

Dora Bloch and the Politics of State Terrorism in Uganda

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Abstract

On June 28, 1976, France's Airbus 139 with over 240 passengers was hijacked by the Popular Front for Liberation Palestine (PFLP), a branch of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), and landed at Entebbe airport. This was the first international hostage-taking terrorist incident in Uganda. The hijackers released non-Jews but refused to release Jews. On 4 July 1976, the Israeli military carried out a mission to rescue Jews. However, Mrs. Dora Bloch (British-Israeli), who had been hospitalised in Mulago was left behind. She disappeared from the hospital, and her remains were discovered in 1979 after the overthrow of Idi Amin. Mrs. Bloch's disappearance raised questions regarding state terrorism, how it manifested, and its impact on Uganda's geopolitical standing and relations with Israel. Drawing on Mrs. Bloch's disappearance, this article reflects on the manifestation of state terrorism. It draws substantially on overlapping narratives, ordinary voices, and/or conspiracy theories and demonstrates the challenges historians encounter in the search for historical facts. This article employs Critical Terrorism Theory (CTT) to examine how terrorism manifested in Uganda and how it can be used to explain the abduction, disappearance, and murder of Mrs. Bloch and the subsequent actions that led to her death. It argues that state terrorism, even though disguised, will often manifest in ways that make it evident that state actors have a role in causing terrorism, thus conforming to the CTT.

Keywords: Critical Terrorism Theory, History, Politics, State Terrorism, Ordinary voices, Kidnap

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Introduction

Traditionally, terrorism studies have focused on non-state perpetrators of terrorism. However, this perception began to change during the Cold War, when states and state actors actively involved themselves in terrorism by, for example, supporting terrorist organisations operating abroad. Thus, terrorism, a widespread global phenomenon, began to manifest in the actions and policies of both individuals and groups, state and non-state. For the state, it primarily manifests in covert actions and policies which are easy to hide from regular actions. On the surface, states present “terrorism acts” as actions in self-defense, preventive action, counter-terrorism measures, or even as promoting “progress and development”. Forms of state terrorism that are much more widespread, powerful, and destructive are not often in the purview of the citizens¹; instead, the focus is on non-state actors, especially those groups that have been labelled terrorists since 9/11. Uganda had neither been known as a terrorist state nor as harbouring terrorism until the hijacking of the Air France plane on 26th June 1976. The other aspect that tainted Uganda’s image and consequently depicted it as a terrorist state was the disappearance of Dora Bloch following the hijacking. Unlike

the other disappearances of the two Americans, Nicholas Stroh, a thirty-three-year-old journalist, and Robert Siedele, a forty-six-year-old lecturer, in 1971, Chief Justice Benedicto Kagimu Kiwanuka in 1972, the disappearance of Bloch was not an ordinary one but a Pol-Pot-style atrocity² to ensure that the populations would be properly traumatised.

Dora Feinberg was born in Jaffa in 1872 to Joseph Feinberg, one of the founders of the Jewish agricultural settlement of Rishon Lezion. Dora Feinberg moved to Jerusalem as an adult, where she met Aharon Bloch of Welsh origin in 1920 while he was serving in the British Army in Palestine (Saul, 2015). In 1925, they married, and she adopted the name Bloch (Dora Bloch). This granted her British citizenship. In 1976, she was moving to New York for her youngest son Daniel’s wedding when the plane on which she was travelling was hijacked. She served as an interpreter (from English to Hebrew) between the hostages and the hijackers because of her fluency in languages.

On the 27th day of June 1976, France’s Airbus 139 was hijacked by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) - General Command (a branch of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation [PLO]) and the German leftist terrorist group, Baader Meinhof (German Red Army Faction) on its way from Israel to France. On 28th June 1976,

¹ In this paper, the interest in using the variable *the politics of state terrorism* is intended to elicit the reader to see the machinations, manipulations, and manoeuvres around the concealing of Bloch’s murder to save the state’s political influence at the time.

² Pol-Pot was a Cambodian Marxist dictator

it landed at Entebbe Airport³, making it one of several high-profile Airbus hijackings in the 1970s. On 4th July 1976, the Israeli military carried out a mission to rescue the Jews. Unfortunately, one of its citizens, Mrs. Dora Bloch, a seventy-five-year-old remained unaccounted for and was later reported killed by Ugandan authorities. On the same date, Israel's foreign counterintelligence agency Mossad requested one of President Amin's former confidantes and friends, Colonel Baruch Bar-Lev, to compile a profile of Amin to better understand the leader they were dealing with. Israel, a nation formed out of the ashes of the Holocaust of the Second World War, learned through tragedy to value every single Jewish life, and dropped the subject of Dora Bloch soon after the July 1976 raid on Entebbe.

