

BY NELSON KIVA

Former minister Shem Bajura Bageline has revealed how the 1982 coup attempt against former Kenyan president Daniel arap Moi forced him to rethink his relationship with the Milton Obote administration in Kampala.

Bageline, in his new book titled: *'Foresight: Treads of a Leader, Professional and Philanthropist,'* notes that the coup plot that was led by Kenya Alt Force's Pte Hezekiah Ochuka unmasked Obote's support for Kenya's opposition led by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and his son Raila Amolo Odinga.

Both Jaramogi and Raila were implicated by the Moi administration in a subsequent crackdown on the coup attempt, which resulted in Ochuka being extradited from Tanzania and hanged in 1987.

By the time of the coup, which almost succeeded with military bases and the Kenyan public broadcaster (radio and television) temporarily taken over by mutineers, Bageline lived in Nairobi as part of the clandestine National Resistance Movement (NRM) external wing as a treasurer.

Mostly composed of the Ugandan elites in exile in Nairobi and beyond, the role of NRM external wing was not limited at soliciting financial and military support to the Luwero Triangle-based rebel outfit, the National Resistance Army (NRA).

It equally functioned as a propaganda machine against the administration in Kampala to discredit it globally.

On page 72 of the 249-page autobiography, Bageline highlights that after the coup attempt had been defeated by the loyal forces and Moi had settled back into power, he became curious about groups fighting the Uganda government.

"He [Moi] was familiar with me because during his tenure as vice-president, I had been responsible for conducting property valuations whenever he sought to make a purchase. Our connection had been facilitated through a mutual friend, Simon Mbugua, who served as permanent secretary in the Kenyan ministry of works," Bageline says in the book.

Bageline, however, confesses that despite their relationship with both Moi and Mbugua, they were unaware of his deep involvement with the NRA back home.

"When they approached me, I honestly informed them that while there were various groups fighting Obote, the NRA was the primary force. They relayed this information back to Moi who subsequently

BAGEINE LIFTS LID ON NRA'S NAIROBI COVERT MISSIONS IN HIS NEW BOOK

PHOTOS BY MIRIAM HAMUTEDI



Bageline (centre), wife Eleanor Bageline (third-right), former prime minister Dr Ruhakana Rugunda (second-right), state minister for finance Henry Musasizi (third-left), and other guests during the launch of his book at Fairway Hotel in Kampala on May 7

started providing financial support to our cause," Bageline said.

IN THE EXTERNAL WING

Bageline claims that the NRM external wing, whose chairman was Matthew Rukikaire, faced some challenges particularly after the NRA forces struck a collaboration deal with the Uganda Freedom Fighters of Yusuf Lule.

"Yusuf Lule assumed the role of a chairman while Museveni became the vice-chairman. One time, Lule was in Nairobi, but then proceeded to London. Unfortunately, some members disregarded the need to know the principle that guided the communication matrix during the struggle," he writes.

He adds: "Some of the members of the external wing insisted on being the intermediaries for all communication between Lule and Museveni, a notion which Lule vehemently opposed. He even threatened to abandon the movement."

According to Bageline, some of them understood that if Lule was to abandon the movement, they would suffer significant losses.

"Being a respected Muganda, we seriously needed the support of the Baganda people. Consequently,

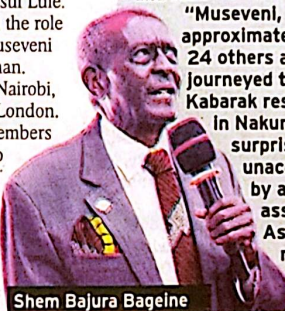
ENTER MUSEVENI

Former minister Shem Bajura Bageline recalls that in 1985, during a visit to Kenya, Yoweri Museveni, then rebel chief, arranged a meeting between the external wing members and Moi.

"Museveni, approximately 24 others and I, journeyed to Moi's Kabarak residence in Nakuru. To our surprise, he was unaccompanied by any of his assistants. As we narrated our struggles,

he consistently expressed his unwavering belief in our victory. I could sense his genuine connection to our cause."

Bageline further reveals: "Following our discussion and some refreshments, he guided me and another individual to his vault, an intriguing experience in itself. Moi opened one cabinet filled with dollar bills, then another with Deutschmarks and then one containing Kenyan shillings. He selected several boxes from that particular cabinet and generously donated them to support our struggle."



Shem Bajura Bageline

three of us; Dr Samson Kiseka (former vice-president), Ernest Kakwano (RIP) and I, decided to fly to the UK at our own expense. We spent a week in London engaging in discussions with Lule. Initially bitter, Lule later gradually changed his stance as we convinced him to abandon the idea of leaving the movement," Bageline reveals.

He recalls that he flew to London on the Kenyan passport as a citizen of Kenya at the same time involved

in subversive activities in Uganda.

"Another hurdle arose during our fundraising efforts. Numerous late-night phone calls informed me of fighters' shortages in the bush. In these instances, my courageous standby agents in Kampala swiftly facilitated the transfer of funds to our forces. I would then rush to the bank the following day and obtain an overdraft to reimburse those who had extended their assistance to us," Bageline states.

However, Bageline recalls one instance when money was raised from Libya and was intended to be deposited into his London account.

"Upon learning that the funds had been collected and sent to the account, I contacted my agents including James Musinguzi (RIP) who were responsible for transferring money to support the bush fighters. I was happy and explicitly instructed them to provide the fighters with whatever amount necessary, assuring them that the money would be reimbursed."

He adds: "Little did I anticipate the predicament that awaited me. My issued cheques bounced, there were no funds in my account. The intensity of my frustration and bitterness cannot be overstated. Determined to address the matter, I promptly called for a meeting and briefed several members, sparking a heated and contentious debate."

"Ultimately, those responsible had no choice but to confess their failure to remit the money. This unscrupulous act not only jeopardised my safety, but also disrupted the seamless transfer of funds to the bush. From the outset, we had agreed that our forces would never acquire peasants' food; be it animals, fruits, or vegetables without providing fair compensation."

According to Bageline, the funds were finally remitted to his account and humbly apologised to those who had received bounced cheques and made good the remittance of the funds.

Bageline writes that the other challenge was when the people responsible for the sick in the hospitals connived with the hospital authorities to inflate the medical bills.

"It was only later that I discovered this deceit, fuelling my anger and disappointment. Despite these obstacles, the performance of the external wing was commendable, and I take immense pride in having been part of its leadership," Bageline says.

In the book, launched at Fairway Hotel in Kampala on May 7, Bageline recounts the hardships that shaped his journey, beginning with a poverty-stricken childhood and continuing through difficult school years where he often lived in other people's homes because he could not afford basic necessities.