* (banana) eaters who are mostly the Baganda from the central region and millet eaters, the majority of whom hail from other parts of the country, the north region in particular. He was critical of the *matooke* eaters who he believed were deluding themselves as superior to other tribes. I never figured out what prompted him to make such a remark, moreover in a highly cosmopolitan community like Makerere University where nearly all tribes of Uganda were represented in its rank and file. His wife, Miria Kalule, also hailed from Buganda! If his quarrel was with those who were in the bush fighting him, then in my opinion, the comment was out of context and made at the wrong forum. Obote had many supporters at Makerere, including the Bagandas. I am sure he was well aware of this fact. The remark therefore left many of us puzzled.

One cannot forget the day the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, late Professor John Sebastian Mugerwa, was picked up by Obote’s security agents. Although he was a well-known member of the Democratic Party, John Mugerwa was first and foremost an academic. He was not known to be actively involved in national politics, let alone participating in the insurgency. However, we learnt later that he was arrested on the suspicion that his fishing boats were ferrying rebels to and from the many islands in Lake Victoria. John Mugerwa, a native of Buvuma islands survived the ordeal. Kagoro Byenkya, the former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitala was another senior member of staff taken into custody by Obote’s security agents. At the time of his arrest, he was the Secretary to the university’s Appointments Board. Mr Avitas Tibarimbasa, a former Member of Parliament for Ndorwa East Constituency in Kabale District, was another Makerere University staff who was also picked up

and taken to “Argentina House” at Mbuya, which was both a torture and death chamber. He too survived and went on to become the University Secretary before joining politics in 2001. Supporters of the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) were particularly targeted because their party leader, Yoweri Museveni, was in the bush leading one of the rebellions against the Government.

Academic freedom is a tradition highly cherished by many university dons and is therefore jealously guarded. But it has also turned out to be the curse of many an academic, the world over. The freedom to speak out your mind on any subject under the sun without fear or favour is basically what academic freedom is about, at least in theory. Many academics take this freedom as a God-given right. But to some political leaders, academic freedom is tolerable only if it is about things they want to hear, things said in their favour; not about relentless criticism of government or politicians in power, a practice that preoccupies many academics. Many academics are outspoken critics of government policies. Some even claim to be the vanguard of the human rights, speaking out on behalf of the voiceless, silent and oppressed majority. But most governments simply hate what they perceive as negative criticism and leftwing activism. Oppressive governments cannot tolerate what they believe is dissent. As a consequence, the quest for academic freedom has gotten many dons into trouble with their national governments and they have paid a heavy price for it. We remember the long suffering the famous Soviet Physicist and father of the Russian hydrogen bomb, Andrei Sakalov, had to endure at the hands of the Soviet Union regime. Sakalov was ostracised for his outspokenness against lack of freedom in the then Soviet Union. He was banished to the Gulag in the bitter cold of frigid Siberia.

Obote was one of those African political leaders who did not entertain negative criticism. His large spy network ensured that whoever engaged in open criticism of the president, the government or his ruling political party was quickly reported to the appropriate authorities for immediate action. Professor Mahmood Mamdani, a Ugandan of Asian extraction, was one of the outspoken Makerere dons who experienced the full wrath of Obote's hatred for criticism. Mamdani, a Harvard-trained political scientist and then a staff in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, returned to Uganda from the University of Dar es Salaam after the fall of Idi Amin and once again found himself in very serious trouble with the Obote Government.

The Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Makerere has a few things to boast about. Ali Mazrui launched his long and distinguished academic career in the 1960s when he was a professor there. In spite of belonging to the same Islamic faith as Idi Amin, Ali Mazrui was forced to abandon his promising career at Makerere. This was the department where Mamdani was also carving out an academic niche for himself. Mamdani made no secret of his left-wing inclination and usually expressed his views openly. However, during the Obote II regime, you

had to be careful about what you said, where you said it and who in the audience was listening to you. It also mattered who read your writings and the papers you presented at conferences you attended outside the country. We were shockingly surprised to hear from one of Obote's Ministers that due to his conduct, which was unacceptable to the Uganda Government, Dr Mahmood Mamdani had been stripped of his Ugandan citizenship and declared *persona non grata* in Uganda. At the time, Mamdani was in Spain attending a conference. Despite the numerous protests and pleas by the local and international community, Obote would not rescind his decision. By a stroke of a pen, Mahmood Mamdani found himself stateless again; Uganda was back to 1972. The Government never disclosed Mamdani's crimes but the decision left Makerere staff profoundly shocked and stunned. Whatever Mamdani said or wrote which Obote's Government found objectionable, remained a matter of conjecture.

As the old adage goes, "every dark cloud has a silver lining". So was Obote's second chancellorship. In spite of the difficulties, Obote was able to find the money for the emergency rehabilitation of the university. It was a big contract awarded to a British firm trading under the name Systems Building Services or SBS as it was popularly known. The contract involved the renovation of the students' halls of residence, especially those with flat roofs. SBS did what it could under the prevailing economic circumstances but came under criticism for what some people saw as bad workmanship. The replacement of terrazzo with burnt clay bricks in some kitchens was a case in point. Terrazzo is durable while clay is a brittle material. Clay tiles could not stand the rough handling and the heavy saucepans carrying the maize dough, which was the staple food of the students during those hard times. During Amin's rule, most of the university's physical plants fell into disrepair. The flat-roofed buildings were leaking profusely. Therefore, the rehabilitation was a timely intervention. The drawback was the Ministry of Education's refusal to let the University Engineer, who had a better knowledge of the university buildings participate in the supervision of the works. Officials of the Ministry did all the supervision. If the University Engineer had been part of the supervision team, perhaps some of the mistakes made could have been avoided. It was through this project that the roofs of Lumumba Hall, the tower of Mary Stuart Hall and parts of Africa Hall were pitched and covered with aluminium roofing sheets. However, after some years, the aluminium sheets lost their shiny lustre due to exposure to the elements.

Before 1980, Makerere salary scales were pegged to the traditional Civil Service U Scale with its various complicated segments. But Makerere University was not part of the traditional civil service. Therefore, the university wanted that distinction to be reflected in the pay scales as well. Obote listened and appointed a commission to look into the matter and make recommendations to Government. The commission, which was headed by a Kenyan and former Makererean,

Professor Simeon Ominde, was called the Ominde Commission. It recommended the creation of a new scale unique to Makerere University. The Government accepted the recommendations and created the M Scale for Makerere. The new scale ran from M1 for the Vice Chancellor down to M15. Employees on the grouping scheme had their own scales, which were not labelled as M, but were treated as being part of the M scale. This was the first time Makerere's autonomy was fully recognised within the limitations of the 1970 Act. The M scale has been in continuous use ever since it was introduced in 1981 with minor modifications added from time to time. When the new scale became operational, Makerere staff were enjoying a higher pay than their counterparts on the Government U Scale. Unfortunately, over time inflation, currency devaluation and unfavourable economic factors impacted the scales negatively.

Another of Obote's significant contribution to the rejuvenation of the university in his second term was the invitation extended to the United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1983 to re-equip and provide technical assistance to the Faculties of Science and Technology. It must have been a difficult decision for the UNDP to return to Makerere after the cold blood murder of Professor W. Popiel in 1979. The beneficiary departments of the new UNDP/ UNESCO support included Chemistry, Geology, Mathematics and Zoology. The Institute of Computer Science, which started as a unit in the Department of Mathematics, was born out of this project. It started with two microcomputers, Apple IIC and Apple IIE, donated by the UNDP. Prior to the creation of the Institute of Computer Science, the Department of Mathematics had an ICL main frame, purchased towards the end of the 1960s. After almost twenty years, it had aged; so, the university decided to board it off. The new Institute of Computer Science inherited the premises of the former Computer Centre.

