

BUGANDA IN MODERN HISTORY

By D. A. LOW (London 1971) (p. 265, Shs. 35/- paper cover).

Buganda in Modern History is a collection of Professor Low's published articles, with the exception of the *Introduction* and the last Chapter (p. 227). In Chapter 1 Professor Low discusses Buganda's reception of and response to the foreign religions during the 19th Century and the revolutionary impact of these religions on Kiganda Society especially in the Royal Court. The author clearly shows that the impact had positive and negative results.

Students of European Colonialism in Africa will find Chapter 2 fascinating. The Chapter is perhaps the best demonstration of the Missionaries' involvement in the Scramble for Africa. Writing of the Christian Missionary Society (C.M.S.) campaign to win Uganda for Britain, Professor Low observes:

What was true of the South of England was true of the North. In Hull the interest was religious. There were only three meetings which sent resolutions: The Rural Deanery Chapter. The Local Branch of the C.M.S. and the C.M.S. Junior Clerical Society—and small circle in which the Bishop, a suffragan—of York and the Rural Dean were active. (p. 67).

The campaign reached a climax between October and December 1892 when the whole of the mass media supported Britain's take-over of Uganda.

In 1953 Sir Andrew Cohen, then the Governor of Uganda Protectorate, deposed and deported the late Sir Edward Mutesa, the Kabaka of Buganda. The shock to the Baganda and indeed to all the politically conscious people in Uganda was incalculable. The British expected violence and bloodshed but the Baganda under the able leadership of the Regency and the Lukiiko, sought constitutional solutions. Professor Low discusses the momentous events of the deportation years (October 1953 to October 1955) in a Chapter he calls "The Namirembe Conference", (pp. 139-166).

These conferences under the chairmanship of Sir Keith Hancock paved the way for the reinstatement of Mutesa as Kabaka. The events which had led to the deposition and deportation of Mutesa are a clear example of the naivety and short sightedness of colonial governments. They expected African leaders to be nothing more than a mouthpiece of the colonial regime, passing orders emanating from the top. When, in this case, Kabaka Mutesa rejected to continue to play that role, such an attitude was intolerable even for a fairly progressive colonialist as Sir Andrew Cohen. This Chapter further highlights an important but unfortunately the shortlived episode in the political history of Buganda. The deportation crisis had taught the traditional leadership in Buganda the need to use the best available talents in the negotiations which led to the return of Mutesa as Kabaka in 1955. Thus these negotiations

were largely in the hands of men like E. M. K. Mulira, Apolo Kironde, Ernest Kalibbala, Thomas Makumbi and Matayo Mugwanya.

The latter was the most intelligent and generally the most far-sighted among the Kabaka's chiefs. Yet the episode as we have observed, was short-lived. As soon as the crisis was over, these talents were rejected and the men were denounced as traitors by the new men who had taken over power in the Kabaka's Government. For the next ten years (1955-1965), Buganda fell in the grip of these rightwing traditionalists who paved the downfall of the Kingdom in 1966. History will judge them harshly.

In Chapter 7, Professor Low discusses the position of Buganda in Uganda but this Chapter has its shortcomings. Those arise partly *out* of a collection of articles, some of which were published nearly 15 years ago. Inevitably therefore the book cannot escape the criticism of relying on materials that is somewhat out of date. There has been very little updating of the evidence despite the time lag. Thus in Chapter 6 (pp. 167-226) where the author discusses political parties, he makes statements that are of doubtful validity, and he relies too heavily on stereo-types which will not stand scholarly criticism. Typical of such stereo-types is the author's statement, unsupported by evidence, that the Catholic Bishops in 1955 approached the Protestant Bishops to form a Christian Democratic Party. A reputable scholar should not make such an important statement without documentation. This in my view is an unfortunate error on the part of Professor Low.

But when all is said and done, *Buganda in Modern History* is an important and valuable book. Professor Low writes well and persuasively. Unlike many a political scientist, the author, who is himself a historian believed that in order to understand the history and politics of a people, one must understand their society and the environment in which they live. This makes Low's writing interesting reading. I recommend this book which is now available from most of the bookshops in East Africa.

Prof. SEMAKULA KIWANUKA,
Makerere University.