FROM ONE TYPEWRITER TO MEDIA EMPIR

By Joseph Batte

When the smoke of Uganda's long civil war finally began to clear in January 1986, the fighters of the National Resistance Movement marched into Kampala and the country slowly started catching its breath again.

But even as the guns went quiet, another kind of battle was beginning, this time with pens, printing ink and a bold idea about how Uganda should tell its own story.



'The New Vision' newspaper editors during a planning meeting in the 1990s. Inset is the first copy of 'The New Vision'



BIRTH OF NEW VISION

President Yoweri Museveni and the comrades who had fought beside him in the Luwero bush were not only thinking about governing. They talked about something bigger. They spoke of a "new vision" for Africa, a country free from tribal politics, corruption and the heavy propaganda that had stained the earlier governments.

And so, on March 19, 1986, that dream rolled onto the streets of Kampala in the form of a newspaper called *The New Vision.*

The very first copy cost just sh300. It was a simple broadsheet, not the glossy giant people know today. The lead headline read: "Government to curb inflation." It looked modest, almost shy. But behind those pages was the birth of what would grow into one of Uganda's most influential media houses.

Getting that first edition out was an adventure of its own. The newsroom – if you could call it that – was a tired warehouse in the Industrial Area. Paper was scarce. Ink was scarce. Even typewriters were scarce.

For a whole week, the team worked almost without sleep. Journalists edited stories by hand under flickering lights that threatened to go off at any moment. Uganda itself was still finding its feet, and so was its newest newspaper.

EARLIER PUBLICATIONS

But the story of *The New Vision* did not begin in 1986. Its roots stretched much further back, deep into Uganda's colonial past.

The paper's ancestor, the *Uganda Argus*, was started in 1955 by the British colonial government. After independence in 1962, president Milton Obote's government continued using it as the state newspaper.

Then came 1971, and with it the rule of Idi Amin. T paper was renamed *Th of Uganda.*

When Amin fell in 19 next government renan it the *Uganda Times.* Bu damage was deep. Yea of propaganda had ero public trust.

By July 1985, the *Uga Times* had collapsed un heavy debts and public suspicion. When the N Government took powe months later, Uganda r a new paper – somethi fresh, something believ

President Museveni h reportedly suggested th New Vision (some repo allege it was Basoga Ns It captured the hopeful of a country trying to re itself.

FIRST TEAM

The Government scrap together a startup budg about $25,000 then. Th team – about 65 peopl

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