On the impact of the raid on Uganda and Amin in particular, Britain acknowledged the effects of the raid on Amin's fortunes by remarking that the "raid was a stunning blow to Amin's image of infallibility" (*The Times*, London, July 30, 1976:28). On Uganda, as a whole, the *Times*, London paper covered the breakup of Uganda-Britain diplomatic relations which was confirmed on 26th July 1976. This

followed the Ugandan government's lack of cooperation in explaining the affair. Uganda also failed to provide a satisfactory explanation of the whereabouts of Mrs. Dora Bloch, one of the British citizens who was among the hostages at Entebbe. It was claimed that she had been left behind by the Israeli rescue team.

This was the immediate cause of the breakup of diplomatic ties and was described by the Western public as "a woe for Idi Amin" (*Christian Science Monitor*, July 29, 1976:1), "and as "one more merited setback for Amin." (*Christian Science Monitor*, July 30, 1976:1). Britain's action was, therefore, justified because Britain had all along tolerated Amin's Uganda because it (Britain) was the head of a "meaningful and moral institution"—the Commonwealth, different from the 'global gang' (UN). Therefore, even when Amin expelled foreigners from Uganda, British loyalty to Uganda was still held. Thus, Britain was forced to cut off diplomatic ties with a Commonwealth country for the first time in history (*Christian Science Monitor*, July 29, 1976:1). Indeed, the Dora Bloch affair was a woe to Amin and the entire nation, Uganda, and relations with Britain were only restored as soon as Amin was overthrown. The Dora Bloch affair, as it later came to be termed, demonstrated the futility of diplomacy to protect the British citizens in Uganda (*The Times*, London, July 29, 1976:5).

³ Idi Amin's argument for allowing the plane to land was that Uganda had to portray a strong culture of state compliance. The damage of not allowing the plane to land would have been heavier if it had crashed due to a shortage of fuel, as he had been told. See Harold Koh, *Why Do Nations Obey International Law?* Yale L.J.2599,2655 (1997) (explaining several schools of thinking on the methods by which international law binds State actors).

In 1979, the subject of what happened to Mrs. Bloch only resurfaced after the fall of Amin's fall when her remains were exhumed, something that only made the matter more controversial. Despite having occurred in 1976, her relatives and Israeli state officials still had an interest in this incident. This article attempts to provide a historical explanation for these events. It draws on overlapping narratives and conspiracy theories to demonstrate the challenges historians encounter in the search for historical facts. It employs the Critical Terrorism Theory's central tenet, which presupposes that terrorism is primarily a state-actor manifestation. It argues that state terrorism, even though disguised, will often manifest in ways that make it evident that state actors have a role in causing terrorism, thus conforming to Critical Terrorism Theory. CTT is important because it demonstrates that the state has a monopoly on violence.

What is State Terrorism?

Before understanding state terrorism, one should first delve into the concept of terrorism. However, it is interesting to note that as a historical phenomenon, terrorism is impossible to define because of its permanent development and mutability over time. It is a fluid concept with no universally accepted definition or standard. However, for this article, we draw on David Claridge's definition of terrorism as,

The systematic threat or use of violence, whether for or in opposition to established authority, with the intention of communicating a political message to a group larger than the victim group by generating fear and altering the behaviour of the larger group. Either the victim or the perpetrator, or both, will be operating outside a military context; both will never be operating within a military context.⁴

Two key features of a terrorist strategy according to this definition are that terrorism is systematic in nature and can be exhibited in a single violent act as long as there is evidence. Second, that terrorism is intended to 'generate a response outside of the immediate victim group'. Bearing on the above definition and its qualifications in mind, Claridge derived a definitional model of state terrorism. According to this model, state terrorism displays the following elements:

- a) it is systematic;
- b) it is actually or potentially violent;
- c) it is political;
- d) it is committed by agents of the state, or by proxies who operate with the resources of the state;
- e) it is intended to generate fear; [and]
- f) it is intended to communicate a message to a wider group than the immediate victim(s); and the

⁴ David Claridge, "State Terrorism? Applying a definitional model," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 8:3, 1996, pp. 50.

victim(s) will not be armed and organised for aggression at the time of the incident.⁵

