

to the 'Colonial Office' in the 1640s and 1670s and William of Orange is said to have landed

in Cornwall in 1688. Surely the author or his editors should have corrected them.

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GENERAL AMIN, by David Martin. *Faber & Faber*, London, 1974. 254 pp. £3.50.

David Martin was expelled from Tanzania earlier this year for reporting on the atrocities taking place in Uganda, which is rather bizarre since the two countries have hardly been friends of late. President Nyerere happened to be in China when Martin filed a report for *The Observer* disproving Amin's explanation of an 'attempted coup' (the true version reached Martin by phone from the wife of the 'ring-leader' whom Amin had had murdered). Amin promptly threatened to bomb Dar-es-Salaam unless the offending journalist was removed. Nyerere's deputies panicked and ordered Martin to leave. Nyerere landed hours later and wrote to Martin apologising for what had happened. The anecdote suggests that we would do well to accept the veracity of Martin's account of events in Uganda since Amin came to power. It also illustrates that Amin is dangerously powerful outside Uganda as well as inside. Although Kenya allows muted criticism of the Uganda leader to appear in Nairobi newspapers, Ugandan refugees fleeing for their lives to Kenya are often sent back to an unpleasant fate. We may laugh when the TV screen shows us Amin making jokes about our economy and ducking fellow-officers in the swimming pool, but our front-doors are securely bolted and Kampala is thousands of miles away.

When Martin claims in his preface that his book is 'a piece of reportage', he is being both modest and accurate. Atrocity followed by partial and muted reporting followed by long silence followed—much later—by detailed exposure and public outcry is a cycle of events all too familiar in Africa's recent history, and Martin deserves credit for his determination to break this cycle and expose the evils of the Amin régime here and now. Such haste demands reportage rather than scholarly analysis. Martin's accounts of brutality, transcribed from eye-witnesses' testimony, make gruesome, numbing reading. The overriding impression left is one of anarchic cruelty: young men in gaily coloured shirts pull up in a white Peugeot and hustle away a victim to bestial torture and the release of death.

It is ironic to learn that in 1962 Amin, then an officer in the Kings African Rifles, was accused of murdering Turkana cattle-rustlers

but that the British Governor General refused to let him be court-martialled since 'it would be politically highly disastrous to bring one of the only two black officers in the Ugandan army to trial for murder on the eve of independence' (p. 19). Perhaps not so disastrous, in retrospect! Whereas the British press introduced us with great enthusiasm to Amin when Obote was overthrown in 1971, we now learn that Amin was forced to act to prevent the disclosure of his embezzlement, his part in the murder of Brigadier Okoyo and his deep involvement with the Anyanya in Southern Sudan. The uncooperative Obote now seems an angel of light when contrasted with the man who has replaced him.

Although educated Africans dismiss Amin as the 'mad man of Africa' and are profoundly embarrassed at the way he delights supporters of the great white laager, it must be admitted that to some extent 'the common people heard him gladly'. Martin hints at the reason for this in his summing up: 'Another important part of Amin's character . . . is his determination to command those who once commanded him' (p. 248). To their peasant subjects many African leaders, Kenyatta, Kaunda, Gowon, Senghor, Houphouët-Boigny, for example, appear to have been tricked into becoming Europeans with black skins and to be the clients of their former colonial masters. Amin, on the other hand, asserts his independence at every turn, spares nobody with his criticism and advice, and buys arms to dissuade his neighbours from talking back. If these peasants see their own leaders monopolising the benefits of their office and receive nothing themselves but heavier tax demands, it is understandable that in their discontent they will applaud a leader like Amin rather than a black-skinned European—just for the swagger and bravado.

Meanwhile the reign of terror continues in Uganda, and it is possible that the worst is yet to come. If Amin presses on with his alleged plan to turn Uganda into a Muslim state, thousands of Christians among the southern tribes will be turned into martyrs. . . . One is reluctantly forced to admit with Martin that his important book may only be an interim report.

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