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TRUTH EVERYDAY

Daily Monitor

THOUGHT AND IDEAS

Margaret Thatcher and Amin

I think Idi Amin had just acquired the title of Doctor of Philosophy (Honoris Causeu) of Makerere University in preparation for leading the whole of Africa as the OAU chairman. The then President of Uganda was greatly moved by the beauty of Margaret Thatcher when her photograph appeared in the Daily Nation newspaper of Kenya on February 10, 1975. The news was Thatcher's victory over Edward Heath whereby she became the leader of the Conservative Party of Britain.

The then President Amin of Uganda sent Thatcher a very friendly letter dated February 12, 1975. It partly read that; "On Tuesday I looked at your photograph in one of East Africa's papers. From the photograph you are very charming, very happy, very fresh, very beautiful, intelligent and confident. I am very deeply impressed by your appearance". This was the first of a number of friendly letters from then President Amin of Uganda to Thatcher.

General Amin, who shortly after became Field Marshal, informed Thatcher that her victory to head the British Conservative Party had made history by proving that a woman's place is not only confined to the kitchen. Amin expressed confidence in Thatcher's distinguished qualities. Amin further promised that he would follow her progress with keen interest as well as prayers. In another letter Amin offered to assist Thatcher in her bid to become the Prime Minister of Britain.

In one letter, Amin wrote that he looked forward to very warm relations between Uganda and Britain in future when Thatcher finally won the post of Prime Minister. The Uganda leader promised to work very hard for cooperation between the two, Amin and Thatcher. He pledged to help her in solving the economic problems caused by his 1972 revolutionary action of booting British Indians from Uganda.

Thatcher is said to have intervened in Uganda during the creeping coup by Oyite Ojok, Paulo Muwanga and Yoweri Museveni against the then President Godfrey Binaisa. It happened that some four Acholi UNLA soldiers from Lubiri Barracks were killed at Lungujja in Kampala. The soldiers blamed some militia being trained for Binaisa. Then one Lt. Kilama led troops on two lorries and two Landrovers towards Entebbe to get at Binaisa then besieged in State House. Through a journalist and the then British Counsel, Thatcher learnt of the crisis and informed Nyerere. The UNLA soldiers were stopped and camped at Kisubi for two days before giving up the mission.

Thatcher was the second among the four groups that had problematic engagements with Dr Obote during his second presidency. The other were; World Bank/IMF, Kenya and Tanzania. Margaret Thatcher was forcing Dr. Obote to publicly condemn and reverse the 1972 Expulsion of the supposed British Uganda, accept the undistributed compensation Amin had paid and return the business properties to the Indians. Dr Obote resisted and only went as far as passing a lukewarm Expropriated Properties Act.

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