According to Blakeley, state terrorism involves the deliberate targeting of individuals that the state has to protect to invoke terror among a wider audience (Blakeley, 2009:15). State terrorism can be internal and or external. Internally, it is used to maintain order and quell political opposition. Simultaneously, externally, it is done in pursuit of specific foreign policy objectives (ibid, 2009:19). Domestically, the state may sponsor covert support for paramilitary or vigilante groups, while externally it lends ideological support to, provides financial or military support, to or collaborates and cooperates with an external terrorist group (Martin, 2003:85; Stohl, 2006:7). Jackson et al. define state terrorism as “the intentional use or threat of violence by state agents or their proxies against individuals or groups who are victimised to intimidate or frighten the watching audience” (Richard Jackson et al., 2010:3). From this definition, the actors who carry out the terror are identified as paramilitary agencies or personnel. The people who are victims of state terror(ism) are political dissident insurgent groups and others who may hold views that differ from those in power.

From the above definitions, it can be argued that for violence perpetrated by the state to be

called state terrorism, it must meet the following features: *a)* it must be deliberate against individuals, citizens, or non-citizens; *b)* it must be perpetrated by identifiable agents or proxies of the state on behalf of the state or in conjunction with it; *c)* it must be visible, that is, acts are carried out publicly; and *d)* its intention is to induce extreme fear in the target audience that identifies with the victims, internal or external, so that they can change their behaviours. Thus, state terrorism has to do with the intentional use or threat of violence by state agents or their proxies against individuals or groups who are victimised to intimidate or frighten the watching audience. The question then is: whether the disappearance and murder of Dorach Bloch fit this description. The answer to this question is provided in the Findings section.

However, for conceptual clarity, it is better to distinguish state terrorism from other forms of violence, since not all forms of state violence, such as state repression and genocide, be classified as terrorism. The first form of mass violence is genocide. According to Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of Genocide (1948):

Genocide is defined as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the

⁵David Claridge, “State Terrorism? Applying a definitional model,” pp. 47-63.

group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” (UN Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of Genocide (1948)).

State repression is defined by Schmid as “a more active process of social control by neutralisation or elimination of actual and potential opponents by a variety of coercive sanctions” (Schmid, 1991:25). This definition shows that the difference between repression and state terrorism lies in their scope and aims. While repression is designed to impact only those who represent an actual or potential threat to the state and aims to deter these dissenters from attacking or protesting against the state, leaving the general population largely unaffected, terrorism does not. Thus, Wilkinson argues that “repression can be distinguished from terrorism because it is a form of coercion affecting only actual dissenters while terrorism since it is meant to deter potential dissenters, is more arbitrary, unpredictable and indiscriminate in its nature and effects” (Wilkinson, 1991:25). Terrorism leaves the population affected population in fear and often

in a precarious situation. Terrorism is conceptually distinct from genocide and repression but could happen at more or less the same time. In addition, this case is on state terrorism and not state-sponsored terrorism, while the former applies to situations where the state unleashes terror on its citizens. We are cognizant of the fact that Dorah Bloch was not a Ugandan citizen, but her disappearance holds the state accountable. The latter applies to situations in which a state supports a foreign Non-State Actor that uses terrorism as a strategy. In this case, if Uganda supported the PFLP hijackers, it was state-sponsored terrorism in the context of a broader hijack-hostage crisis and not specifically on Dorah Bloch.

Methodology

This article is the outcome of a larger project studying the history of terrorism in Uganda. Given the qualitative nature of the inquiry, its sources were both primary and secondary historical narratives collected from different people and places. This article is based on a qualitative case study of the abduction, disappearance, and murder of Mrs. Bloch. It uses the historical narrative method to assess how closely the reality of Mrs. Bloch’s disappearance in 1976 adheres to the four manifestations/features of state terrorism. By analysing the overlapping narratives on the disappearance of Mrs. Bloch, this article shows how it is possible to conclude that her disappearance was

a true reflection of state terrorism that is difficult to identify and construct. The information required was obtained from three data sources: first-hand accounts and secondary literature produced after the 1976 raid at Entebbe, and Police and/or military records of exhumations of unidentified burials.

