

CHAPTER 12

THE 1949 REVOLUTION IN BUGANDA

12.1 The Second Revolution “Number 9” in Buganda

It could be said that the arrest and deportation of Paulo Kiyingi in 1945 did not subdue his trouble-making instincts; for he continued getting into trouble with the government authorities, mostly chiefs, in the villages or rural areas. At times they would be minor problems like not paying his tax levies on time or failing to do his turn in local road maintenance (*bulungi bwansi*). Other times he would get into conflict with the authorities with major problems, leading to imprisonment, like happened during the uprising of 1949.

Apart from the 1945 Revolution in Buganda, nicknamed “*Namba Munaana*” (Number Eight), in which Paulo Kiyingi and compatriots were sent into captivity, there was another uprising which took place in 1949, which was nicknamed “*Namba Mwenda*” (Number Nine). It started off with the recommendation to allow the Africans to process their coffee and gin their cotton. The Africans became anxious to get to the next step of acquiring their own ginneries. They refused to sell their cotton to the Asian middleman traders, who at that time owned virtually all the ginneries and coffee processing plants. The Asians felt done in and so turned to the chiefs to try and force the African farmers to sell their crops or else face prosecution. Many farmers in the villages were arrested, charged with inciting civil disobedience and punished in one form or other. Some were fined, others were imprisoned. There was general discontentment in the population.

On the morning of 25 April 1949, many farmers and elders in Buganda, Paulo Kiyingi included, travelled to Mengo to appeal to their *Kabaka*. They went as members of the **Bataka Uganda** party or the **African Farmers Union**. They grouped outside the palace and selected eight representatives among themselves to go in and present their petitions to the *Kabaka*. The petitions were as follows:

- (1) to sack the top three administrators of the *Kabaka*’s government - namely the Prime Minister (*Katikkiro*), the Treasurer (*Omuwanika*) and the Minister of Justice (*Omulamuzi*), together with their collaborators among the chiefs;
- (2) to open the rule of democracy by letting the people directly elect their leaders and chiefs;
- (3) to significantly increase the number of elected representatives to the Buganda parliament, the *Lukiiko*;
- (4) to facilitate an urgent transition to the African farmers ginning their own cotton;
- (5) to allow free trade, whereby anyone was free to sell their produce in outside countries.

The *Kabaka* was not able to meet their demands or give a positive reply to their petitions. So he asked their representatives to convey that message to them and ask them to return to their homes. The people refused. It is said that at that stage the treasurer, Hon Besweri Mulyanti, ordered the Police to step in. The policemen used tear gas and rifle fire to disperse the crowd. Some lives were lost and other people

sustained major injuries as they scattered in all sorts of directions. Arson and violence followed. As the people scattered, in their anger, they started setting fires to people's properties and committing acts of violence against others. That was the beginning of the 1949 uprising or revolution. The houses of Asians and collaborator chiefs were prime targets. It is said that the houses of Besweri Mulyanti, the urban one at Makeerere and the rural one at Kirema in Bulemeezi, were burnt down. Among the prominent people seriously injured in the violence was Mr JW Kiwanuka Aliddeki, the editor of a Luganda newspaper "**Matalisi**" and son of the former Finance Minister Serwano Kulubya. The people were not impressed by the articles printed in that newspaper, which sounded anti-people's aspirations and biased in favour of the protectorate government.

When Paulo Kiyingi and others returned to their homes in the country, they were hounded by security for fear that the people who had earlier refused to sell their cotton to the Asian traders in the rural areas were the same ones who had started the uprising at Mengo which spread all over Buganda and that they were the same characters going around terrorising lawful citizens and burning properties. This culminated into the arrest of Paulo Kiyingi, Samwiri Kaggulire his nephew, Israel Kalibbala and a few other suspects. They were flogged, taken to the *Gombolola* (sub-county) headquarters at Kapeeka and then on to the *Ssaza* (county) headquarters at Bbowa. They were then transferred to the Central Police headquarters at Kampala, where they were finally released after the suspicions for their arrest had been found baseless.

12.2 The Africans Start Ginning Cotton and Processing Coffee

When the situation normalised the co-operative movement got under way through the formation of Cooperative Societies and Farmers' Associations. The Government passed a legislation to allow transfer of some of the cotton ginneries run by Asians to the Africans. The Africans would be enabled to buy those ginneries through loans obtained from the Uganda Credit and Savings Bank, which later became the Uganda Commercial Bank. The Government undertook to guarantee those loans. In the same way the government also facilitated the Africans in buying coffee processing plants.

The farmers then started selling their cotton and coffee directly to para-statal bodies created specifically for the purpose: the Lint Marketing Board for cotton and the Coffee Marketing Board for coffee. Those para-statal bodies were entrusted with buying the processed cotton and coffee, ensuring they were of a very high standard, selling the same to outside markets albeit at fluctuating prices, but stabilising the price paid to the primary producers without unduly underpaying them.