By all accounts, the Chemistry Department took the lion's share of the UNDP/ UNESCO project. The department received a fully-equipped unit operations laboratory for its new Industrial Chemistry programme and an experienced professor of Chemical Engineering, Dr Somer, from the Middle East Technical University in Turkey, who also doubled as the project's first Chief Technical Advisor (CTA). Professor Somer and one other expert from the same university designed the Industrial Chemistry curriculum.

In addition, the department received numerous pieces of equipment, which unfortunately the project experts refused to hand over to the department when the project ended.

When the equipment was finally handed over, many instruments had no users' manuals. Some of the available manuals were not in English. Also, a lot of equipment was supplied with missing parts. Worse still, the department had no use for some of them. The project's technical experts failed to consult members of

staff on the type of equipment to buy. We knew what equipment we needed but the experts decided to think for us! In the end, funds were spent on equipment no one had use for. Although the UNDP brought in an expert to install and commission the new equipment, by the time his contract ended, he had failed to do so. As a last resort, Professor Somer had to install all the equipment in the Unit Operations Laboratory himself.

The Department of Geology received a big consignment of laboratory and field equipment, including the badly needed camping gear, most of which are still in use. The technical expert, Dr El Etri, an Egyptian Geology professor who later took over as the Project's last Chief Technical Advisor until the project ended in 1989, clearly internalised the needs of the department. As a result, most of the equipment purchased for the department was relevant and useful. Professor El Etri, who doubled as Head of Department, revolutionised the way Geology was taught at Makerere. Emphasis shifted from the lecture room-based teaching to more fieldwork. Under him, students spent more time in the field than ever before. His only handicap was the fact that Geology was offered in combination with Chemistry. This imposed a limit on the number of hours the students could spend on the field. If Geology were to be offered as a single subject, I am sure students would have spent a lot more time on the field. Since its inception as an autonomous department in the Faculty of Science in 1969, after splitting away from Geography, Geology had never graduated a PhD student. As a matter of fact, after the departure of its founding head, Professor McDonald in 1974, the department did not have a single member of staff holding a PhD degree. When McDonald left in the mid-1970s, a classmate of mine, Patrick Mazimpaka, took over the reins. Later, he returned to Rwanda where he was appointed a Minister in the Rwanda Patriotic Front Government. At the time he became a Head of Department, he had only a Bachelor's degree obtained in 1973 and a Postgraduate Diploma in Geology obtained the following year under Professor McDonald. In effect, by the time he took over the headship of the department, he was essentially a Special Assistant, a position equivalent to a Graduate or Teaching Assistant. That was how desperate the staffing situation was after Amin's war.

Late Stephen Sinabantu succeeded Patrick Mazimpaka as Head of Department. Sinabantu made history by becoming the first Ugandan to obtain a Makerere registered PhD in Geology in the early 1980s. I was one of the examiners for his *viva voce*. It was Professor El Etri's idea that Stephen Sinabantu registers for his PhD at Makerere under his supervision. Funds were secured from the UNDP to facilitate his travel to the University of Cairo for literature review, and for experimental work that could not be done at Makerere. Sinabantu was a good student and made rapid progress which enabled him to write up his thesis before Professor El Etri's contract expired. Sadly, he died shortly after the PhD was conferred on him.

The Department of Zoology also received an assortment of equipment and an expert in Wildlife Biology, Professor Derrick Pomeroy. The idea was to strengthen the department's wildlife curriculum, because Uganda's wildlife was a big tourist attraction. It was, therefore, essential to put in place good conservation measures based on solid science. Professor Pomeroy was no stranger to Makerere. He had taught in its Zoology Department in the early 1970s, but left during Idi Amin's expulsion of the British expatriates in 1972.

As the project approached its end, it became evident that there was need to consolidate the wildlife work and make it a permanent feature of the university's curriculum. The Institute of the Environment and Natural Resources was the answer. It was set up to ensure, among other things, the continuity of the wildlife programme beyond the UNDP/UNESCO funding. The institute had a humble beginning in one room in the Chemistry Department. The room had just been vacated by the last UNDP/UNESCO CTA. Dr Elidad Tukahirwa, a Cambridge PhD zoologist was seconded from Zoology as its first Director, with Professor Derrick Pomeroy, who had accepted a local contract at the end of the UNDP/UNESCO project, as his deputy. Besides the direct assistance to the three departments, the UNDP/UNESCO project provided the Faculty of Science with a Leyland bus purchased in 1984, two small Suzuki off-road vehicles, two Land Rovers and motor bikes, all supplied with several years supply of spare parts; and its first photocopier.

In addition to the equipment, a few special assistants were provided with scholarships towards their postgraduate training. The Chemistry Department badly needed to train Ugandan staff to take over the teaching of the newly introduced Industrial Chemistry course. Some of the special assistants who benefited from this scheme included Moses Bogere, who had an MSc in Chemical Engineering from the Middle East Technical University in Ankara and a PhD in the same discipline from the University of Akron in Ohio, USA; Henry Aryamanya Mugisha, who went to the University of Ohio at Athens for the MSc and PhD, and is now the Executive Director of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA); as well as Dr Paul Sagala, who was then Head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering in the Faculty of Technology. Sagala had his PhD in Mechanical Engineering from the Middle East Technical University. Professor Albert James Lutalo-Bosa who was Dean of Science at the inception of the project and his successor, Professor Paul E. Mugambi who worked flat out to ensure its success, deserve a lot of credit for the successful implementation of this very important project. The project was the faculty's first shot in the arm after the Idi Amin's destructive regime. These were some of Milton Obote's major contributions to the renewal of the university and, indeed, they set the stage for the transformation process which we shall describe in some detail later. By the time he was overthrown again in 1985, the university and the Government of

Uganda had entered into negotiations with the European Economic Community (EEC), now the European Union (EU), for a major grant for the rehabilitation of some academic buildings. The Government had also negotiated and secured a big grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the rehabilitation of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry.

One of the intriguing things about Obote's second chancellorship was the retention of Professor Asavia Wandira as Vice Chancellor. As we shall see later, Professor Wandira had served briefly in Lule's Government as Minister of Education before returning to Makerere in 1979 as Vice Chancellor for the second time. He was Senteza Kajubi's replacement. Professor Wandira was always seen as an apolitical person. Whatever political views he had, he kept them tightly to himself – at least that was my impression of him. I believe that among Obote's staunch supporters at Makerere, there were many contenders for the job but Obote preferred to keep Asavia Wandira.

Likewise, the legendary Bernard Onyango also kept his job as Academic Registrar. By that time, the mathematician and physicist, Garshom Odeke Eyoku, who had transferred from the Ministry of Education where he had been serving as Under-Secretary for Higher Education, had joined Onyango as his deputy and was promoted to Senior Deputy Academic Registrar on personal-to-holder basis a few years later. The education psychologist, Professor Twaha Nsereko, was then the University Secretary. He had made history by being the first Moslem to occupy that position at Makerere, replacing the long-serving Michael Ssozi. Ssozi moved to the Main Building from the Centre for Continuing Education. Like Professor Wandira, Nsereko too came from the Faculty of Education. He had joined the University Administration during Idi Amin's chancellorship. His deputy was the economist, David Nyonyintono Sentongo and, like Eyoku, he too had joined the university from the Ministry of Education where he had been Head of the Planning Unit. Again, like Eyoku, Sentongo was also promoted to Senior Deputy Secretary on personal-to-holder basis.