The first-hand accounts were those of witnesses, based on interviews. The interviewees were purposively selected from surviving officers who were guarding the airport. We were lucky as we were drafting the title of this article, a colleague in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences whispered that his father was on duty the day the rescue was conducted. It was from his father (name withheld) that we started snowballing. Thus, the lead to where Dora was buried was provided by an eyewitness who did not know her but saw her being picked up from the hospital and those who claimed to have heard gunshots on 5th July 1976 at around 4a.m. This was augmented with Police Archival reports on the incident. Additionally, the works of Henry Kyemba, a former Minister in the Amin government until his defection in 1977, David Saul (one of the Israeli commanders who were on the Rescue Mission) and Semakula Kiwanuka (a former professor at Makerere University) provided firsthand accounts. Interviews with BBB (a former UBC journalist based in Nakasero), Mr MS (duty overall on the day of the raid), and Dr KA (the only surviving medical expert on the team that examined

the remains of Dora Bloch) also provided primary data. Furthermore, in-depth interviews identified through snowballing were instructive. Two of these were with two special military officers of Amin's regime at the time of the hijack, and like other published accounts, they provide the same narrative. Available accounts of the abduction and disappearance of Mrs. Bloch from police and military records were also used in the study. Thus, this article examines both pre- and post-disappearance accounts.

Competing Narratives, conspiracy theories, and voices on Mrs. Bloch's death

To corroborate these three data sources, this section examines the overlapping narratives about the disappearance of Mrs. Bloch. These range from government accounts (Uganda, UK, and Israel governments) to eyewitness accounts. It should be noted that there are inherent problems with using first-hand accounts, particularly those produced to be commercially viable (Altier, 2012: 88) or for military prestige. For example, Henry Kyemba, a former Health Minister in Amin's government, uses his book to distance himself from the violence that occurred in his ministry and the regime. He justifies his actions and decisions for the period that he remained in Uganda despite knowing about the violence that was taking place. As a historian, Kiwanuka's book focuses on recording the events

of Amin's leadership and how Amin emerged within Uganda. He argues, as does Kasozi, that Amin was both the creator of the situation in Uganda and a product of the history of a country where violence had been used extensively to maintain power. (Kiwanuka, *Amin and the Tragedy of Uganda*: iii). On the other hand, David Saul, a serving Israel military officer writes not only from a military angle but also in defense of the actions of the Israeli government.

Other accounts and historical narratives on the disappearance of Mrs. Bloch used in this article were skewed towards anti-Amin rhetoric. They blamed Amin for the 1976 Entebbe hostage-taking incident which eventually led to the abduction and murder of Mrs. Bloch. These accounts also provide detailed, often uncomfortably intimate pictures of the forms of violence common in Uganda during the 1970s, specifically detailing the 1976 one as the most grotesque. Two of these were with two special military officers of Amin's regime at the time of the hijack, and like other published accounts, they provide the same narrative. They argue that the abduction of Mrs. Bloch by Amin's men was not dissimilar to other abductions during his rule. The interviewees explained how they portrayed Amin's regime and Amin as a monster that needed international recognition in this affair. All these accounts provide very similar descriptions to one another and other reports produced, and therefore, it can be assumed that these accounts

do provide an accurate portrayal of the general trends in violence over this period, even if individual stories may have been sensationalised.

Police archives, File Case No. CD/06/76/00713-02, show that there was an attempt to obtain knowledge of the death of Mrs. Bloch. CID Officers Chemutai and Otika (*not real names*) asked 25 people in Namanve and Kivuuvu but were all hesitant to say anything recalling the days of Idi Amin. However, information was later obtained from Petero Matovu, a shamba man in the Kivuuvu sugarcane plantation (now part of the Lugazi sugarcane plantation). With the disappearance of such a high-powered person, "Mrs. Bloch" -- it was important to review the archives and published reports of the time from different security organisations. In revisionist accounts, the archival material obtained from the security institutions pointed to the fact that protecting the masses, both citizens and non-citizens, was and continues to be the primary responsibility of both the police and military. Therefore, the search for who was responsible for Mrs. Bloch's disappearance was the responsibility of the security forces. Notably, they did their best to find the truth. Despite this, it was impossible to ascertain who was responsible for her abduction, disappearance, and death. Investigations had hit a dead end, and so blaming the state as responsible was not done at that time. Revisionist accounts have pointed to the fact that Mrs. Bloch's

abduction was witnessed in a state characterised by general intimidation, distrust, and social isolation. These accounts that emerged after Amin's overthrow solely blamed her death on Amin. For this reason, Amin was subsequently referred to as a terrorist. Accounts from those who witnessed the kidnapping of Mrs. Bloch could neither point to any person or where she was buried. Thus, none of the eyewitnesses of the kidnapping could help establish the fate or location where Mrs. Bloch was dumped or buried.

