

ARTS & LETTERS

one that will do/To swell a progress, start a scene or two."

The true hero is someone who bases his ideal on the firm ground of democratic tradition. We should live at the golden mean between acting as if we were gods and acting as if we were preordained failures. "The genius of democracy," Silber concludes, "is found in this paradox: we are all a dime a dozen and we are all magnificent."

OTHER NATIONS

Hope After Amin

"Uganda: Starting Over" by Robert D. Kaplan, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Apr. 1987), 8 Arlington St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

During his eight-year reign (1971-79) as president of Uganda, Idi Amin Dada earned a reputation as Africa's most brutal dictator.

But Uganda, says Kaplan, a specialist on Africa, rests in better hands today. The nation's young, well-educated president, Yoweri Museveni, has managed to restore "a modicum of stability" in Uganda's capital. "One foreign resident," writes Kaplan, "told me it is now so quiet in Kampala that he has trouble sleeping at night."

To Ugandans, the silence must be golden. Their country suffered from intertribal warfare long before Amin came along. Indeed, several Bantu kingdoms—each of which boasted its own army, law courts, and administrative system—ruled the territory now called Uganda when the colonizing British arrived in 1894. The British, Kaplan says, exacerbated tribal rivalries. They placed members of the advanced Baganda tribes in civil service posts, and enlisted members of rival northern tribes (the Tesos, Langis, and Acholis) in the colonial army.

Thus Uganda was a divided nation when it gained independence in 1962. The country's first prime minister, Apollo Milton Obote, favored his fellow Langi tribesmen and the closely related Tesos and Acholis in filling government posts, until his own commander in chief, Idi Amin Dada, staged a successful coup in 1971. A Muslim from the Kakwa tribe, Amin stirred up tribal hate. Langi, Teso, and Acholi soldiers were slain in their own barracks. The Ugandan dictator, says Kaplan, "soaked this lush, sylvan country with the blood of several hundred thousand people."

Amin, however, proved to be his own worst enemy. Tanzanian troops deposed him in April 1979 after he tried to annex part of their country. Then a fresh succession of dictators ruled Uganda until Yoweri Museveni and his popular National Resistance Army marched into Kampala, and peacefully took power in January 1986.

Unlike his predecessors, Museveni, whom Kaplan calls "Uganda's first nationalist," has managed to unite the country's roughly 40 tribes. "Our political line is a broad, patriotic line," he has said. "It is antitribalism, antidictatorship, and nationalistic."

Uganda, Kaplan concludes, has now achieved independence—not just from the British, but from "the Ugandan heirs to their . . . legacy."