

Issue Date: April 13, 1979

Ugandan Capital Falls to Invaders

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New Government Formed

An invasion force of 5,000 Tanzanian soldiers and 3,000 Ugandan exiles entered the capital of Kampala April 11 after six months of fighting. As Kampala residents cheered the victorious rebels, a group of Ugandan exiles in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania announced the formation of a provisional government to replace President Idi Amin Dada's eight-year regime. [See 1979 [African Affairs: Tanzanians Advance in Uganda](#)]

Amin denied April 11 that he was defeated. In a radio broadcast, he asserted that his forces controlled 90% of Ugandan territory. His report was discounted by diplomats and military analysts, who said the Ugandan leader's army had disintegrated. Amin himself was last reported seen in Jinja, 50 miles (80 kilometers) east of Kampala.

The invaders had advanced slowly through southern Uganda from Tanzania in early March. Their advance began with the capture of two important southern Ugandan towns, Mbarara and Masaka.

(The renewed fighting stirred discontent elsewhere in Uganda. An uprising March 1 at the military base of Tororo near the Kenyan border was quelled the next day.)

By March 25, the invading forces were reported to have captured Mpigi, a strategic town overlooking Kampala, 20 miles (33 kilometers) to the southwest. Mityana, 35 miles (56 kilometers) northwest of Kampala, was reported taken March 28. Kampala was virtually surrounded by enemy troops and within range of artillery fire.

A curfew was imposed on Kampala March 25, amid reports that Amin had fled the city. The airport at Entebbe, 25 miles (40 kilometers) away, was closed that day. Ugandans and foreign residents of Kampala poured into Kenya as shelling reached the capital.

The advance of the Tanzanians and exiles was halted March 31 by Libyan reinforcements. Early in March, Libya had airlifted tons of equipment to Uganda and sent 2,000 troops, according to reports. (Libya denied sending soldiers.) Colonel Muammer Qaddafi, the Libyan leader, was believed to be helping Amin because Amin was a fellow Moslem.

(Amin reported March 13 that Palestinian soldiers were fighting with the Ugandan forces.)

Qaddafi March 27 threatened to attack Tanzania unless Tanzanian troops were pulled out of Uganda.

Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere disregarded the warning.

The Libyans failed to halt the invasion force. By April 1 the Tanzanians and Ugandan exiles were reported to be on the advance again. Entebbe airport was bombed by Tanzanian planes that day in retaliation for a Libyan air attack March 29 on Mwanza, a town in northern Tanzania. The Tanzanians carried out a second bombing raid April 2 on Jinja.

The Libyans suffered a defeat at Lubowa, five miles (eight kilometers) from Kampala. By April 4, the invaders were within the outskirts of the capital city. Entebbe fell April 4, and the Libyans were reported to have abandoned Kampala. According to reports, they were flown back to Libya April 6-7.

Fresh Ugandan troops from the northwest were brought in April 8 to stem the invaders' advance. But they too were defeated, and under cover of heavy artillery fire the invasion force took control of the capital.

About 1,000 Ugandans and 400 Libyans had been killed in the fighting, according to Tanzanian reports.

The Tanzanians gave no figures for their own casualties but said they were few.

The Tanzanians and exiles received a triumphal welcome from residents of Kampala. According to human rights organizations, Amin's reign of terror had resulted in as many as 300,000 deaths.

(Stores were ransacked throughout Kampala in the wake of the rebel victory. Consumer goods were scarce in Uganda as a result of pervasive corruption under Amin's regime. Most of the shops had been expropriated from Ugandan Asians by Amin and turned over to his personal friends.)

The provisional government formed to take over Uganda was led by Yusufu K. Lule, 67, a former official of Makerere University in Kampala. He appointed a 14-member Cabinet April 11 in Dar es Salaam and pledged to organize elections in Uganda as soon as possible.

(Lule had been chosen to lead the provisional government at a meeting March 23-25 of Ugandan exile groups in the northern Tanzanian town of Moshi.)

In a separate incident, four Western journalists were believed killed April 9 when they tried to enter Uganda to cover the war. They had rented a boat April 5 in Kenya to row across Lake Victoria into Uganda. According to reports, they were picked up immediately by Ugandan police, who shot them. A Ugandan Foreign Ministry announcement April 9 said four foreign "mercenaries" had been shot. It was believed that the ministry's report referred to the journalists, two Swedes and two West Germans.