Additionally, records of pathological reports on exhumed unidentified burials: On Tuesday 29th May 1979 the remains of Dora Bloch were exhumed at Kivuuvu, Kyagwe, Mukono, and examined by a team of pathologists and medical doctors led by Maurice Rogoff. Other doctors present were Dr Lutakome Kayiira (Deputy Minister for Internal Affairs), Dr. Arye Oded (Israel Rep to Uganda), Prof. Ssebuwufu, Dr Makumbi (head Mulago Hospital), Dr Adam Kimala (Lecturer, Makerere – still alive), Dr Kakande and Dr Ssendyose (see, George Muwanga-Kamya, *Munno*, Thursday 31 May 1979, pp. 1 &4, AF PER 079.6761 M 85). In the presence also was Dora's son Bertram Benjamin Bloch. The pathology results corroborated the X-Ray report from Israel indicating a damaged back-bone and the jaw bone resembled that of Dora's according to the 1974, leg bone had mark of leg ulcer which she was

suffering from. The nylon piece of cloth on her was also same the piece she had on the day she was picked from the hospital. The weakness with this data source, however, is that although systematic exhumation could provide information both on individual of Mrs. Bloch and patterns, it could not address cases in which she disappeared,⁶ which would help reflect important patterns, such as the branch of the military that was involved.⁷

In an interview on the American CBS television network on July 11, 1976 a week after the successful raid on Entebbe, the then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was asked the following:

Question: Do you have reason to believe that Mrs. Bloch was killed on the orders of Idi Amin?

Answer: I have no other evidence until this moment as to the whereabouts of Mrs. Bloch, except one — that the Government of Uganda is the sole responsible body for whatever has happened, happens, or will happen to Mrs. Bloch. She was under the full control of the Ugandan authorities while

⁶ Clyde C. Snow & Maria J. Bihurriet, *An Epidemiology of Homicide: "Ningun Nombre" Burials in the Province of Buenos Aires from 1970 to 1984*, in *Human Rights and Statistics: Getting the Record Straight*, supra note 2, at 328, 331.

⁷ Christopher Joyce & Eric Stover, *Witnesses from the Grave: The Stories Bones Tell* (1991).

in the hospital. We have hard evidence that Mrs. Bloch was alive on Sunday morning after the operation. Therefore, the full responsibility for whatever has happened or will happen to Mrs. Dora Bloch lies with the Ugandan government and its president.

Question: In the event that you should get some tragic news about the 75-year-old Mrs. Bloch, what can Israel do?

Answer: I would not discuss what the options that are open to Israel, are but I would like to stress very clearly that the full responsibility will be put on the Ugandan government” (Dan Rather, *Yitzhak Rabin* on July 11, 1976).

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin’s responses, as shown above, combined with the hostage-taking and rescue events at Entebbe, lead us to the question of who killed one of the hostages, Dora Bloch.

Contrary to the Israeli narrative, Lt. Col. Juma Oris, Uganda’s foreign minister, while addressing the United Nations Security Council in New York on July 9, 1976 explained the circumstances of Bloch’s disappearance. From Uganda’s perspective:

Up to the time of Israel’s invasion in the early hours of Sunday, July 4, President Amin had succeeded in having more than half the hostages released.

In his humanitarian efforts, Idi Amin was concerned not only with the release of all hostages but also with their welfare. In this spirit, Mrs. Bloch, who had a piece of food stuck in her throat, was immediately rushed to Uganda’s best hospital for medical treatment.

When she got better on the evening of Saturday, 3 July she was returned by the medical authorities to the old Entebbe airport to join the other hostages. Following the understanding given by the Uganda Government to the hijackers, this was done not to jeopardise the lives of the hostages who were at that time still at Entebbe airport. The Israelis committed a naked act of aggression by invading Entebbe airport, where the hostages, including Mrs. Bloch, were being held by the hijackers” (UN Security Council Proceedings, July 9, 1976).

Since the Amin regime was already much maligned in the eyes of the world, even if Lt. Col Oris was speaking the truth, it was much easier to dismiss this statement as a cover-up and a distortion of the truth to absolve the “murderous regime.”