### **Tito Okello Lutwa – Another Uninaugurated Chancellor**

After the overthrow of Milton Obote for the second time in July 1985 in a military coup by some disgruntled soldiers, led by General Tito Okello Lutwa and Bazilio Okello, Uganda was once again plunged into chaos. Shops were looted and confusion reigned everywhere. Obote escaped in the nick of time and went back into exile, this time in Zambia where his fellow Mlungushi Club member, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, provided him with amenities befitting a former Head of State.

The Okellos, as they were called, naively hoped that after overthrowing Obote, Museveni would immediately come out of the bush and join them. In fact, in the statement which was read over Radio Uganda in the mid-morning of July 9,

1985 informing the nation that the Army had taken over the Government and giving reasons for the take-over, a passionate plea was made to “comrade” Yoweri Museveni to come out quickly and join his fellow patriots who had overthrown Obote’s tyrannical Government. But this turned out to be mere wishful thinking. Museveni never heeded the Okellos’ call. Rather, he stayed put wherever he was. General Tito Okello Lutwa was sworn in as Uganda’s seventh president and *de facto* Chancellor of Makerere University on July 9, 1985. Like Idi Amin before him, Okello Lutwa also had little formal education. His limited English was further complicated by the natural handicaps of his mother tongue. He had difficulty pronouncing some words, which made it extremely hard for his hearers to understand him. Makerere was once again faced with the prospects of having a partially literate man as its chancellor. According to the 1970 Act, there was no way the university could reject Okello Lutwa as its titular head. But for some reason, Okello Lutwa was not installed as chancellor. Once again, Professor Wandira was left to deputise for the chancellor at the graduation ceremony of 1985. Okello Lutwa’s Government lasted less than a year, from July 9, 1985 to January 26 1986. Lutwa was overthrown by a ragtag army of guerrillas and ordinary people led by a young revolutionary; Yoweri Museveni, after the failed Nairobi peace talks brokered by President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya and which some Ugandans had started calling “the peace jokes”. Yoweri Museveni, a graduate of the University of Dar es Salaam, was no stranger to the armed struggle. While studying at the university, he had joined Frelimo of Samora Machel, which at the time was fighting the Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique. He had also participated in the 1972 invasion of Uganda, which was an attempt by some Ugandan exiles in Tanzania to overthrow Idi Amin by force of arms, an invasion which, in my opinion, was premature and doomed to fail. By 1972, Amin’s popularity in Uganda was still peak high. The expulsion of the Asians business community did not seem to have overly angered Ugandans. After all, many Ugandans had been looking forward to it for years. Ugandans were increasingly becoming resentful of the majority of Asians whose preoccupation seemed to be making money without making any deliberate effort to integrate with the local communities.

Worst still, despite the fact that Milton Obote was one of the sponsors of the invasion, no sane Ugandan, let alone the Baganda, could give support to the invading force that was entering Uganda through back places like the southern border town of Mutukula. The invasion failed and, sadly, several people – some of who were once prominent Ministers in Obote’s Government, like Alex Ojera who was Minister of Information and Broadcasting – were captured by Amin’s soldiers and paraded in public before the insensate Idi Amin in the full glare of Ugandan television cameras before they were whisked away and executed. In short, whoever was involved in that invasion was clearly on a suicide mission. Museveni was among the survivors. He details his experience and struggle to rid Uganda of Idi Amin in his book *Sowing the Mustard Seed*.

## **Yoweri Kaguta Museveni**

Yoweri Museveni was sworn in as the eighth president of Uganda on January 26, 1986 on the steps of the Parliament of Uganda. Amidst a huge jubilant crowd, he told the nation that by capturing state power, the National Resistant Movement (NRM) had ushered in a fundamental change and not a mere change of guard. A few months later, he was installed as Makerere's seventh chancellor at another colourful graduation ceremony. Flanked by the new Vice Chancellor, Professor George Kirya, he delivered his inaugural speech. He made it clear that he did not want to serve as chancellor for too long. In his opinion, a prominent person in society and not necessarily the Head of State was best suited to occupy the position. But implementing the President's wish required the repeal of the 1970 Act and that was the hardest part. President Museveni had to wait for 15 years to realise his wish. It was also the duration of his tenure as the university's titular head. One of the immediate and noticeable early changes of Museveni's chancellorship was the relaxation of the security arrangements at the graduation ceremony. Although still thorough, they were not the big inconvenience they used to be. Even on the day of the ceremony, security was minimally visible. The graduation ceremony was much a relaxed occasion. It was in the last years of his chancellorship that security on graduation ceremonies became more visible and stringent; prompted in part by the constant anonymous telephone calls warning of bombs planted in the drainage channels running underneath the Freedom Square and a surge in worldwide terrorism. Although more difficult to secure, the Freedom Square became once again the venue for the graduation ceremony when the Science quadrangle could no longer accommodate the increasing number of graduating students.

One of the many things I remember about Museveni was his uneasiness with the academic pomp and regalia. As a student, he did not attend Makerere; his University of Dar es Salaam was unofficially known to have very little respect for western academic traditions and values. Therefore, when he was first installed as chancellor and robed in the ceremonial gown, he must have thought that universities were weird institutions, totally out of touch with the modern world. Why should a modern institution stick to ancient traditions such as the antiquated academic gowns and other forms of ceremonial attire? Even the graduation ceremony itself was antiquated. Perhaps, the new chancellor did not know that universities are institutions that cherish tradition and where change takes time. Unlike Dar es Salaam, Makerere was part of the older university fraternity and therefore was not an exception to the old academic traditions and practices. However, in time, Chancellor Museveni adjusted to the realities of his office and learnt to live with the antiquated traditions, such as the conferment of degrees, which the office of Chancellor required him to perform. But in so doing, he also learnt to be notoriously late for the ceremony. Being more than an hour late was not unusual for him. There were very few occasions I can recall when he arrived

on time. On one of such occasions, he flew by helicopter from his country home at Rwakitura straight to the university, but even then he was over half an hour late. Some speculated that Museveni's late-coming for the ceremony was perhaps bad scheduling by his staff, who did not give him ample time to get ready on time. Others attributed it to security reasons.

Another one of Museveni's problems in his early years as chancellor was his refusal to deliver the chancellor's speech from a written text. Initially, he would come without one or if he had it, he would make no reference to it. He would make his mental and written notes as the ceremony proceeded. Apparently, he hated reading written texts, particularly when they were written for him. However, over time, he learnt to read from a prepared text but of course with a lot of the off-the-cuff stuff thrown in. His argument was that written texts were sometimes not able to accurately convey the message he wanted to pass on to the audience or were unnecessarily long and boring. Even when he began to read the speeches, he preferred to summarise the written text. But, more often than not, the summary was far longer than the written text.

