



Joseph Ochieno Party politics

NRM doesn't deserve support from UPC

Over the last 12 months, the Uganda Peoples Congress hit the headlines most of the time for the wrong reasons. Sadly, this is for a party which championed Uganda's independence and is vanguard of its selfless nationalism. UPC has in the last 30 years fought lonely battles to defend its name and record.

Lest we forget, under the NRM/A's aims and objectives of the revolution, number one was the; 'Removal of UPC/Milton Obote dictatorship by force (if necessary) and the establishment of a one party 'popularly democracy' (State) under NRM/NRA.

When in 2009 Olara Otunnu muted his interest in leading UPC, I was among the first to object. My opposition to Olara was based not only on his role in the post-UPC junta but also in the fact that he had been an absolute absence - over 20 years despite his privileged position - in the struggle to dismantle the dictatorship he and others created.

I wanted something simple; an acknowledgement, a sense of responsibility, some humility and therefore, an open basis on which we could build trust and confidence to move forward in the interest of the party and Uganda. It was

not forthcoming instead, we were treated to politically irrelevant paper achievements and myths of power and influence around Western capitals.

Somehow Otunnu became leader and although I was not particularly expecting miracles, his achievements exceeded my expectations - below par. Worse, instead of enabling a smooth transition, Otunnu decides to subject the party to another bout of political battles - in court. When some in the party looked to a 'safer' hands in Jimmy Akena to restore what Otunnu had lost, only with months to the 2016 election charade, November hit and a new discussion emerged on the nature of the relationship between Museveni and Akena's UPC, I was at a loss. When Mr Akena decided that he, would not offer himself as candidate for national elections but instead concentrate resources on building party structures I was initially, not persuaded but, then came to the conclusion that it was perhaps, the right decision.

Having decided so, UPC needed to advise its members to either abstain their votes for president or, at the very least, upon their conscience, vote privately. Prior to elections, there is no reason why

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discussion surrounding candidates for president who is not UPC should have arisen, taken so much time and caused such rancour. Who has benefited and why thus far, but the forces that yoked UPC?

Discussion about a common agenda or a shared position with any political party or organisation (NRM is not a party), comes only after elections. That is when parties, on the basis of their parliamentary strength, seek alliances (subject to approval by respective organs), in order to form coalition governments or, where if need arises and a national consensus is needed, they form a government of national unity involving all parties.

In the unlikely event that a legally constituted National Council or Delegates Conference of UPC were called and decided to support another candidate for president in the absence of its own, how would such a body qualify NRM and Mu-

seveni (under the circumstance of Besigye and Mbabazi), as the least worst option? What is it that Museveni would - specifically - offer UPC?

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Instead, UPC must be in the lead to seek minimum requirement from all leading candidates and demand that they confirm that 1980 general elections were convincingly won by UPC (a fact) and not DP. And certainly not by NRM! I know there are those who naively believe that history and true records do not matter. They are wrong.

UPC cannot confuse Ugandans when we are the natural leaders, bolted in jail, by force of arms. UPC should use any leverage to unmask any myths and compel a national dialogue that leads to apologies, prosecution (where applicable), owning up, forgiveness, reconciliation and moving forward. In the words of Obote, what concerns all, must be discussed and resolved by all.

Anything less is a blank cheque handed to a dictatorship attempting to reform itself yet in the words of one of its own generals (David Tinnyefunza), dictatorships cannot be reformed but, dismantled. Who should know better than UPC, the national liberation movement of Uganda.

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