The British narrative, in a confidential Foreign Office memo written by James Hennessy, the British High Commissioner to Uganda, says, “She had been seen by a consultant

at Mulago Hospital last Sunday long after the Israeli commandos had come and gone. Since then, she has not been seen anywhere. Another confidential Foreign Office briefing report sent to No 10 said the most likely scenario was that Mrs. Bloch was killed by Ugandan soldiers, who were “bitter and dangerous following their disgrace at Israeli hands”. Approximately 50 Ugandan soldiers were killed by Israelis during the raid. The report adds, “They may have seized on the only available Jew on whom to exact their revenge”. The Foreign Office confirmed that Mrs. Bloch, who had also required treatment for leg ulcers, was seen by a member of the British High Commission (Peter Chandley) while under guard at the hospital. The report goes on to note, “Moreover, President Amin confirmed that while in hospital, Mrs. Bloch developed leg ulcers. Nonetheless, he ordered her to return and join the other hostages. However, he admitted that he could not ensure that all his orders were carried out. President Amin, therefore, did not deny the possibility that the Ugandans had custody of Mrs. Bloch at the time of the Israeli raid and thereafter;”. Having lost the crisis to the Israelis after they raided Entebbe, there was nothing left to bargain with.

Another narrative that emerged at that time was the “Jimmy Parma Narrative”. This narrative has been greatly debated regarding its authenticity and appropriateness. Parma was a photographer with a

government-owned newspaper, *The Voice of Uganda*. According to this narrative, Parma took photographs of Mrs. Dora Bloch’s body. To conceal the evidence, Parma was murdered by an unknown person. However, for Parma to have photographed Bloch’s body, he had to have come close enough to the scene. This means that he must have been permitted to take the photographs. Had Amin’s soldiers killed her in the first place, she would have been deterred from even attempting to take the photographs.

Knowing the political situation in the 1971-1979 period and the reports of a murderous government in power, Jimmy Parma would have known better than to venture to take photographs of Bloch’s body, when he would have understood the consequences it was indeed Farouk Minawa who dragged the elderly woman to her death. If the story of Parma taking photographs is true, the pictures were not of a dead Bloch but of Bloch being dragged out of Mulago Hospital by the mysterious killers. Arguably, while Parma might have been a state photographer, known to investigative journalists, he might have covertly taken photos of the murdered Bloch and was eliminated upon being discovered.

The editors knew the government’s position on the issues of the day. Whatever the nature of the photographs he took of Bloch, they were only and could only have been of the kind that made the government look reasonable and

even heroic. He would not have been assigned to take a single photograph that did not. If he had ventured out on his initiative to take damaging photographs that incriminated the government, there is a high chance that not only Parma but also many of his supervisors and senior editors would have disappeared at the hands of the government. After all, how was anybody to be sure that Parma had not already smuggled the photographs or negatives to his editors or out of the country to an overseas news photo agency like Camerapix, a Pan-African Multi-Media company, or AP/Wide World?

Apart from Parma, no other reporter or editor of the *Voice of Uganda* was killed. This leaves only one possible interpretation. For a government photographer to have come close enough to Bloch to take her photos could only mean that at the time Parma took photos of Bloch, she was being treated well, was safe, healthy, being attended to by Ugandan soldiers and medical personnel, probably smiling, and in no way being harassed. In a government-owned newspaper during a dictatorship, such photos would be published in the next day's edition to attract public sympathy for the regime's actions. The person who killed Parma did so for either one of two reasons. The first is that Parma's photographs covertly captured the people dragging Bloch to her death, who were probably government operatives (state terrorism); or they showed Bloch looking well, thus

contradicting the reports that she had been killed by the Amin regime (non-state operatives backed by the state (not Ugandan state) which is also tantamount to state terrorism.

The narrative that has attracted the most concern to warrant Amin's government being identified as a terrorist is that of Henry Kyemba. The Kyemba narrative holds that the state was behind the abduction, disappearance, and murder of Mrs. Bloch. Kyemba describes how the men who killed Dora Bloch did not attempt to hide what they were doing:

One of the most extraordinary aspects of this murder was its unnecessarily brutality and public nature. Amin could have acted humanely by helping Mrs. Bloch. The State Research people could have hidden their deeds by arranging for her to be officially discharged from the hospital and picking her up afterwards. Alternatively, they could have quietly removed her through a back entrance. Instead, Amin sent two of his most notorious thugs, who no doubt relished the chance to display their viciousness in public. No cover-up, however efficient, could conceal their crime (Kyemba, 1977:176).

Kyemba's narrative denotes State terrorism and what has augmented his narrative more is his entire book on Amin. In three of the book's chapters, he references Amin or his henchmen's involvement in acts

of violence, torture, and murder. This qualifies the state as having a monopoly on violence.