Museveni's chancellorship ushered in several changes, which in many ways contributed significantly to the transformation of the university. When Museveni became president of Uganda in 1986, Professor Asavia Wandira was still vice chancellor. By then, he was Makerere's longest serving vice chancellor. For some reasons, Museveni felt that Professor Wandira had served long enough, and it was time for a change. That same year, he appointed Professor George Banabas Kirya, a medical microbiologist, as the new vice chancellor. Amanywa Mushega, who had taken over as Minister of Education from Joash Mayanja Nkangi, later appointed Professor Wandira full-time Chairman of the then Teaching Service Commission. Professor Fredrick I. B. Kayanja who was then Dean of Veterinary Medicine, took over from Professor Anthony Gingera Pincwya as Deputy Vice Chancellor. Reverend David Nyonyintono Sentongo replaced Professor Michael Agurochai Owiny as University Secretary. Sentongo had been acting in the position since 1985 when Michael Owiny resigned and took up a professorship in the Department of Zoology.

Bernard Onyango was another key senior administrative staff that Museveni retained, thus achieving the record of being the longest serving academic registrar at Makerere. David Sentongo's appointment as substantive University Secretary generated some unexpected controversy. For some reasons, the university decided to fill the position of University Secretary through an advertisement instead of confirming David Sentongo who had acted in the position for some time. David Sentongo decided to present himself as a candidate for the job. At the end of the interview conducted by the university's Appointments Board, news leaked out that the job had gone to Professor Charles Katongole, a former Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. This sent some shock waves into the university

community. We could not believe that David Sentongo had failed the interview. Reverend Sentongo was perceived as an honest and competent administrator. The rumour was premature. The Minister of Education appointed the University Secretary; the Board just identified people suitable for appointment. At the end of it all, Joash Mayanja Nkangi, who was Minister of Education at the time, confirmed Sentongo for the job. Professor Katongole went to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as Permanent Secretary. Sadly, he died a few years later after an official trip to Djibouti.

For many years, Makerere staff had not gone on strike. After the restoration of the rule of law and guaranteed freedom of speech, Makerere's academic staff through their association, Makerere University Academic Staff Association (or MUASA as it is popularly known), started agitating for better pay and improved terms and conditions of service. These demands coincided with the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF) initiated economic reforms, which among other things, put emphasis on limiting Government expenditure and bringing down the run-away inflation as well as other structural adjustment programmes (SAP).

The currency reform of May 1987, which included the devaluation of the Uganda shilling by 30 per cent after removing two zeros, had not translated into the intended economic benefits. For example, Shs1000 before May 1987 was worth Sh10 after the currency reform but after 30 per cent devaluation, the actual value was Shs7. Initially, the public had welcomed the reform, referring to the new currency as Museveni's "dollar", literally and metaphorically. The reform found the people tired of carrying huge wads of worthless bank notes. For example, by 1986 one US dollar was equivalent to USh1,450. After the reform, one dollar was going for USh60; literally, because the new green bank notes bore a close resemblance to the American dollar bills, and metaphorically because the new currency was supposed to be as strong as American dollar. To the surprise of many, the new notes did not bear Museveni's portrait, which was a departure from Amin and Obote's practice of printing their portraits on all bank notes. However, the currency reforms were not as successful as was expected for several reasons. One of those reasons had a lot to do with timing and inflationary pressures. The reform came too early in the country's economic recovery, when most of Uganda's industries were producing at very low capacity. Important industries such as the sugar mills, the tea and soap factories, had totally collapsed and in dire need of urgent rehabilitation. Without the local factories working at a reasonable capacity, the country's industrial output could not sustain consumer demand. So, the country had to continue importing most of the consumer goods like sugar, rice and maize flour. All this importation required foreign exchange, which unfortunately was in very short supply. The dollar black market or *kibanda* as it was popularly known, which put a lot of pressure on the local currency, also

continued to flourish as traders looked for dollars wherever they could find them. All this contributed significantly to the weakening and constant devaluation of the new currency.

After attempts to bring the attention of the new Government to the dire economic plight of Makerere University academic staff had failed, the moribund MUASA turned into a vocal and militant organisation. Fred Juuko who was at the time the Dean of the Faculty of Law, was its new president. Soft-spoken Juuko had attended the University of Dar es Salaam for his Master of Laws degree but for some reason, he left Dar es Salaam and returned to Makerere where he completed the degree. Juuko did not hide his socialist inclinations. On several occasions, he openly disagreed with Museveni and his Government over many political and social issues. So, when the Government failed to meet MUASA's demands, the politically astute Juuko and other Makerere firebrands, including late Joseph Carasco and Mahmood Mamdani mobilised the otherwise docile staff for strike action. The 1989 academic strike was part of the long struggle for a living wage and was probably the first staff strike at Makerere. However, MUASA avoided calling it a strike in the traditional trade union sense. According to MUASA, its members had simply decided to lay down their tools until Government met their demand for a living wage.

By all accounts, the strike was well organised and popular. Government supporters and its foes alike were solidly behind it, perhaps a reflection of the level of frustration that existed at Makerere at the time. The message the academic staff were putting across to Government was a simple one. "We have had enough! Our patience has run out. After all, Museveni came to fix Uganda's problems, why not fix ours too?" Makerere staff could not understand why the president was unable to do something about their miserable situation. For how long could a respectable full professor continue to live on a salary of less than the equivalent of a hundred US dollars a month? This was the level of expectation Ugandans had in Museveni. He had fought a five-year protracted guerrilla war to liberate Ugandans from the yoke of tyranny and despair. Now was the time for him to deliver. It was a difficult time for both Government and the University Administration. Despite the concerted efforts of the Minister of Education, Amanywa Mushega, to resolve the problem, his words were falling on deaf ears. The strike simply continued. When MUASA refused to call off the strike, all staff were invited to an emergency meeting in the Main Building, which Eriya Kategaya, one of the senior Ministers in Museveni's Government addressed. Kategaya promised that Government would consider MUASA's demands but on condition that the strike was called off and staff resumed teaching. Staff booed and jeered him, an act that prompted him to walk out. The following day, Government issued a statement requiring all staff to hand over their house keys and vacate the university premises within 24 hours. This, in effect, meant we had been sacked *en masse*. Panic ensued and

in the midst of the chaos, some started blaming the Government for resorting to strong arm and scare tactics to force staff to call off the strike. Staff could not imagine that their popular chancellor, a long time freedom fighter and a believer in resistance against injustice, had turned against them for what they thought was a legitimate demand.

Some members of staff were determined to defy the order and call Government's bluff. MUASA's trump card was the acute lack of qualified personnel to replace the sacked lecturers at short notice, unless Government was seriously intent on closing the university indefinitely. Soon, rumour came flying that a former Makerere don who was now a Minister had advised the president and government to issue such an ultimatum, the reason being that since most members of staff did not have personal accommodation and were therefore totally dependent on the university, asking them to vacate university houses would make them think again, forcing them to make hard choices. The obvious one would be to end the strike. This was the government's trump card. Whether the ploy would have worked, we can never tell. From what I gathered after the strike, several members of staff were prepared to hand over the keys rather than capitulate to the Government's ultimatum. It was a humiliation some staff were not prepared to accept. Ironically, the students and their leaders kept out of our conflict with Government. If there was any support from them at all, it was indirect and at best lukewarm. I was intrigued why the students did not show solidarity with their lecturers in their hour of need! But with or without the students' support, the solution to the standoff between MUASA and Government was about to come in a dramatic way.

