

CHAPTER 15

THE LAST DAYS OF PAULO KIKWANGUYIRA KIYINGI

In March 1966 James Henry Mpiima suddenly passed away at a very youthful age of 33 years at his home in Masaka, Buddu. PK got this chilling piece of news of the death of his second son while in his country home at Bukatira, Bulemeezi. The editor-author of this book was the one entrusted with the task of conveying this shocking news to the old man. When news got to the Makeerere home from Masaka I was in class at school. I was quickly summoned home and told to get on the next bus to Bukatira. I got there in the afternoon hours, somewhere between 3 and 4 pm. My old man was out in the field picking cotton. When he saw me he shook in his pants for he knew there had to be something very wrong. He quickly asked me in a firm voice but which was filled with fear: “Sse-kka-dde, what’s the matter?” I broke the news to him! In all my upbringing I had always been told that real men don’t cry and indeed up until then I had never seen or heard a grown up man cry. But on that day my father cried out aloud, tears rolling down his cheeks, saying: “Wowe-eh, my son Mpiima has died, what a tragedy; I am dead, who will bury me”!

In 1967, about a year after Mpiima’s death, PK was diagnosed with a medical condition “high blood pressure” or “hypertension”. It is presumed that the stress and depression associated with the death of his son Mpiima combined with a number of other factors to precipitate this dreaded disease - factors like: (i) the nationalist struggles of his entire life such as the confrontations with the colonial government in the 1940s which lead to his deportation into captivity and after his release the further confrontations with local government representatives, which at times lead to severe punishment in the form of flogging and/or imprisonment; (ii) the hard-working life of a farmer; (iii) the relatively meagre income he was forced to live on after his release from captivity compared to the period before; (iv) the frequent journeys by foot, to plead for the defenceless common people in the village as the unpaid people’s advocate and (v) all the unfairness and injustice of the colonial administration within the country. To add to the problem of hypertension, PK was also diagnosed with a groin hernia soon after. The hernia got complicated by irreducibility to the point of near strangulation. It required a surgical operation to correct the problem. Many top doctors at Mulago, the national referral hospital, as well as the private hospital at Namirembe, all attended to PK in an effort to save his life. The head surgeon in the country Mr Sebastian Kyalwazi (FRCS) worked with several physicians to try and get PK’s blood pressure under control so he could safely operate on his hernia, but to no avail. The strangulation of the hernia caused PK a great deal of pain. He would spend the whole night wailing in pain, so loud as to nearly wake up the entire neighbourhood. This pain further increased the blood pressure, making it ever more difficult to bring down. The elevated blood pressure in turn put a big strain on his heart, weakening the heart muscles, leading to what in medical parlance is termed “congestive heart failure”. Strong analgesic medications for the relief of severe pains of that nature were in short supply during those days, unlike today.

It was in such severe pain that PK’s life came to an end. On 18th September 1968, at approximately 8 o’clock in the evening, Paulo Kiyingi passed away at Namirembe Hospital, in the presence of his wife Eseza Nabwami and his daughter Efulansi Miriam Nalugwa Musoke. The same year 1968 saw the

staging and conclusion of the 19th Olympic games in Mexico City, Mexico. PK was aged 72 years at the time of his death.

After a moving funeral service at St John's church Makeerere, the church he so fervently fought for, PK was buried with great honour by so many people, close family, extended relations, friends, colleagues and acquaintances. People travelled from far and wide to farewell and lay to rest the hero of all heroes into his final resting place; a hero who struggled for his country until his death - the unsung hero. He was buried at the ancestral burial grounds at Mpigi Nakaseeta in Bulemeezi county adjacent to where his fathers, Samwiri Lwasi Buzaabo and Semyoni Kaddu Nansambu, had been laid to rest. David Kulumba Kiyingi was installed as the heir to PK, as is the custom in the country, to be the new head of the Kiyingi family and estate. Kulumba is now a successful practicing lawyer with one of the more promising private law firms in Kampala city.