Another narrative about the death of Mrs. Bloch is the Abraham Kisuule Minge's narrative. According to this narrative, following the end of the 1979 Tanzania-Uganda war in which Amin was deposed, a former officer in the State Research Bureau, Abraham Kisuule-Minge, espoused a narrative in April 1979 that Bloch was killed on orders of two security men, the Director of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Lt. Col Farouk Minawa and one Cap. Nasur Odongo. As quoted by *Times* magazine in a report published on April 30, 1979:

Bloch was transferred from the hospital to the SRB. Minawa did not drag Bloch from her Mulago hospital bed, as has been alleged (according to Kissule's narrative). As the director of the NIA, Minawa hardly needed to come to Mulago Hospital himself to arrest an elderly woman who posed no security or physical threat to anyone. Bloch was brought to Minawa, and while in Makindye, Farouk made a slashing motion and cut her throat as she was flung to the floor. Mrs. Bloch was driven away, sobbing, to a nearby forest, where she was shot in the back buried in Makindye barracks where Ben Kiwanuka

was buried. (*The Times Magazine*, April 30, 1979).

While this narrative may be true, it misses the fact that neither the remains of Ben Kiwanuka nor those of Bloch were found in the Makindye Military Barracks. The narrative also does not corroborate other narratives regarding the place where Bloch was presumably killed and where the remains were found. The inability to corroborate this information from Kissule demonstrates the challenge of sustaining an argument on state terrorism.

One narrative that has come to challenge all other narratives imputing state terrorism is the J.G.S. Makumbi's narrative. According to Dr Makumbi, who was the Medical Superintendent of Mulago Hospital, Dora Bloch was taken from the hospital by men in civilian clothing. Recalling the date as July 4, 1976, Dr Makumbi stated that the circumstances leading to Mrs. Bloch's disappearance started when he had just completed the evening ward rounds. As he stood on the fourth floor, he heard a scuffle on the sixth floor, where Mrs. Bloch was staying in one of the VIP rooms. He rushed to the stairs to see what was happening and saw armed men carrying machine guns, firing bullets to frighten people out of the way, and pulling Mrs. Bloch down the stairs. Outside, a black Mercedes-Benz was waiting. She was dragged into a vehicle, the door was shut, and the vehicle was driven away. Although these men were clad in civilian' clothing, their

features were quite familiar to some hospital staff. They were believed to be security guards in the presidential staff. How they were known at the hospital and whether they always picked up people were issues that were interrogated. Although this narrative is informative, our attempts to find an eyewitness to corroborate it failed. Additionally, this narrative was characterised by generalisation. For example, Dr Makumbi talks of a machine gun, but as a doctor or civilian, he would not know the different types of guns. Likewise, he talks of men in civilian wear unique to them without identifying any of them which does not qualify them to have been Amin's guards.

Another narrative is the Victor Kato's narrative. Kato was a resident in Namanve at the time of the death. According to his narrative, Mrs. Bloch was shot. He had never witnessed the shooting but had heard gunshots on the evening of July 4, 1976. The body of a white woman was found after the killers abandoned it in the Namanve Forest. Kato adds that the white lady (assumed to be Mrs. Bloch) was killed along with a white chicken, as a possible practice of witchcraft. This narrative does not, however, tell how the remains of Mrs. Bloch came to be found in the Kivuuvu Sugarcane plantation, Kyagwe, Mukono, over 30 kms away from the Namanve forest.

The final narrative considered in this article is the John Sekabira narrative. According to this narrative, a soldier named Shaban killed

Bloch. John Sekabira, a former student at Makerere University, speaking in exile, told *Drum* in an account published in its September 1977 issue that he had witnessed the burial of "the body of an elderly white (referring to the white race) woman" at Murchison Bay Prison Camp on August 20, 1976 (*Drum*, Sept 11, 1977). Sekabira was not specific about whether this elderly woman was a Bloch or any other white woman. Speaking from exile, a soldier named Shaban is the one who killed Bloch. However, there seems to be no connection between where he claimed the elderly white woman was buried and where Mrs. Bloch's remains were found. This suggests that there may have been other whites, in addition to Mrs. Bloch, who died in Uganda during the same period.

In an interview with one of the surviving members of the Presidential Military Unit, he described the situation as follows:

If there was anyone who knew how difficult this affair was from the start, it was my boss (President Amin). The safety and well-being of the hostages was a big concern for him, regardless of his personality and position as president and OAU Head. Not only Dorah, Bloch alone but all the hostages were on his mind. He kept telling us this, and the most pressing issue was to secure the release of the hostages, but the hijackers had also

held us at ransom with some demands. The night Israel attacked was the very night Amin had planned to poison the hijackers and hand over the hostages. That is how Israel would respect Uganda and him in particular. When Israel attacked and President Amin heard what had happened to our colleagues, he became furious. I remember him saying, ‘You can imagine these fools. We are even treating their sick people, and they cannot cooperate? Go get her out of the hospital and dump her at the airport which we did but as we were carrying her in the car, she stressed us and bite our colleague’s hand (now late) who got annoyed and pushed her. She hit her head on the door and went into a coma. We called the president and informed him that she fainted and died while attempting to resist, she fainted and died. He told us that no one should know about it. Go bury her in Makindye...That was the story in short. We could not pronounce her dead in our hands. Therefore, the ideal state policy was to say that she disappeared from the hospital. (Interview with Brigadier X, 16 July 2019).