Although students had not played an active role in the staff strike, we later learnt that it was one of our former students, a female Psychology graduate working in one of the President's offices located in the International Conference Centre, who successfully brokered a meeting between the President and the MUASA executive that led to the end of our industrial action. She was able to convince the President that there was still merit in holding last minute talks with MUASA before enforcing the ultimatum. Fortunately, the President agreed to meet the executive at the State House at Entebbe. Fred Juuko and some members of the executive were invited to meet the President at short notice. Given Uganda's recent history when state operatives randomly picked up people who were never to be seen again, the sudden invitation to the State House was a matter of extreme concern to staff and left many MUASA members worried for their safety. Fortunately, this was a new Uganda where the state had respect for human rights and security of person.

The President met the MUASA team late in the evening. In his usual jovial mood, he informed them that he was meeting them when the decision to sack all striking staff had already been communicated to the public over the radio. At the time, Radio Uganda was the only radio station in the country.

Nevertheless, the meeting went ahead as scheduled and turned out to be cordial and productive. The President agreed to rescind the order sacking all of us and promised improved terms and conditions of service, which included transport for Makerere staff to buy food directly from the farmers at reasonable prices, upgrading Makerere University Primary School to cater for the children of staff, as well as giving children of members of staff preferential admission at Makerere College School, which was started as a demonstration school for the Faculty of Education. President Museveni also promised to review the salaries and other allowances paid to Makerere staff in the following financial year. In return, the President asked MUASA to resume work. Juuko and his team came back late at night to an anxiously waiting crowd of MUASA members. He did not reveal much of what had transpired at Entebbe but asked members to attend a special meeting in the Main Hall the following day. The following day, the Main Hall was packed to capacity. Everyone was anxious to hear the news from the State House. After Juuko had briefed an attentive audience, the majority of staff believed the Government had made a good gesture, and agreed to resume work while waiting for Government to deliver on its promise. In the MUASA language, the strike had been suspended but not called off, and could resume any time if and when the conditions warranted. However, one could detect anxiety and fatigue.

Fred Juuko had proved himself a good mobiliser and a persuasive communicator. By all accounts, the strike had succeeded in drawing Government's attention to the plight of Makerere staff. Indeed, Government made good on most of its promises except the living wage, which remained elusive up to my departure in 2004. The strike gave MUASA the clout and militancy it did not have before. Suddenly, MUASA had become an organisation that instilled fear in Government officials. Many institutions of higher learning in the country took a cue from MUASA and formed similar academic staff associations to champion their demands. Members of staff of the new Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo (ITEK) formed the Institute of Teacher Education Academic Staff Association (ITEASA) which tried to mirror MUASA in militancy. Apparently, staff in some institutions believed that MUASA had succeeded because of militancy. In my view, they missed the point. MUASA succeeded largely because of Juuko's leadership. He was neither excessively militant nor too confrontational but had the knack to mobilise and carry the people along with him.

There was a mistaken belief in some institutions that to be effective and feared, an academic staff association had to be led by firebrands. More often than not, such leaders did not achieve much. Another attribute I saw in Juuko was "objectivity". During the strike, some of the more vocal members of staff from the Department of Political Science started attacking the Vice Chancellor, Professor George Kirya, and his administration, accusing him of corruption. Juuko stood up and told the meeting that there was no evidence to suggest that

Professor Kirya or the University Administration for that matter was corrupt. In his words, the strike was not about unfounded allegations against the Vice Chancellor or the University Administration; it was about a struggle for a living wage, decent terms and conditions of service. I guess this attribute stems from his background as a lawyer.

Although the strike ended amicably, thanks to the intervention of the Chancellor, it left a few casualties in its wake. As we learnt later, some Government ministers and top civil servants had started apportioning blame to the university officials, claiming that the strike could have been averted if the University Administration had handled it properly. Frankly, I could not figure out how the Vice Chancellor could have handled it differently. I vividly recall the many attempts Professor Kirya and Professor Lutalo-Bosa, who was acting as Deputy Vice Chancellor, made to resolve it within the confines of the university. Indeed, several meetings were held between the University Administration and the strike committee without success. The university authorities failed not because they were incompetent administrators, but because members of staff were in no mood to listen. The problem of poor pay had been a thorn in the flesh of staff for a long time. By the time the staff decided to go on strike, the problem had reached flash point. There was little the Vice Chancellor could have done to prevent it. In any case, it was not the Vice Chancellor's fault that staff were poorly paid, Government was the paymaster. MUASA knew very well that the University Administration had no capacity to address their pay grievances. The solution lay elsewhere; at the source of the resources. Therefore, whatever acrimonious feelings Government officials had against the Vice Chancellor and his administration were based on a total misunderstanding of why the staff went on strike. Staff were angry and decided to vent their anger and frustration the way they did. To paraphrase one of Martin Luther King's famous speeches, "we were tired of working full time jobs for part time wages". The strike was a popular uprising.

Apparently, Government had not taken kindly to what had happened at Makerere. Soon after the strike, we started hearing rumour that some heads in the Main Hall were about to roll, that some high-ranking officials in the University Administration were on their way out. Initially, we dismissed it as unfounded rumour but in March 1990, the rumour became stark reality. During an evening news bulletin, Radio Uganda announced that Makerere had a new Vice Chancellor, in the person of Professor William Senteza Kajubi. There was no mention of Professor Kirya's fate. There and then, Professor Kirya was unceremoniously relieved of his duties as Vice Chancellor. The dismissal of Professor Kirya over the radio was too reminiscent of the Idi Amin era.

Professor Kajubi had been Vice Chancellor of Makerere before, but he too had been relieved of his duties once before during the era of the Uganda National Liberation Front, and had gone back to his old National Institute of Education

in School of Education. However, when Government created the Institute of Teacher Education in 1988 to replace the National Teachers College at Kyambogo and the National Institute of Education at Makerere, the Minister of Education, Joash Mayanja Nkangi, sent him there as its first Principal. He was, therefore, coming back to Makerere as Vice Chancellor for the second time.

Professor Lutalo-Bosa, who was acting as deputy to Kirya during the strike, did not suffer the same indignity as his boss. Instead, Government decided to confirm him as substantive Deputy Vice Chancellor. Before moving to the Main Building, Professor Lutalo-Bosa was Dean of the Faculty of Science. He had been picked by Professor Kirya to act as his deputy in place of Professor Fredrick Kayanja who left Makerere in 1988 to start Mbarara University of Science and Technology in Western Uganda.

The return to Makerere was a difficult period for Professor Kajubi. During this time, the university experienced a lot of turbulence, largely as a result of the new policies the Government, and the Ministry of Education in particular, was trying to implement at the time. From time immemorial, Makerere undergraduates used to enjoy a lot of monetary privileges including pocket money, which students fondly referred to as the “boom”; money for transport to and from the university; a textbook and stationery allowance and special faculty allowance pegged to the students’ peculiar course requirements. Students taking courses like medicine enjoyed a far bigger special faculty allowance than those in the Arts. All these various allowances were in addition to the free tuition. However, given the rising student numbers, the increasing higher education expenditure and the recommendations contained in the report of the Education Review Commission of 1987, which Professor Kajubi chaired, Government decided to act. The Kajubi Commission had recommended that Government should stop meeting non-instructional costs in tertiary institutions. This in effect meant the end of the “boom”. To the students, this was anathema, a pill too bitter to swallow. The battle lines had been drawn in the sand and it was going to be a spirited fight. Students were determined to protect their cherished privileges Museveni’s Government was abolishing.