This interview echoes narratives found in the biographies and statements of key actors in Uganda’s

military and press at that time. From Idi Amin’s memoir, there seem to be widely scattered comments on this subject. However, given his personality and the foreign policy direction with Palestine and Israel, it is clear from the above interview excerpt that Uganda had a hand not in the murder but in the disappearance of Bloch. This does not exonerate the state from terrorism.

From the above, it is clear that these deaths and disappearances and the narratives around them are often told in truth, speculation, and rumour, in competition for audience. Hence, the use of the term competing narratives in this article. These narratives range from government accounts (Uganda, UK, and Israeli) to “eyewitness” accounts. What is clear is that these accounts and historical narratives on the disappearance of Mrs. Bloch in this article were skewed towards anti-Amin rhetoric, except for the Uganda Government narrative that was pro-Amin. Even with no credible evidence in them, narratives such as Henry Kyemba, Abraham Kisuule Minge, Jimmy Parma Narrative, Victor Kato, and John Sekabira thrived on the anti-Amin rhetoric. In the end, the Dr. J.G.S Makumbi narrative came to challenge all other narratives imputing state terrorism. The failure of all those narratives to point out the role of the state in Mrs. Bloch’s murder makes them lacking in authenticity and appropriateness, thus giving way to the records of pathological reports on exhumed unidentified burials, later to be confirmed as Mrs. Bloch’s. The

changing circumstances surrounding the concealment of knowledge of Bloch's murder manifested as urban state-centric terrorism.

Conclusion

This article has attempts to locate the death of Mrs. Dorah Bloch within the state-sponsored terrorism narrative. It examines different types of narratives based on archival records and interviews. The abduction, disappearance, and murder of Bloch raises three historical questions. The issue is that State Terrorism existed in the 1971-1979 period because abduction and concealed murders are types of terrorism. Additionally, the inability of any single narrative to persuade us that Dorah Bloch was kidnapped or abducted by Person X, killed, and finally buried in place Y leaves us with three important questions: If not the state, who can walk into a hospital and get a patient out without any formal clearance? Was Dorah Bloch's disappearance similar to that of former Chief Justice Benedicto Kiwanuka or Julie Ward in Kenya? Based on the four characteristics, does the above narrative and voices qualify the disappearance and murder of Mrs. Dorah Bloch fit to be described as state terrorism?

The answer to the question of who committed or masterminded the abduction, disappearance, and murder of Bloch can be summed up as follows: Dorah Bloch's remains

were found in Uganda shortly after Idi Amin's fall. On Tuesday, May 29, 1979, the remains of Dorah Bloch were exhumed at Kivuuvu, Kyagwe, Mukono, and examined by a team of pathologists and medical doctors led by Maurice Rogoff. Other medics present were Dr Lutakome Kayiira (Deputy Minister for Internal Affairs), Dr Arye Oded (Israel Representative to Uganda), Prof. Ssebuwufu, Dr J.G.S. Makumbi (Medical Superintendent, Mulago Hospital), Dr Adam Kimala (Lecturer at Makerere – still alive), Dr Ignatius Kakande and Dr. Andrew Ssendyose. (see, George Muwanga-Kamyia, *Munno*, Thursday, 31 May 1979, pp. 1 and 4, AF PER 079.6761 M 85). Dorah's son, Bertram Benjamin Bloch was also present. The results corroborated the X-ray report from Israel, indicating a damaged backbone and jawbone that resembled that of Dorah Bloch, according to the 1974 medical report, a leg bone had the mark of an ulcer which she was suffering from. The nylon piece of cloth on her was also the piece she had on the day she was picked from hospital. Thus, although her disappearance was disguised, the exhumation of her remains in Uganda and the results of the X-ray report made it evident that Bloch disappeared from the hospital but remained in Uganda. State actors whose primary duty was to protect Bloch played a role in causing this form of state terrorism, thus conforming to the Critical Terrorism Theory.

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