Government left it to the Minister of Education, Amanywa Mushega, to implement and enforce the new Government policies and reforms. Amanywa Mushega, a Major in the Army and a fighter in Museveni’s bush war, was a battle-hardened soldier who was ready to do battle with the students. In the early 1980s, when Obote’s Government was harassing the UPM supporters and everyone suspected to be close associates of Museveni, Mushega had hurriedly left the Faculty of Law where he was teaching and joined Museveni in the bush. Like Museveni, he is a Dar es Salaam Law graduate. After a stint as political commissar in the Army and one or two other appointments in Government, in 1989 the President appointed him full Minister of Education, replacing Juash

Mayanja Nkangi, who had moved over to the Ministry of Finance. Mushega served as Minister of Education and Sports for nine years. During those years, a lot happened in Uganda's education system.

In March 1990, Amania Mushega made an important and bold policy statement. He announced that Government had henceforth abolished the boom, transport, book and stationery allowances at Makerere and in all higher educational institutions. Hell broke loose at Makerere. The Students' Guild, with Wilbod Owori who went to Namilyango College for his high school as its president, started organising a series of protest strikes. I remember an incident when the late Joseph Carasco, Mahmood Mamdani, Rutanga Murindwa and I tried frantically to protect Owori from arrest after leading a protest match. In spite of their spirited efforts, Government never barged. Instead, the Government decided to send the students home and close the university.

Unfortunately, the student protests led to misunderstandings within the MUASA executive of which I was a member. At a meeting called to discuss the students' plight, at which some members including myself were absent, the executive decided that MUASA should support the students in their demands. It was further agreed that MUASA should condemn Government for its high handed handling of the situation and demand that it should rescind its decision and call back the students immediately.

The meeting was held on a Sunday, and as was my usual practice then, I was away from the university, spending the day at my parents' home. Late in the evening when I returned to the university, Mrs Noridah Kiremire, who was also a member of the MUASA executive, accompanied by Dr Ezra Twesigomwe of the Physics Department, who some years later became MUASA Chairman and led another staff strike, came to my Quarry House flat and informed me of a meeting some members of MUASA executive had held in our absence. They also informed me about the important resolutions passed on behalf of MUASA, which they had circulated to Makerere staff and the wider public.

We wondered why our colleagues had decided to hold such an important meeting in our absence. We also wondered why we should support the students when they had kept a safe distance from us when we were on strike, even when we were threatened with *en masse* dismissal. We did not understand why MUASA should get involved in their struggles with Government beyond extending our simple sympathy to them. In fact, some of us had already gone out of our way to help their Guild President escape arrest at our own risk! Thirdly, a general meeting of MUASA had been called for Monday, why did our colleagues not wait and discuss such a crucial matter in the general assembly? We later learnt that MUASA Chairman was also absent from the meeting. In the event, we thought it was better to make our views known. Naturally and understandably so, our disagreement with some members of MUASA executive invoked a lot of anger

and ill feelings. Our action was perceived as a betrayal of our association and a stab in the back. During the general meeting held in the lower lecture theatre of the Faculty of Arts the following day, we apologised, but pointed out that as a matter of principle, we disagreed with that method of work. Some of us had joined MUASA to fight for staff welfare and not for any other agendas, adding that we were simply calling for more transparency in the way the executive made decisions. Some people in the audience tried to move a motion to have us expelled from the executive and MUASA. However, before the motion was debated, we tendered our resignation, which was accepted. It was one of those regrettable occasions in one's life.

Soon after our resignation, we started hearing stories that MUASA had been infiltrated by some anti-government elements who were trying to use its popularity to destabilise the Government. It was impossible to discern the truth, but one thing I certainly heard said about us was that we were Government supporters who wanted to wreck MUASA from within, which unfortunately was far from the truth. My difference with some of my colleagues in the executive had nothing to do with my support for Government if I had any. But even after leaving the executive, I remained loyal and committed to MUASA, because I was well aware of the tremendous sacrifices MUASA leadership had made to bring the welfare of Makerere academic staff to the front of national priorities. In the past, they could have lost their lives for speaking out and leading a strike. Although the living wage was still an illusion, Government could no longer afford to ignore the plight of Makerere staff. Whatever political or ideological differences Fred Juuko might have had with the NRM, he had fought for the good of all of us. The “killing wage”, as we used to call our pittance wages, was slowly giving way to something close to a living wage.

After a few weeks, Government re-opened the university with the understanding that there should be no more strikes and demonstrations. For a while, the university was peaceful but when Norbert Mao succeeded Owori whose term had ended, the issue of the scrapped allowances resurrected; this time with all the might the students could marshal. The strikes resumed and took on a more violent tone. On several occasions, students engaged Police in pitch battles but all to no avail. Government stood its ground and refused to capitulate to the students' demands. This perhaps was one of the fundamental changes Museveni had promised the nation after he was sworn in as President in January 1986 and one he was not about to backtrack on, lest he was perceived as a weak leader. Norbert Mao, another Namilyango boy and Law student, was undeterred too. He became even more relentless than his predecessor in mobilising his fellow students to continue with the struggle for what were once privileges but now rights. The fight had to be fought to the bitter end and the battles, mainly of words, would be fought in the Freedom Square.

To ensure that students did not assemble in the Freedom Square, the Police was to cordon it off. On the fateful Monday, December 10, 1990 the students defied the Government order and started gathering in the Freedom Square for an important message from the Resistance Council III Chairperson. Although by now I was at Kyambogo, I used to go for Sunday mass at Makerere because I used to enjoy Father Kanyike's mass. The Sunday preceding what the students now call "Black Monday", I attended the 9 o'clock mass. It is common practice at the end of the mass for the priest or some other person to read announcements, including marriage banns, shortly before the final blessing. This Sunday was no exception. Father Lawrence Kanyike, the Chaplain of St Augustine's Chapel, was the day's mass celebrant. At the end of the mass, he read the announcements. One announcement was from the RC III Chairperson asking the students to assemble in the Freedom Square the following day, Monday, at 9am to hear an important message she had for them from the Minister. The announcement ended by telling the students that Government was willing to consider their grievances. I was told that the same message was also read in the St Francis Chapel. The following Monday morning, the students started assembling in the Freedom Square as instructed.

Later, we learnt that the Minister of Education had visited a friend, a resident of Kasubi View Estate on Saturday night, December 8, 1990 and discussed the ongoing students' strike. In the course of their discussion, they agreed to persuade the students to resume classes, while Government reconsidered their demands. The RC III Chairperson, who was living almost next door to the Minister's friend, was seen as the right person to deliver this important message to the students. In a way, it was a message of hope that Government was finally willing to loosen its stance on the students' demands.

Apparently, no one informed the Vice Chancellor who was living off the campus of this new development. Also, the Minister of Education seemed to be unaware of the ban his colleague, the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Police, in consultation with the University Administration, had imposed on the student assemblies in the Freedom Square. The Vice Chancellor had left the university for the weekend in the full knowledge that there would be no more assemblies in the Freedom Square and that the Police would be deployed there to ensure the ban was enforced. Unfortunately, lack of coordination turned all these good intentions into a Makerere tragedy and the Vice Chancellor's worst nightmare.

As the students started gathering in the Freedom Square to listen to the RC III Chairperson as told, Police ordered them to leave immediately. The students ignored the Police order and continued with their assembly. The Police decided to charge in a bid to disperse them. In the ensuing commotion and chaos, a young and timid Police constable opened fire, hitting two students; Tom Onyango a second year BA student and Thomas Otema, a first year BSc/Education student.

One died instantly, the other died on the way to hospital. We later got to know that the two victims were not even part of the big crowd which had assembled in the Freedom Square.

At the time the two students were shot, the Vice Chancellor was just on his way to the university. In the pre-cellular phone days, it was left to Professor Lutalo-Bosa, the Deputy Vice Chancellor to deal with the immediate aftermath at great personal risk. Hell had broken lose. Government had no alternative but to close the university. Fortunately for the University Administration, the closure coincided with the Christmas and New Year break; so, in a rather dramatic way, the closure cooled the situation. By the time the university re-opened, the students were either too tired to carry on fighting or deeply regretting the death of their two innocent fellow students. This was the first deadly confrontation between the Uganda Police and Makerere students resulting in the loss of life. No doubt, it was a painful experience for the parents, student leadership, Uganda Police and the University Administration. Although it was hard to come to terms with the tragedy, the Police learnt some valuable lessons from it. They started paying serious attention to good riot control techniques and practice, especially when it involved students.

In spite of this tragedy and the students' efforts to force Government to change its mind, all was in vain. The Government did not capitulate to the students' demands. After failing to secure their demands through strikes and other confrontational means, a new crop of student leaders cleverly devised a new scheme of getting free money from Government, which they dubbed the "Needy Students Scheme". The new scheme was the brainchild of Charles Rwomushana, a BA Education student who replaced Norbert Mao as Guild President, together with Fox Odoi, a Law student as Guild Speaker. Charles Rwomushana successfully campaigned on the platform of helping needy students secure Government funding to cover such expenses as transport, stationery and pocket money. He succeeded mainly because he had in a way won the heart of the Chancellor. He came from very humble beginnings in rural Rukungiri in western Uganda. Unlike most Guild Presidential aspirants at Makerere who used to hire fleets of buses and all sorts of vehicles to ferry their supporters during the campaigns, Rwomushana conducted his campaign on foot. It was a clever tactic. It won him the votes and the Guild presidency. Rwomushana had another advantage; access to the President of Uganda, which he put to good use.

After his election, he immediately went about putting his campaign pledge into action. He started demanding for the immediate implementation of the "Needy Students Scheme". Although it was true that many students studying at Makerere come from very poor families, it was impossible for the University Administration to identify a needy student with absolute certainty. In Uganda where most people, particularly those working in the informal sector, do not file

income tax returns, there is no reliable source of information and good data on which the university could base an accurate assessment of a student's economic inadequacy. Whatever criterion the University Administration devised was arbitrary, at best subjective. However, Charles Rwomushana, the architect of the scheme had his own way of identifying his fellow needy students. He organised them into an association, Makerere University Needy Students Association (MUNSA). He also made sure that the money came from the Treasury direct to them through the association of which he was the chairperson. Rwomushana did not realise that taxpayers' money came with strings attached – accountability. The Ministry of Finance required him to account for the money, moreover through the university system he was trying to circumvent. Perhaps in the haste, he did not realise he had inadvertently assumed the responsibility of an accounting officer, which required him to keep good records. For failing to file a satisfactory accountability on time, the University Administration decided to withhold his final year examination results until he did so. His over-zealousness had put him into trouble. Eventually, he sorted out his problems and graduated. When he left, MUNSA died a slow death.

After the deadly students' strikes, the relationship between Professor Kajubi and Government went into a nosedive from which it never recovered. At the same time, some of his seasoned senior colleagues were retiring. In 1992, Bernard Onyango retired at the age of 60. Although he had the option to continue as Academic Registrar on a post-retirement contract until he was 65, Onyango decided to call it a day. Instead, he joined Uganda Martyrs University at Nkozi, a young private university founded by the Catholic Church where he spent the rest of his last working years as its first Academic Registrar. Although I was not able to interview him on grounds of failing health, I strongly suspect that after over thirty years at Makerere, he was looking forward to a change. He had been in the Main Building far longer than any of his colleagues and had seen it all, the good, the bad and the ugly.

Other senior administrators were also fast approaching the mandatory age of 60 and would soon be on their way out. The retiring group included the University Secretary, David Sentongo and the long serving Dean of Students, George Kihuguru, who was the first Ugandan to be appointed to that position after the departure of his British predecessor, Mr Dindwidy in the early 1970s. Uncle George, as the students fondly called him, had also become a legend at Makerere. He had been an eyewitness to all the staff and student upheavals. He too had seen the best and the worst of Makerere.

Garshom Eyoku, the Senior Deputy Academic Registrar was also due to retire in the early 1990s. Eyoku's main responsibilities were Senate affairs and admissions. In the days when nearly everything was done manually, his strong background in Mathematics came in handy during the annual undergraduate

admissions exercise. He was particularly good at fixing cut-off points for each course and arriving at the exact number of students within each cut-off points. Although the exercise was always laborious and could take up to a week or longer, the presence of Eyoku was always an asset to the Deans. He was thorough and incredibly honest. Nowadays, the computer does most of the work and the admission exercise is more or less a one-day affair. John Katuramu, who was Deputy Secretary in charge of personnel and administration, was also on his way out and so was Mrs Deborah Etoori, one of Mr Onyango's long serving deputies. In short, Professor Kajubi's second term coincided with the retirement of most of the first and second generations of Ugandan senior administrators at Makerere.

Although a few wanted to leave as soon as they attained the retirement age, every retiring Makerere University member of staff, irrespective of rank and position, was eligible for a two-year post-retirement contract, renewable by mutual agreement until the age of 65. That was the practice then. For some reason however, Minister Amanywa Mushega was not keen to extend the same privilege to the retiring administrators. He wanted them to leave immediately. After the staff and student strikes, the Minister seemed to be fed up with Makerere administrators. However, there was a stark reality that could not be overlooked. The political chaos and economic turmoil of the 1970s and the 80s had deprived many Ugandans, especially those on fixed incomes, of the opportunity to save for their retirement. Besides, at that time, Makerere University did not have a meaningful retirement scheme. Even if it had one, inflation and the currency reform of 1987 had rendered such schemes almost worthless. The low wages notwithstanding, most working people had become totally dependent on their jobs for survival – literally a hand-to-mouth existence. The university did not only provided staff with a regular income, it also gave them free housing – a privilege staff had come to take for granted. As a consequence, few members of staff had adequately prepared for their retirement.

At the time, a personal house was a luxury few could afford. It was therefore small wonder that retirement was not a topic that featured regularly and prominently in staff's small talk, beyond the casual complaint that the existing retirement schemes were inadequate. It was not a topic staff spent time discussing seriously. It seemed the university had employed us for life. So, when the Minister refused to give the retiring senior administrative staff post-retirement contracts, it was an agonising moment for many of them. Panic and hyped anxiety gripped the Main Building. Most of these old men had no clue how they would cope with the new life without a roof of their own over their heads and a regular income, little as it was, to fend for their families.

To make an already bad situation worse, this was also the time Professor Kajubi was relieved of his job as Vice Chancellor. On September 23, 1993, I was named the new Vice Chancellor, with Professor Justin Epelu Opio as my deputy. I was

being transferred from Kyambogo where I had been serving as Principal of the Institute of Teacher Education since 1990 and taken back to Makerere as Kajubi's successor. It also meant that I was inheriting Makerere's myriad of problems. I had entered the fray. To add to my heavy burden, the Minister made it clear to me that the remaining old men in the Main Building had to go as soon as they reached their retirement age. There and then, my work was cut out for me. But as a rookie Vice Chancellor, the Minister's decision posed a serious problem. If all the old men suddenly left, the first hurdle I would have faced was loss of institutional memory. With no senior person familiar with the university's administrative structures and functions to guide us, learning the ropes would have taken much longer. I also knew that the recruitment of the new senior administrators would take a long time; but after a series of consultations, I discovered that the Vice Chancellor had some powers to make temporary appointments for a period not exceeding six months. This came as a great relief. I had found a safe way of managing the exit of the retiring old men. Having served the institutions for so long, I thought it was unfair to let them go with a bitter taste in the mouth. So, as we advertised and prepared to fill their positions, I asked David Sentongo and George Kihuguru to stay on as University Secretary and Dean of Students respectively for six months more.

Allowing the old officers to stay on for six more months relieved us of some pressure. With their help, I was able to find my way about in Makerere's administrative maze, but in a jocular way, the Minister kept reminding me that he was about to ask me to refund the money I was paying them as salary. My response was that as soon as he, the Minister, appointed a new University Secretary and Dean of Students, I would have no reason to keep the two officers any longer than necessary. Reverend Sentongo was an extremely efficient accounting officer, conversant with the Government accounting systems, and a good financial manager. He really helped me settle in. I actually learnt a lot of valuable lessons from his vast experience in the first few months as Vice Chancellor. George Kihuguru was equally an asset in helping us to implement our first reforms. He knew how to handle students; he had no fear of rowdy student mobs. We should remember that not so long ago students had been fighting Government for abolishing their allowances and, although most students had given up all hope of ever again enjoying free money from Government, there were still pockets of them masquerading as needy students, and from time to time they would stir up some commotion if, for some reason, Government could not release their money on time. Uncle George knew how to quell the commotion and calm the riotous students. In the end, I kept both of them for over a year. Indeed, it was a win-win situation for me and for them.

Reverend Sentongo was able to secure a new job at Nkumba University. George Kihuguru managed to complete his house in Kikoni, and also ended up in a new job with the Nile Power Company. This, in my opinion, was the

best way to manage the exit of such retiring staff who had served the institution so diligently for so long. I am sure that when time came for them to go, these officers did not leave the university with a bitter taste in the mouth. They must have gone away not thinking that their long loyalty to Makerere was misplaced or that they had toiled in vain; they had ample time to sort themselves out. The lesson I learnt out of his experience was that managing staff exit is as important as managing their entry.

It was equally sad to see Garshom Eyoku leave. I have already alluded to his invaluable contribution to the undergraduate admissions when the exercise was still manual, which in turn helped the university maintain a high level of integrity and credibility in a very sensitive area. During admissions, the university was always under enormous pressure. There were always too many worthy candidates competing for very few places. That was how intense the competition was, but under Eyoku's watchful eye, no unqualified student could enter the university.

In addition to his role in keeping admissions clean and transparent, he had another rare attribute. He used to amaze members of Senate with his detailed knowledge of the workings of the university and his ability to remember Senate decisions made five years ago as if he had an intuitive way of anticipating the kind of questions that were likely to be raised at any Senate meeting. He always came to the meetings well prepared with the appropriate reference documents – some new, some old – and when a question was asked, he would quickly open the relevant document and read out the answer. He would then follow it with his usual high-pitched laughter as if to say, “I had anticipated that question and I knew where to look for the answer in the forest of old documents”. In fact, before he left the university, he had earned himself the title of “Walking Encyclopaedia”.

Because Makerere University did not have a meaningful pension scheme, he too left almost empty-handed. To address this problem in the short run and in anticipation of a more meaningful pension scheme in the future, the University Council had taken some stop-gap measures and put in place the interim award retirement package whose computation was based on an elaborate mathematical formula. One of the variables in this formula was one's length of service in the university. Unfortunately for Mr Eyoku, his service in the university was short. Since he had transferred from the Ministry of Education headquarters in the 1970s, he had not been in the university service long enough; so when his interim award was computed, he did not have much to carry with him to start a new life. Although we were able to give him and other retiring officers a decent send-off, the fact that after many years of dedicated service they were leaving the university almost empty-handed hurt and haunted me, but there was nothing I could do at the time.

The interim award scheme, which I put in place was under the stewardship of John Katuramu who was the Deputy University Secretary in charge of Administration. He did all the calculations for each retiring member of staff.

Despite being in charge of the scheme, he too left the university with very little. Like Garshom Eyoku and David Sentongo, he too had joined the university from Government in the 1970s after a stint in the UK as an Education Attaché at the Uganda High Commission.

Sorting out the retiring staff issues was one of the many things that happened during Museveni's 15-year chancellorship. I think it is fair to say that what happened at Makerere when Museveni became President of Uganda reflects some of the changes which took place in the country as a whole during his presidency. For example, for the first time in the history of Makerere University, students could constantly boo the Chancellor, who was also a Head of State, at graduations and other functions, and even walk out of the graduation marquee when he was delivering the Chancellor's speech and get away with it. This was in stark contrast with his predecessors, who had no tolerance for such behaviour.

In addition, Museveni attended several students' functions at Makerere, including fundraising for the renovations of their halls of residence like Lumumba Hall, whenever he was invited and available or whenever he chose to come to the university on his own. His wife too was very active in the students' HIV and AIDS awareness campaigns, strongly advocating behavioural change and warning the young undergraduates against the dangers of unsafe sex. She also participated in several counselling sessions, all aimed at minimising the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. She was a regular visitor to the various halls of residence at the beginning of each academic year and would give talks, lasting several hours to first-year students, particularly the female students, whom she felt were most vulnerable to risky behaviour. Each session would be followed by a general discussion, which at times involved frank exchange of ideas on such matters as abstinence and other forms of protection against the HIV virus. She is also on record as the First Lady who studied for a degree at Makerere when her husband was the sitting Chancellor of the university.

President Museveni was also instrumental to the restoration of Mahmood Mamdani's Ugandan citizenship and his return to Makerere. But like all good academics, Mamdani could not help being critical of some of Museveni's policies, particularly the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), which he saw as being imposed on Uganda by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to impoverish the already poor Ugandans. Mamdani even founded a private research organization – the Centre for Basic Research – at Kololo to study, among other things, the effects of the SAP. Instead of locking up Mamdani for being too critical of his Government, Museveni decided to engage him in a public debate. This was unheard of in Uganda. I am sure most people like me, when we heard the news that the President had decided to engage Dr Mamdani in a public debate about his Government's economic policies, decided that it could not be true! But indeed it was true. Mamdani accepted the challenge and came back for the battle of wits.

In his opening remarks, Mamdani narrated his fears when he received the President's invitation. He said that his first thoughts were that here was another Ugandan President either wanting to lock him up or to send him packing again in exile as it had happened to him before. Professor Sempebwa of Katende and Sempebwa Advocates, one of the prominent law firms in Kampala, and a former member of staff of Makerere University, chaired and moderated the debate hosted in the Kampala Sheraton Hotel. The President presented and defended what he called his thesis and Mamdani did the rebuttal. At the end, both men shook hands and, as his last remark, Mamdani thanked Museveni, saying that it was like a dream to him that after debating the President, he could go back to Makerere, live and work in peace. Indeed, Mamdani continued to lecture at Makerere and to work at his Centre for Basic Research undisturbed until, on his own accord, he left for a professorial appointment at the University of Cape Town. In being critical of Government, Mamdani was not an exception. There are many Makerere academics who are equally critical of Museveni and regularly wrote stinging articles in the newspapers and have continued to live and work in peace. Such was Museveni's chancellorship.

